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The Frankfurt Consultation did not, of course, solve the problem of "humanity" for Christian ethics. Perhaps if there had been more time, the results might have been refined and brought together more fully. As the groups reported a second and final time to the Con-

sultation as a whole there was vigorous debate on this or that point, so that one should not look on these quite diverse reports in any way as a consensus. They will accomplish their purpose, however, if they prod us further on the "quest for true humanity".

WALTER H. CAPPS

The Meaning of Secular, Secularism, and Secularization

In conjunction with the LWF Commission on Theology study theme, "The Quest for True Humanity and the Lordship of Christ", the USA National Committee of the Lutheran World Federation in 1966 organized a series of study groups on sub-topics of the same theme. Four area groups, comprising some fifty American Lutheran theologians, each met from four to seven times over a period of two years. Their geographical areas and study themes were as follows:

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|------------------------|--|
| 1. Philadelphia Area: | "The Scope of the Lordship of Christ" |
| 2. Chicago Area: | "Jesus Christ and the Future of Humanity" |
| 3. Minneapolis Area: | "What is True Humanity?" |
| 4. San Francisco Area: | "The Meaning of Secular, Secularism, and Secularization" |

The following report written by Professor Walter H. Capps of the Department of Religious Studies, University of California at Santa Barbara, reflects on the course of the discussion of the San Francisco area group. Their study program was structured so that they might explore the ways in which the idea of the "secular" might be understood in order to determine the significance which the varying emphases might have for the church in its mission to contemporary society.

Several of the papers given at this group will be published in the fall of 1969 under the title "Christian Hope . . . and the Secular", edited by Daniel Martensen, Augsburg Publishing House, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

The several papers which were read in the course of the study group's endeavors, provided opportunity to view the phenomena called "secularization" and "secularism" from several different vantage points. One paper, for example, focused on the emergence of the "secular" in the nineteenth century, with particular reference to its appearance and treatment in the writings of Karl Marx. Another author reached back much further into history when he traced the status given to the *secular* by Old Testament writers and the Israelite community. At the same time, the historical reference points upon which the committee focused were not limited to the past. Another essay examined the way in which secularization was recognized by Dietrich Bonhoeffer, particularly in the observations included in his *Letters and Papers from Prison* (London: SCM Press, 1953). And the committee discussions in and around these

specific foci pushed for specifications of current—and, indeed, future—ramifications of tendencies implicit in the Old Testament, emergent in the nineteenth century, and manifest in the post World War II western world. In addition to such chronological entries were the temperamental or attitudinal vantage points by which the committee was also instructed. One paper, for example, describes the confrontation with the secular which is a part of the life of the modern Russian Orthodox community. And this endeavor to locate the secular within a religious attitude which differs in many respects from that which characterizes western Christendom, particularly nineteenth- and twentieth-century Protestantism, was followed by a face-to-face confrontation with a living "secularist" who professes to have gotten rid of any and all influences by religious attitudes in general. Hence, the committee viewed its topic by

selecting particular historical vantage points of predictable instructional ability, and then by devising other mental perspectives which promised to be able to cultivate sensitivity to attitudes which were manifestly different from those represented by the discussants. In methodological terms, the procedure was contextualistic. Meaningful historical and attitudinal contexts were established; then the attempt was made to locate the secular, and to describe its novelty and the shape of its claims, within each context.

At the same time the committee understood its task to be something other than pure objective investigation. The committee was formed to coordinate its efforts with the studies being conducted by the Lutheran World Federation's Commission on Theology. And, beyond that immediate purpose, the committee had other goals in mind. The Lutheran World Federation itself is not interested simply in pure objective investigation—not even when that investigation is directed toward its own study topics. Ultimately, the Lutheran World Federation is a service organization whose endeavors reflect needs within the church. Hence, the work of the west coast section of a Lutheran World Federation theological study committee was also conditioned by the overall objectives of the agency by which it was commissioned, and by the interests of the church under which both serve. For that reason, the objective scrutinies of historical and attitudinal contexts were conjoined with projections regarding the potential influence of the phenomena called "secularism" and "secularization" upon the seminaries and parishes of the church—and, indeed, upon the contemporary affirmations of its theologians. One member attempted to assess the influence of secularization upon worship and congregational life, and noted that the parish of the immediate present—and certainly of the expected future—will reflect a world in which all-encompassing commitments are no longer present. A seminary professor proposed the kind of innovations which appear appropriate in theological education when the process of secularization nullifies the propriety and applicability of traditional "scholastic" and "monastic" patterns of immunization. One author attempted the monumental task of assessing the extent of secularist influence upon the contemporary usefulness of normative Lutheran theological statements—not least among which is the doctrine of "justification by grace through faith". Each touchstone—the parish, the seminary, the church's theology—provided provocative opportunity to sharpen awareness regarding the reality of "the secular" as well as its almost pervasive pres-

