CHURCH AND COMMUNITY

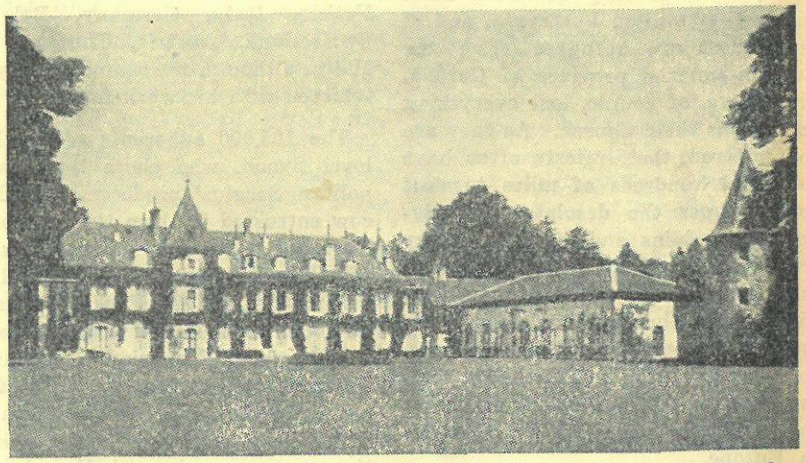
VOLUME 7, No. 6 — AUGUST, 1950

LE CHATEAU DE BOSSEY

On the border of the Lake of Geneva in Switzerland, is situated the Chateau de Bossey, which is the home of the Ecumenical Institute of the World Council of Churches. Under the general direction of Dr. Hendrik Kraemer, assisted by Suzanne de Dietrich and Pastor H.-L. Henriod, the Institute has been engaged for the last three and a half years in aiding men and women of all countries, denominations and vocations to see more clearly into the fundamental spiritual and religious issues which are at stake in their sector of life.

Towards this end, some fifteen conferences have been held on subjects ranging from art to international law. These conferences last from five to ten days, and are essentially a round-table sharing of experiences and viewpoints by men and women engaged in a given field of work or research.

The Institute has therefore put on its programme for 1950 a conference of human biologists, to which a small number of theologians who are really interested in the subject will be invited. The general object of this conference will be to provide a meeting place for competent biologists and some well-known theologians in order to discover what the Christian understanding of man and the understanding arising from the investigations of modern biology have to tell each other. From all quarters the cry is heard that we need a new doctrine of man, that is to say a new formulation of the perennial riddle, man. This cry is raised among theologians because it is felt that in the modern situation, which is so deeply different from former situations in history, we need at least a thorough restating of the Christian view of man, because since the renaissance our conception has been considerably altered and widened. Modern anthropological research has brought in its wake a quite new approach to the problems of man's nature. The frontier-problems and frontier-sciences are, therefore, of outstanding importance for the shaping of our fundamental judgments. Biology, especially of man, is such a frontier science, where man appears as an organism to which its psychical functions are bound, and as spirit, with all the crucial problems implied. It is therefore, in the present situation, meaningful to bring together men who are competent or well-informed in this field, and men who are interested in this problem, either theologically or philosophically.



The main themes suggested for the conference are:

1. Introductory survey of the main approaches and conceptions now dominant in biological research, in regard to the origin and peculiar nature of man, especially as regards the relation of his physical and psychical character. How is the problem of man defined in modern biological terms?

2. What challenges does this situation, with its established quantum of knowledge and its hypothetical surmises, put to the customary Christian understanding of man?

3. The psychic structure of man in the light of the modern doctrines of heredity and constitution; the legitimate conclusions to be derived from it in regard to man as a physico-psychic unity, and the limits of their validity. (The significance or non-significance of race can be treated under this heading.)

4. The psychic structure of man in the light of the modern insight into internal secretion (hormones), and other physiological processes (nervous processes, etc.,) which influence man's psychic life.

5. What can be said on the basis of a Biblical understanding of man to this new picture of man which arises from the study of modern biology? What challenge does the first put to the second? (This is emphatically not meant in the spirit of apologetics, but on account of a common quest for truth.)

The work at Bossey was first begun

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in 1946, through the generosity of Mr John D. Rockefeller, Jr., who has been giving the World Council sufficient money to pay the rent on the Chateau ever since that time. Last month, however, Mr Rockefeller made a new offer to the Council: a monetary gift sufficient to buy the entire Chateau and to carry out extensive structural alterations. This, of course, was accepted, and the future of Bossey as an international study and conference centre seems assured.

In addition to conferences such as the one outlined above, the Ecumeni-

At the present moment there are twenty-five New Zealanders studying in Britain, who have received invitations to attend courses at the Bossey Ecumenical Institute.

cal Institute runs courses for laymen. These courses have greater emphasis on lectures and formal study, and less on discussion. Bible study (led by Mlle. de Dietrich) is integral to the course, and emphasis is also placed on the witness of the Church to and in the world, and on the Ecumenical Movement in both its historical and its theological aspects. An attempt is made to introduce the members of each course to Church traditions other than their own.

In course and conference, worship is an integral part of the life of the Institute, and students are also expected to turn a hand in the house and garden. Both these factors, as well as the informal contacts of leisure hours, are of inestimable value.

The Christian Council of Kenya has taken on one admirable enterprise of its own. Kisumu, at the head of the great Lake, is a rapidly growing town, the meeting-place of two steamer routes, a railway and several roads. The Christian Council has rented a large site just outside the town, and started a hostel to house Africans who are passing through or have come in search of work. They are allowed to stay for four nights for 1/- per night, and cheap meals are available. Prayers are held morning and evening, and a real attempt is made to care pastorally for those who pass through.