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## Theological Observer. - Kirchlich-Zeitgeschichtliches

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## Theological Observer

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**The Church and the Returning Soldier.**—The *Living Church* (May 21, 1944) directs attention to the important subject of the returning soldier and his relation to the Church in a brief but well-prepared article. Beginning with the letter of a bewildered mother regarding her aviator son, in which she complains that her son "is so very different from the way he was when he left home," the writer suggests three things which the churches should do to keep servicemen and servicewomen with the Church. "First," he says, "the Church should keep in touch with their service personnel wherever they may be, and, if they have returned, keep in close touch with them especially during the period of adjustment. Second, the Church leaders should keep themselves informed about the provisions of the Federal, State, and community agencies for returning servicemen and servicewomen, but the Church should not seek to compete with these agencies. The Church has a special mission." The writer in this connection quotes a Marine officer who said: "I hope that you will emphasize that the Church is still the one agency which, because of its long experience, is equipped to do and give something which no secular agency can give. Urge the Church not to compete with the United States Employment Service, the American Legion, the Chambers of Commerce, the Labor Unions, and other agencies which are working in the employment field." To this the writer of the article remarks: "I agree with this officer. The Church should not enter the employment field, but should be able to direct the returning soldier to the proper agency if such assistance is needed." He adds: "Third, the Church's specific and definite responsibility is to get these men and women to be active members in the Fellowship of Christ's religion. Ninety per cent of this task lies with the local church. Denominational headquarters or church federations may be able to offer suggestions, but success or failure will largely depend on local imagination, local devotion, the thought and action of vestries or boards of parishes, and the interest of individual congregations." Speaking of the men and women returning now, he writes: "We pray that the time will come quickly when all the servicemen and servicewomen will return, but now they are returning quietly, one or two at a time. Some have been physically incapacitated. Many more will be suffering from spiritual, mental, and social disabilities. If the Church is to serve the spiritual needs of the returning service personnel, it must understand them. It must realize that these men and women cannot be expected to settle down into the routine existence from which they have been uprooted. They will need a vast amount of personal friendship. To do this job, we must care enough to listen. The most important thing is our attitude. If we are critical or sentimental, we will not be helpful. So much depends on the way in which we listen. It must be genuine, interested listening. Otherwise we will do more harm than good. If we can learn now how to minister to those who are returning to civilian life, we shall



be better prepared to minister to the larger number when the fighting ceases."

The writer, it seems, has some valuable suggestions to make, simple though they be. If the Church keeps in touch with its service personnel, adheres to its special spiritual work, though also preparing itself to advise questioners concerning the somewhat elemental, but nevertheless essential bread-and-butter problems, and, above all, if it meets them with sympathetic understanding and applies to them the sanctifying and consoling ministry of the Word and the healing ministry of sincere Christian love, there is no reason why it should not keep former members with the Church and win new ones. After all, the problem is not too complex. The application of God's Word, of Christian love, and of sanctified common sense will solve this as well as other problems confronting the Church.

J. T. M.

**The Bishop of Iceland Visits Our Country.**—This spring a number of Lutherans met a distinguished visitor from Iceland, the most Rev. Sigurgeir Sigurdsson, bishop of that Lutheran country. As the *Lutheran* reports, he came as the guest of the Icelandic League in the United States and Canada and attended its twenty-fifth anniversary meeting in Winnipeg on Feb. 21—23. The bishop's itinerary has been transcontinental. He was entertained in Pacific Coast cities by both civic and ecclesiastical authorities. His arrival in New York is, according to information now available, the conclusion of his tour. At Wagner College, Staten Island, N. Y., the degree of doctor of divinity was conferred on him, President F. H. Knubel of the U. L. C. A. making the speech of presentation. The bishop in response said, "We of the Lutheran Church in Iceland wish to co-operate with all Lutheran groups. There is no excuse for dissension or fighting among ourselves. This is childish. Our chief efforts should be against materialism and the attitude of mind that is out of sympathy with the great work the Church has to do. After we have done our share in reconstructing the world, then we can have the privilege and luxury, if we like, of fighting among ourselves. But until then there is work to do." The bishop here is overshooting the mark. To quarrel merely for quarrel's sake, to cause divisions in the Church over questions that have not been decided by the Word of God, to come to blows over ceremonies and other outward matters, is indeed childish. But to uphold the truth as given us in the Holy Scriptures belongs to a different category. Where God has spoken, no Lutheran, if he is true to the Lutheran heritage and to the spirit which Luther himself manifested, can afford to adopt an attitude of indifference.

