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1965 — THE CHURCH IN SWITZERLAND IN RETROSPECT

There are 877 million Christians in the world, nearly 30% of the earth's population: 500 mio are Roman Catholics, 256 mio Protestants, 121 mio other Christians. 13 millions of the world's population are Jews, 427 mio Moslems, 380 mio Hindus, 300 mio Confucians, 190 mio Buddhists, 180 mio Taoists, Animists and other race Churches, and 591 mio others or without denominational faith.

After the Reformation, the Churches remained in determined isolation. Since the first world war, the tendency to meet has crystallized more and more. It has become clear that all Christians, whatever their denomination, are in the same boat which is threatened by the waves of atheism, materialism and secularism. The non-Roman Catholic Churches created the Ecumenical Council in 1948 in Amsterdam. Today, 214 Churches from all parts of the world belong to it. The R.C. Church took a sceptical attitude towards the movement. But by the creation of a Vatican Secretariat for Unity by the late Pope John XXIII and above all during the recently ended Vatican Council, a new situation has arisen. Even at the Vatican Council the desire to stress the unifying rather than the dividing forces has become apparent. It is indeed a great event that through the Communal Working Party contact has now been directly established between the Ecumenical Council and the R.C. Church. The first working party met at the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey, Geneva, in May. Interdenominational meetings have taken place and excellent work has been done in Switzerland as elsewhere. At Einsiedeln, an international meeting of university graduates took place. The Evangelical and Roman Catholic Mission Councils have met and even called common press conferences. At Commune level, interdenominational talks and prayer meetings have been held.

Eighty missionary institutions belong to the Swiss R.C. Mission Council. In November, the delegates met for their General Assembly. One of the meetings was given over to interdenominational discussions with Protestant Mission personalities.

At the initiative of University professors, a Swiss Theological Association was founded in November. Its objects are theological research. Prof. J. L. Leuba, Neuchâtel, is its President.

At Christmas, all Churches in the French-speaking part of Switzerland united again for a common Christmas campaign.

This does not signify any change in faith. The demarcation line is clear. Christian tolerance, it says in a brochure issued by the Church Council of Zurich "Standort und Auftrag der Evangelisch-Reformierten Landeskirche", is not the same as indifference, but means respect for the freedom of the next man and serious acceptance of the convictions of faith.

Swiss Protestantism consists of a number of Churches whose boundaries are those of the Cantons. In the Federation of Churches founded in 1920, are the Cantonal Churches, the *diaspora* and Free Churches and "other faith groups organised on a Church basis and adhering to the Reformation". Its organisation is similar to the old Federal State and the Federation's Delegates' Meeting is comparable to the old Diet.

The Delegates' Meeting of 1965 took place in Winterthur. It showed that the Church had grown stronger inspite of "Kantönligeist" ever in evidence. One of the important fields of activities is the spiritual and material

support of the Swiss Churches abroad. There are six in Italy, two in France, one in Barcelona, four in Africa, four in South America and the Swiss Church in London with its two communities.

With its recruiting campaign for nursing staff, the Federation wanted to make a special contribution to sick people in need.

A second campaign "Bread for Brethren" to relieve suffering in developing countries has been started. At the end of the year, nearly three million francs had already been collected, two million alone in the Canton of Zurich.

The preparatory work for an international Protestant radio transmitter has been going on. The Federal Council had agreed in 1964 that such a transmitter was to be built in Switzerland. At a conference at Rueschlikon at which 90 delegates from the most important Churches in Europe were present, a commission was appointed to study the question further.

The problem of the conscientious objector to military service has also been studied, and a report was published.

An unexpected legacy by an American was a welcome contribution to the Federation's funds. The Evangelical Church in the Canton of Fribourg received a substantial sum to cover its deficit. It still has to support its own schools. This is in contradiction to Art. 27 of the Federal Constitution in which it says that all public schools may be attended by members of all denominations and without infringement on their faith and conscience.

One of the most commendable works of the Federation is HEKS (Hilfswerk der Evangelischen Kirchen der Schweiz). In 1965 it completed 20 years during which much good has been done in Europe, Asia and Africa. It contributes to the assistance scheme for developing countries. HEKS supports the Nettur Technical Training Foundation in Southern India. On 9th April it opened a meeting centre in Kyoto, Japan. The Protestant schools of the Kongo, supported by HEKS, are of the most important in that country thanks to highly qualified staff.

Mission work has again been an important part of the Churches' work. The Basle Mission celebrated its 150th anniversary in June. There is a lack of missionaries as well as of Ministers. A special course in Berne helped to reduce the lack. Several of the Cantonal Churches now have women Ministers.

In the two R.C. Cantons Lucerne and Ticino, there should soon be a cantonal Church organisation for the Protestant minorities.

In the Canton of Vaud the feud between the Eglise Libre and the Eglise Nationale, which has been going on for over 20 years, has been buried, and in a plebiscite the electorate accepted a fusion.

