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Theological Observer. - Kirchlich-Zeitgeschichtliches

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Theological Observer — Kirchlich-Zeitgeschichtliches

Dr. Reu on Luther and the Scriptures. — In the February, 1940, issue of the *Kirchliche Zeitschrift* Dr. Reu concludes his important essay on the topic mentioned. All who love Lutheran doctrine will have to thank him for this splendid presentation of Luther's position respecting the inspiration of the Holy Scriptures and their inerrancy. The rather numerous passages in Luther's writings where, critics have maintained, Luther voiced views incompatible with belief in the full inerrancy of the Bible are examined here, and the fallacies involved in the argumentation of the critics are uncovered. We shall quote a few sentences. "That Luther was not ready to admit errors even in the numerical statements of the Bible we see in his exposition of Gen. 11:27, 28: 'This passage is among the most obscure statements of the Old Testament, which has caused so many questions which a diligent reader will encounter here and there in the older and more recent writers. . . . There is added another fault, that vain spirits hold it very praiseworthy if they can pass unrestricted judgment concerning difficult and dark statements of Scripture and then can obstinately maintain their opinions. This is a disease of our nature against which an exegete of Holy Scripture should carefully guard himself.'" (P. 86.) Having produced a number of pertinent quotations from Luther's writings dealing with difficulties in the Holy Scriptures and showing, that, when correctly understood, Luther consistently taught and defended the infallibility of the Bible, Dr. Reu continues: "These examples must suffice. It is no discovery nor 'evasion,' when 'inerrancy' is ascribed only to the original text and not to the text we possess today. That was taken as a matter of course by Luther. And it is noteworthy that he not only discussed these problems with the small circle of scholars who sat with him around the table working on the revision of the translation, but that he mentions them in the glosses printed in his translation meant for the common people." (P. 93.)

"In this country the phrase has been coined: 'Lutheran theology in its classic period knew nothing of a verbal inspiration.' This, too, is only true if it refers exclusively to the dictation theory. If, however, it is to include the rejection of the inerrancy of the original documents, then it cannot be supported by Luther's views, who certainly is the greatest exponent of the 'classical' period of Lutheran theology. Nor by Georg Major, who in his book *De Origine et Autoritate Verbi Dei*, which was reprinted at least four times between 1550 and 1559, made the first attempt to develop the dogmatic teaching concerning Holy Scripture. Nor by Flacius, *Clavis Scripturae Sacrae*, of 1567" (p. 96). There follow some valuable remarks on the position of Flacius with respect to the Scriptures.

We are happy to state that the lectures of Dr. Reu will be published separately. Everybody should endeavor to procure a copy. In our opinion they have definitely proved that the contention of many modern scholars that Luther did not look upon the Scriptures as infallible is altogether wrong.

A.

