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Theological Observer. - Kirchlich-Zeitgeschichtliches

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Theological Observer

The Lutheran and Lutheran Unity. In the issue of May 17, 1944, the *Lutheran* (U. L. C. A.) prints a letter written by a soldier who complains that while other Lutheran papers speak a great deal about Lutheran unity, the *Lutheran* submits no articles touching that subject. The editor, Dr. N. Mehlhorn, makes a response, and it is that response which interests us for the present. He points to the Washington Declaration (1920) and the Savannah Declaration (1934) issued by his church body, the U. L. C. A., in which he says, "The subject of Lutheran unity has been treated at length." "The Savannah Declaration led to the appointment of a commission instructed to confer with other Lutheran bodies in order to establish a united Lutheran front in America." Dr. Mehlhorn continues, "Responses were received from the American Lutheran Church, whose commissioners held meetings with ours, out of which came eventually what we now call the Pittsburgh Declaration. [The term usually employed is "Pittsburgh Agreement." A.] Its three articles were adopted at the 1940 conventions of the U. L. C. A. and of the American Lutheran Church, but the promise of pulpit and altar fellowship has not yet been fulfilled by the authorities of the latter. A commission of the Missouri Synod met that of the U. L. C. A. in [after? A.] 1935; but we are informed it declined to consider the Savannah Declaration and has not since met our representatives."

Stopping our report on Dr. Mehlhorn's remarks for a few comments, we wish to say that uninitiated readers of his response will hardly be enabled to obtain a clear picture of what happened in negotiations between the various commissions and what the present status is. As far as the A. L. C. is concerned, its Mendota Resolutions of 1942 declare that it is willing to enter into pulpit and altar fellowship with the U. L. C. A. on the basis of a full and wholehearted acceptance of and adherence to the Pittsburgh Agreement, and it speaks of the removal of existing obstacles as first being necessary. In other words, the A. L. C. is not convinced that the U. L. C. A. fully and wholeheartedly accepts the Pittsburgh Agreement—a view which certainly is justified when one recalls the large and influential minority which in the Omaha U. L. C. A. convention of 1940 fought the acceptance of this Agreement and of statements made since by prominent spokesmen of the U. L. C. A. in which the position of the minority is endorsed.

With respect to the Missouri Synod, its commission did not decline to consider the Savannah Declaration, but in the two meetings it held with the U. L. C. A. Commission it found itself in disagreement with this commission on the very first paragraph of the *Brief Statement*, the doctrinal declaration of the Missouri Synod, in which the inspiration of the Holy Scriptures is spoken of. It will be recalled that the commission of the U. L. C. A. refused to endorse what is stated there on the full inerrancy of the Holy Scriptures, some of the U. L. C. A. commissioners being unwilling to endorse the old Lutheran position that the Bible, being God's Word throughout, is free from error in whatever it says,

geographical, historical, and scientific matters included. At this point an *impasse* resulted, which automatically terminated negotiations.

Dr. Mehlhorn next mentions participation at intersynodical conferences on the part of U. L. C. A. pastors and teachers, which conferences, however, were unofficial. Then he dwells on the membership of the U. L. C. A. in the National Lutheran Council and states that "the U. L. C. A. has co-operated heartily and, we believe, effectively, with the groups that are not 'in pulpit and altar fellowship' with it, but who find no inconsistency in accepting our co-operation in planning and equipping needed ministries with personnel and material."

The final paragraph of the response should be quoted because it calls for a comment or two: "It is the conviction of the editor of the *Lutheran* that the U. L. C. A. has gone about as far in the direction of union as is possible for it to go. Our declarations are not derived from unofficial utterances in discussion groups but on [from?] the resolutions which have been adopted by our Church in convention assembled. Union of Lutheran church bodies in America is by precedent vested in action on resolutions presented and adopted by these bodies in convention assembled. So far as we are informed, only the U. L. C. A. has so expressed a desire for closer union. Other Lutheran bodies either by direct refusal or by omission of action seem to have signified their belief that the time is not at hand for anything more than 'friendly debates.' It is my opinion that these discussions, after being the accepted policy of Lutherans for about seventy-five years, have demonstrated their power to maintain our divisions." Dr. Mehlhorn's remarks are far too sweeping. To mention but one thing, he forgets that the Synodical Conference was founded with the express purpose to unite the Lutherans of America on the basis of Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions. He forgets, too, that the "friendly debates" have not been ineffectual, because out of them grew the Synodical Conference and a number of other alliances. The American Lutheran Church, for instance, was not founded without the aid of a number of "friendly debates" that preceded it.

