

NEWS Of the Christian World



The Netherlands

BERT STOOP

Convert to Catholicism

At the end of a Sunday evening service in the old New Church of Middleburg (Reformed), Hendrik van der Linde, the minister, ascended to the pulpit and told his astonished congregation that he had decided to join the Roman Catholic Church "for ecumenical reasons." The conversion is particularly noteworthy because of Dr. van der Linde's past record. As a young theologian he did a great deal of work for the first General Assembly of the World Council of Churches in 1948 at Amsterdam. That same year he received his doctorate on the strength of a dissertation entitled "Rome and the Una Sancta." Dr. van der Linde became an enthusiastic promoter of ecumenical unity among Protestant churches, wrote several books on ecumenical themes and became study secretary of the Netherlands National Council of Churches.

But for Dr. van der Linde the Protestant movement toward unity was too slow. He was in an ecumenical hurry, and his longing for unity could not keep pace with the laborious efforts of the World Council and its member bodies. In 1951 he resigned his national council post and took over the pastorate of the church in Middleburg. From that time on he had no active part in the ecumenical movement, though he did lecture on the subject in Roman Catholic circles. In 1956 he published a book, *The Coming Ecumenical Church*. While it received much criticism in Protestant circles, no one foresaw his recent decision. The church council of Middleburg issued a statement calling Dr. van der Linde's decision "respectable but regrettable."

War Crimes Remembered

The Dutch minister of justice announced recently that four of the most notorious of the Germans convicted of war crimes after World War II will soon be released. They are Willy Lages, former Gestapo chief in the Netherlands; Aus der Fonter, who was responsible for the deportation of 100,000 Dutch Jews who never came back; and two other S.S. officers who were in command of concentration camps. The four are among seven Germans and 42 Dutch quislings still held in prison in this country. More than

20 of them were condemned to death but had their sentences commuted to life imprisonment. A life term in the Netherlands normally works out to 20 years' imprisonment, less for those who exhibit good behavior.

Many people have protested to the government against release of the four Germans. The interdenominational *Israel-Contact* sent the minister of justice a letter asking that because of the exceptional nature of their crime—the extermination of the Jewish population and its defenders—they not be released. The letter noted that the Dutch people have for centuries made it a point of honor to provide a "real home" for the Jews, and that the ministry's action in releasing the war criminals makes it seem that the Dutch consider Jewish suffering unimportant.

At this time of the year German tourists begin their annual invasion of the Dutch countryside. Shortly before the annual commemoration of the victims of World War II on May 4, the government distributed to all customs houses near the German border leaflets requesting German tourists to respect the commemoration meetings and to stay away from places associated with atrocities committed by their compatriots . . . or themselves.

Pleasing All the People

To foreigners Dutch radio and television seem strange and rather incomprehensible. Each of the big religious and political groups has its own radio and television organization, but there are only two television channels for them to share. As a result some part of the audience is often offended by the partisan broadcasts of one or another of the groups. (The six organizations are Socialist, Gereformeerde [conservative Reformed], liberal Protestant, Roman Catholic, ecumenical and neutral.)

Recently an uproar ensued when the Socialist broadcasting corporation presented a television program featuring a well-known columnist, a kind of Thurber-ish humorist, who repeated some aphorisms coined by a Flemish writer. One of them was to the effect that God created woman, saw how badly man fared with her, and decided to remain a bachelor. The next day a woman member of parliament, a representative of the Christian-Historic party, complained to the minister of education, arts and sciences that the columnist's comments were

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Universalist- Unitarian Merger

ROBERT B. TAPP

One Candle from Two

Two candles burned on the stage of Boston's Symphony Hall May 21st, flanking a larger, unlit one. Then Philip R. Giles, general superintendent of the Universalist Church of America, and Dana M. Greeley, president of the American Unitarian Association, stepped forward and simultaneously transferred the flames to the central candle, thus symbolizing the birth of the Unitarian Universalist Association. Earlier that day delegates had overwhelmingly approved the final step in merger of the two denominations. Unitarians voted 725-141S, Universalists 1S65-65-a result far exceeding the necessary two-thirds approval. The scattered opposition in the two groups had had its say from the floor, but threats of withdrawal were few.

Thus was climaxed a century-old flirtation and 118 recent years of advisory votes, plebiscites and commissions. The two denominations had met in Syracuse last October to amend and adopt a definitive plan of "consolidation." This plan then went bad to individual churches under a rule that 60 per cent of the churches and fellowships must vote and 70 per cent of those approve. William B. Rice, chairman of the joint merger commission, reported at Boston that over 90 per cent had participated before the deadline, and that approval had been voted by 91 per cent of the Unitarians and 79 per cent of the Universalists. With such grass-roots endorsement, the Boston vote seemed hardly in doubt.

The New Church's Polity

The new Unitarian Universalist Association will not actually be created until May 1961. As of now it has 895 churches and fellowships with 156,411 legal members. Unitarians outnumber Universalists by more than 1S-1, and they will bring the major share of assets to the new body. It is an association of free churches whose congregational polity and autonomy is guaranteed. Ministers will be "called" and "ordained" by local churches, but only the association can grant "fellowship." Since pensions, status and

mobility hinge upon the latter (a Unitarian practice), highly selective standards are feasible and likely.

Over-all policies will be set by a General Assembly, meeting annually. Each settled minister will have a vote and churches will be permitted lay delegates proportional to the number of their members. This ratio decreases for very large congregations.

The major official, to be elected next May, is the president, who will serve a four-year term and can be re-elected twice. A moderator, who will serve without salary, is to be the chief presiding officer. These and other nominations must come from a special interim committee. In subsequent elections the Board of Trustees will nominate candidates for president, secretary and treasurer, and a nominating committee will recommend candidates for other posts. Additional nominations may be made by advance petition, but not from the floor. In short, the new constitution tries to avoid both a self-perpetuating dynasticism and an anarchic version of democracy.