ence within traditional preoccupations of Lutheranism. The committee's decision made it apparent that the phenomena called "secularism" and "secularization" are no mean innovative trifles but rather carry the potential force of being able to require that the fundamental bases of the institutional expression of the "Lutheran faith" be reconstituted.

The methodological focus of the committee was twofold. On the one hand, it attempted to work within some of the prominent (and to treat some of the important) contexts within which the secular registers. Such contexts were established on the basis of chronological sequences and attitudinal differences. And, on the other hand, it tried to keep perpetual interest in the aspects of the topic which were of most apparent concern to the church body under whose auspices the committee was called together. These aspects were determined by reference to the several contexts within which the activities of the church are conducted. Throughout the discussion an attempt was made to differentiate the two foci, yet to keep them together and in reciprocal influence.

As a result, the conclusions to which the committee came fall within two broad categories. The first has reference to the theoretical significance of the emergence of the secular. The second pertains to specific aspects of that phenomena which appear to have direct bearing upon established customs and patterns of the church's existence. The difference between the first and the second, however, is not the difference between theory and practice. Nor does the first represent some speculative or ideal preoccupation to which the second stands as a mere realistic instantiation. On the contrary, theory and practice are implicit in both categories. Both categories, in turn, represent endeavors which are both speculative and realistic. The difference between the two categories, then, refers to degrees of directness to issues which the church faces. In the second instance, the directness is maximal: the category is devised by means and in terms of precise interests to the church. In the first instance, the directness is more devious: the category can be better accounted for on grounds to which the interests of the church are subordinant.

In the first instance, for example, the group discovered that the ideological question looms large. Secularization, that is, has reference to some kind of ideological innovation within an established "religious" apprehension of human experience in the world. It implies that a world-view is in the process of change, and that men are employing new and differ-

ent schemes of reference by which to secure their aims, assertions, theories, interests, and corporate visions. In one paper, for example, it was suggested that insight can be gained into what Bonhoeffer refers to as "the world come of age" if one utilizes Erik H. Erikson's "identity crisis" as an index into some of the ingredients of that widespread religious and cultural alienation which secularization implies. The alienation is created, at least in part, by the incapacity of a traditional ideology—the one "secularization" is in process of discrediting—to supply the interpretative canons in terms of which contemporary experience can be settled.

At one time, apparently, a particular ideology served both faith and culture effectively. Men could refer to it when they sought to give meaning and direction to their individual and corporate undertakings. The committee called this ideology "theism"—that systematic view of things which requires God as ultimate reference and necessary explanation. The process of secularization, however, has challenged the capabilities of the theistic frame of reference, and, as a result, has inserted a vacuum in place of a previous meaning schema. The vacuum testifies to the depth of alienation: there is no longer any overriding hypothesis nor any all-encompassing categorical system to which religious affirmations can attach themselves to inspire a sense of harmony between the several worlds in man's experience. Without that totalizing frame of reference there is also no overarching conceptualizable basis on which to ground man's confidence. The retention of religious references by a sort of natural or logical entailment is no longer necessary nor possible.

The group was agreed: the affect of secularization is to so severely qualify the influence of traditional theism that that meaning schema is no longer operable as a systematic or comprehensive frame of reference. Traditional theism, that is to say, builds upon hypotheses which are not only contestable, but which, because of a lost interest, have fallen by default into disuse. The significance of the theistic interpretation, by all manner of measure, belongs to an age which is past. There is no conceivable way of reconstituting its basis. The conditions which it requires have passed into oblivion. What makes that closed situation even more definite is the growing awareness that even were these previous conditions resurrectable there would be insufficient strength to engage in reconstruction by virtue of a pervasive and profound—but very definite—lack of interest. As Jacques Barzun has noted, "there comes a time for all systems when the ideas, and more especially the lingo,

cease bubbling and taste flat." (Jacques Barzun, *Darwin, Marx, Wagner*, New York: Doubleday, 1958, p. xii).