Excerpts from President Janzow's Address on the Service of Dr. C. F. Graebner.—When during the second week of December, 1939, Concordia College, Unley, Australia, observed its annual graduation exercises, Dr. C. F. Graebner, the retiring principal of the school, was honored in a special way by his colleagues and friends. Excerpts from Dr. Janzow's address, culled from the *Australian Lutheran* (Jan. 5, 1940), bear witness to the splendid work which Dr. Graebner has done for that flourishing school, which in future will be administered by Prof. H. Hamann as headmaster. Dr. Janzow said: "The task assigned to Dr. Graebner required extraordinary talents. Initial 'spade work' had to be done; Synod's interest in Concordia had to be rekindled and greatly increased; additional students had to be recruited; a course of studies had to be mapped out; a variety of subjects had to be taught; Christian discipline had to be maintained; in short, the institution had to be organized most carefully and established on a firm foundation. Ever greater teaching ability and administrative talents became necessary as the institution had grown. But Dr. Graebner measured up to these ever-increasing demands on his strength and ability. In fact, our fine institution of today, the large array of pastors and teachers and others who received their training in higher education at our Concordia, as well as the members of the faculty and of the board controlling the institution, bear eloquent testimony to the fact that our director was endowed with a special measure of the talents needed for the efficient and successful conduct of an institution such as ours. For thirty years I have been a member of the college board and have witnessed the confidence of its members in their director's management; while appreciating highly his exceptional teaching ability, they felt safe in his conscientious leadership. And yet, all glory also for this belongs to God; for it is He who has equipped our director with these special talents required for his arduous work. The fruits of his labors have been manifold. Hundreds of boys and also girls have received a higher education under his direction, a host of graduates of Concordia are now in active church service as pastors and teachers, filling the gaps made by death or other causes, or are working in new fields, the opening of which has been made possible by the regular supply of workers trained at our college. All are capable workers, filled with zeal to extend the Kingdom, to spread the knowledge of salvation instilled into them by the faithful indoctrination received from our venerable director and his faithful coworkers. Unflinching fidelity to the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions marks their activities, and that in surroundings where the spirit of indifferentism and Modernism aims to usurp the infallible authority of Holy Writ. This was the result of their faithful training. From the beginning of his labors in our college Dr. Graebner always stood four-square on the Bible and the Lutheran Confessions. Neither he nor his coworkers ever succumbed to the temptation of modernistic infidelity, which has ruined so many similar institutions of learning. Great and numerous indeed are the blessings which have come from our college while it was under the directorship of Dr. Graebner. Nevertheless we must give all glory to God for all of them; for it has been

He who has blessed our director's labors and has kept him steadfast in the profession of our most holy faith without wavering."

Dr. Graebner will continue his work as teacher at the college, especially in the theological seminary, where he is the leading instructor in Christian doctrine. May God's abundant blessings rest upon his labors in the future as they have rested on him in the past! J. T. M.

Missionaries to be Drafted for the Promotion of Peace. — In a recent issue of the *Lutheran* we read this disconcerting item:

"A significant influence for peace is under way but completely dissociated from national direction or control. The Foreign Mission Conference of North America, with headquarters in New York, is seeking to mobilize the Protestant forces of all nations for peace by uniting 10,000 missionaries, serving in seventy-three countries, in 'an unselfish mission' to make world peace 'a primary purpose' of their ministry. The Protestants represented in this conference are said to approximate 30,000,000, who are all definitely committed to the support of foreign missions. The Conference Executive Secretary, Dr. Emory Ross, says: 'This agency is potentially the greatest non-governmental factor for peace in the world. . . . It has a larger personnel working in close relationship with foreign peoples and governments than any other national body.' In the mean time the movement will be launched on March 16 in the traditional way, with '500 convocation luncheons' in widely distributed centers and beginning with a radio message from President Roosevelt. What can be done remains to be seen. The first difficulty will be with the national authorities that are on a war-time basis. If the movement can survive the atmosphere of the spread tables and the suspicions of the authorities in the belligerent lands where the message is to be proclaimed, its effect should be profound."

Every missionary, it may be assumed, is for peace between the nations of the world. Missionaries, however, it must not be forgotten, have received the assignment to preach "the peace which passeth all understanding." If the establishment of earthly peace is made their special business, the result may be that the cause of neither peace will be served. Let the ambassadors of Christ attend to the duty which our Master has entrusted them with, the proclamation of the Gospel. It is simply inexcusable to take them away from this sacred work. We need medical attention for our various bodily ills. What folly if attorneys, whose duties lie elsewhere, should all endeavor to serve as medical advisors, to write prescriptions, and perform operations! Let not the men who have to serve humanity's highest needs forget their true calling and make the procuring of earthly blessings for others their great aim. "Let the dead bury their own dead, but do thou go and preach the kingdom of God," applies here. Besides, it must not be overlooked that there is no better way of establishing earthly peace than the spreading of the everlasting Gospel, which changes men's hearts and makes them willing to live at peace with one another. A.

