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The Lutheran Ethic. The Impact Of Religion On Laymen And Clergy

A REVIEW ARTICLE

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The Method

THIS BOOK PURPORTS to be a study of the impact of religion on laymen and clergy in every day life. Four Lutheran American church groups were selected and attention was focused on the distinctive characteristics of their clergy and laity to see how their religious ideology functioned in the community and country in which these people lived.

In this volume the reader will find a report of the findings of a sociological study of religion which had the support of four major Lutheran church bodies located in southern Michigan. Over a period of four years an in-depth analysis of members of Lutheran congregations, including clergy and laity, was undertaken with the financial support of the Michigan District of the American Lutheran Church; the Social Action and Research Commission of the American Lutheran Church; the Board for Missions, the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod; the Michigan Synod of the Lutheran Church in America; the Detroit congregations of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod; and the Lutheran Council in the United States of America.

The primary data utilized in this sociological research was of three kinds. The first type of data used was furnished by interviews of 886 laymen in three counties of Metropolitan Detroit. Random sampling was taken by the selection of names from the membership roles of various congregations of the four participating Lutheran churches. The second kind of data consisted of questionnaires which were answered by 241 Lutheran clergymen from the four participating groups located in the greater Detroit area. The third type of information was furnished by 1,095 students of all faiths attending Eastern Michigan University, who responded to questionnaires that were mailed to them. The purpose of the latter sampling was to make a comparison between the religious and non-religious views of these students as compared with those expressed by Lutherans on the same topics and issues.

Thus in Dr. Kersten's study one finds involved the four largest branches of American Lutheranism: The Wisconsin Evangelical

THE LUTHERAN ETHIC. THE IMPACT OF RELIGION ON LAYMEN AND CLERGY By Lawrence L. Kersten. Wayne State University Press, Detroit, 1970. 309 pages. Cloth. \$8.95. Dr. Kersten, a faculty member at Eastern Michigan University, presented the findings here as a doctoral dissertation in the area of sociology. Help was provided by LCUSA and its member synods along with the Wisconsin Synod. The style is quite readable and should therefore receive wide circulation. As Dr. Kersten's study is a barometer of Lutheranism in America today, the results will be of interest to all concerned in Lutheranism's major issues.

Lutheran Synod (WS), the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (MS), the American Lutheran Church (ALC), and the Lutheran Church in America (LCA), representing 98 per cent of American Lutheranism.

The study was conducted by Lawrence L. Kersten, Ph.D., assistant professor at Eastern Michigan University and adjunct assistant professor of Urban Planning at the University of Michigan. He was formerly Research Analyst with the Metropolitan Detroit Council of Churches. Kersten received help and criticism from other sociologists greatly interested in this research, scholars such as Charles Glock, Jeffrey Hadden, Thomas Hault, Raymond L. Schmidt, Gerhard Lenski, Benton Johnson and Ronald Johnstone.

Over 100 analytical tables scattered throughout the study give the questions asked and their responses. In a number of appendices additional tables with many recorded facts are included. In this review it will not be possible to discuss all the material set forth in this book. It is recommended that the reader purchase or consult this volume in a library.

Kersten used five measures of religious commitment in his three-county Metropolitan Detroit area study. He developed indexes that measured beliefs, practices, knowledge, associational involvement and communal involvement, and throughout his book describes and contrasts them.

The Lutheran Ethic

In the opening chapter Kersten sets forth what he believes is "the Lutheran ethic." He contends that Lutheranism has received far less attention from sociologists of religion than has Calvinism, despite the fact that Lutheranism supplied the initial stimulus for the movement known as the Reformation. Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* has been the basis for research and analysis of areas which so far have been investigated by sociologists of religion. Weber's study was an analysis of religious and sociological values in Protestantism covering the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries. Since the ethic of Lutheranism differs in many respects from that of Calvinism and from that described by Weber in his classic work, Kersten believes that it is highly desirable that sociological studies be made to see how the Lutheran ethic functions in the world.

