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## Theological Observer. - Kirchlich-Zeitgeschichtliches

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## Theological Observer

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**No Opening Prayer at the San Francisco Meeting.**—In dramatic fashion the *Chicago Sun* of April 26 describes the manner in which the important San Francisco peace meeting was opened. "The delegations were arranged in alphabetical order of their nations—with Australia, Brazil, Bolivia, in the front seats. There were men and women of almost every creed in the house—Christians, Jews, Mohammedans, Confucians, followers of the Hindu sects, Buddhists. Because of their diversity of beliefs this historic attempt to prevent war did not open with a vocal prayer. Instead, Stettinius called for one moment of silence, while the delegations meditated and dedicated their work to the objective of what to do that the world never again erupts in shattering, devastating war." Whoever wrote that editorial recognized that the "diversity of beliefs" which existed in the San Francisco convention hall would have made joint vocal prayer altogether incongruous or impossible. Evidently the writer approves of the course that Mr. Stettinius felt he had to take.

There have appeared, however, strong criticisms of that manner of opening the meeting. For instance, the *Christian Beacon*, organ of the Bible Presbyterians, published a lengthy editorial in which the course of our Secretary of State is definitely condemned. In order that our readers may become acquainted with the argumentation employed by those who think a joint public prayer should have been spoken, we submit this editorial in part.

"Perhaps one of the most important and most significant developments in the San Francisco Conference has been the fact that the sessions of that world security meeting, heralded as the greatest meeting of its kind ever held in the history of man, were opened without any invocation of the Almighty God. It is impossible for us to explain the sensation that came over us when the United States Secretary of State Stettinius, in opening the session, simply said, 'We shall have a moment of silent meditation.' We were expecting someone to lead the assembly in prayer, asking the Almighty to bless, to give success, and to grant peace! But God was left out. He was not invoked. His name was not mentioned.

"We have not recovered from it yet, for we feel that in this failure is contained all the elements of catastrophe and of tragedy for the future of the world, and especially of our own United States of America.

"It should have been done. We have asked God in prayer to deliver us from our enemies and give us victory. He has answered. He is answering. But when we come to establish the peace, we do not dare mention His name or ask Him to help! We want His help when we are in war, but we do not need His help when we are setting up the peace. We can do that!

"D Day was a day of prayer. Our late President led the nation in prayer. Prayer has been the emphasis on every hand, and in almost every letter that has come from the battlefield back home has been a request for prayer. God! We cannot be without Him! God is the One



who delivers and keeps. God is the biggest factor in war. He also is the biggest factor in peace.

"Then, too, America is supposedly a Christian nation. This conference has been held on our soil. We are the host. We are paying the bill of \$1,400,000 to provide for every convenience except the personal expenses of the delegates. The United States Congress has always opened its sessions with prayer. 'In God We Trust' is written on our coins. Yet, when we come to be the host for the World Security Conference, we ask God to be excused from the meetings while we open with a moment of meditation. If we are a Christian nation, should not that fact be known in our relationship with all nations? What happened, that prayer was not offered? What is the explanation?

"The public explanation of the failure to open the conference with the invocation of divine favor is most amazing and astounding. We were told that the conference was not opened with prayer, because it might offend some of the nations who were in attendance. Think of it! Rather than take the chance of offending some atheistic nation, such as Russia, we chose to offend God. We said in effect, 'Lord, we'll have to ask You to understand and be sympathetic. We're not mentioning Your name or calling upon You directly because Russia is here.' To give this explanation to the world is without doubt the greatest capitulation that the United States Government has ever made. We sold out the Almighty God in order to try to win a little favor, to keep a little peace, so to speak, with Russia! Russia is not the one who is going to give peace to the world. It is the Almighty God who is going to give it. He alone controls the hearts and minds of men everywhere. He alone must be our refuge. ('Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord.')

In this outburst of indignant feeling one can well see how much greater the power of emotions is than that of sound theological argumentation and logical consistency. The editor of the *Christian Beacon* is carried away by the thought (which we, of course, fully share) that we need God in this hour of supreme crisis and that we Christians should not be afraid to show our colors — and all other considerations disappear. He would undoubtedly agree that one of the pillars of our republic is the tenet of the separation of Church and State and would defend it against all comers. Being a Fundamentalist, he would spurn as something unworthy and blasphemous joint worship with those who deny the true God. Still he says there should have been an opening prayer at that momentous meeting. Does he not see that there can be no joint worship of the delegates assembled at San Francisco, since many of them are non-Christians? That aspect of the question does not affect him. There should have been, so he seems to think, a joint public prayer for and by the Christians in that gathering. The non-Christians would have refrained from praying — that would have been their privilege. The logical inconsistency of having a religious ceremony at the beginning of a meeting in which not all the accredited delegates or members can join does not strike him.