Methodism Rejects the Inspiration of the Bible. — The *Christian Beacon* (Feb. 1) quotes from *Revelation* an editorial concerning the stand taken by the *Christian Advocate*, the official organ of the Methodist Church, on the inspiration of the Bible. The editorial reads as follows:

"There have been those who claim that there is a movement back toward the Bible in the midst of the Methodist Church. There was much shouting when a 'conservative' editor was elected to the *Christian Advocate*, the official organ of the Church. We have kept a rather close watch on that paper, therefore, during the past few years and have a report to make. Since the present editorial control—we scarcely looked at the paper before that time—there has been an increasing tendency to publish material that is in opposition to the Word of God. Time after time we have been absolutely horrified by some of the things that have been printed in the *Advocate*. Now, in November, over the editor's name, appears an answer to a question: 'What percentage of Methodists would deny the infallibility and inspiration of the Scriptures in the common acceptance of these terms? What laws and commandments of the Old Testament may still be regarded as binding upon Christian men?' To this the editor of the *Advocate* answered: 'I believe enthusiastically in revelation, and I have no doubt that a great majority of Methodist preachers do also. But belief in revelation does not mean that the Bible is an absolute Book. Revelation at the New Testament level is a very much higher value than it was for the Old Testament servants of God. At the New Testament level revelation is always personal and immediate. The Holy Spirit makes use of the Scriptures to illuminate your intelligence. He makes use also of other writings dependent upon the Scriptures, such as commentaries and theologies. But revelation is that personal experience in which God manifests to you His will for you; and this is the only law that is binding upon your conscience. *What I am saying is that the New Testament would no more countenance substituting it for the living voice of God speaking in your own immediate experience than it would countenance your substituting the formalism of idolatry for the vitality of true worship. The Scriptures are the revelational deposit for the instruction of your intelligence and the opening up of your heart to the living voice of God, just as some picture of Christ may be the expression which will hold your heart transfixed as adoringly you cry: Strong Son of God, Immortal Love! Quite evidently Jesus regarded Himself as the complete fulfillment of the Old Testament, for He even then set aside its provisions with respect to adultery in the case of the woman in the Temple courts.*' We pass over the ignorance displayed in the last sentence; for Jesus did not set aside the Old Testament but established it, when the passage is rightly understood. We will write on this matter later in these columns. But if the *Advocate's* position is the position of the great majority of Methodist preachers, we have much that is clearly explained; for the position expressed here is the absolute abandonment of the position of Luther and Calvin and the Wesleys. It reduces itself to the old view that the Bible is inspired when it inspires you and that it is not inspired when it does not inspire you. The true Christian Church has always taught that the Bible is superior to any voice that speaks in the heart and experience and that any voice that does speak contrary to the Bible is either the flesh or the devil."

What the "*Christian*" *Advocate* here says of revelation is indeed

a horrible mess of falsehood and perversion of truth in which not merely this point or that but the whole of it is intrinsically and substantially false. In the Old Testament revelation was just as "personal and immediate" as it was in the New, since God Himself directly moved or commanded the sacred penmen to write down His Word. Nor is it merely the purpose of Scripture to illuminate "human intelligence," but Scripture is the sole source and norm of faith and life. "Commentaries and other theologies" (pagan cults?) are not a *norma secundaria*, but, if truly Scriptural, merely a declaration of Scriptural truth. Revelation is not the "personal experience in which God manifests to you His will for you"; such an experience is not revelation at all but *Schwaermerei*. Lastly, it is downright perverse to claim that the New Testament would not "countenance substituting it for the living voice of God," since the New Testament expressly anathematizes any one bringing another gospel than that taught by the holy apostles, Gal. 1:8; Rev. 22:18, 19. In short, the "conservative" editor of the *Advocate* reveals himself as thoroughly antichristian in his enthusiastic expression on revelation. To him therefore applies Christ's warning in Matt. 7:15. We are glad to find in this refutation of Methodist enthusiasm an indirect reference to Luther, for it was the great Reformer who said that all enthusiasm above and contrary to Scripture is "the old devil and old serpent, who converted Adam and Eve into enthusiasts." (Cf. *Triglot*, p. 495.)