A.

**May Chaplains Follow Their Conscience?**—In a recent article that appeared in the *Lutheran Companion* (Augustana Synod) the statement occurs, "In the Army, Lutheran chaplains must administer Communion to men of all denominations. . . . This war should bring about a better understanding and more brotherhood and good will among Protestant churches." While we shall be grateful for every inch of better understanding between the various denominations, we should deplore it very much if the work of chaplains led to indifferentism in doctrine. One



of our chaplains writes us that the information submitted in the *Lutheran Companion* article referred to is not correct. We quote, "It simply is not true that 'In the Army, Lutheran chaplains must administer Communion to men of all denominations.' Least of all is a Lutheran chaplain obliged to administer Holy Communion at a union service. If a Baptist soldier desires Communion, a Lutheran chaplain has the full right to invite a Baptist clergyman, in or out of the Army, to minister to him. The Lutheran chaplain is not compelled to do one thing in violation of his conscience." Everybody can see that many difficult situations arise for a chaplain to whom men of all denominations turn for counsel and advice. The above statement of one of our chaplains, however, is reassuring in its definite assertion that the Government does not expect any chaplain to do a thing that violates his conscience. A.

**Churchmen Favor Humane Treatment of Germany.**—What test should be applied to proposals concerning the future of Germany? If a distinguished group of American churchmen have their way, the decisive question will be: "Will this policy prepare the German people for a constructive part in European life ten years from now, or will its chief effect be to keep Germany a center of infection at the heart of Europe?" In a notable "Statement of the Peace Settlement in Europe with Special Reference to Germany" this group, which was appointed by the Commission on a Just and Durable Peace of the Federal Council but which speaks on its own authority, provides four principles on which the United Nations may build a constructive Germany. The first rules out revenge. Germany would be required to restore stolen property and to aid in rebuilding what her armies have destroyed. But there must be no long period of reparations, they declare. "The discipline of Germany because of the crimes she has committed should not be controlled by a spirit of vindictiveness but by concern for European recovery and peace." The second point opposes the proposed dismemberment of Germany into separate states but favors instead the inclusion of that country in a larger federation of European states. The third principle is that "our policy in dealing with Germany should be calculated to strengthen the forces inside Germany which are committed to freedom and international co-operation." The ten signers declare that they believe "millions of Germans have not been deeply corrupted by nazism" and that the cleansing of their national life should be primarily their own work. Finally, they hold that "while corrective and precautionary measures are taken to end the menace of nazism and militarism in Germany, efforts should be made to enable the people of Germany to find for themselves the necessary economic conditions for a good life." Signing the document are John C. Bennett, chairman, R. H. Edwin Espy, Harry Emerson Fosdick, William Ernest Hocking, Rufus Jones, William Allen Neilson, Reinhold Niebuhr, O. Frederick Nolde, Henry Pitney Van Dusen, and Arnold Wolfers.

*Christian Century*, June 14, 1944

**On Conference Attendance.**—One of our pastors, instructed by his conference to send out a note of admonition and encouragement to bring about better attendance of the meetings, wrote to his conference brethren as follows, "Neglect of conference is a harmful thing for us personally



and for our Church. Past experience has proved that in many instances diligent and regular attendance at conferences is necessary and of inestimable benefit to each and all of us. None of us have yet reached that stage, nor shall we ever reach it, where we are no more in need of practicing instruction, supervision, discipline among ourselves. Cf. Synod's By-Laws, Art. 7, B, 4. Synod expects us to arrange conferences and to attend them. In this way Synod's objective will be kept before us and furthered, 'the conservation and promotion of the unity of true faith and a united defense against schisms and sectarianism.' (Constitution, Art. 3, 1.) In its By-Laws, Art. 7, B, on 'Conferences,' Synod recommends that, in addition to the conferences mentioned above, the pastors and teachers, if possible (for us it is possible), shall arrange for smaller conferences and meet for the purpose of discussing important and necessary doctrinal and practical matters.' Must not such earnest recommendation and encouragement on the part of our Synod move us to take our conferences with conscientious seriousness and encourage us to be diligently regular in attending them?" — We merely add, Let us all read and heed.

