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Theological Observer. - Kirchlich-Zeitgeschichtliches

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Theological Observer. — Kirkljch-Zeitgeschichtlijes.

I. Amerika.

"Lutheraneren's Sofisteri."—Under this heading *Evangelisk Luthersk Kirketidende*, the official organ of the Norwegian Synod of the Ev. Luth. Church takes *Lutheraneren*, the official Norwegian organ of the United Norwegian Church, seriously to task on account of its "philosophical speculations" ("*filosofiske spekulationer*") in its synergistic presentation of the doctrine of conversion. The whole matter began with an innocent question propounded by one of *Lutheraneren's* readers, namely, whether it is correct to say, "One converts himself," or "Moody has converted so and so many sinners." *Lutheraneren* replied that the statements are incorrect, when applied to conversion in its narrow sense. It said: "If with the word *conversion* we think exclusively of that act in the soul which consists in the crossing over from spiritual death to spiritual life, then it is God alone who acts, and that without any cooperation from the side of man. Man can do nothing in this link. In this sense he cannot convert himself. Neither can a Moody or any other man convert any other person. To create a new life in man is a creative work of omnipotence, which God alone can perform." (Cf. CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY, p. 525, July, 1933.) So far, so good. However, *Lutheraneren* continues: "But this act of God can be performed only *after certain conditions* are present. These conditions consist in this, that the sinner reads or hears the Word of God, that he considers the content of the Word, *that he gives his consent, that he considers it in its application to himself, that he acknowledges that he is on the wrong road, that he sees before him a dark eternity, etc.* Such things the unregenerate man can do. Unless the sinner performs these spiritual acts, the Spirit of God gets no opportunity to create the new spiritual life in him. But when the sinner *does* these things, then the Spirit of God *gets the opportunity* and uses it to create the life. Thus the sinner must himself provide a necessary prerequisite for God's act in the soul. If one in the concept *conversion* includes these links in the chain, which accordingly man himself *can and must provide*, then there will also be some truth in this that man converts himself. . . ." Such was *Lutheraneren's* first utterance on conversion, its first synergistic misrepresentation of what our dogmaticians have called "intransitive conversion."

Lutheraneren's article was answered by a lengthy discussion of the matter which appeared in the CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY (July, 1933) under the heading "*Kein Modus Agendi vor der Bekehrung.*" In reply to this *Lutheraneren* wrote *inter alia*: "There is something helpless in this internal self-contradiction and confusion in this part of the Missouriian theology [*sc.*: "Unconverted man can read, hear, and understand God's Word *externally or grammatically*, but not *spiritually*, so as to believe and accept the Gospel"]. The confusion arises from the fact that one does not take any notice of the *psychological factor* which without fail must be included if one would have his ideas well ordered. For our purpose in this connection we think of two regions of the soul. Each one of these acts under its own laws. The one region is *consciousness*. There ideas,

thoughts, feelings, and volitions are active. *Over these activities man (unconverted man included) has power to exercise self-determination.* Deeper down in the soul is another region. We have no direct conscious knowledge of this. The will has no direct power over it. When Scripture uses the word *heart*, it points in certain instances to this region [*sic!*]. Modern psychologists call it the 'subconscious,' because they regard it as lying under the conscious sphere. . . . It is *in the consciousness* that the mental activities in connection with the hearing, reading, and meditating on God's Word take place. *In this sphere natural man has the ability to exercise self-determination.* . . . Man must provide his mental contribution for the shaping of the instrument [the "hearing" of God's Word]. . . . When, then, the Holy Ghost by these means comes to the soul and *the instrument* [man's "hearing," consenting to God's Word, etc.] *in the consciousness is ready for His use*, then follows His creative regenerating work in the heart, in the deep, in the subconsciousness. There He works alone. There man has no *modus agendi*. . . . We read in the Formula of Concord: ' . . . For concerning the presence, operation, and gifts of the Holy Ghost we should not and cannot always judge *ex sensu* [from feeling], as to how and when they are experienced in the heart; but because they are often covered and occur in great weakness, we should be certain,' etc. (*Trigl.*, 903.) When the Formula here says that the Holy Ghost's work of creating new life 'often occurs covered and in great weakness,' then that shows that its author localized the act not in the open consciousness, but deeper down in the soul [?] or, as we would say in the language of modern psychology, in the subconscious. *The change which has occurred in the deep reacts again on the consciousness.*