J. T. M.

The Church and the Social Problem. — The *Presbyterian* of January 18 writes: "Chief Justice Charles Evans Hughes was summoned a while ago to leave his post at the Capital and hurry to Rochester to discuss before a thronged meeting of his own denomination one of the topics listed on the program. Unable to leave his appointments at Washington, the learned statesman sent substantially the following as his message to be read at the convention: 'The thoughts of the people are centered these days upon social and economic subjects. There is no lack of machinery to deal adequately with these. The Church has no call or need to enter that domain. The Church has a far higher mission. It stands for spiritual cleansing and all the high services that flow therefrom. I consider it to be the highest duty to magnify the New-Testament-defined mission of the Church.' The specific duty of the Church is to lift up Christ as Savior and Lord."

The paragraphs immediately following in the article are also worth quoting. They point out that the Church will accomplish her mission if she sticks to the Word. And her Gospel-message is the cure for the hurt of the world. "Shortly before his decease, people were asking the late Francis Landley Patton of Princeton about the rising, crowding, treacherous dealings that characterize the years as they pass. His simple reply was: 'There is no hope for the world save in the rehabilitation of the Christian faith of the New Testament. It is back, back, back, to the incarnate Christ and the atoning blood, or it is on, on, on, to atheism and despair.'" "These both [atheism and despair] came by the hand of the ancient Foe, who stole in early and polluted the life channels of the race. Luther well named that Foe 'the prince of darkness grim' and then added: 'We tremble not for him. His rage we can

endure; for, lo, his doom is sure. One little word shall fell him. That word is Christ, Christ Jesus, it is He. From age to age the same, and He must win the battle.' And He will if the Church will lift Him up and hold Him forth and let men see Him through His atoning blood as cure for the hurt of the world. It is not 'with God to save by many or by few.' It is with Him to save! There is none other way. None other name. It is the Church's hour to point out the way, to magnify the truth as it is in Jesus." E.

The Pacifism of the Liberals.—In some Lutheran circles a movement was recently astir to amend the Augsburg Confession and the Apology in such a way that also Lutherans might be excused from service in case of war on the ground that the Lutheran Church belongs primarily to the groups of conscientious objectors. No such amendment is in place, since what our Confessions teach with respect to the right of civil government to demand war service is based upon God's Word, the true source and norm of the Christian's faith and life. A warning against a pacifism which goes beyond Scripture is necessary because Liberalism today, finding the time right for such a message, declares it to be a sin "to fight in any capacity." The *Christian Beacon* (Jan. 11) offers a brief but nevertheless adequate editorial on the matter when it says: "The pacifism for which many of the Liberals in the Christian Church are working is that which pledges men never to fight in any war whatsoever. Wars of all kinds, regardless of whether they may be called righteous or justified, are wrong. Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick, undoubtedly voicing the position of many liberal leaders, thinks it is a sin to fight in any capacity. His position is expressed in the *Christian Century* for December 13 in the article 'Putting Christ in the Uniform.' In this article he deals with a number of texts in the Bible without going to the very basic, fundamental, moral foundation upon which the right of self-defense rests in the Scriptures. To say that war is sin under all circumstances is to deny moral distinctions. It is wrong for Fosdick to contend even for what he thinks is right. When the President appeals to the Federal Council for help in his peace move, in effect he is asking those men who think that even the defending of the United States is sin to become more active and aggressive in spreading such doctrines. A true pacifism seeks to maintain peace but will defend justice and righteousness when necessary."

This supports what the Augsburg Confession has stated long ago in Article XVI, "Of Civil Affairs," namely: "Of civil affairs they teach that lawful civil ordinances are good works of God and that it is right for Christians to bear civil office, . . . to engage in just wars, to serve as soldiers (*iure bellare, militare*)." The Apology, in its commentary on this brief statement, adds the explanatory declaration: "Public redress which is made through the office of the magistrate is not advised against but is commanded and is a work of God according to Paul, Rom. 13:1 ff. Now, the different kinds of public redress are legal decisions, capital punishment, military service." (*Triglot*, p. 331.) J. T. M.