Seeing the incongruity involved in the course advocated by the *Beacon*, we shall have to continue our instruction on this subject in all



patience, hoping that more and more our fellow citizens will come to share the position endorsed by the *Chicago Sun*. Perhaps gradually the realization will prevail that the Christians participating in an important political meeting will pray, even if no public prayer is spoken, and that these prayers are efficacious even though they consist only in the inaudible outpourings of humble Christian hearts. A.

**Contemporary Christian Biography.**—In the *Sunday School Times* (May 6, 1945) Ernest Gordon, under this simple heading, offers proof that God has His elect saints in every denomination, doing His work in a quiet way, no matter what their station in life may be. It offers us inspiration to carry on with the supreme task which the Lord has assigned to us as Christian pastors. He writes: "The *Christian Irishman* records the death of Mr. Alexander MacAskil, an Irish scholar, saint, and missionary. He was a graduate of Aberdeen University and a profound student of the Word in both Hebrew and Greek; also a distributor of the Word. For fifty years he sold Scripture to Irish-speaking people in the west of Ireland, a conscientious and successful colporteur. In his long service he paid an immense number of visits to Irish homes, and sold some 70,000 New Testaments. He is described as a man of singularly beautiful mind and spirit.—Prof. Duncan M. Blair, at the early age of thirty-one professor of anatomy in King's College, London, and later, in the Regius Chair of Anatomy, Glasgow, has passed away at the age of forty-eight. He was both scientist and Calvinist, and exercised a profound religious influence over students. A tower of strength to the Inter-Varsity-Fellowship of Evangelical Unions, a much sought lay preacher in Scottish churches, an elder in the small congregation of Milton Church, Glasgow, and active in the work of foreign missions, he was also in the last war a surgeon-lieutenant in the navy, and in the present war first commanding officer in the Glasgow University Navy Division. The loss to Scotland of this great Christian leader is almost irreparable.—A Brazilian Sunday school leader who recently died was Mr. J. L. F. Braga, a manufacturer of Rio de Janeiro, charter member of the Y. M. C. A. and of the Evangelical Hospital, and for thirty years superintendent of the Fluminense Church Sunday school. He was also founder of the Brazilian Sunday School Union, and in 1932 president of the World's Sunday School Association. He was a devout and respected Christian in his business life and in his home." J. T. M.

**Atrocity Stories and—Love Your Enemies!**—Is it possible to love the perpetrators of the atrocities of Buchenwald and Dachau and of the horror camps in the Far East? To one endeavoring to escape in this instance the application of the command of love proclaimed with unsurpassed clarity and force by Jesus and His Apostles, the thought might suggest itself that the people responsible for these shocking crimes against humanity have ceased to be human beings, that they have become obnoxious reptiles and simply must be exterminated with as little feeling of regret as when one kills a man-eating tiger or a cobra. First of all, a word of caution is not out of place. How easy it is for people to be misled we remember from the First World War, when the blackest stories were spread about inhumanities committed



in Belgium and elsewhere which afterwards were proved to be fabrications of propagandists eager to arouse the public passions against the German nation. At that time, it is true, the attempt was made to push America into the struggle on the side of the Allies or to maintain the feeling of indignation after we had declared war, while now the European war is ended and the motive of creating a desire for fighting the German people no longer exists. Still, all who recall the air of truth with which the stories of 1917 were told and the pictures which were presented in proof will be somewhat wary when they come upon the descriptions of brutalities said to have been committed by the Nazis and the Japanese. They will hold that perhaps more information will bring to light that what in some instances now appears an atrocity in reality should not be given that harsh epithet.