Hence, religious stances and theological positions which depend upon traditional theistic frameworks are also doomed to oblivion by the process of secularization. This, the group noted, would include most instances of what has been referred to as "Protestant Scholasticism"—the theistically-modelled systems of seventeenth-century Lutheranism, and the varieties of their successors in "neo-orthodoxy" which extend even into our own era. All such forms of "scholasticism" are challenged by the mood which refuses to certify all-encompassing commitments and is unable to take seriously any systematic portrayal of "the nature of things". By association, all educational, doctrinal and catechetical formats which build upon such "scholastic" bases are also profoundly inapt. For "scholasticism"—and what Krister Stendahl refers to as the "metaphysics-in-a-God-key"—reflects an intention toward unifying the several worlds of human experience by specifying their interrelationships, and, more fundamentally, by regulating the values which pertain thereto. The secularist mood will not admit such regimentation, nor can it tolerate any hierarchization of objects of value. Protestant and Catholic variations of such subordinationist schemes are threatened by the mood. But, as the committee also noted, there are other vantage points within both Catholic and Protestant and Protestant theologies which are not so threatened. (See the discussion of this subject by Paul Holmer, "Atheism and Theism: A Comment on an Academic Prejudice", in *Lutheran World*, Vol. XII, No. 1, 1966, pp. 14-25.)

The writings of Martin Luther, for example, seem to be consciously independent of the theistic frame even though they reflect what one might call a theistic temper. Within them belief in God is affirmed; at the same time it would be inappropriate to conceive that God as a hypothesis necessary to the explanation of the world. In the same way, patterns of correlation between fields of endeavor are specified in Luther's writings: distinctions are drawn between the activities of faith and reason, for example, and similarities between such activities are also suggested. Yet, at no place does Luther undertake to provide some religiously-authorized schema regarding the place of each ingredient within the totality of things. Nor does he construct the occasion for referring to the theologian to supply the canons of ultimate explanation. Luther's theology can be construed independently of the theistic frame of reference. And, as one of the papers illustrates, so also is systematic theism absent from

the perspectives of the Old Testament writers. Its appearance comes as a relatively late intrusion, and, in no sense, as part of the original. Nevertheless, that intrusion has been pervasive. Hence, the destructive abilities of the process of secularization are widespread and profound. The formal religious stances and theological positions which fall in the wake of that process are numerous. And traditional Lutheran theology—whatever that means—is not exactly in a privileged or sheltered position.

But the ideological issue is not exhausted by a specification of the sphere of influence of the secularistic incursion. It would not be enough to simply spot the kinds of religious mentalities and theological positions which, *mutatis mutandis*, are able to survive the austerity measures the secularist process imposes. In addition, one must approach "secularism" and "secularization" directly, and ask whether these are mere instances of some larger phenomenon, i.e., the perpetual shift in the working conceptual apparatus by which human beings interpret events and experience. Ideological innovation has always characterized religious mentality and theological positioning. No meaning scheme which has remained static has long survived. Novelty and change appear to be the rule rather than the exception where the formulation of religious and theological awareness are concerned. To put it succinctly: is "secularism" simply the present expression or crystallization of a process which is as old as man's recorded reflective history, i.e., the process of transition in ideological composition? Will it then happen that "secularism" will be succeeded by another product of that process—and in the same way that "secularism" was successor to a previous "ism"? If this be the case, then the theologians of the church should be wary of reconstructing the entirety of their affirmations—or at least those which are susceptible to transposition into the new age—by means of language and thought forms which the secular mood can sustain. They should be aware that they are embarking upon a process which will have to be repeated, and that their own efforts will require superseding as soon as the current "ism" builds up sufficient reaction to spawn its successor. In this light, the theological endeavor can never be more than a temporary undertaking. Always its tentative conclusions fall under conditions inherent in the extent to which they can be sustained by the prevailing "ismic" view. While some theologians may find adventure in this constantly shifting terrain, they must also come to realize that the product of such perpetual relativity is eventual self-defeat. In short, if secularism is simply an instance of a

recurrent phenomenon, then possibly it can be ridden out without having to be taken with utmost seriousness. Since its inception theology has survived subsequent instances of the same occurrence; while secularism possesses features which are particularly troublesome, when relativized, they are no longer devastating. If "secularism" and "secularization" are interpreted in this way, they can no doubt be weathered and eventually withstood—perhaps not so much by a theological victory as by the relentless character of that ongoing ideological process. Inevitably, according to this view, secularism will be followed by something else.