The term "Lutheran ethic" was first employed by Ernst Troeltsch in his book, *The Social Teachings of Christian Churches* (tr. 1932), although Weber had set forth the basic elements of the "Lutheran ethic" in his book published in 1904. Both Weber and Troeltsch constructed their conception of what constituted the "Lutheran ethic" from the Lutheran Confessions as well as from the writings of Luther and Melancthon.

A "Lutheran ethic" comprises more than a formulation of religious teachings and creeds; it actually involves a total ideology. Besides a statement of doctrines and beliefs it encompasses attitudes and religious and non-religious conduct. Traditional Lutheranism

holds certain beliefs about God, man, eternal salvation and the Bible. In the "Lutheran ethic" both clergy and laity have special roles. The "Lutheran ethic" has delineated stances on the nature and function of the family, government, education and the economy and it has views regarding the structure of the different classes comprising society.

Kersten claims that the "Lutheran ethic" reflects life as it was lived in the Middle Ages, which was considerably different from social life in twentieth century America. In Europe there was no separation of church and state as is the case in the United States. In Luther's day there existed a rural economy which was opposed to usury, while Lutherans in present-day America are living in a capitalistic society that operates much differently than the Germany of some 400 years ago.

This book purports to be an objective study of beliefs, attitudes and practices that exist and it does not attempt to prescribe what should be held by Lutherans. The role of the sociologist is scientifically to gather data, describe what he finds and draw valid conclusions. He should not presume to prescribe what ought to be the results.

Basic Lutheran Theological Teachings

The "Lutheran ethic" teaches that man was sinless prior to the Fall as recorded in Genesis 3. After the Fall man became a totally corrupt being. Adam's offspring were born with inherited sin. In spiritual matters man is unable to perform that which is acceptable to God for salvation. This contrasts strongly with Romanism which holds that although man is born with sin, he is not totally corrupt and that he may overcome his sinful state by the performance of good works. Kersten quotes from *The Book of Concord* which clearly teaches that man is born with original sin which has affected his entire nature; the powers of his mind, heart and will. Martin Luther in *The Bondage of the Will* is also cited by the author to show that there can be no "free-will" in man or in any other creature. *The Book of Concord*, however, does point out that man has some free will in "external" or "nonspiritual matters," and declares that man can choose among the words and things which reason itself can grasp. Again the same Confession states that men are found to "obey their evil impulses more often than their sound judgment, while the devil, who as Paul says (Eph. 2:2) is at work in the ungodly, never stops inciting this feeble nature to various offenses. For these reasons even civil righteousness is rare among men."

The Detroit Study showed that little uniformity exists on the part of clergy and laity of the four major branches of Lutheranism. One of the significant results of that study revealed the absence of a unified Lutheran philosophy of life. It is, therefore, considered improper to speak about a "Lutheran" view on any subject that might be under discussion.

On the basis of data collected, according to Kersten, the Wisconsin and Missouri Synods are the most theologically conservative Lutheran Church bodies that approach the theological position set

forth in the Lutheran Confessions. The ALC and the LCA are more liberally-oriented from a theological viewpoint, the LCA being the most liberal. A conservative theological position, Kersten claims, will also influence the attitude on religious and social issues. Thus he wrote: "A conservative theological stance relates to a conservative position on both religious and secular questions. The theologically conservative respondents are also more pessimistic than optimistic about the potentials of man in this world and see man's free will as severely restricted, both in this world and in the next" (p. 23). Liberally oriented Lutherans rejecting basic teachings of Lutheranism are moving in the direction of beliefs and attitudes of other major Protestant bodies in the United States.

According to the "Lutheran ethic" salvation is a gift of God made possible by the vicarious death of Christ upon Calvary's cross. Man cannot earn his salvation. Salvation is by grace alone (*sola gratia*). While Roman Catholicism adheres to a doctrine of grace, it stresses the mediation of grace through the church hierarchy, religious rituals and works of merit. In contradistinction, Luther emphasized that grace and salvation cannot be "obtained" through such means. Salvation by faith in Christ apart from works made possible altogether because of God's grace, is more individual than organizational.