A.

**Brief Items.** — In Atlanta, Ga., there is a Christian day school conducted by members of a Presbyterian Church. It has the name "Napsonian School," derived from the full title "North Avenue Presbyterian School." Pastor Adolph R. Meyer of Augusta, Ga., writes us that the school has 18 teachers at the present time and that in the last semester 299 were enrolled. It begins with kindergarten and has a full high school department. Pastor Meyer adds, "The school has its own board of directors and operates as an independent unit." This faith-strengthening venture has been in existence for about 34 years.

The Young Men's Christian Association this year celebrates its hundredth anniversary. Its founder was a young London clerk, George Williams. To the extent that the Association helped to bring people to Christ we rejoice in its existence. With sorrow we think of it that often it cultivated indifference in doctrine.

Concerning the Methodists, a prominent spokesman of the denomination said in winter, "The Methodist position will not officially endorse, support, or participate in war." However, the Methodist convention held in Kansas City early in May took a different stand. With a vote of 773 to 300 it adopted this statement: "God Himself has a stake in the struggle. . . . The Church must speak unequivocally regarding the attack upon civilization which has been made by the forces of aggression." The absolute pacifist position was condemned.

One of our service pastors draws attention to statements made by modernistic Dr. Leiper in a recent article in the *Christian Century*. Among other things Dr. Leiper said, "What about conservative reactionary Christianity? The answer is that there is no reason to expect us to have intelligent or consistent outside support from Christian sources — certainly no 'unified' or 'authoritative' support as far as Protestantism is concerned." The pastor very correctly adds, "That I consider a challenge to our Lutheran Church."



Southern Baptists are called the "problem child" of American Protestantism" by the editor of the *Christian Century* because of their persistent isolationism. The truth of the matter is that these Baptists refuse to accept Modernism with its rejection of fundamental teachings of the Scriptures.

The Presbyterians have either under their control or affiliated with them three classes of seminaries: Seminaries fully controlled by the General Assembly, seminaries related co-operatively to the General Assembly and to other denominations, and seminaries not fully controlled by, or related to, the General Assembly. "In the second group come seminaries like that at Louisville, Ky., which is under the joint control of our denomination and another." The third group, we imagine, would be represented by Union Seminary, New York, which used to be under Presbyterian supervision.

According to a Catholic authority there are almost twice as many priests in the United States alone as there are in all Latin America put together. For about 22 million Catholics in this country, including children, there are over 36,000 priests and 150,000 nuns. In the 18 Latin American nations put together, with an aggregate population of about 120 millions, it has been estimated that there are less than 19,000 priests. — *The Presbyterian*.

In England there is a severe shortage of clergymen. Congregationalists have stated that "one hundred fewer denominational churches are under ministerial supervision at present than in 1939; that of 1,600 ministers in active pastoral service 246 are over the normal retirement age; that while 165 churches are now seeking ministers, it is estimated that only 35 new pastors will be available in 1944 and 29 in 1945." This information is submitted in the *Protestant Voice*.

England has lost a prominent Congregationalist, Dr. W.B. Selby, who succeeded Dr. Fairbairn as head of Mansfield College, a Congregational school at Oxford. He served as head of the school from 1909 till 1932, in which latter year he retired.

A.

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It has been our custom to retain the names of our subscribers on our lists for two numbers after the subscription has expired, so that the subscriptions could be continued without interruption in case a renewal came in late. We were very happy to follow this plan at extra expense, but we are now unable to continue this policy because of present conditions.

Our Government has insisted that we reduce consumption of paper and eliminate all possible waste. Because of the restriction in the use of paper it will become necessary to discontinue subscriptions to all of our periodicals with the last number paid for under the subscription agreement. We shall, however, continue our policy of reminding our subscribers of the expiration of the subscription by inserting the usual number of notices in the second last and the last numbers of the periodicals they receive. It is our sincere hope that our subscribers will co-operate with us and the Government by renewing their subscriptions promptly upon receipt of the first notice.

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