Nihilism in Religion.—It is not news when we are told that Christian theologians are denying the absolute infallibility of the Bible. But here is a real news item: a professor is telling us that an infallible

revelation is impossible. Men being what they are, God is unable to communicate absolute truth and certainty to them. Dr. Ralph Waldo Nelson, Professor of Philosophy, who is also Professor of the Philosophy of Religion (that gives him the right to dabble in theology), elaborates this thesis in an article appearing in *Christendom*, Vol. IV, No. 3, p. 400 ff. In reading the following excerpts from his article, note that he attaches some weight to the argument advanced by many a conservative theologian, viz., that it is futile to speak of an infallible Bible, seeing that we no longer have the original manuscripts but only copies. But note particularly that he goes them one better, and that is our news item. We are told:

"I am not overlooking the passages of Scripture quoted by Calvinistic theologians in support of their doctrine of Scriptural infallibility . . . But the point here that is relevant to our present line of thought is that even such supernatural guidance would not render these written reports any more certain than human language can be. The fact is that human language is human even when God speaks it and when men quote it from Him. Of the earth earthy, its words coined by men to facilitate their understanding, description, and cooperative control of earthly things, human language simply cannot be a literal vehicle for conveying God's infallible will and wisdom to men. But for the sake of argument let us suppose that God might do something unbelievably miraculous to human language, so as to make a historic accumulation of Hebrew writings and another collection of Greek scripts capable of conveying His infallible wisdom regarding human affairs. We then face the alternative of concluding either that God blundered ignominiously in bringing such absolute writings into existence, only to allow them all to be destroyed, or that He continued this unprecedented miracle in guiding every copyist, textual critic, translator, and printer who has had a part in bringing the Bible to my desk. No one who has read the history of Hebrew and Christian scriptures would accept the latter alternative. Neither does he believe that God is a blunderer. What, then, does the earnest Christian layman, who has been taught from childhood to think in terms of dogmatic certainty and to associate this type of conviction with the foundations of his Christian faith, actually do before these equally impossible alternatives? He simply confesses his failure to understand and continues to nurse his fiction of absolutism. But a process of tragic dissolution has begun to operate within his inner springs of action and beneath the social order in which he participates. Again, for the sake of argument (now relevant to the positions of both Roman and Anglican Catholics, and Protestants), let us suppose that God has brought all this about and that the Church, the papal hierarchy, and the Bible are, any or all of them, infallible. We now confront the final question. How can any of these be infallible to the ordinary human communicant or reader? How can divine absoluteness come to men through any medium so long as it is a fact that, even if God Himself, in all His sublimity and glory, should appear in my study at this moment, I should be able to see and hear Him by no means other than my most fallible powers of perceiving and understanding? Confronting God thus immediately,

I should still be human. In a word, we have now discovered that an infallible revelation, by whatever means it might come through an authority however absolute, presupposes and requires infallible communicants or readers in order to render its own infallibility any more than a deceiving fiction. . . . We have found that, if God should supernaturally reveal Himself and His teaching to men, this revelation could not be absolute or infallible to any finite man. . . . Having discarded the myth of infallibility. . . ."