In contrast to historic Calvinism, Lutheranism involves the church more directly in giving grace to the sinner. Calvinism's doctrine of predestination which taught that God had predestinated individuals to salvation or to damnation led to the conviction that grace could not be lost by failure to use the Word of God and the Sacraments. Neither merit nor the Church was necessary to receive nor keep the saved in a state of grace. Lutheranism held, on the contrary, that grace could be lost and taught that Baptism, the Lord's Supper and the proclamation of the Word were the channels for the creation and preservation of faith.

The Religious Commitment of Lutherans

In Chapter 2 Kersten examines the religious commitment of Lutherans. The Detroit Study centered on five dimensions of religious commitment: religious beliefs, religious practices, religious knowledge, associational involvement, and communal involvement. These are manifestations of religiosity that sociologists of religion claim are measurable. Kersten gathered laity and student samples on these five indicators, but only examined the clergy for religious beliefs. Religious commitment as understood in this study comprised both the individual's personal religious commitment as well as a formal institutional or organizational involvement.

Important in determining a Lutheran's religious beliefs is his attitude toward the Bible. Both clergy and laity were asked to state whether or not they believed the Bible to be true in all that it says, and if they accepted the entire Scriptures as the Word of God. Because the Bible was written by men, modern theologians believe that the Bible has errors and mistakes even though its basic religious and

moral teachings may be true. The Lutheran laity and clergy were to state whether or not they subscribed to the idea that although the Bible contains many errors and myths, it nevertheless is still the Word of God.

The answers given by clergy and laity show a wide divergence among the four branches of Lutheranism. There are significant differences between clergy and laity on whether the Bible is totally inerrant or that it contains errors and mistakes. Kersten claims that the responses given on the nature of the Bible have implications for answers in other parts of his research. The Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WS) is theologically the most conservative, and the clergy from this body agree unanimously on the four questions of the Religious Belief Index. The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (MS) is nearly as conservative, but there are trends of change. The American Lutheran Church (ALC) is more liberal than WS and MS, while the Lutheran Church in America (LCA) is generally the most liberal. In the WS and MS the laity gave more liberal answers to theological questions than did the clergy. In the ALC and LCA just the reverse was true, the laity being more conservative than the clergy (cf. pp. 33-34). On the statement "The Bible is God's word and all it says is true." only 10 per cent of the clergy in the LCA answered this affirmatively, 19 per cent in the ALC, 74 per cent in the MS, and 100 per cent in the WS. Kersten observes: "The 90 per cent difference between the LCA and the WS clergymen seems almost inconceivable within the single denomination of Lutheranism" (p. 34). Laymen did not approach the same extremes: LCA had 29 per cent, ALC 35 per cent, MS 62 per cent, and WS 77 per cent, that gave the traditional answer.

A second question dealt with the historicity of Adam and Eve and of the Fall as recorded in Genesis 3. The range among the laity of those who believe it was from 48 per cent in the LCA to 83 per cent in the WS.

The third statement on the Religious Belief Index read that "only those who believe in Jesus Christ as their Savior can go to heaven." In the LCA 56 per cent of the laymen indicated such a belief is necessary, 58 per cent in the ALC, 75 per cent in the MS, and 84 per cent in the WS. Of the LCA clergy only 43 per cent held to this fundamental New Testament teaching, 52 per cent in the ALC, 84 per cent in the MS and 100 per cent in the WS.

The fourth statement on the Religious Belief Index was: "A child is already sinful at birth." This involves the important doctrine of original sin which, as Kersten points out, is "a key element in the Lutheran ethic" (p. 35). The laity in the Lutheran congregations involved in this study indicated a more optimistic attitude than did the clergy. Answering the question in the traditional Lutheran way, response in the LCA was 45 per cent of the laity, 67 per cent of the clergy; in the ALC 58 per cent of the laity as over against 74 per cent of the clergy; in the MS 77 per cent of the laymen and 99 per cent of the clergy, and in the WS 79 per cent of the laity and 100

per cent of the clergy. These statistics apply only to the region studied.