In conclusion, it ought to be said that in the past true Lutheranism never had the aim and the desire to become a great organization able to wield political influence, but that its objective, wherever it remained true to its real spirit, always was to adhere to the Scriptures and to preach in its fullness the good news of the redemption through Christ Jesus. Its prayer always was that it might be and remain the Church of the Word, regardless of what others might think of its attitude and of the influence or lack of influence in external matters which might result. We hope that Lutherans throughout the world will continue to strive for unity, but that they will place higher than any success that might be achieved in negotiations loyalty to the divine Word. A.

The Church and Unionism.—Under this heading, the *Lutheran Herald* (April 11, 1944) offers its readers a letter of criticism and a fitting reply containing a noteworthy testimony to the truth. We read: "A deeply disturbed reader has sent us the following communication: 'For the benefit of many people in our Church who seem to be ignorant and very tolerant on the question of unionism, though they call themselves Lutheran, kindly publish in *Lutheran Herald* the position of

our Church on this subject in answering the following questions: 1. Is it not contrary to God's Word and our Lutheran confession and practice to bring Methodists, the Evangelical Free Church, Presbyterians, and Baptists into our Lutheran congregations and have revival meetings together with them, yes, even permit one of them to perform a ministerial act in a Lutheran congregation? 2. Have not our Lutheran church buildings been dedicated for Biblical, Lutheran worship and practice only? 3. Should we allow the sectarian churches with their revivals in our congregations to take part with their speaking, singing, and testimony?—It is not necessary to give specific answers to each of the three questions propounded; all deal with the same subject: Unionism. Unionism is usually defined as participation in worship or spiritual work with those with whom we are not in fellowship of faith, thereby being untrue to our confessional stand. The stand of our Church on this point is clear. The so-called 'Articles of Union,' on the basis of which the merger of 1917 was effected, include the following paragraph: 'The three bodies promise one another in all sincerity to follow the rule not to have spiritual fellowship and work with the Reformed churches and others who do not share our body's faith and confession.' (Article 3. Translated by the Editor.) Our stand on unionism is, accordingly, incorporated in the very document which brought our Church into being. In our relation to our sister synods of the American Lutheran Conference, we have taken the same stand. One of the basic documents of the Conference is the so-called 'Minneapolis Theses' which our Church adopted at the time the Conference was formed. Article III of this document, entitled 'Church Fellowship,' includes this statement: 'They [i. e., the bodies composing the Conference] agree that the rule *Lutheran pulpits for Lutheran pastors only, and Lutheran altars for Lutheran communicants only* is not only in full accord with, but necessarily implied in, the teachings of the divine Word and the Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. This rule, implying the rejection of all unionism and syncretism, must be observed as setting forth a principle elementary to sound and conservative Lutheranism.' This, then, is the official stand of the Church. We do not believe that it is being transgressed by many pastors, congregations, or individuals. It should be transgressed by none."

Unionism, especially as here described, is indeed a flagrant transgression of God's commands and a most serious hindrance to true church unity. Witness against it, by word and deed, is therefore of utmost importance and necessity, and the *Lutheran Herald* has done well in pointing out the official stand both of the Norwegian Lutheran Church of America and of the American Lutheran Conference against it. Refusal to heed Scripture on this and other points must, of course, be followed by that salutary church discipline which Scripture, too, prescribes.

J. T. M.

Methodists and the Teaching of Doctrine. A Methodist bishop stated some time ago that the distinctive characteristic of the Methodist Church is that Methodists have no distinctive doctrine. It seems that Methodists are beginning to experience whither such indifference to doctrine ultimately will lead, for Chaplain W. W. Harding says in the *Chris-*

ian Advocate: "One observation is that persons who attend services and evidence religious interest are predominantly not those to whom denominations do not matter. Catholics, Lutherans, Adventists, and various doctrinaire groups furnish the most religiously evident persons in the Army. Conversely, the soldiers to whom denomination means little or nothing are the men to whom religion itself is hardly significant." Methodism, which claims to emphasize exclusively Christian living, is beginning to realize that an emotional sermon will never reach the desired goal. May the Lutheran Church continue to be a doctrinal Church, not only in its instruction of the children, but also in its preaching in the pulpit.