But, on the other hand, it may be the case that the seriousness with which secularism is being taken reflects a distinct rupture—and not simply an additional moment—in the ideological process. The committee entertained this possibility, especially in the discussion which followed the presentation of a paper on the influence of Marxism in the secularization of the west. From a Marxist perspective "secularism" may be regarded not as a late occurrence in a particular growth pattern, but, rather, as the fruition of that pattern: the manifestation of maturity. The question of dialectical inevitability is paramount in this regard as is the referral of the issues of "secularism and secularization" to the issue about mankind's ultimate future. The committee recalled that the contemporary German theologian (and frequent participant in dialog with Marxist theorists) Johannes B. Metz, of the University of Münster, distinguishes the Christian's attitude toward the future from the Marxist's by contrasting the agnosticism of the first to the alleged foreknowledge of the second. Metz contends that what differentiates Christian hope is not that it knows more about the future than others, but, precisely, that it knows less. By virtue of its being Christian, it does not possess the ability to de-mystify the future—again, as a certain dependence upon Marxist dialectic might insure. The only access the Christian has to the future is that knowledge which accompanies love of the brother—as John I puts it: "we know because we love the brethren". The interpretations of the theology of hope, the Marxist sensitivity to the secular, the new situation with regard to utopian preoccupation in the world—all of these make the question about whether secularism is an instance within a process, or, on the other hand, the end result of a long-lived process, a vital one.

At this point the group's conversation referred to the comments of another theologian-of-hope, Jürgen Moltmann, who has lectured

recently on his impressions of the results of the Christian-Marxist dialogs in Europe. Professor Moltmann made reference to a Paris newspaper reporter who, after having witnessed a recent conversation between Marxist theorists and Christian theologians, commented that the discussion appeared similar to him to that which goes on between two old maiden aunts. There is apparent vivid animation, but nothing very lively to report to anyone who is not involved in the conversation. Upon reflecting upon that sort of reaction to a discussion in which he had vigorously participated, Moltmann noted that both Christianity and Marxism are minority positions in Europe—especially by contrast to that large “third force” which is insensitive to both because it has self-consciously refused to be victimized by any sloganizing religious, philosophical, or political positions. It will not choose between possible answers because it is resolutely unwilling to look for “answers”. It possesses no potential devotees of any philosophical or religious school because it cannot regard “school” as something to which one should be obligated. In light of this, the committee asked: perhaps secularism then reflects the emergence and prevalence of the “third force”. Perhaps its rejection of traditional theism is a refinement of the third-force tendency to banish slogans, and to be released from a feeling of obligation to or dependence upon all-encompassive categorical frames of reference. Perhaps secularism implies the rooting of values in ways which have de-sensitized themselves to hierarchical order. Perhaps in the secular age the banishment of the “God hypothesis” has greater bearing on the second of these two terms than it does on the first. Perhaps the stress should be laid on “hypothesis” and not on “God”. Perhaps the phenomenon secularism depicts is only secondarily religious, but, as is the case with all ideological innovations, influences religion because of the strictures it places upon all previous modes of thought and activity. If this be the case, then secularism is indeed new. But its novelty has reference to an innovation which is not simply a shift in kind, but rather a total shift in mood. With secularism one has come to the end of a line. But secularism is the kind of phenomenon which is unable to restore the line, and incapable of summing it up. In short, the uniqueness of secularism is implicit in the fact that secularism is not itself an “ism”, and has rejected the categories by which all “isms” register. Christianity no longer has a bearing because no place can be found for it. Its previous role has not been rejected, but, rather, from the secularist’s position, only transcended.