"When, then, the Holy Ghost must have this 'hearing' as His instrument; when without this 'hearing' He neither can be present nor regenerate man; when this 'hearing' consists in conscious ideas, thoughts, feelings, and volitions in man; when these cannot come into existence *without man's self-determining, voluntary contributions thereto*; when, therefore, *the possibility of the occurrence of conversion depends on man's choice either to supply these contributions to the forming of this instrument of the Spirit or not to supply them*, then it follows from necessity 1) *that the attitude natural man voluntarily assumes at this point has a deciding significance for his conversion*; and 2) *that the categorical assertion that man, as far as his conversion is concerned, can do nothing at all in spiritual things before his conversion is a confusing, misleading, and dangerous teaching.* If one distinguishes, as indicated, between that which takes place in man's salvation with the cooperation in the conscious, self-determining region of the soul and that which takes place by the sole activity of the Spirit in the deep of the soul, then one will also get a clear understanding of the Formula of Concord [*sic!*]. If one mixes that which takes place in the consciousness with that which takes place in the deep and treats the two objects as though they were one and the same, then confusion is unavoidable. In the realm of thought distinction must be made between the things that are different." (Cf. *Lutheraneren*, January 17, 1934.)

Both *Kirketidende* and the *Lutheran Sentinel* of the Norwegian Synod replied to this synergistic presentation of the doctrine of conversion. In the *Lutheran Sentinel* we read: "We notice here that he [the author] *ascribes*

to the unconverted sinner power and ability to assent to the Word of God, Law and Gospel; to apply the truth to himself, to acknowledge his sin and guilt, and to understand that he is subject to eternal punishment. But not only that. We notice also that he teaches that natural man before his conversion to God not only can by his natural powers and abilities himself perform this part of the work of his own conversion, but that he must do all this as a necessary condition, or prerequisite, to the regenerative work of the Holy Ghost. If the unconverted sinner does not thus prepare and open his own heart, the Holy Ghost cannot convert him. That this doctrine is gross synergism and contrary to and entirely opposed to the doctrine of the Word of God concerning the corrupt condition and total lack of abilities and powers of natural man in spiritual things can easily be understood from numerous clear passages of Scripture. . . . It is an undeniable fact that the union of 1917 did not cure the participating churches from the disease of synergism. In *Lutheraneren*, January 17 issue of this year, appears a second article in defense of the first. We shall take notice of that later." (Cf. *Lutheran Sentinel*, February 14, 1934.)

Kirketidende, February 7, 1934, comments on the matter as follows: "In spite of God's clear Word, *Lutheraneren* teaches that unconverted man can and must work together towards his conversion and that the Holy Spirit is not able to do anything before the sinner himself has opened his heart and determined himself for salvation and given the Word his assent. But *Lutheraneren* has no use for God's Word in its description of natural man's condition before conversion, that is, before his conversion and salvation. In its whole discussion it has no use for a single word of God as proof for its doctrine. It manages the whole thing with philosophical speculations. With these philosophical speculations it has discovered a deeper region in the soul, which it calls the 'subconscious,' concerning which we of course cannot know anything. But there it is that the Spirit's activity takes place, while in that region of the soul which is called the conscious, consisting of reason, will, and conscience, there man himself works. That is the portal through which the Spirit must enter and that man himself must open. Unless man does this, he cannot become converted. Accordingly, it is man's own work which makes the decision. That is too bad! *Lutheraneren* teaches that a man is saved not by grace alone, but by grace and works, and that is synergism."

In a letter which Dr. L. A. Vigness addressed to one of his protesting readers he further explains man's self-determination as follows: "When the Word of God is present in the mind as indicated, it cannot be said that the mind acts exclusively by its own powers. Let me say that the mind cannot produce a concept even of a small material object, as, for instance, an apple, by its own powers. Every mental act is a joint product of two contributing factors, namely, a stimulus and a response. The apple, for instance, acts as the stimulus; the optic and other nerves respond by carrying the currents to the brain; the intellectual functions respond by transforming that current into percepts and combining these into a concept. In the call to the unregenerate sinner to repentance the Holy Spirit and the Word of God acts as the stimulus, of course different from, and incomparably superior to, a material object. But to this stimulating presence, which is there in and through the Word, the mind responds. And so far

as the conscience realm (the conscious) is concerned, *this response comes from the functions involved by the innate vital powers* in those functions. It is *simply nonsense* to say that the sensory nerves and the percept-forming and concept-forming functions of the mind can act in the formation of all other concepts, *but are dead and useless when it comes to receiving, and acting on, the concept-forming stimulus from the Word of God.* The practise of yourself and others who hold this view is a good deal better than your theory. I do not believe your message to the unregenerate can be summed up in a statement like this: I have a very important message to you, but there is absolutely nothing you can do about it. You neither mean nor say anything like this. *You expect response of some kind.* And this is plainly enough the teaching of the Scriptures and our Lutheran Confessions."

