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Theological Observer. - Kirchlich-Zeitgeschichtliches

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Theological Observer

The Lutheran Hour.—This grand evangelistic endeavor has opened its fourteenth season. Within recent months 86 new stations have been added to the chain carrying its Gospel message. Among these stations is VPD 2, located at Suva on the Fiji Islands. The Lutheran Hour Bulletin states that in the Philippine Islands seven fine stations have been secured. The chain includes two stations in Shanghai and one in Chungking, China. While the broadcasts in China at present still use the English language exclusively, it is hoped that soon the vernacular also will be employed. According to the Bulletin mentioned, "Openings have been secured for broadcasting the Lutheran Hour in Portugal, Spain, Andorra, Italy, Greece, and Monaco." Our readers should remember that the Lutheran Hour has to pay a high price for the time it receives from the Mutual Broadcasting System and that it is not permitted to appeal for funds over the air, the regulations of the company prohibiting any requests of that nature. May the Lord's bountiful blessings accompany the constantly growing and expanding venture.

A.

Please Change.—In my translation of an article by Dr. Stoeckhardt on "Law and Gospel According to Their Differing Effects," there occurs the phrase on page 18: "Up to this point does the contrition of despair extend which finds its full expression in the *concreated* enmity against God." Through the courtesy of a careful reader my attention has been called to the fact that the word "concreated" is incorrectly used here. It should have been rendered by the word "inborn." Please change to read "inborn enmity."

WALTER H. BOUMAN

Conference of Lutheran Pastors in Poland.—Interested as we are in the Lutheran Church in Europe, we cannot pass by this R. N. S. wireless communication:

"Sixty-one Polish Lutheran pastors, many of whom were interned in concentration camps during the war, wept and embraced each other at the opening in Lodz of the first postwar conference of the Polish Evangelical Augsburg Church. Representing the largest Evangelical body in Poland, and made up mostly of Poles of German origin, the Church suffered severely at the hands of the Nazis. A dramatic note was sounded when Acting Bishop Jan Szeruda opened the three-day sessions by reading the names of twenty-one pastors killed by the Germans. Delegates displayed open joy when each was presented with a new suit and overcoat, and with shirts and socks. They were also given dresses, shoes, and underwear for their wives. By tacit agreement, the German language was not used at the conference. Sessions took place in the impressive Church of St. Matthew, the last remaining of the three former Lutheran churches in Lodz. The two other churches were turned over by the secular authorities to Roman Catholic

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congregations after the German exodus. Among speakers at the conference was the Rev. Clifford Ansgar Nelson, pastor of the Gloria Dei Lutheran Church in St. Paul, Minn., who is in Europe on behalf of the American Section of the Lutheran World Convention. He declared that 'the Church in Poland must make it clear that Lutheranism is not a German religion, but a Christian faith with a universal appeal.' An overseas visitor was Bishop Thursten Ysander, of the Swedish Lutheran Church. Another Swedish bishop had been expected to attend, but was not given a visa, reputedly because of his strong 'anti-Soviet attitude.' It had been hoped that 120 German Lutheran pastors remaining in Silesia would be represented at the meeting, but they have been ordered to leave Poland shortly, despite a request by Bishop Szeruda that they be permitted to extend their stay in Poland."

The Confessional Struggle in Germany.— We reprint here a significant dispatch from Geneva:

"A year-long 'honeymoon' between German Protestant churches appears to be ending. Observers report growing tension between churchmen with strong denominational beliefs and the Confessional group which united members of various denominations in a struggle against Nazism. Friends of Pastor Martin Niemoeller, leader of the Confessional group, say he is depressed by the current development. The Evangelical Press Service of Zurich uses the word "danger" in describing the aspiration of conservative Lutherans of Bavaria and Hanover for a united Lutheran Church and adds that this 'confessionalism' can have serious repercussions in all countries. The agency quotes Niemoeller as urging a 'return to the Word of God' rather than to an emphasis upon denominational differences.

"German Protestantism united a year ago when the Evangelical Church of Germany was formed at Treysa. Going beyond federation, but stopping short of amalgamation, the new body included Lutheran, Reformed, and United Churches, in fact all but the Free Churches. At that time observers felt that German Protestants had achieved a revolutionary reversal of policy by abandoning an emphasis on theology to the exclusion of other issues. It was expected that the new policy would unite the churches more closely than ever before through a program of social action. Pastor Niemoeller was a strong supporter of the new policy, surprising many by swinging to the other extreme from his former theological position."

Here a glimpse into the soul-searching theological debates now going on in Germany is furnished the reader. Will the banner of conservative Lutheranism, avoiding both unionism and separation, receive the support to which it is entitled? On the whole subject see the review of Dr. Herman's book in this issue of our journal.

A.