Hence, the committee wrestled with the possibility of religious stances within a “third-force” context—a form of religious sensitivity or action which not only survives the strictures placed upon slogans but also lives within an atmosphere in which such frames of reference bear no influence. The participants wondered about the conditions for Christianity which may be present when the traditional ones have seemingly been transcended. And it was on this basis that the second general area of conversation was introduced, i.e., the particular affect of the process of secularization upon interests fundamental to the Lutheran church. One paper proposed that theology be construed as celebration of the secular, and that theological education be reconstructed so as to accord the same honor to nature which heretofore has been directed to supernature. This stance, i.e., the celebration of the natural vis-a-vis the celebration of the supernatural, contains the possibility of re-establishing the purpose of seminary education. According to the author of the paper, the function of the ministry is to affirm the true meaning of the world. And, in much the same way, the intention of dogma is to affirm what God says about this world. Hence, while this naturalization of the ministerial role tends to mitigate the mystique which is often attributed to the ordained, it does not imply a watering-down of the priestly office. On the contrary, one man’s contention that the world is God’s sacrament is in keeping, he argued, with Luther’s insistence that the sacramental element lies “in, with, and under” the natural, and not “above” it. The tone of these recommendations reflects an attempt to let the world be the world. In that light, the function of seminary education is not the inculcation of techniques by means of which to make men feel guilty about being human, but rather the critical sensibilities by which all things human can be celebrated by virtue of the fact that they are human. Behind this proposal is a recognition of a shift: the seminary will no longer be called upon to transmit theological systems whose connection with things as they are is only tenuous. More pointedly, the starting point for theological education is not God, but world. As was noted, theology is about man. One could add, the church is about world.

In much the same way, the secularist incursion has had—and will have—a profound affect upon parish self-consciousness. One member of the group outlined some of the ingredients of the recent shift. In the secularized congregation, for example, religion is not looked to to give overarching meaning to men involved in vocational occupations whose technical scope and subtle nuances defy traditional “theistic” comprehension. Nor can one

assume that the minister within a secularized congregation is the theological expert: many members of his congregation will possess more expert education in religion, theology, and related fields. In the same way, the secularized congregation is no longer monolithic, and no longer homogeneous. Hence, it is characterized by its tolerance of different patterns of behavior and various syndromes of belief. The gospel, which it fosters is not put forth as a formula—or a slogan—to be accepted. Rather, all of its functions and the truths by which it stands serve to bring man to maturity, to effect the realization of the new being promised in the gospel of Jesus Christ. As in the case of theology, the local church is about man. And the effect of secularization upon the life and worship of that local congregation has reference to a new sensitivity regarding the gospel's resourcefulness in bringing man to human maturity.

A very knotty related issue came to focus. Talk about seminary education and the worship life of congregations can be innovatingly exciting since the proposals which make up such talk usually have reference to the future. But where the theological tradition is concerned, there is no complete overcoming of a rather fixed and immalleable past. Noting that "trust in the mercy of God" is a sixteenth-century phrase whose sustainability in the present age is not simply to be presumed, the attention of the committee was focused on some of the rudiments of "Lutheranism's dialog with Luther". The committee noted that many of the characteristics of a particular age belong to the particularities of that age, and are left behind when that age is succeeded by another. There is nothing sacrosanct, necessarily, about the sixteenth century—nothing which can safeguard it from the temporalizing processes which relativize the products of any particular age. Hence, Luther neither belongs nor can he be transported into the twentieth-century simply by virtue of the fact that he is Luther. But, at the same time, Luther bears a relevance for twentieth-century Lutherans (and Christians) which surpasses any basis of exact correlation between the two eras. To put it baldly: Luther is part of—and party to—twentieth-century Lutheranism even if the questions raised today do not yield to Reformation clarification. In the same way, "justification by grace through faith" is a component of twentieth-century Lutheranism even if the situation it addressed in the sixteenth-century is not exactly reproducible in the modern world. The ties between the two centuries are definite even when such continuities are lacking. For Luther's influence is not necessarily of a theoretical—even theological—kind. It is entirely conceivable that