F. E. M.

Canterbury and the Church's Social Obligations.—The archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. William Temple, recently published a comprehensive article in which he speaks of the position of the Church and the Christian in the world today. The article is surprisingly conservative when one considers the many contacts that the archbishop has had with social gospel people. To a far greater extent than a person would expect he emphasizes the old truths that have always been set forth by conservative theologians in such a context. It is impossible for us to reprint the article. Nor can we here well present a penetrating critique of everything the archbishop submits. We should like to acquaint our readers with some of the chief views he espouses.

The archbishop believes that what Christians who have earnestly grappled with the questions involved have arrived at as their conclusions can be presented in five affirmations or decisions. The first one is a decision "for God who has spoken." "A 'decision for God' involves a sharp separation in thought, and therefore in the long run in practice, from many dominant tendencies of our time which seek the whole fulfillment of man's life in his earthly existence." A second decision is "for neighbor." "Between the decision for God and the decision for neighbor there is a most intimate connection. In the New Testament these are always intertwined. We should in all remembrance of God remember also our neighbor and in all thought of our neighbor think also of God. Our highest act of worship is not a mystic 'flight of the alone to the Alone,' but a fellowship meal, a Holy Communion. We come before God as 'our Father,' to whom all His other children have the same right of access; the truth about God is, among other things, His universal Fatherhood." The third decision is "for man as rooted in nature." "There is need of a much clearer recognition of the part played in human behavior by subconscious egoisms, interests, deceptions, and determinisms imposed by man's place in nature and history, by his cultural patterns, and by his sinfulness." "If Christians are to act with effect in the temporal order, it is necessary, as was said at the beginning, to distinguish more clearly than is commonly done between the two distinct spheres of society and Church or the different realms of Law and Gospel."

The fourth decision is "for history." "If history is to have a meaning, there must be some central point at which that meaning is decisively disclosed. The Jews found the meaning of their history in the call of Abraham, the deliverance from Egypt, and the covenant with God following upon it. For Mohammedans the meaning of history has its

center in Mohammed's flight from Mecca. For Marxists the culminating meaning is belief in the emergence of the proletariat. The Nazis vainly pinned their hopes to the coming of Hitler. For Christians the decisive meaning of history is given in Christ." "A decision for history confronts us with two urgent practical tasks. The first is to disabuse the minds of people of the notion, which is widespread and infects to a large extent current Christian preaching, that Christianity is in essence a system of morals, so that they have lost all understanding of the truth, so prominent in the New Testament, that to be a Christian is to share in a new movement of life and to co-operate with new regenerating forces that have entered into history. The second task is to restore hope to the world through a true understanding of the relation of the kingdom of God to history as a transcendent reality that is continually seeking and partially achieving embodiment in the activities and conflicts of the temporal order."

The fifth decision is "for the Gospel and the Church." "In the tasks of society Christians can and must co-operate with all those, Christians or non-Christians, who are pursuing aims that are in accord with the divinely intended purpose of man's temporal life. But Christians are constrained to believe that in the power of the Gospel of redemption and in the fellowship of the Church lies the chief hope of the restoration of the temporal order to health and sanity. What none but utopians can hope for the secular world should be a matter of actual experience in the Church. For the Church is the sphere where the redemptive act of God lifts men into the most intimate relation with himself and through that with one another. When this is actually experienced, the stream of redemptive power flows out from the Church through the lives of its members into the society which they influence. But only a Church firm in the faith set forth in outline earlier in this essay can give to its members the inspiration which they need for meeting the gigantic responsibilities of this age. Spiritual resources far beyond anything now in evidence will be needed. It may be that the greatness of the challenge will bring home to Christians how impotent they are in themselves, and so lead to that renewal which will consist in rediscovery of the sufficiency of God and manifestation of His power."