So, what is left for man seeking religious truth? God cannot give him an infallible revelation. That would seem to spell nihilism in religion. Nothing is left worth having. Oh, no, says Professor Nelson, you have a better basis for your faith than God's infallible Word. And what might that be? The article concludes with this paragraph: "When Christians consent to receive the supernatural teaching of God in the natural manner by which human beings receive all else that comes to them, they will find the Bible to be an inspired and inspiring source book, a gold-mine of initial data concerning God's plan of life for men; and they will find Christianity to be not something handed down ready-made from the past but rather a program of personal and social achievement, rooted in the past and highly illumined by records of past experience, but with its richest significance as a dynamic way of life discoverable and verifiable only in the fruits it may produce in the present and the future. By these fruits may Christians verify their faith both in God and in the good news brought from Him by Jesus; and thus verified scientifically in the experimental laboratory of human life, this faith becomes knowledge of the truth that sets men free." But this way of escape from Nihilism again lands us in Nihilism. We are asked to base our faith on "the fruits of personal and social achievement." "Thus verified scientifically in the experimental laboratory of human life, this faith becomes knowledge of the truth that sets men free"! But we cannot base our faith on something that man produces, effects, experiences. That foundation is too weak; it is as nothing. And the faith thus produced is a purely human assurance. And that counts for nothing. It is not a divine assurance. Professor Nelson would like to call it that. The title of his article is "The Supernatural Is Natural." But on his own showing the "Supernatural," God, cannot work through human agencies. Everything human is fallible.

A word or two in addition. C.H. Dodd, Professor of Exegesis at Oxford (and a professor of exegesis ought to know more about these things than a mere professor of the philosophy of religion), offers this remark in support of his thesis that the Bible is not the infallible Word of God: "In the expression 'the Word of God' lurks an equivocation. A word is properly a means of communicating thought, through vibrations of the vocal cord, peculiar to the human species. The Eternal has neither breath nor vocal cords, how should He speak words?" (*The Authority of the Bible*, p. 16.) The professor of the philosophy of religion proves the impossibility of an infallible revelation by a defect in human nature; the professor of exegesis, by a defect in God. Take your choice. The professor of philosophy seems to have the better argument.

The difference between the liberals (Nelson, Dodd) and the "conservative" theologians is that the Liberals insist that there is nothing of infallibility about the Bible,—"the myth of infallibility,"—while the so-called Conservatives say that the Bible is infallible only in spots, other portions being the work of fallible men exclusively. But both groups are alike in that the teaching of both lands us in Nihilism.

If any one should be perturbed by the argument (stressed by Nelson as well as by our Conservatives) that God did not make every copyist and printer infallible, let him read Dr. Arndt's article "Have We the Original Text of the Holy Scriptures?" C. T. M., X, p. 105 ff. E.

Pupils in New York Schools Released for Religious Instruction.—Pupils may now be released from New York schools for the purpose of receiving religious instruction, according to a recent ruling of the board of regents of the New York State Department of Education. Release may be for one hour a week and is contingent, in any particular case, on agreement of local school officials.

The board passed the following resolutions:

"That the board of regents, wishing to meet the request of parents that their children in the public schools be excused for instruction in religious education under duly constituted religious bodies of the parents' choice, recommends to the commissioner that the department issue a bulletin to the public school officials of the State expressing the view that, if the local school officials, with whom the power is lodged, wish to authorize the excusal of the children from the public schools for instruction in religious education during school-hours and outside school-buildings and -grounds for not exceeding one hour a week of school time at the close of a session, the commissioner will not consider such diminution of school time to be a violation of the compulsory education law, provided that the superintendents and teachers charged with the administration of the school program approve the particular hour or hours of release as not interfering unduly with the administration and scholastic work of the schools."

Recognition was also made of religious holidays observed particularly by the different religious bodies under the following resolution:

"A pupil registered as belonging to a particular group who is absent on a religious holiday included for such group shall be marked absent in red, and such absence shall be credited as if the pupil were present in determining the average daily attendance for equalization purposes.

"NOTE.—It is assumed that Good Friday will be included as a part of the Easter holidays. If school is held on Good Friday, the day is to be considered as included above in the list of religious holidays."

The Living Church

A Much-Needed Note.—In these days when through the unemployment situation and the difficulties of agriculture, not to mention the plight of the business man, vexing social problems raise their heads on all sides, Christian ministers, conferences, and conventions are apt to lose their balance and to forget the Church's real task. With approval we submit the following from the *Presbyterian*:

A writer for the *Dallas News* lately criticized the churches of that city for not caring adequately for the poor and unfortunate. In com-

menting on this charge, the *Baptist Standard* very properly called attention to the fact that the Church is primarily a religious and not a charity or reform institution, though many do not realize this.