the secular occurrence implies an almost complete discrepancy between Luther's questions and our answers. Theoretically, this is profoundly troublesome. Practically, in terms of sustained influence, its significance is not as great. As a matter of fact, Luther's historic, originative role has assured his place within the tradition which he founded. Within that tradition he will always serve as a cultic figure. Indeed, the lively discussion of *justification* by the Lutheran World Federation in Helsinki, 1963 (see "Justification Today, Studies and Reports", in *Lutheran World*, Supplement to No. 1, 1965) is witness not to the irrelevancy but to the present influence of Luther's thought—even though that influence's extent has not been precisely determined nor its mode distinguished. Obviously, the role Luther played in the Reformation cannot be the role that he assumes today—in the same way that Moses takes on a different cultic function in the subsequent generations of those who live after an accomplished exodus. Nevertheless, while his role is different, his presence in the twentieth century is assured—and in much the same way that the influence of a father stays with his children almost regardless of their intentions or desires to structure it otherwise. The real question facing Lutherans in the twentieth century, then, is not whether "justification by faith" can be reformulated in the current idiom or in terms of the current problematic. But, in the secular age, the question is rather: are the traditions which Lutherans bear resourceful? Are they sufficiently resourceful to establish freedom and to certify both personal and corporate integrity? But these are religious questions, fundamentally, and cannot be satisfied by theological answers. Hence, they are only awkwardly approached via attempts to establish theological rapport between the statements of the author of a living tradition and what twentieth-century Lutherans (and Christians) find it necessary to say.

The committee concluded its discussion by noting that it had only begun to prepare itself for the issues which the new age brings. The committee would be the first to acknowledge that its accomplishments are almost negligible, and that they register perhaps only—if they register at all—in the realm of an awakened sensitivity to a new occurrence. Of one thing they are sure: the secular age like all previous ages provides opportunities which have not been present before. One other thing they suspect: the secular age is different from all previous ages, and provides challenges, threats, and hints of dissolution which have not been present before. Some of the features which belonged to an earlier age are

incapable of making the transition to the situation which now pertains. Some of the characteristics of the secular were born with the appearance of this age. Hence, whoever embraces the secular age—indeed, whoever feels moved to celebrate its advent—does so in the awareness that certain resources of traditional celebration have been cut off—and by the very event which is being celebrated.

Postscript

Finally, with respect to the elusiveness of "secularism and secularization"—I began my remarks of a year-and-a-half ago with the suggestion that the term "secular" belonged to a bipolar (sacred-secular) context, apart from which it had no referents. I argued that "secular" is a meaningful term only within or in relation to that context. I proposed two possibilities for understanding the occurrence of *secularism*: 1) that secularism implies an inversion within the sacred-secular bipolarity which finds the two polar terms exchanging logical functions, so that "secular" assumes the role of the principle of determination; or 2) that secularism denotes a dissolution of the entire bipolar context by virtue of a major and thorough transition to a pre- and/or post-polar framework. What I have learned through the discussions is that the connector between these two possibilities is not an *or* but an *and*. Both of them are true. Secularism testifies to both occurrences. It denotes a shift within the bipolar context which, at the same time, is able to retain bipolarity; and, it reflects a manifest rupture of bipolarity. These twin occurrences are the basis of its elusiveness. Secularism implies both kinds of shift.

In addition, the influence of secularism upon theology is not necessarily the same, therefore, as its influences upon the church. Since secularism implies twin occurrences, it may well be that the first registers in theology while the impact of the second is felt within the church. For its part, theology appears able to tolerate "secularization". It has done it many times before. In fact, it feeds on the very bipolar relation to which the secular stands as a necessary constituent. Theological patterns can comprehend the secular by virtue of the interdependence of secular and sacred. The two polar terms are reciprocally and dialectically related. Even the author of *The Secular City*, we note, now seems ready to suggest that the event whose stress his book celebrated has since created an imbalance which can be remedied only by a new

emphasis upon the reality and distinctiveness of the sacred. Christian theology can tolerate the secular: its basic form requires a perpetual dialectical relation between "sacred" and "secular"—as well as between God and the world. This means that each of these polar terms must become the vantage point, from time to time, through which the other is seen. Theological affirmations can begin from either side. Indeed, both sides and both vantage points are necessary if the terms "sacred" and "secular" are in dialectical relationship.