The thoughts contained in the quotations submitted above are couched in somewhat philosophical language, and at times it is not easy to understand the archbishop. Now and then the thought seems rather vague and indefinite. The emphasis on the doctrine of free grace and full forgiveness through the work of Christ is lacking. But one is glad to see that this prominent churchman at least turns away from the social gospel as it is preached by Modernism and insists that what is needed is the preaching of the Gospel of redemption. A.

Lutheran Literature in Spanish — Through Dr. Streufert we have heard of translations of Lutheran works that have appeared in Buenos Aires in the Spanish language. The volumes are very neat and attractive. Among them is Luther's exposition of the Lord's Prayer: "Martino Lutero, El Padranuestro"; Melancthon's article on Justification by Faith in the Apology of the Augsburg Confession: "Felipe Melancthon, La Justificacion Por La Fe"; and Luther's famous treatise on the Liberty

of the Christian Man: "La Libertad Cristiana." It fills a person with joy to see this dissemination of Lutheran gems in a Roman Catholic country and, at that, in the language of the people. May the venture continue and help to spread the saving truth. A.

The Seventh Luther Academy. Wartburg Theological Seminary, Dubuque, Iowa, will hold the sessions of the Lutheran Academy this year from July 11 to 20. Last year, it will be recalled, the Academy was not in session on account of war conditions. The topics to be discussed are the following: Studies in the Gospel According to St. John, The Basis of Luther's Social Ethic, Selected Old Testament Texts, Social Problems Facing the Church, Illustrated Lectures on Church Art, Preaching in Our Day, Some Recent Literature in the Field of Church History, Qualifications for the Ministry, The Church and the Service Men, The Family Altar and Evangelism, Challenge of Latin America, The Liturgical Movement in Non-Lutheran Protestantism, Eight Meditations on the Means of Grace (Chapel Services), Visual Aids Clinic (Lectures and Demonstration). Inquiries for rates and reservations are to be addressed to Rev. W. F. Goetz, Wartburg Seminary, Dubuque, Iowa.

Economics and Religion.—A writer in *America* (Roman Catholic weekly) quite thoroughly and in an enlightening manner expounds the view of recent Popes on economic issues. He contends that economic liberalism is dead and yet is often spoken of as though it still were the dominant force in the economic life and development of our country. What is meant by economic liberalism is stated in words of Macaulay written about a hundred years ago, "Our rulers will best promote the improvement of the people by strictly confining themselves to their own legitimate duties—by leaving capital to find its most lucrative course, commodities their fair price, industry and intelligence their natural reward, idleness and folly their natural punishment—by maintaining the peace, by defending property, by diminishing the price of law, and by observing strict economy in every department of the State. Let the Government do this—the people will assuredly do the rest." Roman Catholic leadership took issue with this view and condemned, as *America* says, "the practice of unlimited competition." The reason given is that "such competition favors the survival of those who are strongest or who pay the least heed to the dictates of conscience." It is contended that "rugged individualism has destroyed free enterprise." "In the course of time," so our writer says, "the ideal of free competition was largely dropped, and emphasis was laid on freedom of contract and freedom from State interference." Against this position the Church's leadership urged recognition of the "natural right of workers to organize and bargain collectively with their employers." It was even suggested that it would be a good thing if the wage contract were modified by a partnership arrangement which would give to labor a share in the ownership or management or profits of business. And employers were reminded that "a just wage is a family living wage and that an economic system which provided less was badly in need of overhauling." The ideal of freedom from State interference likewise was declared wrong. The principle was enunciated, "The civil power is more than the mere guardian of law and order." Governments are praised which have

become "more conscious of their obligation to see that justice is done to the working class and to promote a broader social policy." Just as free competition cannot be regarded as the ideal to be striven for in a state, so economic despotism (the right and practice of the employer to deal with the individual employee rather than with the whole group) "must be curbed and ruled by the State." In modern society, as it is constituted at present, the State is "bound to intervene for the purpose of protecting the common good."