We say, It is not. While our Confessions declare expressly that unconverted man can hear and read and somewhat discuss the Word of God *externally or grammatically*, he cannot hear, read, or perceive the Word of God spiritually, so as to give his assent to the Gospel, believe and accept it. The entire second article of the Formula of Concord is an emphatic denial of what *Lutheraneren* here teaches. And this denial is based upon Scripture, which attests: "It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure," Phil. 2, 13. Yet, when we address the spiritually dead man with the Word of God, this is not mockery, just as little as it was mockery when Christ said to Lazarus: "Come forth." For the Word of God is the living, effectual means by which the Holy Spirit works contrition and faith in the spiritually dead man, just as Christ bestowed new life upon Lazarus by His divine word.

Years ago synergism advanced the "psychological-mystery theory" to demonstrate man's cooperation in his conversion. *Lutheraneren* now comes out with a new "subconscious-conscious theory" and with a "stimulus-response theory" to prove the self-determination which natural man must do to make it possible for the Holy Spirit to convert him. All are "*filosofiske spekulationer*," and all are based on "*sofisteri*." The *Lutheran Sentinel* is indeed right when it says: "Whoever believes that his conversion and salvation is dependent not only on the grace and mercy of God in Christ, but also, *even for a small part*, upon his own work, denies the Gospel of Christ." That is the true doctrine of our Confessions, the doctrine of Luther, and of Holy Scripture. J. T. M.

Secularistic Tendencies in the Lutheran Church. — The *Theological Forum* of April publishes an article by Herman A. Preus: "Recent Developments and Trends within the Church," from which we quote the following: "The Laymen's Report should do one thing more for us of the Church. It should awaken us to the fact that there has been a cooling off in our missionary zeal. Mission-festivals are not in vogue as they used to be. We are too busy keeping up with the modernistic Federal Council of Churches' program of peace, politics, and prohibition, Mother's Day, Father's Day, Family Day, etc., *ad nauseam*. The command of the Master to go and make disciples of all nations yields to the demand for the Church to become a social center.

"*Secularism* is here, and it is as subtle a poison as Satan ever injected

into the Church. It is here naturally. The depression has forced the Church into the field of public relief, social welfare, and 'case work' of the most specialized nature. One may easily speculate on the amount of energy the Church has given to this at the expense of preaching the Gospel and shepherding souls. The National Lutheran Council, right or wrong, is treading on thin ice with the resolution presented at their recent conference in Chicago regarding the rights of the Church in relief work. So are they on dangerous ground who are crying for the Lutheran Church to take a more open part in politics and public issues, not least of which is prohibition. It has been no boost to the prestige of a certain Reformed body that they declared a few months ago that, if repeal were voted, the Church could just as well lie down and confess that it was beaten and a total failure in the world. The churches that have talked the loudest in political issues, have conducted lobbies in Washington and State legislatures, and in general have forsaken the preaching of the Word for political activity and social uplift have not thereby won any added respect from the world. The Lutheran Church may well think twice before she leaves her enviable position as an 'otherworldly' group and flings her hat in the arena of politics or the 'social gospel.'

"You pastors analyze the questionnaire you received from Messrs. Fosdick, Cadman, *et al.* and see if you recognize the most subtle piece of treasonable pacifism ever to be laid at the door of the Christian Church. Let us hope that the Lutheran Church will go on record as militantly opposed to this most un-American document. It is just one more case of the Church's forgetting herself and refusing to 'give unto Caesar what is Caesar's.'

"The social gospel has run its course and proved its inadequacy to redeem society. Isn't it time to get back to the elementary principle that the Church is the kingdom of Christ, who says, 'My kingdom is not of this world'? Isn't it time for the ministry to get back to the preaching of the Word, not morality, not philosophy, but the Law and Gospel? The social gospel can never replace the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which says to the individual, 'You must be born again.'" E.