However, when these figures are compared with two other studies they assume significance. Jefferey K. Hadden in *The Gathering Storm in the Churches: The Widening Gap Between Clergy and Laymen* made a sample study of clergymen from six major denominations which included ministers from the ALC and MS. Similar questions were asked by Hadden on his Religious Belief Index. The beliefs of Lutheran clergymen nationally showed marked similarities with the answers of pastors of the Detroit Study. Dr. Kersten claims that these studies support "the hypothesis that the clergymen from various branches of Lutheranism hold belief systems emphasized during their seminary education, which with minor regional variations, they retain no matter what part of the country they are called to serve" (p. 39).

Rodney Stark and Charles Y. Glock in *American Piety: The Nature of Religious Commitment* made a study of religious beliefs of Lutheran laymen in the northern California area. This study showed a similarity in answers given to what traditional Lutheran theology would consider basic questions. The Detroit survey essentially is in agreement with the Stark and Glock research.

Sociologists have pointed out that variables in research studies are caused by factors such as age, sex, social class and nationality. No difference appears between the laymen's age and their ranking on the Religious Index Scale. However, some significant differences appear regarding the age of the clergy in the Detroit Study. Younger clergymen more often rank as liberal and older clergymen as conservative. Dr. Kersten claims: "If the younger clergymen maintain their liberal theological beliefs through the years, then dramatic changes in Lutheran belief patterns likely will occur (p. 40)." The beliefs of clergymen are independent of the social class of their congregations, although the Study revealed that laymen from a higher social class tend to be more liberally inclined. Individuals born outside of the United States are theologically more liberal than those born in the United States. Those individuals who attended a parochial school were more conservatively-orientated than those who were graduates of public schools. People who were raised in a rural area were more conservative than those coming from urban places. The largest number of people ranking high on the Religious Index were those who had enjoyed religious training from early childhood.

Church attendance is highest on a weekly basis in the WS and MS churches with the latter having the highest percentage of the four Lutheran bodies. The Association Involvement Index showed that there is more institutional involvement in the WS and MS than in the more liberally inclined ALC and LCA churches.

The Detroit Study shows that there are no great differences regarding associational involvement in the four Lutheran bodies. Kersten states, however, that large differences exist in the area of personal religious practices. Conservatively-oriented laymen prayed

much more often to God to ascertain His will for their lives than did the liberally inclined laymen. Saying grace at the table, the Study revealed a low of 18 per cent for the LCA and a high of 45 per cent for the MS. To the question: "Have you tried to convert an unbeliever?" the range was as follows: 26 per cent in the LCA tried, 34 per cent in the ALC, 44 per cent in the MS, and 48 per cent in the WLS.

Religion and Politics

Chapter III of *The Lutheran Ethic* deals with "Religion and Politics." Kersten claims that political and social conservatism is part and parcel of the "Lutheran ethic." It considers government as keeping within bounds the sinfulness of man who because of inherited sin is inclined to selfishness and corruption. That there are and always will be inequalities in life with varying social classes has been the conviction of Lutherans in the past. The "Lutheran ethic" in previous years has been skeptical of secular reform movements because of the over optimistic view of human nature. In the hereafter all inequalities in this life will be rectified.

Is such a stance viable in twentieth century America? Those Lutherans who are committed to the "Lutheran ethic" reflect this in their attitudes toward politics. The survey showed that theologically conservative clergymen more often favor the Republican party and vote for Republican candidates. They also take a conservative stance on social welfare and a more hawkish attitude on war. Lutheran laymen who rank high on the five dimensions of religious commitment select the Republican party and vote for its candidates.

Lutherans and Civil Rights and Liberties

In Chapter IV Kersten studies "Religion, Civil Rights, and Civil Liberties." According to the author's understanding of the "Lutheran ethic" the ideal social structure was to be found in a patriarchal-agrarian structure, which was based on serfdom and slavery. The "Lutheran ethic" emphasized the spiritual equality of all men but recognized inequalities among races and social classes. It considered all callings as vocations from God and hence honorable. The existing orders were, therefore, in harmony with the will of God and were not to be changed by human revolution. It was also a part of Lutheran belief, according to Kersten, that Lutheranism was the one "true" religion which allegedly fosters a spirit of intolerance toward Jews, Roman Catholics and atheists.