We have quoted extensively because in this article of *America* the issues with which modern economic debates concern themselves are clearly stated. For the Bible Christian the issues can be put in these three questions: Does the Bible, our sacred rule for doctrine and life, tell us whether the principle of free competition should be defended or opposed? Does it say whether freedom of contract on the part of the employer and the individual employee must be upheld or condemned? Does it teach that the State may pass special legislation for the benefit of the less privileged classes, or does it state that such a course would be unethical? The answer is obvious. The Bible is not a book dealing with questions of political science and economics. It does not legislate for the State. It does lay down broad rules for the individual Christian. It has given us a grand maxim: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." That the Christian should remember and follow this rule not merely in his home and his private life but also in his business dealings and in his political activities as well, we believe no one will dispute. The special forms in which this disposition of love and helpfulness toward the neighbor must manifest itself have to be determined by circumstances and cannot be enumerated in advance. These few lines are written in the hope that they will help our readers in their endeavor to clarify their own thinking on the question where and to what extent religious principles must be heeded in the economic field.

A.

Do Our Seminaries Require More Courses in Professional Skills? —
On this subject Dr. Foelsch, president of the Chicago Lutheran Seminary of the U. L. C. A., says in the course of an article in the *Lutheran* of April 5:

"Men blame the seminaries; and in no small way they are rightly blamed. The seminaries produce the preachers; therefore the Church, humanly speaking, cannot possibly be greater than its seminaries; and the people—*qualis rex, talis grex!* Now where lies the trouble at the seminaries? Here is one trouble—our faculties are often so busy with peripheral matters that the one thing the Church rightly demands of a theological professor, *to think*, is honored in the breach.

"The aim of the superior man is truth, and he'll not find it listening to the throb of Pullman wheels as he dashes off to meetings—literally in all directions—at the call of this or that board or committee or commission. He *may* render a worthy bit of help here or there or yonder, but meantime his main business is neglected. Now don't blame the professor, but blame the Church for this. One can't imagine Henry Eyster Jacobs constantly being called hither and yon to meetings at somebody's whim. Nor Revere Franklin Weidner! Those giants spent

long hours in their study daily — and studied, prayerfully delving deep. That's how they came to be giants of the mind and of theology! They thought the faith through and caught its glory and made the dogmatical riches of it, locked up in other languages, available to the Church in America. Their students were taught to think it through, too, and then went out passionately to preach that 'systematic but fundamentally simple doctrine.' 'In this crisis' we must have mentors who think, who know why and what they believe, every jot and tittle of it.

"Let the seminaries, therefore, not yield to the ill-considered demand for more courses in professional skills. The tricks of the trade have their day and cease to be. Tomorrow there will be a new way of folding the hands as one walks across the chancel and a new approach to church publicity, perhaps even a new technique of evangelism. What, then, if a preacher's brain and heart and hand hold but skills; how can he be a flame of fire, how a messenger of God?"

A.

Merger of Congregational-Christian and Evangelical-Reformed Churches Planned. A report from Philadelphia states that committees of the two church bodies mentioned have held a joint meeting and have approved tentative plans for the merger of their church bodies. It is stated that public opinion in both bodies seems to favor the merger. In June both churches will meet in their regular conventions to discuss the report of the joint committee. Final action consummating the merger is expected in 1946. The sponsors of the union have some difficulty in finding a name for the new body. The following names have been suggested: "The United Church"; "The United Church in America"; "The United Church, a Communion of the Church of Christ in America"; "The Church of Christ in the United States." If the union is brought about, the new body will number about two million members. Considering the laxity with respect to doctrine prevailing in the circles concerned, a merger of these bodies seems to be the logical thing.

A.

Bigotry Characterized. In an address which Dr. P. O. Bersell, president of the Augustana Synod, delivered at the installation of Dr. S. C. Eastbold as president of the Pacific Lutheran College, Parkland, Wash., November 28, 1943, he quoted these words of a Lutheran college president concerning that "pseudo-Christianity which fosters bigotry, dogmatism, and intolerance," "It places Christian faith on any Procrustean bed that happens to be the rational model at that time, and the body of living faith is reduced to a manageable corpse." Everybody will admit that that is striking phraseology. Too often in their attempts to rationalize their doctrines and to put them into a certain mold or pattern, theologians do twist and wrench the Scripture passages to such an extent that they become denatured and no longer have any life in them. This wrong use of Scripture texts must, of course, not induce a person to go to the other extreme and take all Scripture texts lightly, confining himself to bare generalities. The answer to intolerance is not toleration of error. The Christian theologian who prayerfully adheres to the teachings of the Word of God as they appear on the sacred page will avoid the two extremes, that of dogmatism and bigotry and that of doctrinal laxity and indifference.