In the Religious Spectrum

The most interesting question to many is of course the place this new denomination will hold in American religious life. Neither Universalists nor Unitarians participate in the World or National councils of churches, although in some cities and states they cooperate with affiliated bodies. Theologically, as the tides of liberalism have ebbed in recent decades, they have increasingly been visible as the "remnant vehicles" of Protestant liberalism or modernism. On the Symphony Hall stage historic pulpits—those of William Ellery Channing and Hosea Ballou—had been placed. A special centennial service honoring Theodore Parker put Faneuil Hall into use again the evening of May 24.

It would be quite inaccurate to see the churches of this new association as simply preserving the modernism of the 1920s; to do so would be to overlook a left wing that shades off almost imperceptibly into nontheistic humanism and Ethical Culture, and a right wing of various neoliberals and Tillicians. Within this numerically small denomination is probably to be perceived the greatest diversity that has ever sought and claimed to have found common religious experiences.

Constitutionally, this new body does not require any minister, church or member to subscribe to "any particular interpretation of religion" or "any particular religious belief or creed." Actually, it does have a tradition, and it will continue to attract and involve those persons who understand and endorse that tradition in all its changing manifestations.

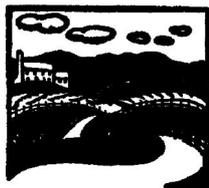
Spirit and Goal

Pointing toward such a future was the sermon at the joint worship service cele-

brating the consolidation. Donald Harrington, minister of New York's Community Church, hailed a "new world faith" which he sees taking its place on this continent alongside Protestantism, Catholicism and Judaism. Recognizing parallel tendencies in other cultures, he declared that "little heresies" have now been transformed and can speak to Ute "needs and conditions of modern, world-minded man." Then, invoking Emerson: "We are not less Christian, but more." The "liberal spirit," he said, seeks to make history rather than be bound by it, and it finds continuing evidences of "organic synthesis" in all religions. The goal is righteousness, not ritual. Such a spirit and such a goal derive basically from "human nature which is universal" rather than from the teachings of the great faiths.

Such predictions mayor may not prove prophetic for the new Unitarian Universalist Association. What is clear is that the energies consumed by the merger process in recent years have now been freed for more significant tasks. And it is agreed that arguments for the relevance of a religious liberalism, as distinct from Christian or secular liberalism, will at least have a better hearing.

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Iowa

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Discouraging Discrimination

A report compiled for the U.S. Civil Rights Commission concludes that discrimination against Negroes in Iowa presents a "very discouraging" picture, despite some bright spots. Housing, lodging and dining facilities, and barber-shops are cited as the points of greatest difficulty. As to the housing situation, Iowa is "no worse nor any better than many of the other midwestern states," the report notes. It finds that most larger hotels will accommodate Negroes, but only under "certain conditions," and that while "restaurants will serve them ••• most of the time the service is very poor and the colored person is humiliated to the extent that he does not return." Barber-shops were found to be "practically unanimous" in refusing to serve Negroes.

The report expresses the belief that Iowans are "gradually awakening to the fact that our Negro neighbors are fine people who are being unfairly treated," and that the fair-minded among them "are making an honest effort to correct the situation." Waterloo was found to present one of the best pictures in the state, with "no difficulties" reported in housing, no discrimination in hotels or

in most restaurants, and a situation in which barber-shops have "never questioned" serving Negroes.

Court Upholds Magazine Ban

Federal District Judge Robert Van Pelt has ruled that state Atty. Gen. Norman Erbe has authority under Iowa law to ban newsstand sale of magazines which in Erbe's opinion contain obscene material. Judge Van Pelt added, however, that the attorney general does not have authority to prejudge such publications, and therefore cannot ban issues of any particular magazine before their appearance on Ute newsstands.

The court upheld Erbe's banning of 42 magazines in September 1959 on the ground that they contain obscene material. Publishers of the periodicals had claimed that Erbe does not have such authority and had sought an injunction ordering withdrawal of the ban. In his ruling Judge Van Pelt said he was making no decision as to the constitutionality of Ute Iowa law or whether or not any of the magazines involved actually are obscene within the meaning of the state statute. The court did hold that Erbe was "doing his duty" under authority given him by Iowa law "to protect the youth of the community." "This court believes . . . that eventually in the different localities of Iowa juries should determine in criminal cases whether any of Ute plaintiffs' magazines are or are not obscene," Judge Van Pelt added. Erbe expressed gratification at the ruling and said that continued cooperation of county attorneys and dealers in retail magazines will "result in an end to this nefarious traffic."

How to Help

At a Des Moines meeting on medical and religious treatment of the ill about 65 ministers and physicians concluded that a religious approach in telling a person about a fatal illness can often help overcome fears, develop a patient's confidence and lead to better patient-physician understanding. "Facing realities is much, much easier than facing anxieties of the unknown," Dr. Floyd Burgeson, a general practitioner, told the session. "I sincerely believe peace of mind does not come in a pill or a capsule or a hypo." William Knight, pastor of the Highland Park Christian Church, observed that telling a patient the full extent of his illness "gives peace of mind and a sense of courage."

In his annual report Superintendent Milton D. Broadfoot of the Iowa Temperance League said the organization needs to cultivate interest in rehabilitation of alcoholics. He called for consideration of ways in which the league could assist the alcoholic and suggested compilation of a list of Iowa pastors who have been particularly effective in this ministry. Broadfoot reported that the league's educational program has covered 98 per cent of the state's junior and te-