"They look upon the churches as charitable and social organizations to perform social service. Such a view puts the churches in the wrong light entirely and would overwork them constantly.

"A church is not an institution for charity, but it is an organization for the promotion of religious truth. Every man outside the church is under the same obligation to relieve suffering humanity that any man in the church is under. . . . Some people look to the churches to oppose every sort of evil and take the attitude that outsiders are not as much under obligation to oppose these evils. People expect a preacher to oppose the liquor traffic, gambling, vice, immorality, dishonesty in business, oppression of the poor, and other evils. If the churches should give themselves to such matter to the extent that some outsiders claim, the matter of religion would be entirely secondary, and the main purpose for which the churches exist would be almost entirely neglected."

A.

Dr. Chapman Deceased.—While most of us may never have heard of the subject of this sketch before, Dr. John W. Chapman for forty-three years served the Protestant Episcopal Church as missionary in Alaska. He died November 27, 1939, eighty-one years old. His post in Alaska was Anvik, and it is stated that he "reduced the native dialect spoken at Anvik to writing." He helped our understanding of the language spoken in that territory by making records of native songs and of a long folk-lore tale in the Anvik dialect. The *Living Church* writes of the changes in Alaska Dr. Chapman lived to see. "During his term of service in Alaska he witnessed the development of travel in the territory from the period of the canoe and snowshoe to the steamboat and railroad to the airship as common means of travel. He saw the gold rushes pass through Anvik and lived through the period when it required several months to communicate with friends in the East. He lived to see the time when through his own wireless radio station he was able to converse, in continental Morse code, with an amateur in Berkeley, Calif. It is believed that his wireless station at Anvik was the first installed in any mission-station." As one reads this, one thinks of the mission our Oregon and Washington District carries on in Alaska and prays for divine blessings on the preaching of the Gospel in that far Northern country.

A.

Albania's Troubles with Italy seem to be not only political but likewise religious. At least that is the case with Christian work among the population of this largely Moslem land. It has been decreed by the new Fascist federal head of the Italian Prefecture in Albania that nothing religious may be published without written permission from the central office. In fact, difficulties are put in the way of evangelical missionaries using tracts and pamphlets already printed. All literature used by the Albanian Mission, including portions of the Bible printed in the Albanian tongue, have been taken over for detailed examination. The action is probably due in part to Italy's desire to avoid trouble with her new Moslem subjects by the stirring up of any religious dis-

sension; but since similar repressions have been exercised elsewhere, as in Ethiopia, under pressure from Roman Catholic authorities, it is likely that the same influence is at work in Albania. Writes one of the mission heads: "These are dark days, and we value your prayers. There are causes for thanksgiving. Two colporteurs returned last week after three days in a half-Moslem town, where they sold 119 gospels from house to house, besides distributing hundreds of leaflets. We must get the seed in before the storm breaks." — *The Lutheran*.

Brief Items.—The U. C. L. A. has lost a prominent pastor in Dr. Edwin Heyl Delk. Born in 1859, he reached a high age. He had been a member of the Publication Board of the old General Synod and president of the Board of Directors of Gettysburg Theological Seminary. His last position as pastor had been in Philadelphia. In theology he was distinctly a Liberal, sponsoring some modernistic errors.

Abraham Lincoln once belonged to a missionary society. About a year ago there appeared an article in the *Christian Advocate* by Anna Onstott which told of the documentary evidence of this little-known fact. In 1861 Abraham Lincoln paid twenty dollars and became a life member of the missionary society of the Foundry Methodist Church, Washington, D. C. In 1863, paying \$150, he became a life director. The original certificate has been found as well as the records that establish the facts. "Thus we have proof of the closest link in the religious life of Abraham Lincoln with any church." — *Lutheran Companion*.