A.

Episcopalian Disunity. In an article in the *Christian Century* of May 10 having the title "What Is Disturbing Episcopalians?" Prof. W. Norman Pittenger, member of the faculty of General Theological Seminary, New York, of the Protestant Episcopal Church, says among other things, in discussing difficulties which his church body faces, that with respect to the ministry there is a difference which "becomes marked, aggravated, sometimes painful in the extreme." "The recent discussion of relations with the Presbyterians and the several proposals made in that regard have in my opinion done more to create discord in the Episcopal Church than anything that has happened for many years. The reason for this is plain: These proposals have forced out into the open the real differences and divergences which were latent. New alignments have been brought about; varying kinds of Evangelicals and Catholics, Liberals of one sort or another, have found themselves in agreement with those whom they had formerly considered 'in the other camp.' But by and large Catholics of all stripes, conservative and liberal, and Evangelicals of all stripes, oldfashioned and 'ecumenical,' have taken opposing positions, while the central body has found that in the main it was sympathetic with attempts at reunion but suspicious of any plan that would alter, in any degree, the place of the episcopate as the Episcopal Church has generally, if vaguely, maintained it. The question has not been a simple one. It is not merely whether the episcopate is of the *esse* of the church and whether therefore the proposed plan did or did not water it down or give it away. It has been much deeper. It has concerned the whole matter of order, of the relation of church as Body of Christ to ministry as representative functioning agent of that Body, of the place of the episcopate in such a functional ministry — or, in essence, the relation of faith and order."

Speaking of the role which this subject played at the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church last year, Dr. Pittenger says, "It was, so some of us think, only by the grace of God that a very serious break, if not in actual allegiance, at least in friendship and common *loyal* membership, was prevented last autumn when the General Convention met to discuss these and many other questions. The statesmanship of four widely trusted bishops, the Christian understanding of men like the new bishop of Washington, who tempered the proposals so that they could be accepted for discussion but not taken as binding on the church, and the almost providential refusal of delegates to engage in public controversy on the matter, saved the Episcopal Church from a display of real, maybe fatal, disagreement within itself. What would have happened had the proposals been actually adopted? It is hard to say in detail; what is certain is that a large group of devout Episcopalians of the catholic persuasion would have found their position extraordinarily difficult, perhaps impossible in the long run. This may be regrettable, but it happens to be true."

It is impossible for a Lutheran who has learned from 1 Peter 2 that all Christians are priests and from 1 Corinthians 3 and 4 that ministers are but servants, and that hence they do not constitute a special rank, and who through his reading of the New Testament in general has become convinced that our Lord and the Apostles did not establish a

hierarchy, to see how the Protestant Episcopal contention concerning the authority and succession of bishops can be held. Here there is one of the vestiges of Romanism which the Church of England kept and cultivated. And that it is by no means an innocuous relic is now becoming apparent. A.

The Case of Father Orlemanski. Who is Father Orlemanski? Newspaper readers know that he recently went to see Stalin and that since he had no authorization to interview that leader, he was suspended and now professing repentance is re-instated as priest of the Catholic Church. *America* (Jesuit weekly) says, "Father Orlemanski, like the prophets, is not without honor save in his own country; for Moscow went all out to make him welcome. His coming was front page news, and the wire photo services hummed with his picture, in company with Marshal Stalin and M. Molotov. Evidently Father Orlemanski is someone of importance in Soviet eyes. His purpose, he told the A. P. correspondent, is to promote a democratic Poland, friendly to the U. S. S. R." According to the *Christian Century*, Roman Catholic spokesmen declared that Father Orlemanski "represented only himself and not the Church in his mission to Moscow, and that he has gone off the reservation entirely in collaborating with the arch-Communist and announcing to the world the Soviet leader's benevolent intentions toward Poland and religion." It appears quite certain that what this priest pleaded for in his interview with Stalin was not religious liberty for Poland, but special privileges for the Roman Catholic hierarchy. This is what he said, "As to religion, the religion of our forefathers shall be the religion of the Polish people, and Marshal Stalin will not tolerate any transgression in this regard."