But even if the shocking stories should be proved true to the smallest sordid detail, would it follow that we have the right to look upon the people who fully or in part were responsible for these evil deeds and upon their nations as no longer being members of the human family? The Savior certainly teaches us a different view. He prayed for His tormentors. The faithful martyr Stephen did not share this opinion. He prayed for those that stoned him. The great Apostle Paul was willing to lay down his life for his people, though they persecuted him with unprincipled fury. In these days, when public indignation has reached such a high pitch, the Church more than ever must proclaim the divine principle: Love your enemies! Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. If prominent secular leaders emphasize this Christian tenet, certainly the Church cannot do less. In a speech delivered on V-E Day at the University of Chicago the president of this school, Robert Maynard Hutchins, said among other things, "The most distressing aspect of present discussions of the fate of Germany and Japan is the glee with which the most inhuman proposals are brought forward and the evident pleasure with which they are received by our fellow citizens. The general maxim of the educated person should be, 'Judge not, that ye be not judged.' The peace of the world depends upon the restoration of the German and Japanese people. The wildest atrocity stories cannot alter the simple truths that all men are human, that no men are beasts, that all men are the children of God, that no men are irrevocably damned by God, and that all men are by nature members of the human community." We should have worded some of these statements differently if we had written them, and it may be that what President Hutchins has in mind at one or the other point is a theological error, but the general truth which he endeavors to express is plain and should be recognized by us as such. The populations of Germany and Japan consist of human beings. What happened there is evidence, not of their having ceased to be members of what we call mankind, but of the power of fanaticism. Let us not forget that the same evil fires have often manifested themselves in other countries and that America has not been immune against them. It is a sad chapter in human history which here comes into view. One thinks, for instance, of the shocking crimes that have been perpetrated



in the name of religion. What a power religious fanaticism has often been! Even today we at times witness that people, apparently good Christian people, driven by some fanatical impulse, unwittingly act on the principle that the end justifies the means and without any hesitation smear the good name of their opponents, and all "in defense of the truth"! It ought to make us very humble to observe what has happened in the countries of our former or present enemies, because there we see plainly what weak creatures, after all, we human beings are. Let the Church, then, preach humility and love of our enemies, just as Luther in his day did not hesitate to proclaim those Scripture teachings which his hearers needed. That is not political preaching, but preaching of the Word in its fullness and with an eye to the requirements of the day.

A.

**The President's Last Worship.**—President Roosevelt spent his last Easter at the Little White House and attended the morning worship at the Warm Springs Foundation Chapel. William Childs Robinson, who conducted the service, reports at considerable length on it in the *Calvin Forum* (May, 1945). Among other things he writes: "The President's last Easter worship was a triumphant service. The responsive reading was the selection from the fifteenth chapter of First Corinthians found in the hymnal of the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A. Among the opening sentences were these: 'Now is Christ risen from the dead and become the first fruits of them that slept.' 'Behooved it not the Christ to suffer and to enter into His glory?' 'If we suffer with Him, we shall also reign with Him.' Every one of the hymns, the anthems, and the solo were eloquent with the notes of the resurrection triumph: 'Come, Ye Faithful, Raise the Strain'; 'Open the Gates of the Temple'; 'God so Loved the World'; 'The Day of Resurrection, Earth, Tell It Out Abroad!' 'Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!' 'Crown Him with Many Crowns.' The President's last Easter worship was a truly Christian service. As the service was closed with the apostolic benediction, so it was opened with the Christian salutation: 'Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.' The prayer included the petition that as God in His mercy has forgiven us, His rebellious creatures, for Christ's sake, so He would put it into our hearts to exercise mercy as well as judgment in shaping the peace of the world. The incarnation of the Son of God, the central affirmation of the Christian faith[sic?], was the theme of the Easter sermon. As the music was redolent with Christ's resurrection, so the sermon was steeped in His suffering and dying for our sins. And these two great events—Christ's death for our sins and His rising again the third day—are the Christian Gospel. Or, to quote the sermon: 'The Lord of glory of His own will entered into our life of grief and suffering, and for love of men bore all and more than all that men may be called to bear. He suffered as the Lamb of God for the sins of the world. He was delivered for our offenses and raised for our justification. Therefore,

'In peace let me resign my breath  
And Thy salvation see:  
My sins deserved eternal death,  
But Jesus died for me.'"