The Detroit Study reveals that consistent with the traditional "Lutheran ethic" theologically more conservative clergymen express attitudes suggesting: 1. greater prejudice toward Negroes; 2. a higher degree of anti-Semitism; 3. greater concern about Catholic power in this country; 4. strong distrust of atheism. On these matters the clergy are more tolerant than the laymen participating in this study.

Lutheran Ethic and Morality

Chapter V deals with "Religion and Morality." In this chapter living the Christian life is discussed. According to the "Lutheran

ethic" the Ten Commandments were given to bring about repentance in the unconverted sinner, and for the child of God to set forth a moral standard to follow in living a God pleasing life. By trying to keep the Decalogue man is unable to merit salvation. Kersten's study revealed a significant fact, namely, that many Lutherans believe that they can achieve salvation by keeping the Ten Commandments. This is strange when one considers the emphasis placed on *sola gratia* in Lutheran theology. Lutherans go to the Bible to obtain their norms and instruction on moral problems. The Detroit Study shows that for present day Lutherans the Ten Commandments play a very important role. Most conservatively-oriented clergy and laymen only consider those matters moral issues that are discussed or mentioned in the Bible. Lutherans are not concerned morally about smoking even though evidence has shown that it is physically damaging. The study shows that sexual behavior is a matter of great concern for Lutherans. They do not believe, however, that the Church as an organization should involve itself in moral and social issues except on an individual basis.

On the subject of divorce the "Lutheran ethic" is strongly opposed to the breaking down of the home or family relationships. Theologically more liberal clergy, however, are inclined to accept divorce as a solution to marital problems and they indicate a willingness to marry divorced individuals.

The changing role of woman in American culture is one of the areas where a conflict occurs between the traditional Lutheran conception of the wife in society and the Women's Liberation Movement. In the MS clergy 48 per cent, 43 per cent in the WS, 42 per cent in the ALC and 39 per cent in the LCA clearly were not in favor of a mother-wife engaging in a full time career. The more conservative Lutheran clergy do not believe that the wife should have as much to say as the husband in decision making regarding family matters.

The "Lutheran ethic" accepts the Biblical teaching that "whoever takes the sword shall perish by the sword." Half of the laymen believe that murders should suffer the death penalty. The clergy ranked on this matter according to their theological orientation: in the liberal LCA 17 per cent and ALC 43 per cent favored death for offenders, while 100 per cent in the WS voted in its favor. In the MS 79 per cent were in favor of capital punishment.

The more liberally inclined clergy take a more lenient attitude toward homosexuals and all types of sex deviation.

The new morality has become a major concern for all churches. The tendency for Lutheran clergy and laity is to oppose the new morality although those inclined toward liberalism will also permit the adoption of new moral views. Only a small percentage of laymen believe that pre-marital sex is permissible. A majority of the liberal Lutheran clergy contend that extra-marital relations can be justified in some instances.

In Chapter VI "The Institution of Religion" the important topic of the purpose and function of the church is discussed. According

to the "Lutheran ethic" the duty of the church is to preach the gospel and the primary task of the Lutheran clergy is to proclaim the message of salvation. The concern of the minister is to save men's souls for eternity. Social reform and the building of the kingdom of God on earth as conceived by liberal Lutheran clergy never was the goal of Lutheran church work.

Luther held to the idea of the existence of two kingdoms and that religion as an institution should function separately from the secular world. All institutions were God ordained and each had its specific function. Luther encouraged obedience to the authorities that God had given. Even tyrants were to be tolerated; civil disobedience had the Wittenberg Reformer's disapproval. Kersten claims that "the Lutheran ethic principle of nonresistance is reflected in the strong opposition among laymen to civil disobedience (p. 118)." Lutheran laymen look upon religion as a personal matter; a Christian should seek his personal salvation and take seriously church attendance, prayer, Scripture reading and attendance at the Lord's Supper.