This is fully consonant with the Roman hierarchy's conception of freedom of religion where the majority of inhabitants are Roman Catholics. A.

A Decision Pertaining to Religious Liberty. In the case of the *United States vs. Ballard*, which was before the United States Supreme Court not long ago, a decision was handed down for which one must be truly grateful. The case had to do with the "I am" movement, a thoroughly fantastic, heterodox, faith-destroying affair. In a Federal court a jury had condemned certain promoters of this movement on the charge that they were using the mails to defraud people. The issue, as the judge pointed out to the jury, was not whether the religious views of the defendants were right or wrong, but whether they were conscious, deliberate deceivers, using their religious tenets to enrich themselves at the expense of gullible people, tenets which they themselves did not believe. The Circuit Court of Appeals reversed the judgment and held that consideration of the religious beliefs of these people should not have been excluded from the trial. The United States Supreme Court set aside this decision of the Court of Appeals and upheld the first judge in his view of the case. The decision according to the *Christian Century* contained these statements, "Freedom of thought embraces the right to maintain theories of life and of death and of the hereafter which are rank heresy to the followers of the orthodox faiths. Heresy trials are foreign to our Constitution. Men may believe, but they cannot prove. They may not be put to the proof of their religious doctrines or beliefs."

... The miracles of the New Testament, the divinity of Christ, life after death, the power of prayer, are deep in the religious convictions of many. If one could be sent to jail because a jury in a hostile environment found these teachings false, little would be left of religious freedom. . . . The religious views espoused by respondents might seem incredible, if not preposterous to most people. But if those doctrines are subject to trial before a jury charged with finding their truth or falsity, then the same can be done with the religious beliefs of any sect."

These words represent true Americanism.

A.

Religious Conditions in France. A very disquieting item appeared in a correspondence from Lisbon printed in the *Christian Century*. Speaking of France, the writer says, "Those who believe that any important change in the religious situation in France has been brought to pass by recent events there might well ponder some facts given by Father H. Godin and Father Y. Daniel in an article in a recent number of *Le Christianisme au XXe Siecle*. For example, a priest who was challenged to find 12 avowed Christians among the workers in a parish of 40,000 could not do so. Among 70,000 women doing 'voluntary' labor in Germany last year the chaplain appointed to work among civilians knew only 30 names. Of these, only 10 were interested in the Catholic Youth Movement. After the age of 20 only one person of the young workers of Paris continued to receive religious instruction, and the figure falls to one in 300 between the ages of 20 and 40." In other words, the population of France is reverting to paganism. The Roman Catholic Church is still carrying on its work with its externalism and emphasis on ceremonies, but it has lost its influence on the masses.

A.

The Methodist General Convention. Early in May this year the General Convention of the Methodist Church, representing eight million members, met in Kansas City, Mo. The convention made the headlines chiefly because, contrary to predictions, it adopted a resolution supporting the war. The respective vote among the clergy was very close, 170 ministers voting affirmatively and 169 negatively. The vote among the lay delegates in favor of the resolution was 203 to 131. The committee in a majority report had merely recommended that the 1940 position should be reaffirmed, according to which "the Methodist Church will not officially endorse, support, or participate in war." The resolution proposed by the minority report and adopted by the convention reads, "God Himself has a stake in the struggle. . . . In Christ's name we ask for the blessing of God upon the men in the armed forces, and we pray for victory. . . . We are well within the Christian position when we assert the necessity of the use of military force to resist an aggression which would overthrow every right which is held sacred by civilized men." To us it seems that the majority report was based on solid ground when it held that the Church should not pass judgment on a political question.

From the *Protestant Voice* we glean a number of additional facts about the convention and the Methodist Church in general. Methodists now have 25,377 preachers. The denomination in four years has lost 432,168 pupils in its Sunday schools. Of its foreign missionaries 1,200 are still active and three fourths of all its foreign fields are still operating.

The attempt to obtain full preaching rights for women was overwhelmingly defeated. Gen. Chiang Kai Shek, a Methodist, had cabled greetings. From another report we learn that total wartime prohibition was endorsed.

A.