Desire for Union Voiced.—In the *Lutheran* of April 5, 1934, several spokesmen for the idea of Lutheran union come before us. One of them is from Saskatchewan, Canada, and the situation existing now, as he paints it, is quite dark. "Do you know what a certain man of a Lutheran congregation told me? He said, 'It seems to me that the Lutheran synods are acting in the same manner as the machine companies—rivalry and business.' What does the Lutheran Church in the West mean to many Lutherans? It is an agency for religious needs. He says, 'If one church demands too much money, I will go to another.' It is hard to conceive what damage and confusion the discussion [?] of the Lutheran Church has caused."

In California a group of Lutherans "representing all the Lutheran churches in Southern California with the exception of the Missouri Synod" adopted a resolution reading thus: "Resolved that the Lutheran men of Southern California representing all of the above-mentioned synodical groups petition the presidents of the various synodical groups named to call a meeting the latter part of the year 1934 for the purpose of

uniting all Lutheran churches under one Lutheran Church of America; that the organization committee be composed of one laymen and one pastor from each synodical group; these to be the minimum representation from each synod and to be the allotment of representatives for the first three hundred thousand baptized members in the synod; each synod to be allowed an additional pastor and layman for each full two hundred thousand baptized members above the first three hundred thousand," etc.

Commenting on the movement launched by the people in Southern California, the editor of the *Lutheran* says in the same issue of his paper: "It will strike many of us that uniting America's Lutheran church-bodies is something of a job so big that so far no one has had the courage to do more than wish it could be done." On the letter from Canada he remarks: "It is very disturbing to advertise our purity of doctrine, loyalty to Scripture, and simplicity of organization, only to have some 'less favored' group inquire, 'Which Lutheran organization have you in mind?'"

The subject of union of Lutherans will not die, nor should it die. It is a matter to which every one of us should constantly give prayerful thought. But more important than union is the consideration that divine truth must not be violated by any association that may be established. It is to be feared that many of these people who so passionately plead for union do not sufficiently consider what are the chief treasures of the Church — the holy Gospel and the Sacraments. A.

A Necessary Crusade. — While not at all endorsing the claims of Cardinal Hayes of New York as to special rights and privileges in the Church of Christ, we have to approve of the earnest warning he issues concerning reading-matter which is poisoning the minds of our young people to-day. He is inaugurating a crusade which is directed against a very real and pernicious evil. We quote him: "Much of our general literature has of late degenerated swiftly and terribly. The low condition to which it has fallen is evident. The country is deluged with obscene and immoral publications. Not only news agencies and news dealers, but drug stores, department stores, and renting libraries have combined to flood the land with foul and vicious reading-matter. Some hitherto reputable publishers have surrendered their ethical principles and are engaged in an unholy rivalry with the purveyors of pornography. And not a few of even the best secular newspapers now display advertisements of obviously nasty books. This formidable evil, it seems, cannot be remedied by law. Existing legislation is lax, enforcement is loose, and the public conscience is apathetic. Therefore the time has come to take strong measures for safeguarding the morals of our people. And there is reason to hope that we shall be joined by all men and women of good will, who, though not of our faith, are alarmed and scandalized by this ever-rising tide of literary filth." The sad feature of the situation is that this picture is not overdrawn and the colors are not too dark. A.

The Enemy within Our Gates. — Under this heading the *National Republic* (February, 1934) writes: "The sex question is now before us. Columbia University supports it; Notre Dame denounces it. Stanford University says that sex education has been a failure, that it 'has let loose a flood of talk until sexuality has become an obsession.' The grand jury