The Detroit Study shows that the laity want their pastors to keep the two kingdoms separate. The laymen are opposed to their spiritual leaders becoming involved in secular affairs and a considerable number of the laity have indicated that they will only continue their financial support of the church if their pastors agree to discontinue their involvement in social and secular issues. The more conservatively inclined laymen regard Lutheranism as the one true religion and consider change of its structure and purposes not to be tolerated.

The more liberally inclined Lutheran clergy are strong for social action which is not the case among the conservative clergy. The less indoctrinated the laity is, the more it is in favor of stressing social action as a major purpose of the church.

The most dramatic difference among the Lutheran clergy surveyed was the role of women in the church. Nearly 100 per cent of the LCA and ALC clergy were in favor of giving women an equal voice in the management of the church, while only 47 per cent in the MS and none in the WS were inclined to grant women leadership in the church. On the question of woman ordination for the office of the holy ministry, 98 per cent of the LCA clergy are in favor of the female pastorate, 30 per cent in the ALC, 8 per cent in the MS and none in the WS.

In Chapter VII Dr. Kersten investigated the images that Lutherans had concerning man, God, and religion. In earlier chapters some of these matters have been alluded to and will again appear in the concluding chapter.

On the question of whether God determines a person's life or whether man is in control of his life, received varying answers from the clergy and laity which indicate the lack of a unified Lutheran position. The issue of God's will versus man's free will determines whether a Lutheran believes that he is saved solely by grace or

whether he can save himself by good works. Less than one in five Lutherans of the LCA and ALC, and about one in ten in the WS and MS believe that man is saved by works.

Traditional Lutheran teaching holds that man contributes nothing toward his salvation. This study still reflects the old controversy between monergism and synergism. Only a small majority of Lutheran laymen accept the idea that they cannot contribute anything toward their salvation. The laity often reflect what they have been taught by their pastors or at other times what seems reasonable to them. Seventy-eight per cent of the LCA clergy, 67 per cent of the ALC clergy, 27 per cent of the MS and 7 per cent of the WS ministers do not accept the total inability of man to participate in his salvation. A synergistic view also relates to the conviction expressed by both laity and clergy that salvation may be achieved by keeping the Ten Commandments.

The Lutheran view concerning God and man has implications also for the socialization of children. Laymen from theologically conservative bodies stress obedience, while those from liberally oriented churches emphasize teaching the child to think and to exercise independence. Children that are taught obedience are also found to be children who are taught to accept the Bible's teaching on creation as opposed to the view on evolution.

Lutherans Compared with Other Faiths

In Chapter VIII Dr. Kersten compares social attitudes and religious ideologies of major denominations as reflected by college students with those revealed in the Detroit Study. Students from the following churches and denominations participated in this study: Jewish, United Church of Christ, United Methodist, Episcopal, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic, Baptist, LCA, ALC, MS and WS Lutherans. The study showed that college students are more liberal in their beliefs and practices than those young people not attending a college or university. Lutheran college students were more liberal in their attitudes than laymen of the Detroit Study. Large differences exist among the Lutheran students of the four Lutheran denominations attending Eastern Michigan University. The Religious Beliefs Index reveals that religious beliefs are stronger among Lutherans and Baptists than among other Protestants. Dr. Kersten claims that the majority of students of the United Church of Christ, United Methodists, Episcopalians and Presbyterians do not accept traditional teachings about the Bible as God's inspired Word, man as a sinner already by birth, Jesus Christ as God's Son and the only Savior of the world, the existence of the devil and the virgin birth. Jewish students hold beliefs which in many respects parallel those of liberal Protestantism. The Episcopalians are the most liberal of Protestant churches. Students from liberal Protestant denominations are less involved in church activities than are Baptists and Lutherans. Students from liberal Protestant and Jewish bodies show less religious commitment than that of students classified as theologically conservative.