But the situation with the church is different. The church is not a mere theological component, not even some necessary ingredient within theological thought. The church is a social reality: neither a theoretical phenomenon nor a product of an ideology, but a social and political agency. As a cultural reality the church belongs to a context within which the influences of secularization assume different form from that displayed within the environment of theological dialectics. More precisely, the life of the church is caught up in a social milieu where secularization means not simply a shift in dialectical emphasis, but a transfer—and resultant loss—of role. The secular occurrence implies that the function the church once had with respect to the world has been displaced. To maintain the role which could be assumed in pre-secular days the church would need to have the support of a God-world determination. But when that relation is inverted—when the sacred is viewed via the secular, and the world is regarded as the starting point—then the situation is different. It is too simple to say that the shift implicit in secularization is a movement away from some churchly mandate regarding the ordering of culture toward mere inclusion of the church alongside all the other organisms which make up the socio-political milieu. But the shift certainly signifies that the authority of the church in matters cultural or religious has been modified.

Formerly the *church-world* relationship allowed the church to be conceived as *God's* agency in the world: the locus of the divine presence in the world. Now, the *world-church* polarity seems to imply that the church be construed not as divine but as human agency: the locus of the human vis-a-vis God, the topos where man is present. Earlier the format for the church's role in the world could be read from its theological patterns. But when the shift occurs, when "world" is the starting point, then the blueprint is more difficult to compose: the ingredients of its design

must be taken from the socio-political complex to which the church belongs.

In the long run this may mean that the religion of the church will become a cultic—and not a cultural—phenomenon. It may also lead to a religious stance without support of a theological interpretation of culture. Ultimately, as

a kind of unexpected byproduct, it may also set the foreground for a new sensitivity to the dynamics of first-century Christian affirmation. And if this be the case, the theme of the forthcoming LWF Assembly—Sent into the World—especially when referred to the world of third forces, is even more provocative than it at first appears.

RUTH FREY

The Uppsala Assembly—A Response to Bishop Lønning

Miss Ruth Frey, a member of the Lutheran Church in America and a U.S. History teacher in a secondary school in Maryland, was a youth participant at the WCC Assembly at Uppsala, 1968.

It is not without a certain degree of trepidation that I have accepted the invitation of *Lutheran World/Lutherische Rundschau* to write this personal evaluation of the Fourth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, in part as a response to Bishop Per Lønning's evaluation which appeared in the January 1969 issue. My trepidation (although admittedly possible grounds for expulsion from the under-thirty generation) stems simply from the obvious distance between my own qualifications as an Uppsala observer and those of Bishop Lønning—as well as, no doubt, those of my readers. Nevertheless, in at least three areas I do have rather different views of what went on at the Assembly, which hopefully will be of interest.

First, the question of manipulation. At the outset of his article, Bishop Lønning makes a considerable case for the manipulation of the youth delegation by a radical minority. Although this is undoubtedly true to some extent, from my vantage point it is an oversimplification, and one which can lead to some especially unhappy results in our present climate of student activism at that.

Ironically, as an example of manipulation Bishop Lønning mentions the statement "On Behalf of Youth Participants", presented to the full Assembly and referred by its action to the Central Committee, the Committee on Re-Examination of WCC Structure, and the Committee on Youth Ministries, claiming that it was "a private statement by a minority of [the youth participants]".¹ As I recall, this document was drafted by the youth steering

committee, consisting of two members from each continent elected by a plenary of all official youth participants, and was debated and revised at length in at least two open meetings which all youth were urged to attend. I attended one of these meetings, and though not large, it definitely heard and responded to very different points of view. From this and from numerous conversations with fellow youth participants, I would therefore conclude that the statement "On Behalf of Youth Participants", the final youth pronouncement and the only one to be mentioned in the official Uppsala report, was not only produced by as democratic a method as perhaps could be expected under Assembly conditions, but was also substantively supported by the majority of youth present.

On the other hand, when several less widely debated statements written by specific interest groups (e.g. one on Assembly tactics from the continental Europeans) were presented to youth plenaries for approval they were rejected on grounds of being attempts to impose a minority's will on the majority. Furthermore, the youth steering committee tried hard, though certainly with incomplete success, to see that all youth statements to the press were cleared through it and properly identified as either personal views or positions officially adopted by the youth as a group. All of this suggests that youth were not always manipulated in Uppsala, and further, that they were capable of recognizing and combatting manipulation when it did occur.

A second, and for me a more serious difficulty with Bishop Lønning's evaluation of the Fourth Assembly's youth participation is his statement that manipulation was "something

¹ *Lutheran World*, Vol. XVI, No. 1, 1969, p. 57.