of Niles, Michigan, is investigating the free sexual actions of 150 extremely youthful girls, between the ages of thirteen and sixteen, taken up in a vice inquiry. In this instance the churches adopted a resolution calling the situation 'an appalling one'; yet a few months ago an organization of which these same churches are members endorsed the question of sex education and even issued a booklet on the question. Prof. H. M. Parshley, teacher of zoology to girls at Smith College, says that followers of the birth-control movement are *no longer making sex experiences dependent upon a wedding-ring*. Of course, he used much more academic language, but that was plainly the idea received by the young women who listened to him, according to the *Chicago Tribune*. Smith College is noted already for its sex *questionnaire* of several years ago. There was a time when the approach of the sex question to the youthful girl was an insult; to-day it is beginning to be a principal parlor and roadside discussion, and the world and the home are feeling the effect of it. Breaking down character and encouraging indecency is a part of the program to break down the nation; for as the home goes, so does a nation. Rev. John F. O'Hara, vice-president of the University of Notre Dame, recently called attention to one 'compulsory' course recently established not in R. O. T. C., but by the faculty of Columbia University, which compulsion has so far brought forth no riots on Columbia's campus. The faculty of the institution has decreed that hereafter all sophomores will be 'required to take a course in concubinage,' as Rev. O'Hara says. He adds: 'President Nicholas Murray Butler lamented the decline in good manners, not only among the younger generation, but also upon the part of their elders. He blames this condition on the antiphilosophies and pseudopsychologies of our day. Less than two months after the publication of that lament Columbia announced a course to be required of all sophomores in a *freer conception of the relation of the sexes, unhindered by law or religion*. The head deplored the decline in good manners, and his faculty required of the students a course in concubinage.' This sort of compulsion appears to meet with acceptance among those who denounce compulsion of a constructive study." Another result of the *obsession of sexuality* is the smut department in the three-cents-a-day libraries "around the corner," which ministers would do well to investigate.

J. T. M.

One-Hundred-Fiftieth Anniversary of Methodism.—It was in 1784 that American Methodists held the conference at which they organized their church-body. John Wesley had authorized the meeting and the work of organization, sending at the same time Dr. Thomas Coke, whom he had ordained to be a bishop in the American Methodist Church, and giving orders that Francis Asbury, living in America, should also be ordained as bishop. This important meeting, held 150 years ago, took place in Baltimore and is known as the Christmas Conference. At the time 163 ministers calling themselves Methodists were engaged in their work here in America. The name chosen by them was Methodist Episcopal Church. A medal has been struck in honor of the anniversary, showing on the one side Wesley, Coke, and Asbury and on the other a messenger on horseback riding at top speed to invite the Methodists to come to said Christmas Conference. If Wesley could listen to Methodist sermons to-day, how he would be surprised at the gross rationalism evident in many of them!

A.

II. Ausland.

„In Deutschland herrscht volle Kirchenrevolution.“ So urteilt der europäische Korrespondent des „Kirchenblatts“ und berichtet unter anderem: „Anzeichen dieser Selbsthilfe sind Einsprüche von Gemeindefkirchenräten gegen reichsbischöfliche Verfügungen; Berufung aufgelöster Kirchenräte auf ihr göttliches und darum unantastbares Recht; Verwendung abgesetzter Pfarrer im Gemeindefdienst als ‚Hilfsprediger‘ in vollem Amt; Berufung freier Synoden wie im Rheinland, dieser fast uneinnehmbaren Festung alter Kirchlichkeit und Glaubenstreue. An dieser Synode haben übrigens neben den mehrheitlich Reformierten auch Lutheraner und Unierte teilgenommen, und um Aufnahme in ihre Mitte hatte neuerdings der Bruderrat des gesamten Pfarrernotbundes gebeten, ‚um aus seiner verhängnisvollen Ver-
 einzelnung herauszukommen.“ (21. April). Die „A. E. L. N.“ berichtet: „Die ‚Freie Evangelische Synode‘ nahm folgende Entschliebung einstimmig an: Die am 19. Februar versammelte Freie Evangelische Synode im Rheinland erhebt Einspruch gegen die vorläufige Amtsenthebung der drei Pfarrer Lic. Dr. Bedmann, Düsseldorf, Gräber und Held, Essen. Sie stellt fest, daß die gemahregelten Pfarrer im Gehorsam gegen ihr Ordinationsgelübde und ihre Verusfukunde zur Wahrung des Bekenntnisstandes der Kirche recht- und pflichtmäßig gehandelt haben. Durch die Maßnahmen des Kirchenregimentes gegen die Prediger wird die Gemeinde verwirrt, geistlich und rechtlich entmündigt und ihr Vertrauen auf die Unabhängigkeit der lauterer Verkündigung des Wortes Gottes erschüttert. Synode fordert die sofortige Aufhebung der verhängten Maßnahmen.“ (9. März). „Ein erlösendes Wort in der immer schwereren Kirchennot, nach dem man längst in lutherischen Kirchen ausschaute, ist die feierliche Kundgebung im ‚Amtsblatt für die Ev.-Luth. Kirche in Bayern‘ vom 17. März.“ Die Kundgebung ist von dem Landesbischof D. Meiser und andern unterzeichnet. Es heißt darin unter anderem: „In ihrer Anschauung vom kirchlichen Amt ist unsere Kirche als eine evangelisch-lutherische an die Lehre unserer Bekenntnischriften vom Amt gebunden. Danach gibt es in der Kirche nur ein Amt, das von Gott eingesetzt und darum göttlichen Rechtes ist: das Amt der Verkündigung des Evangeliums und der Verwaltung der Sakramente. Auch das bischöfliche Amt ist nur insofern von Gott gesektes Amt, als es an diesem einen Amt der Kirche teilnimmt. Die über den Dienst an Wort und Sakrament hinausgehenden Funktionen des bischöflichen Amtes sind menschlichen Rechtes. Um der Ordnung in der Kirche willen ist den Bischöfen zu dem Dienst am Wort noch der schwere Dienst der ‚Superintendentur‘, der Aufsicht über einen Kirchenbezirk, übertragen. Damit ist jede hierarchische Auffassung des Bischofsamtes in der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche durch das Bekenntnis ausgeschlossen. Wir sehen mit ernster Sorge, wie heute eine dem Wesen unserer Kirche fremde Hierarchie in den deutschen Protestantismus eindringt und das Wesen des geistlichen Amtes und damit den evangelischen Charakter unserer Kirche zu zerstören droht. . . . Die Abberufung eines Bischofs wie eines Pfarrers kann nur auf Grund eines geordneten, dem kirchlichen Recht und dem Bekenntnis entsprechenden Verfahrens erfolgen. . . . Der Bischof ist wie der Pfarrer in seiner Amtsführung an das Bekenntnis seiner Kirche, auf das er bei seiner Ordination verpflichtet worden ist, gebunden. . . . Die Frei-