The "Young Church" in Switzerland, too, was active in 1965. Two hundred delegates met at Zofingen in September, representing over 9,000 members from 525 "Young Church" groups. An ecumenical work camp was organised at Vennes (Vaud). Twenty young people from all over the world gathered to renovate the medical centre for difficult children. The camps, some forty of them, were organised by the Ecumenical Council of Churches. In 1965, the Council moved into a new centre in Geneva.

A Zurich clergyman, Pfr. J. W. Hollenweger, was appointed Executive Secretary of the Ecumenical Council.

In June it was 550 years since Johannes Hus was burnt at the stake in Constance. In October, it was 400 years since the death of Guillaume Farel, the French Reformer who carried out Reformation in Neuchâtel and Geneva.

One of the most important events for the Swiss Roman Catholics in 1965 was the creation of a Swiss Cardinal, Mgr. Prof. Dr. theol. h.c. Charles-Joseph Journet. Abbé Journet was born on 26th January 1891 in Geneva, a citizen of Vernier. In 1917, he was ordained in Fribourg. He has been a Professor at the Priests' Seminary in Fribourg. He is also an author of repute, especially of "L'église du verbe incarné" and founder of the theological paper "Nova et Vetera".

The nomination by His Holiness Pope Paul VI came as a great surprise. Only two Swiss had ever been Cardinals, the well-known Valaisan Matthäus Schiner (1511) and Gaspard Mermilliod from Geneva (1890). Cardinal Journet was received officially by the Federal Council on his return from the Vatican. The Fribourg Government also gave a reception in his honour.

Tribute was paid to Mgr. Charrière in November, when he had completed twenty years as Bishop of Lausanne. Visitors from many parts attended the Pontifical Mass and the celebrations in Fribourg.

The "Fastenopfer" collection of the Swiss R.C. communities, organised for the fourth time in 1965, amounted to 6.6 million francs. This was Fr.640,000 more than in the previous year. The "Caritas" assistance organisation also had a very active year and did much good work in many parts of the world.

In December, the Swiss R.C. Mission Bishops met in St. Gall. New terms of reference were issued.

The Church Synod of the Canton of Zurich agreed to a request by the R.C. "Bibelwerk" Stuttgart to take over the text of the Zurich Bible which goes back to Zwingli. Roman Catholics look upon it as the best non-Catholic translation.

In November, an "Ecumenical Bible" in three volumes was published. It contains comments on principles from Protestant, R.C., Orthodox and Jewish angles.

It may be interesting to note here, that a Ladin translation (Romansch of the Upper Engadine) of the Gospel according to St. Luke has been published. The work was done by Miss Domenica Messmer, editor of the "Foegl Ladin" at Samedan.

There are also thirty-six parishes in Switzerland adhering to the "Christian Catholics" faith. They have a membership of about 30,000. Their Bishop is in Berne, and the University of Berne has a C.C. faculty. There is one village in Switzerland, Moehlin (Aargau) which has a C.C. majority.

Prof. Oscar Cullmann, Protestant lecturer on the New Testament at Basle University, played an important part at the Vatican Ecumenical Council. Many of his suggestions were considered in Council texts. On 5th December, he was invited to lunch by H.H. Pope Paul, which may be looked upon as an outstanding event. The Pope presented Prof. Cullmann with a photocopy of the oldest text of the N.T., the famous *Codex B* or *Codex Vaticanus*. He was also elected to the Institute of the History of Salvation in Jerusalem.

At the invitation of the Holy See, the Federal Council decided to be represented at the closing ceremony of the Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican and appointed the former Federal Councillor Dr. Enrico Celio as Plenipotentiary Ambassador on special mission and the Swiss Ambassador in Rome to attend the ceremonies on 7th and 8th December.

In 1955, the then Councillor of States for Obwalden, the present Federal Councillor Von Moos, presented a Motion to delete the Articles 51 and 52 from the Federal Constitution, the so-called "Konfessionelle Ausnahmearikel" dealing with the prohibition of Jesuit Orders and monasteries. A report on the matter was promised. The late Federal Councillor Feldmann left the legacy to the recently retired Federal Councillor Wahlen. In Parliament, during the December Session, the latter was asked as to the progress of the preparatory work. He answered that the Zurich expert on constitutional law, Prof. Werner Kaegi, had the report ready, and the Cantons would soon be consulted. The suggestion that a so-called Article of Tolerance should be substituted has been discussed by many bodies in Switzerland. In September, a number of citizens of various political opinions and denominations formed a group to find out public opinion in this matter. In October, the Liberal Party of the Canton of Zurich organised a study group to discuss the problem. The new year should take the matter a good step further, especially as the total revision of the Federal Constitution will be discussed.

(Based on an article by "p.w." in the "Basler Nachrichten" and on news received from A.T.S.)

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