Concluding his article, the Rev. Mr. Robinson says: "It is not likely that I shall ever again preach to a President of the United States, but I may well remember that the King of kings is always in the audience and that I ought to preach *Him* as in *His Presence*." It is largely because of the fine Christian spirit evinced in the last words of the quotation that we have cited this inspiring report. Mr. Robinson might have forgotten "*Him*" and thought only of the President, shaping his sermon so as to flatter his honored guest; but he did not. He might have forgotten "*His Presence*" and kept in mind, while preaching, only the presence of the greatest human commander in chief in the world; but he did not. He preached Christ, the incarnate Son of God, the Substitute and Redeemer of mankind, the risen Lord, triumphantly ruling over all things. What a rare opportunity was his! It was the President's last public worship, his last chance to hear the Word, and he heard the Gospel proclaimed in a simple, lucid, convincing way. Mr. Robinson writes: "The President's last Easter worship was designed as a service of comfort and strength." For us pastors who serve the living Christ in His never-falling presence this may serve as an incentive to continue by all means in making every worship, no matter by whom it may be attended or on what occasion it may be held, a truly Christian service, rich in comfort and strength, by centering every part of it in the crucified and risen Redeemer. The rich fruits of such worship heaven's glory will fully reveal.

J. T. M.

**Conditions in China.**—With eagerness Christians interested in mission work read about conditions in China and the prospects of mission work after the fighting has ceased. In the *Lutheran Companion* Victor E. Swenson, an Augustana Synod missionary, who was driven from Honan by the Japanese, speaks in the following manner of conditions in war-torn China: "Postwar China will swing open doors for the Gospel that are now closed. Although the struggling, suffering Church is carrying on heroically under present conditions, the need for postwar reconstruction among China's four hundred and fifty million people will be tremendous.

"The great masses are groaning under the rule of the Japanese military machine. The inhuman, barbarous treatment suffered by the Chinese people under the heel of the Japanese armies, as they have engulfed one province after another, beggars description.

"Almost two years ago it was my privilege to travel to Fulkow, a city in Central China about forty miles east of Hsuehchang, Honan, to preach the Gospel to several thousand Chinese soldiers. It was a wonderful opportunity to break the Bread of Life to the Chinese army. It so happened that the general was a boyhood friend of one of our teachers. General Whang had spent some time in Russia prior to taking charge of this army. When speaking to the army, in the way of introduction, he pleaded for more love among nations, in army life, home life, and all others spheres.

"The average citizen in Central China is not broken in spirit. Although the Japanese militarists are temporarily ruling over them, you find a strong spirit of endurance and resistance among the Chinese.



They are determined to throw off the foreign yoke. You find also a growing spirit of patriotism and love for country. The national anthem is sung with much fervor by every child at school.

"China is really fighting two wars—one against Japanese aggression and the other against famine, disease, dishonesty, and ignorance within its borders. The slogan which Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek gave the nation when the war began eight years ago reads: 'National Resistance together with National Reconstruction.' In many a public building in China one will see these four characters, 'Tien hsia wei Kwung,' which means, 'The world a commonwealth.' This motto is the hope of many in modern China.

"I must add just a few sentences about the terrible famine in China two and three years ago. It was not uncommon to see crowds of people leaving Honan for West China. A wheelbarrow would be secured, upon which was placed Grandma, a baby or two, tucked away in a few quilts. Some pots, bowls, chopsticks, a little flour or millet and some sweet potatoes were taken along. Father would push the barrow, while a twelve-year-old girl or boy would pull. Perhaps a little sister and brother, with the mother, would bring up the rear. Thousands upon thousands trekked the long and weary road to West China in this manner. Many died along the way and were buried by the roadside. It was dotted with graves. Dogs could be seen eating human bodies, since many were not buried very deep in the ground.

"Famine relief committees were organized. Money, food, clothing, and medicine were distributed to Christians and non-Christians alike.

"Child welfare camps also were established where the children were taught to read and write, as well as some useful industries. Children were trained to weave cloth and towels, make shoes, tan leather, make soap, make printing presses, plant victory gardens, etc. At our Hsuechang camp we had about two thousand children that were either famine victims or war orphans.

"Millions upon millions have traveled to West China. Probably as many as eighty million have thus emigrated to find new homes. The crying need of these millions is indescribable, both from a physical and spiritual point of view. Any help that can be given at this time would be doubly appreciated."

A.