heit, die die Kirche fordert, ist die Freiheit . . . für das kirchliche Amt, das zu sagen, was zu verkünden es durch den Auftrag Gottes gezwungen ist und wovon die Kirche sich in ihrem Bekenntnis Rechenschaft gibt" (30. März). „Die Lutheraner in Westfalen sind aufgewacht; denn Präses D. Koch, der die mannhafteste Bekenntnisrede auf der Westfälischen Provinzialsynode hielt, wie auch die meisten Mitglieder dieser Synode, guter Lutheraner. Also nicht nur die Reformierten halten jetzt ihre freien Synoden, der Bekenntnismut erhebt sich auch bei den Lutheranern, und trügen nicht alle Zeichen, werden wir eine große Erhebung des Luthertums in der Deutschen Evangelischen Kirche erleben" (30. März). „Die Zeit des Bekennens ist gekommen. Eröffnungsrede des Präses D. Koch zur Westfälischen Provinzialsynode am 16. März in Dortmund: . . . Aus meiner Einladung zur heutigen Tagung geht hervor, und ich bin in der Tat der Meinung, daß wir als Westfälische Provinzialsynode nicht die Haltung einnehmen können, die in jenem § 3 von uns verlangt wird. . . . Ich habe bei Übernahme meines Amtes feierlich versprochen, die mir obliegenden Pflichten zu erfüllen, und meine Amtsführung unter das Wort des Apostels gestellt: „Ich übe mich, zu haben ein unverleht Gewissen allenthalben, gegen Gott und die Menschen.“ Nun ist die Zeit des Bekennens gekommen. . . . Ich kann der Provinzialsynode nicht empfehlen zu tun, was dieses Kirchengesetz von uns verlangt; ich darf nicht empfehlen, es zu tun. Es ist weder sicher noch geraten, etwas gegen das Gewissen zu tun. Gott helfe mir! Amen“ (23. März). „Abschiedsbrief des D. Freiherrn von Pechmann an den Reichsbischof: München, Ostermontag, 2. April 1934. . . . Aber, Herr Reichsbischof, zu der Not und Verwirrung, welche Sie mit dankenswerter „Sachlichkeit“ feststellen, wäre es nimmermehr gekommen, wenn nicht die Führer und Träger der kirchlichen Revolution, welche im Dienste kirchenfremder Zwecke und Ziele die Einheitskirche erzwungen hat, um vieles schwerer gefehlt hätten, als Ihre Kundgebung erkennen läßt. . . . Nun habe ich zwar, Sie wissen es ja, seit April v. J. oft und oft protestiert: gegen die Vergewaltigung der Kirche, gegen ihren Mangel an Widerstandskraft, auch gegen ihr Schweigen zu viel Unrecht. . . . Es ist Zeit, einen Schritt weiter zu gehen, das heißt, durch den Austritt aus einer Kirche zu protestieren, die aufhört, Kirche zu sein, wenn. . . . So lange als irgend möglich habe ich diesen Schritt hinausgeschoben, von dem ich nicht zu sagen brauche, was er mich kostet. Nun aber kann und darf ich nicht länger zögern. Ich bitte Sie, die Erklärung meines Austritts aus der Deutschen Evangelischen Kirche hiermit entgegenzunehmen. Verehrungsvoll . . . D. Wilhelm Frhr. von Pechmann, Präsident des Deutschen Evangelischen Kirchentages von 1924 bis 1930“ (13. April). *The Christian Century*, April 4 (German correspondence): „A free-church sentiment is abroad in Germany, fifteen years too late, but better late than never. . . . Already in January the Pastors' Emergency League had convened in a free synod.' . . . Now in March they have met again, this time 800 strong. In submarine commander Pastor Niemoeller's parish-house they discussed the possibility of a complete separation of Church and State. These pastors went on record opposing the dictatorship of Mueller, antichristian pronouncements by certain Nazi spokesmen, and the identification of the swas-