College students take a more liberal attitude over against the new morality than do adults and clergymen. Half of the students questioned believe that premarital sex relations are legitimate for engaged couples, 33 per cent of Jews concurring, while thirty-three per cent of Baptists and WS Lutheran students opposed this practice. On the matter of extra marital sex relations, Jews and Episcopalians have the most liberal views, MS Lutheran students the most conservative. Students in general take a much more liberal view on the new morality as compared with the laymen in the Detroit Study. On the subject of abortion, Roman Catholic, Baptist and MS Lutheran students often are opposed to abortion while LCA students are least opposed to this practice.

Regarding the function of religion, a greater tendency is to stress this-world character of religion in opposition to the other-world nature. Lutheran students believe that religion should bring about reforms in society. Yet most students do not believe that the church should make pronouncements on major social issues.

Members of all religious groups, except the Baptists and some of the four Lutheran groups, believe that a person is saved by works.

Conclusions Based on Detroit Study

Chapter IX presents the conclusions of the Study. In this chapter Dr. Kersten delineated trends evident in Lutheranism. The Detroit Study shows that Lutherans in some respects share similar beliefs with other religious groups, yet significant differences on many issues distinguish clergy from the laity. The differences among Lutherans that once characterized earlier twentieth century Lutheranism still exist. Dr. Kersten concludes: "In addition to large-scale disagreements on basic Christian beliefs, Lutherans show differences on such fundamentals as the role, nature, purpose, and function of the institution of religion (p. 204)."

Lutheran laymen favor open communion. The clergy of the LCA and ALC and half of the MS favor inter-Lutheran communion and 98 per cent of the LCA and ALC clergy favor pulpit exchange as compared with the WS which opposes it. A deep split in MS exists on this issue. Two other matters that are keeping Lutherans apart are the issues of biological evolution and membership in secret societies. The WS and many in the MS reject biological evolution as conflicting with a literal interpretation of Genesis 1-3.

Conservative Lutherans believe that the religion of secret societies with its secret rituals, sets forth a philosophy of work righteousness which is in direct conflict with Pauline teachings. Laymen in the WS and MS do not oppose the lodge as much as do their clergy.

On the matter of ecumenical involvement, 81 per cent of the LCA clergy would like to see all Lutherans merge into one body; 70 per cent of the ALC and 46 per cent of the MS would favor merger; 60 per cent of the LCA clergy consider "all American Protestant religions as equally good." Liberal Lutherans favor joining other Protestants in church work.

The Detroit Study indicates that in Lutheranism there is a *trend away from supernaturalism to a religion dominated by a humanistic orientation toward life* (p. 208) (Italics are reviewer's). Ninety per cent of the ALC clergy do not consider the Bible entirely true; only five per cent in the ALC accepts the complete truthfulness and reliability of the Scriptures. More than 75 per cent of the LCA clergy do not accept the Virgin Birth as a necessary doctrine. Nearly 33 per cent of the LCA clergy do not believe that faith in Jesus Christ is necessary for salvation. Nearly half of the ministers of the LCA, ALC and MS hold that correct conduct is more important than religious beliefs. Concerning this doctrinal change reflected in the Detroit Study, Dr. Kersten concludes: "Thus, the theological modernism which affected most other Protestant bodies early in this century apparently has now permeated Lutheranism. The fact that the trends are strongest among the clergy, usually the defenders of the faith, is very significant for the future of Lutheranism (p. 208)."

The beliefs of laymen and clergy of the ALC are somewhat more conservative than those of the LCA but close cooperation between these two bodies has resulted in the former becoming more liberal than it was some years ago. The LCA has been involved in non-Lutheran Protestant commitments for many years. The ALC is heading in the same direction, thus favoring extensive ecumenical involvements. A theology of social reform and humanism is replacing the traditional purpose of saving people for the next life.

Although at present the Lutheran MS church is still strongly conservative, the younger clergy show trends that reflect a liberal and humanistic attitude toward religion and ethics. Dr. Kersten predicts (p. 211) that within twenty years there will be a merger of the MS church with the liberal churches of Lutheranism.