**The Religion of Freemasonry.**—*The Calvin Forum* (April, 1945) under this heading, in a lengthy article, analyzes the religion of Freemasonry, reaching the conclusion that lodge membership and church membership are incompatible. Because of the importance of the subject we quote the writer's concluding paragraphs. He says: "Much more could be written about the religion of Masonry. Not a word has been said so far about the way of salvation which it teaches; about the taking of Masonic oaths, which are contrary to Christian ethics. But enough has been written to show that Masonry is a false religion. It is the devil's substitute for the Church. Masonry is an evil that honeycombs the Christian Church in America. Many Christian churches tolerate this evil in their midst. Even Christian ministers are members of the Masonic order. How is it possible? It is a very strange phenomenon. Let me suggest four reasons for this enigma. In the first place, there are



professing Christians who do not know what Christianity is. They think Christianity and religion are the same. If an organization is religious and has a Bible present, offers prayers, etc., they conclude that the organization is Christian. They are sincere, but they lack knowledge. And they deserve our sympathy. Probably their pastors are to blame, because they have not informed their members of the evil of the Lodge. In the second place, there are professing Christians who do not know what Masonry is. Some have never read one book on the subject explaining its aims and ideals. They do not even know that such books exist. This is also true of members of other organizations. Some professing Christians do not even know what their Church stands for. Surely Christians should ascertain what is the doctrinal position of their Church and the religious position of their Lodge. In the third place, there are some professing Christians who continue their relation with Masonry in spite of the fact that they know what Christianity is and what Masonry is. That is worse. This position is pitiful. They are without excuse. And among them are Christian ministers of the Gospel and elders in the Church of Christ. They are not loyal to God and His Word. They are inconsistent. They believe one thing and live another. In the fourth place, there are some professing Christians who have deviated from the faith of our fathers. They are the Modernists, who relegate the infallible Bible, who designate the blood atonement as butcher-shop theology, and who declare the virgin birth of Christ and His deity as non-essentials. That such affiliate with the Lodge can be understood. Every true Christian should take his stand against any organization when membership in it requires fellowship of Christians and non-Christians in matters of religion and worship. That is what St. Paul meant in 2 Corinthians 6:14-18. And every Christian denomination, true to the Bible as God's infallible Word, should take a definite stand against Lodge membership by its church members. No member in the Masonic order may be tolerated in the Christian Church indefinitely. This is the only consistent position the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ on earth can take regarding this matter. The Church of Christ should enlighten its members about oath-bound secret societies. It is just as inconsistent and sinful to be a member of the Christian Church and the Masonic order as it is to be a member of the Christian Church and the Theosophical, the Christian Science, or the Unitarian Society. Elijah Alfred Coyle, a Unitarian minister and Mason, is consistent when he calls heart-and-soul Masons to leave the evangelical churches and join the Unitarian Society, because the teachings of the Unitarian Society and of Masonry agree perfectly. (Tract: *The Relation of the Liberal Churches and the Fraternal Orders*.) Therefore it is consistent on the part of the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ to call true Christians to leave and forsake Masonry and be a member of God's Church only, because the religious teachings of Masonry and of the Christian Church conflict. The religion of Masonry is naturalistic and evolutionary; the religion of Christ's Church is supernatural and revelational." The article was written by James Putt, pastor of the Christian Reformed Church, Fulton, Ill. *The Calvin Forum* is published in Grand Rapids, Mich.

J. T. M.



**"Sir Ambrose Fleming.**—The death in England of Sir Ambrose Fleming, world-renowned physicist and pioneer in radio communication, at the age of ninety-five, received wide notice. The *New York Times* devoted about a column to his 'obit,' and the next day half a column of leading editorial space was dedicated to his work. One sentence in the obituary notice, as given in the metropolitan daily, stated that for many years Sir Ambrose had been bitterly anti-German. As long ago as 1900, he refused to read works from that country. No mention was made, however, of the fact that Sir Ambrose Fleming was for many years president of the Victoria Institute, which was formed eighty years ago to combat the evil influence of anti-religious teaching which wore the garments of 'science falsely so-called.' A devout Christian, Sir Ambrose Fleming was able to discern the wicked emanations of the spirit as he was clever enough to be a pioneer in the cruder material phenomena of electrical energy. While hosts of his fellows were sacrificing their religious beliefs and losing their wholesome family traditions of piety under the blasts of German science with Biblical Higher Criticism as its first line of attack, this cautious scientist was not to be taken down the garden path."—*Exchange*.