tika and the cross. Another factor in the free-church movement is the pastors' fraternities of South and West Germany. . . . Lay fraternities have been formed in many spiritually awakened parishes. . . . Fewer arrests have been made this month than in January and February." Die Tagespresse berichtet: "Ulm, Germany, April 22. Protestants of South Germany gathered 10,000 strong in the historic Muenster Cathedral here to-day, defied what was termed the 'Evangelical papacy' of the administration of Adolf Hitler's Reichsbishop Ludwig Mueller. . . . Delegations from the two states' churches (of Wurttemberg and of Bavaria) and from the recently formed free synods of the Rhineland, Westphalia, and Brandenburg were joined in the gathering by sympathetic members of congregations in other parts of Germany. . . ."

Die neue Staatsführung und das Freimaurertum. Hierüber schreibt die „Freikirche“: „Auf Grund der Neuordnung des Reichspräsidenten zum Schutz von Volk und Staat vom 28. Februar 1933 hat das Sächsische Gesamtministerium folgendes verordnet: 1. Personen, die einer Freimaurerloge angehören, sind im öffentlichen Dienst des Landes nicht mehr anzustellen. 2. Allen Beamten und Lehrern im Staatsdienst, im Dienste einer Gemeinde, eines Gemeindeverbandes oder einer sonstigen Körperschaft des öffentlichen Rechts ist diese Verordnung bekanntzugeben, um ihnen eine ernsthafte Prüfung nahelegen, bevor sie den Eintritt in eine Freimaurerloge erwägen, und um sie, sofern sie Mitglied einer Freimaurerloge sind, von der Einstellung der neuen Staatsführung zum Freimaurertum zu unterrichten.“ Die „Freikirche“ bemerkt hierzu: „Hiernach dürfen zwar Freimaurer im öffentlichen Dienst des Landes Sachsen nicht mehr angestellt werden; sind sie aber angestellt, so ist ihnen der Eintritt in eine Freimaurerloge nicht verwehrt. Auch alle Beamten, Lehrer usw., die bereits einer Freimaurerloge angehören, können im öffentlichen Dienst des Landes bleiben. Die Regierung warnt jedoch mit obiger Verordnung vor den Freimaurerlogen und läßt durchblicken, daß in Zukunft vielleicht noch schärfere Maßnahmen gegen die Freimaurer ergriffen werden. Die Neuordnung bezieht sich auf alle Körperschaften des öffentlichen Rechts, also auch auf die sächsische Landeskirche. Diese hat bisher das Freimaurerwesen geduldet. Sogar manche landeskirchliche Pastoren sollen Logenmitglieder sein. Bei dem 150. Jubiläum der Freimaurerloge „Zum Goldenen Apfel“ in Dresden wurde die Jakobikirche für eine Andacht zur Verfügung gestellt, obgleich das Freimaurertum in scharfem Gegensatz gegen das wahre Christentum steht. . . . Der Staat hat ein Recht, gegen geheime Gesellschaften wie die Freimaurerlogen, die ihre Mitglieder durch besondere Eide verpflichten, vorzugehen. Denn was die Logenmitglieder einander geloben und schwören, geschieht auf Kosten des Staates und aller Bürger, die nicht Logenmitglieder sind.“ Würde hierzulande eine ähnliche Verordnung durchgeführt werden, wer bliebe dann noch in Amt und Würden? Ja, was würde dann aus den freimaurerischen Pastoren in den liberalen lutherischen Kreisen unsers Landes?