From the *Watchman-Examiner* we see that there is a China Christian Broadcasting Association, which operates a radio station in Shanghai, China. The report says that the work of the association has met with such general success that a plan has been broached to install radio stations in several other great centers of China. Naturally the question how to supply the people with receiving-sets is a serious one. The association is furnishing such sets to the extent of its financial ability. It is pointed out that 85 per cent. of the people are illiterate, which emphasizes the extreme importance of preaching the Gospel by this means. We are happy to hear that the Lutheran Hour will be broadcast from a station in Shanghai, China, although the medium at first will be English, not Chinese.

One hundred years ago, in November, 1839, John Williams was killed and eaten by cannibals at Erromanga in the New Hebrides. According to the *London Christian* it was a tragic but triumphant end of one of the most remarkable careers in the annals of Christian missions. Williams was only 43 years of age, but into those years he had crowded a record of varied toil and achievement that has few parallels. The islands of Tahiti, Rarotonga (which he discovered), Samoa, Fiji, and the New Hebrides all came under his influence and were the scene of his labors.

Watchman-Examiner

Dr. Mark A. Matthews, minister of the First Presbyterian Church of Seattle, Wash., died on February 5, aged 72. He saw his church grow during a 38-year pastorate from 400 to 8,500 members, the largest in the denomination. He was formerly a moderator of the Presbyterian General

Assembly. To this report in the *Christian Century* we can add the interesting information that of late Dr. Matthews endeavored to establish a Christian day-school. How far his plans were realized we have not learned.

Lutherans in America are endeavoring to raise \$500,000 for the relief and assistance of Lutherans living in the war area. The director of the campaign, organized by the National Lutheran Council, is Dr. Oscar C. Mees of Canton, O. Most of the \$500,000, so the *News Bulletin* says, will be administered through the Lutheran Church in Finland, which is a part of the Lutheran World Convention. Lutheran missions in India, Africa, China, New Guinea, conducted by German societies, now cut off from all support, will be given approximately \$150,000. Help will likewise be given to Lutherans in France. Our General Relief Board has promised the National Lutheran Council \$5,000 to be used for the physical relief of German Lutheran missionaries.

Though ninety-eight per cent. of the inhabitants of Finland are Lutherans, at least nominally, Roman Catholic nuns were sent there in July, 1939. They belong to the Sisters of the Precious Blood and hail from the United States. When the war came, they fled to Holland. Now, however, they have returned to Finland and are doing work among the poor children of a certain section. Let no one say that Rome has lost its aggressiveness.

"The University of Toronto, from December 27 to January 1, was the meeting-place for 400 students from Canada and the United States who came together to consult with about sixty missionaries, educators, and secretaries of church boards concerning the World Mission of Christianity. In *personnel* and purpose as well as in potentialities it will take a worthy place in the ecumenical succession following after Oxford, Edinburgh, Madras, and Amsterdam. The conference was planned by the Student Volunteer Movement, which four years ago at Indianapolis, in a great convention of thousands, rounded out half a century of unique service to the mission-work of the churches. This conference was jointly sponsored by the Foreign Missions Conference, the University Commission of the Council of Church Boards of Education, the Interseminary Movement, the Committee on Friendly Relations among Foreign Students, the Student Christian Movement of Canada, and the National Inter-Collegiate Christian Council of the United States." So reports the *News Bulletin* of the National Lutheran Council. What an array of organizations! Twelve Lutheran institutions were represented. The purpose was to engage in study, with sharing of information and Christian fellowship. Naturally the meeting was an utterly unionistic affair.

When Abraham Lincoln moved to Washington to begin his work as President of the United States, he at once, as a writer in the *Presbyterian* reports, sought the advice of a member of his cabinet regarding the choice of a suitable church home for him and his family. He is said to have declared, "I wish to find a church whose clergyman does not preach politics." That's worth remembering. A.