**Methodists Surpass Campaign Goal.**—"Not many will be surprised," writes the *Christian Century* (April 18, 1945), "to learn that the Methodist Church has overshot its \$25,000,000 objective for the first and financial phase of its 'Crusade for Christ.' The final figure subscribed, as announced on April 6, was \$26,040,749, of which more than \$11,000,000 has been paid in cash. This is the largest sum ever raised by a Protestant denomination in one year for a purpose beyond the regular work of the church. An unannounced proportion of the fund is to be used for relief and rehabilitation, but the larger part will be devoted to meeting war-occasioned emergencies in the missionary and educational work of the denomination. The success of this drive will be noted far outside Methodist circles. Already many other denominations are in preliminary phases of similar campaigns. These enterprises are going each its own way. Two reasons seem to account for the absence of co-operation between Protestant bodies at a time when the urgency of the world crisis would seem to make integrated action imperative. At the end of the last war a combined drive was staged. It was called the 'Interchurch Movement.' The mistakes of this effort, the first of its kind, plus the fact that the Methodists got first into the field this time, probably explain why the denominations are following an individualistic policy now. But there is no assurance that the present course will prove more satisfactory in its over-all results than did that which the churches followed a generation ago. The churches are not making the same mistakes they did then, but the blunder of projecting great unrelated programs may prove even more serious." In closing the editorial, the writer therefore pleads with "the other denominations, whose 'crusades' are yet to be launched, to achieve a co-ordination which will give unity to Protestantism's postwar impact." There are a number of thoughts which the article projects. In the first place, there is evidently a great willingness on the part of church members to contribute toward



postwar educational, missionary, and relief enterprises. Again, it seems that church members are most apt to give when the solicitation comes to them for service of the denomination's own special objectives. Lastly, in view of Methodist generosity we Lutherans may scrutinize our own efforts of contributing toward benevolences. Recently the *Lutheran Companion* (April 4, 1945), quoting from the *National Lutheran Council Quarterly*, reports editorially that it is rather cheap to be a Lutheran. The United Stewardship figures for 1942 reveal that it would cost 13 per cent more to be a Congregationalist than a Lutheran, 33 per cent more to be an Evangelical, 42 per cent more to be a Presbyterian, 50 per cent more to be an Episcopalian, 56 per cent more to belong to the Reformed group, and 102 per cent more to be a member of the Nazarene Church. Statistics, of course, are delusive. They may be juggled in such a way as to present a wrong picture of the eleemosynary status of a church. But be that as it may. The *Lutheran Companion* uses the given figures to prepare its readers for the greater postwar missionary program of its church. Quoting Dr. Bersell, it says: "After the war will come the greatest missionary opportunity in the history of the Christian Church. Now is the time to get ready for it." The hope is then expressed "that 150 new missionaries may be sent out by the church during the next five years, and that will mean one missionary for every 2,000 confirmed members as against one for every 4,000 at the present time. This is not an unreasonable proposal. If Christians are really earnest about heeding the Lord's last and final command to His followers, they will make the evangelization of the world their first and foremost concern. Here all Christians may well heed the example of the Moravian Brethren, which is undoubtedly the greatest missionary communion in all Christendom. For every fifty-eight members at home, the Moravians are said to be supporting one missionary abroad. If this is true, surely it should involve no great burden on the Augustana Synod to send forth one messenger of the Gospel into foreign lands for every 2,000 believers at home."

J. T. M.

**Roman Catholic Crusade in Mexico.**—How the Roman hierarchy in Mexico is fanning the fires of fanaticism in its endeavor to oppose Protestant preaching, can be seen from a pastoral letter of the Archbishop of Mexico, Luis Maria Martinez, a translation of which was sent us by our brother, the Rev. B. J. Pankow, who is working in Mexico City. We quote a few of the salient sentences.

"Venerable Brethren and Beloved Children: Known is the intense propaganda which with perfect organization and with powerful pecuniary resources the Protestant sects are effecting in all the Republic. By these means they are attempting to rob from the Mexicans their richest treasure, the Catholic faith, which was brought to us four centuries ago by the Most Holy Virgin [of] Guadalupe. . . . We believe that the Most Holy Virgin in this hour, even as in all the periods of our history, is repeating to us those same assuring and consoling words which in the person of Juan Diego she spoke four centuries ago: 'Hearken, my son, to what I am about to tell you: Do not worry, neither let anything grieve you, do not fear sickness nor pain. Am not I here, your Mother?'



Are you not beneath my shadow and protection? Am not I alive and healthy? Do not I have you in my bosom, and are you not serving me? Could you have necessity of anything else?"

These extracts are sufficient to give the reader an idea of the tenor of this pastoral epistle. No wonder that religious feeling runs high in certain sections of Mexico. A.

**A Word for Ex-Pastors.** — G. Merrill Lenox, writing in the *Watchman-Examiner*, submits considerations which should be pondered. We herewith reprint his article.