Brief Items.—Twenty missionaries of the Norwegian Lutheran Church of America stationed near the Chinese battle front have been able to carry on their work during the last year without interference from the Japanese, it was reported at the annual meeting of the Church's Foreign Board. It was voted to call four Seniors at Luther Seminary, St. Paul, as new missionaries to China. They will study the language for one year at Berkeley, Calif.—*The Lutheran*.

On April 8 Dr. Sidney B. Snow, president of the Unitarian Meadville Theological Seminary, died in Chicago. This seminary is now affiliated with the Divinity School of University of Chicago.

According to press reports the bombing to which Germany is subjected has destroyed big stores of theological books, for instance, in that great book center Leipzig. When that city was bombed, the so-called "publishers' district" was wiped out, and an untold number of theological books perished. Germany, and with it the world, apparently faces a famine of theological books.

The Bible now has either wholly or in part been published in 1,062 languages. In 1943 four new languages were employed to give parts of the Scriptures to the respective people—Walamo, which is used in Ethiopia, Yipounou and Yisangou for sections of French Equatorial Africa, and Gunwingu, which latter language is spoken by natives of Northern Australia.

The Roman Catholic press in Great Britain and America generally see a political motive behind the statement recently made by Patrick Sergius of the Russian Orthodox Church challenging the Pope's right to call himself the vicar of Christ. They associate it with the fact that the Russian armies are occupying Catholic territories in Poland. So writes the *Christian Century*. Of course, Rome would manage to find some ulterior motive if its supremacy is challenged.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, so the press reports, is advocating that the palaces now forming the dwellings of English bishops be used for other purposes. Though the salaries of English bishops are very high, the expense of maintaining their establishment is enormous, and a poor person can hardly afford to become an Anglican bishop.

Concerning union with the Episcopalians, the *Presbyterian* says, "The impression is that efforts in this direction have not been very fruitful of definite results during the last year. After all, the place to build this union is in the local parish and not at the conference table of the committees." The paper favors union with the Southern Presbyterians, saying, "To us this union seems like the very first step in any kind of authentic ecumenicity. If brethren so closely connected by historic origins and natural ties cannot get together, then what practical chance is there that other unions far less natural can be consummated?"

Walther Memorial Hospital, conducted under the auspices of the Chicago Lutheran Hospital Association (1116 N. Kedzie Ave.) is looking for nurses. It "offers young women 18—35 years of age, high school graduates, a three-year nurse's course, including books, uniforms, no tuition, and with complete maintenance."

One is glad to hear that on April 17 the House of Representatives unanimously passed a resolution urging the administration to send food to the countries in Western and Northern Europe dominated by the Nazis. Similar work has already been done for poor bleeding Greece.

Someone has said that the business of the ministry is "to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable."—F. W. Burnham in the *Christian Century*.

America (Roman Catholic weekly) argues against the granting of divorces by citing this instance: "A California wife instituted divorce action charging that her husband had married her on a bet; that he would drop her off at a cheap movie house, then go to a good one; that he would not let her buy the food, 'and we had Hamburger, sweet potatoes and gravy three months straight.'" Sad, of course. And still this does not justify Rome in rejecting all divorces.

Dr. Herbert L. Willett, 80, for many years one of the editors of *The Christian Century*, died March 28 at Winter Park, Florida. He was professor of Old Testament language and literature at the University of Chicago, outstanding leader of the Disciples of Christ, one of the organizers and principal pioneers of the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America.—F. E. M.

We fully agree with *America* when it in indignation says, "Literally tons of paper have been wasted in describing in disgusting detail the Lonergan trial, the Chaplin trial, the Rother trial, and the host of ripe divorce proceedings. . . . Should we not begin to blame . . . the press that presents so eagerly, so vividly, so minutely, every detail of every sordid case that comes along?"

Disconcerting news comes from Kentucky. Gov. Simeon Willis is said to have signed a bill which gives counties the right "to provide at their expense for transportation of both parochial and public school pupils to their schools." The Roman hierarchy has been working for such a law for a long time. On the face of it, it may seem a fair provision. What is alarming is that here the State supports sectarian schools. From here it is merely one step to direct support of private religious schools with the funds of the State.

Concerning the men returning from the front as casualties, between one third and one half, we are told, are suffering from mental or nervous illness. (See *America* for April 8, 1944.) With respect to them a difficult task faces Christian pastors.

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