Chateau in Switzerland Now a Religious Center

Protestant Laymen and Clergy Gather There, Learn to Apply Faith to Workaday World

By JO-ANN PRICE
Of The Journal Staff

Celigny, Switzerland — Since it was opened in October, 1946, no less than 500 Christian laymen and theologians have made their way along the narrow "avenue of trees" to the Chateau de Bossey near here. They have come from many countries and religious denominations to discuss how churchmen can come to grips with current affairs.

The chateau is a 20 room mansion, hung with pictures of Napoleon collected by the owner, which today serves as the Ecumenical institute of the World Council of Churches.

For $1.84 a day visitors can eat, sleep, visit and take 10 day to three week courses. The institute is unique among Protestant training centers because it is world-wide in its make-up.

tries and 15 denominations since it started. Whether they speak English, French or German—all three tongues are used—they return to their homes talking about "the ecumenical movement" and "common fellowship in Christ."

Attempts No "Solutions"

The institute does not propose to make large scale pronouncements on the state of Protestantism today, according to Prof. Hendrik Kraemer, Dutch born director general, a layman. "We're not a factory for solutions," he said.

It does, however, try to point the way for the Christian doctor, lawyer, social worker, industrialist or journalist to live up to his faith in the workaday world.

Students, usually between 20 and 35, co-operate in housekeeping and cooking. They are bunked in the elegant old rooms on the second floor of the chateau and at a smaller house down the road, known as "Petit Bossey." A 12th century tower at one end of the Chateau, a remnant of a previous castle on the site, has been turned temporarily into a small prayer room. An old redecorated barn is a lecture hall, chapel and library.

"We try to give people a concrete ecumenical education," Prof. Kraemer said. "It's more than just going to a lecture for an hour. It is a matter of working and living together."

Difficulties for Laymen

The modern Christian laymen, he explained, frequently is baffled when it comes to adjusting the problems of the business world to the principles of the Christian faith. Either he cannot meet the problem itself or he is "not sufficiently informed about what the Christian faith is and what are its implications," he said.

"The church really meets its problems in the lives of its members," he asserted. "The real question facing church leaders now is to learn from the members what their ordinary life problems are."

The status of the laity in church life has received more and more recognition by the clergy during the last 10 years in Europe, Prof. Kraemer said. Organizations such as the Christian Frontier movement in Britain and Evangelical academies scattered throughout Germany are laymen groups. The war was partly responsible for their development, he said.

Businessmen, Doctors Meet

At the institute a conference of businessmen recently spent several hours discussing the Sermon on the Mount and its application to office life. Prof. Kraemer led a group of physicians and surgeons in a conference on the special problems confronting the Christian medical practitioner.

"Although they are from different countries," he continued, "their basic professional problems are the same."

The expression of Christian convictions by members of the laity, meeting on an international basis, is a highly important method of strengthening the world minded-

Prof. Hendrick Kraemer at the Chateau de Bossey

ness of denominations, in the opinion of world council leaders.

For too many centuries, according to Prof. Kraemer, the churches "have very comfortably thought that they were doing a good job in perpetuating themselves," thereby losing contact with the issues of life facing their members.

The roster of speakers at the institute reads like a "Who's Who" of Protestantism: Dr. W. A. Visster 't Hooft, executive secretary of the World Council of Churches; the Rev. Oliver S. Tomkins, London, England, and Dr. O. Frederick Nolde, New York city, both associate general secretaries of the council, and many others. University professors from all parts of Europe have visited the institute.

In Prof. Kraemer, 62, the institute has as its head the leader of a movement in Holland in World War II which sought for a "renewal" of vitality of the Dutch Reformed church. He is the author of "The Christian Message to a Non-Christian World" and is a former Dutch Bible society translator and representative of Indonesia.

In World War II, as professor at the University of Leyden, he organized an above ground resistance of students and professors against the nazification of university life in Holland. The movement fought a Nazi demand to remove two Jewish professors from the faculty. As a result, the university was closed and Dr. Kraemer was arrested and sent to a camp for hostages in south Holland. In 1946, he joined the provisional committee of the World council and was named to direct the institute.

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Dr. Henry Kraemer
The Ecumenical Institute
Celigny, Switzerland

Dear Dr. Kraemer:

Thank you very much for your help to The Milwaukee Journal, and myself, during my recent trip to Europe. There was a great deal of interest here in the European stories. With all best wishes, I am,

Sincerely yours,

Jo-ann Price

(Miss) Jo-ann Price
Religion Reporter

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