The Wisconsin Synod which is comparatively much smaller than the other three Lutheran groups is strongly conservative and shows that Biblical orthodoxy is not dead. There is no indication in this church body that laity and clergy are changing in their religious attitudes. The WS church is characterized by three features: 1. Its leaders know what the goals of the church should be; 2. Compared with the other Lutheran bodies the laity has a greater consensus on beliefs and practices; and 3. the clergy are unanimous in their theological beliefs.

Dr. Kersten envisions a split in the MS and a realignment of conservative Lutherans which will be opposed by a numerically much larger group of liberal Lutherans where the differences in theology and action will be so great as to be apparent to any intelligent person. The Michigan professor claims that liberal theological beliefs result in a general erosion of all forms of religious commitment. The liberal LCA and ALC members are less inclined to become involved with church programs. In the exercise of individual religious practices, liberally-minded laymen ranked lower and were less informed about Biblical teachings than conservative members of the MS and WS Lutherans. Individuals belonging to the WS and MS churches

contributed more to the financial support of the church than LCA and ALC members.

It is Dr. Kersten's contention that as a result of the growth of theological liberalism, the Lutheran Churches in America may face some very serious problems in years ahead. As modernism takes over, traditional forms of religious commitment are being surrendered. Attending church, working for missions, participating in evangelistic efforts and becoming involved in programs of religious education will be considered unimportant. As a result of this diminishing interest in these matters, the financial support of the church and its programs will suffer seriously. The very existence of the church as an institution will be endangered as humanism increases and religion becomes merely an individual concern. It is quite possible that in America there may be a duplication of the situation obtaining in Europe where only about 10 per cent of the people have any institutional church involvement.

Schism between Clergy and Laity

The Detroit Study shows great differences between theological liberal and conservative Lutheran pastors. Liberalism is greater among the clergy than among the laity in the four church groups. The goal of the liberal theology is the reformation of society, both by direct and indirect means. Many liberal theologians have relinquished the idea that the main reason for the existence of the church is the salvation of the members of society. The new liberal Lutheran theology is not giving comfort and consolation to its lay church members. Liberally oriented clergy also take a more liberal stance on social issues than do the conservative clergy.

The Reviewer's Observations

The reviewer has presented the findings and inferences of Dr. Kersten. The data of this study will be differently received and interpreted. Some of the assumptions that Dr. Kersten has adopted will be challenged by readers of his book. For instance, the fact that conservative Lutherans do not accept theistic or atheistic biological evolution does not mean that Christians who accept the Biblical account of creation are opposed to science. There is a difference between true science and the speculations of scientists. The very fact that evolution is called a theory indicates that it has not been scientifically proven. Dr. Kersten has made some assumptions as to how religion properly and effectively functions in society and what, according to his way of thinking, establishes standards by which to judge certain aspects of Lutheranism.

Dr. Kersten has correctly pointed out major and significant differences between theological liberalism and a religious ideology that (1) accepts the entire Bible as God's inspired Word; (2) believes in the intervention of God in history; (3) holds that nothing happens without God's awareness or permission; (4) does not reject the supernatural; (5) portrays faith in Christ Jesus necessary for salvation; (6) believes in the reality and culpability of sin; (7) teaches that

all men are responsible for their actions and that there will be a final judgment; and, (8) there is a hereafter, with people either spending eternity in fellowship with the Triune God or banished from Him forever in hell.

The Detroit Study points up the fact that the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod is not characterized by the same unity of belief it once had and that polarization has occurred. Furthermore, if the type of education that many of its younger clergy are receiving continues, it will only be a matter of time when the true ethic of Lutheranism will have been supplanted by a Christless religion and true historic Lutheranism will cease to exist. This situation that has developed and which continues to develop cannot be resolved by ignoring the actual facts. No Hegelian synthesis is possible whereby as a result of two clashing points of view, a synthesis will emerge that will prove acceptable to all who claim to be Lutheran. Modernism is a rejection of every fundamental Biblical doctrine and its tolerance can only result in the substitution of a man-made religion for God's teachings. Theological liberalism devoid of a message of hope ultimately deprives even life on this earth of real meaning and purpose.