One hears all too often of invasion of the sacred prerogatives of a pastor by one of his predecessors. With all the seminary courses on ministerial ethics and all the articles on the subject and with all the discussions in clerical groups, one wonders how a pastor can remain ignorant of his obligation to his successor. Yet many an ex-pastor, upon the least provocation, treks back to his former field or in some other way impedes the work of the new undershepherd. Is he intentionally unethical or merely naive? Results unfortunately are the same.

There is almost never ample justification for a pastor's return to a parish once served, either for a funeral, wedding, or baptism. He may have officiated at the wedding of the great-grandparents, grandparents, and parents of the person involved. For sentimental reasons he may be wanted back, and he may himself want very much to return. But the main consideration must be how best can he strengthen the ties of love and loyalty between his former parishioners and their present pastor? This he will find can best be accomplished by cheerfully staying away and adamantly refusing to rob his successor of the blessed privilege of partaking with his flock in their highest joys and deepest sorrows. For, as every pastor knows, it is through his ministry in time of tragedy and triumph that there comes the best opportunity to win the affection and confidence of the people.

Just recently a respected minister returned to his former field for a funeral. He justified his return on the basis that the brand-new minister had not yet had time to become acquainted with the family of the deceased. Nonsense! What a marvelous opportunity it would have been for the new pastor to win his way into the affections of the bereaved loved ones. In such cases, when the ex-pastor refuses to interfere, the folks involved almost invariably say, "How wonderful our new pastor was. We know we can now depend on him for any service we need." From that time on, the family customarily is disposed to accept the new minister on the field as its leader and become a more vital part of the church. Otherwise, though perhaps temporarily consoled, it would likely continue the worship of the dead past.

Occasionally, a church invites back its ex-pastor deliberately to embarrass his successor. An influential member sometimes delights in demonstrating his ability to pull a busy former minister from his crowded schedule in a distant city for some personal or family ministry. Such motives are, of course, reprehensible. But, even when the intention is good, the practice is bad. Stories of bitterness and friction resulting from this breach of good taste are legion. Anyone who has the privilege



of fellowshiping with clergymen across the nation hears sad tales by the score.

Are there no exceptions? Precious few. More attempts at justifying the practice in question are pure rationalizations. Where relatives are involved, any sensible minister would joyously welcome a fellow pastor's visit to his congregation for a special ministry. It is best, however, to cease seeking exceptions; strive to abide by the general rule. In the event of an exception, let the parishioner who wants the former minister write him through his present pastor. Let him request the latter also to have a significant part in the prospective proceedings, whether wedding, funeral, or an important celebration. Thus, the two clergymen will appear as comrades-in-service, not competitors for the confidence of the people. The pastor on the field should never be ignored or relegated to the sidelines. It is well to remember that every contact he makes in his community opens the way for additional service to the church.

Those delightful friendly letters one likes to write to members of an earlier congregation—what about them? Keep them to a minimum. If you must write, seize every opportunity to laud your successor and strengthen his work and refrain from discussions of church policies, especially those of a controversial nature. More harm is wrought by inquisitive and insinuating letters than the ex-pastor dreams of.

"My predecessor comes back often and visits the people. He does not attack me outright, but his 'neutral' silence in face of criticisms of me encourage reluctance to accept my leadership," a devoted minister is heard to declare. If a minister goes back, he must be more than neutral; he must be helpful. The writer in visiting his former parish has gone as far as placing his schedule in the hands of the minister on the field, insisting that even invitations to meals be extended through him. The people have interpreted this procedure as a testimony to the happy harmony and continuity of the church's pastoral leadership through the years. Every social call made by the visiting predecessor should be not only a benediction to the home visited, but a strengthening of the ties between the people and the pastor at the helm.

Should a pastor accept an invitation to a former parish to preach or deliver an address upon some special occasion? Not too soon after he leaves. He should give his successor a chance to establish himself. Then, when he does come, he should unfailingly praise the new pastor both in public address and in private conversation. To call attention joyfully to every evidence of progress: building improvements, attendance, financial reports, special projects, evangelistic advance, should be a real satisfaction. Sentimentalizing over the past might please the people, but it will not build for future extension of the cause of Christ.

One pastor recently reported that he had been back several times to his last church and "had to butt in," for his successor had "made a lot of mistakes and was not doing things right." How the new pastor was doing things was simply none of his business. He might deplore the policies which replace his, but he must remember that the pastoral leadership of that church is sacred ground. He must stay off.