J. L. M.

Die Assyrier in ihrem neuen Heim. Die Tagespresse berichtete vor kurzem von Niedermehelungen flüchtiger Assyrier seitens mohammedanischer Araber. Diese Mitteilung sowie die Tatsache, daß auch unsere Synode unter den wenigen Assyriern unsers Landes Mission treibt, macht einen

längeren Bericht über dies Volk im „Luth. Herald“, geschrieben von E. Strider, für uns um so interessanter. Hiernach sind die Leute, die sich selbst assyrisch nennen, wirklich Überreste des großen assyrischen Volkes, das einst Herr von Vorderasien war. Als später die Perser Ninive und Babylon eroberten, gingen Reste des besiegten Volks in die Berge Kurdistan, wo sie im ersten nachchristlichen Jahrhundert das Christentum annahmen und als erste organisierte christliche Kirche in Vorderasien ihre Sendboten bis nach China sandten. Nach dem Mönch Nestorius nannten sie sich Nestorianer, und die Kirche umfaßte schließlich achtzig Millionen Seelen. Von diesen existierte, als der Weltkrieg begann, ein kleiner Rest von 150,000 Menschen, und zwar unter der autonomen Herrschaft ihrer Patriarchen im türkischen Kurdistan. Im Weltkrieg schlossen sich die Assyrier den christlichen Heeren an und kämpften gegen ihre türkischen Unterdrücker. Schon damals wanderten viele nach dem persischen Urmia, in dessen Umgegend schon lange eine lutherische Mission betrieben worden war. Der Weltkrieg ließ etwa 60,000 zurück, die sich unter ständigen Kämpfen bis nach Mesopotamien durchschlugen, wo ihnen die Engländer bei der Stadt Mosul provisorisch Sicherheit gewährten. Als aber England später das Mandat über Mesopotamien nicht behalten wollte, knüpften die Assyrier mit Persien Verbindungen an, die vor einiger Zeit zum Abschluß gekommen sind. Nach dem Vertrag werden sich die Assyrier in ihrer alten Heimat, dem persischen Kurdistan, niederlassen, um dort, allerdings auch in feindlicher Gegend — denn auch die Kurden sind Mohammedaner — nach fast unzahligen Mühsalen von neuem den Lebenskampf aufzunehmen. Uns Christen muß das Wohl dieses Volkes, das so viel für die Ausbreitung und Wahrung des Christentums im fernen Osten getan hat, gewiß am Herzen liegen. Für das Volk selbst ist wichtig, daß es in einer päpstlichen Bulle vom Jahre 1445 als Chaldäer bezeichnet wird. Der Name identifiziert es mit den Babyloniern, was deshalb sehr gut paßt, weil sie noch heute als Umgangssprache das Aramäische benutzen.

J. L. M.

Modern Views Invading Turkey. — That the old order is vanishing in Turkey is very evident, among other things, from the new status accorded women. A reporter in the *Christian Century* writes: —

“What is probably the last vestige of the separation of sexes in Turkey will disappear when the Istanbul municipality has given definite expression to the wish recently moved that the two rows of seats reserved to woman in tram-cars should be abolished. Originally the assignment of special seats to Turkish women on ships as well as in railways aimed at the seclusion of Mussulman women from the other sex. In tram-cars, for instance, the first two rows were separated from the rest by means of heavy curtains, through which furtive glances would dart both ways. After the reform this separation lost its *raison d'être* and was suppressed both on ships and railways, but has been allowed to go on in tram-cars, the curtains only being removed. Thus it has become a sort of privilege, which is felt to be inconsistent with the situation as it is now, when feminine competition asserts itself in all branches of profitable activity and Turkish women occupy high positions even in professions usually reserved to men, like the police.”

A.