What has been said in these paragraphs applies especially when the former minister continues to live on the field. Under such circumstances, he must be ever so careful to avoid interference in the activities of the church. The test is almost too great to bear. However, some have borne it well and have been towers of strength to succeeding pastors. The writer was once richly blessed by a wise predecessor who remained in his church while holding an executive position in a community religious organization. Alas, some have been thorns in the flesh—often unconsciously so. The minister who continues to live in the area where he has previously served must have the grace and generosity to remember at all times that he is *not* the pastor. Funerals, weddings, and leadership in all areas of the church's life are the pastor's sacred ground. The ex-pastor must resolutely refuse to trespass upon it in any way or at any time.

**Brief Items.**—In India a prominent bishop of the Anglican Church, the Rev. V. S. Azariah, died recently. He was the first native Anglican bishop. His home was in Dornakal. His chief interest is said to have been church union in South India.

Whoever is interested in second-century Christian literature and the writings of pagan opponents which appeared at that time ought to read a pamphlet having the title "Celsus and the Old Testament" by Edward J. Young. The pamphlet is a reprint of an article in the *Westminster Theological Journal*, VI, No. 2. It constitutes a chapter in the doctrinal dissertation of the author entitled "Biblical Criticism to the End of the Second Christian Century." Dr. Young is professor at the Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia.

A hundred chaplains belonging to the Protestant Episcopal Church state that they "are appalled at the indifference of a great majority of the American people to Christ and at their ignorance of Christianity's basic teachings about God and man, as these are revealed in the men and women to whom we minister. The churches generally seem not to have won the allegiance of youth." How true! The preaching of the social gospel certainly has not helped to inform people religiously.

Scheel, in the *Pittsburgh Press*, recently printed this, "Two fifths of our population are church members, from whom come four fifths of our college students, three fourths of the home owners, nine tenths of charity, and ninety per cent of leaders in public life. Which makes one to think. If one more fifth of our population were converted and brought into the Church, what a change that could bring about in American life!"

#### *The Presbyterian*

With joy we heard the news that the plates for the printing of the Scripture in various Filipino dialects in Manila are undamaged, with the exception of about ten per cent, which suffered in the bombardment.

One is glad to see that Bishop William T. Manning of the Protestant Episcopal Church in New York joins his fellow bishop the Rev. James P. De Wolfe in protesting against the speech of Mr. Rockefeller, in which the latter advocated a creedless Christianity. Addressing his diocese, Bishop Manning stated, "Pay no heed to those who tell us that the



Creed and the Sacraments are unimportant for Christians today, that the Holy Catholic Apostolic Church has no reality, and that we can have Christian unity by casting aside the Christian Creed."

"It is now established by modern astronomical calculations beyond any question of doubt that Jesus Christ was crucified on Friday, April 15, 29 A.D. All Biblical references pertaining to the Crucifixion are found to be correct. As soon as Christian churches set aside this old method of finding Easter by the phase of the moon, then Easter Sunday will occur on the first Sunday after the first Friday on or after April 15. The earliest Easter Sunday will come on April 17 and the latest on April 23."—Communication from Maxwell J. Welch, 419 S. Grand Avenue, Los Angeles 13, Calif.

Msgr. Fulton J. Sheen, the well-known Roman Catholic radio speaker, has voiced the opinion that the time of Antichrist is near. What he is worried about is a declaration signed by 1,600 American ministers and other religious leaders which opposes participation of the Church in the peace negotiations which are expected to start soon. Let him read Revelation 17 to ascertain the whereabouts of Antichrist.

The Presbyterian Church, with about a million members, is trying to recruit 500 new foreign missionaries, and the Nazarene Church, with 200,000 members last year, set as its goal the recruiting of 400 new missionaries in the next four years, and I am told that they already have 200 pledges. That group of Christians gives over \$54 per capita annually to the Lord's work.—Dr. Bersell in the *Lutheran Companion*.

"When questionnaires were recently sent to our Presbyterian chaplains in the armed forces asking them what subjects they deemed most essential and vital in reorientation courses to be offered by our seminaries for returning chaplains, the word 'theology' stood near the top of an overwhelming percentage of the returned questionnaires. The voices of shallow thinking which a few years ago were crying out against theology are now getting fainter and fainter as the Church becomes more and more conscious of its need for a more systematic and profound understanding of our Gospel truth."—Dr. S. B. Harry in the *Presbyterian*.

A.