A New Venture — A "Character School."—From Seattle, Wash., comes this news item (R. N. S.): "A 'character school,' only one of its kind west of Chicago, which will take the place of the traditional Sunday school, opens September 29 at University Congregational Church in Seattle. Originated by the Rev. Ernest Ligon of Schenectady, N. Y., ten years ago, the school was operating in four eastern churches last year and will function in eight this year. Since the idea still is in its experimental stage, Dr. Ligon has limited the number of churches using it until 1950. The Rev. William Gold, minister to youth at the Seattle church, is in charge of the school. He studied in Dr. Ligon's workshop this summer, brought the plans to the congregation, which almost unanimously approved it. A special secretary to handle the work of the new school will be added to the church staff. The staff of the Sunday school, which no longer exists, will be augmented by 20 new teachers. They will attend training classes until enrollment begins September 5. Two-year-old children through high school pupils will be eligible for attendance, and there will be a special class for parents." We have heard of this venture before. The name does not seem to be a very happy one and to describe accurately the work that is being done, if our information is correct. The intention is to do far more for the children than is done in the average Sunday school. Further light on the undertaking is awaited with interest.

A.

The Assumption of Mother Mary.—In Roman Catholic circles the question is discussed whether the Pope should officially declare that the body of Mother Mary when she died was preserved from corruption and soon afterwards taken into heaven. A dispatch from Toronto says that the Church teaches this very thing, but that it is not as yet an article of faith in the sense that the Church has explicitly defined it as something Christians have to believe. It is true that Pope Benedict XIV stated that this view represents a probable opinion "the denial of which would be impious and blasphemous." We are told that the Pontiff "has been receiving appeals from cardinals, bishops, religious committees and universities, that the Ascension be made an article of faith." From Rome comes the information that the Pope is now polling all the Roman Catholic bishops of the world on the attitude of Roman Catholics toward such a declaration. "Vatican circles expect that the response to the papal inquiry will be favorable and point out that the dogma that the body of Christ's mother was taken into heaven after her death would be the first added since 1870, when the infallibility of the Pope in matters of faith and morals was proclaimed." What arrogance!

A.

Overlapping of the Work of Synods.—The *Lutheran Companion* (Augustana Synod) of September 18 prints a letter which we think should be reprinted here. It is written by the Rev. W. R. Conrad of Grand Rapids, Minn.

"A recent editorial in the *Lutheran Companion* causes me to

write this comment. My blood boils when I see the waste of manpower up here in the northern part of Minnesota. When I first came to this parish, I served four churches. In that same area there were five Lutheran pastors at work, most of them serving from two to four overlapping fields. We have now added three more to this mess.

"Let me give the picture. A Finnish Lutheran pastor comes down to Bovey from Hibbing to serve a small group of people. A Norwegian (until their recent synodical meeting) comes from Nashwauk (originally started as Augustana) down to Trout Lake, near Bovey, to serve a handful of people. A Missouri man comes from Marble (up toward Nashwauk) to serve a group at Bovey. We have a pastor serving Bovey and Coleraine as well as Warba, southeast of Trout Lake. I formerly served those two churches.

"Here at Grand Rapids the Augustana Synod has a church and parsonage. The Missourians likewise have a full-time resident pastor. To care for my parish, I go out to Deer Lake through Cohasset and Deer River. At Deer River we have a resident Missouri pastor who also works elsewhere. A new Missouri pastor who lives at Hill City, south of Grand Rapids, now serves congregations at Remer and Cohasset (he goes through Grand Rapids on his return trip after services in Cohasset). At Remer there is also a Norwegian Lutheran pastor, who likewise serves four fields.

"Now doesn't this all make sense? No wonder so little has been done in these areas. And who is to blame? If we would turn over some of these congregations to the nearest resident pastor, we'd get somewhere. 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' That should be our motto in taking steps toward Lutheran unity. Who cares whether it's Finnish, Norwegian, Augustana, or Missouri? I'm sure God doesn't! We all claim to be Americans. (I wonder if that makes any difference with God, either.)

"I resigned from one congregation recently so as to put in full-time work at Grand Rapids. I know it would be an unforgivable sin to let a Missourian take care of that other field. But I think we are committing a greater sin not to minister to a greater field like Grand Rapids, which is wide open for work. We should have a congregation here of at least 500 to 600 members and more. There is room for two Lutheran churches in a community of 6,000 when there are so few of the evangelical churches, but not in these other communities of at least 1,500 people.

"God is going to hold us accountable for the little gains we have made in the Lutheran Church in recent years. And to confess that we are just as guilty as the rest 'takes more grace' than we usually possess.

"Yours for a greater concern about souls and not church buildings, without souls."

Having read this letter, what shall we say? That it breathes deep love for the Lutheran Church no one can deny. There is no doubt that often carnal zeal has led synodical officials or representatives to begin work in fields which they have no right to invade.

It is a pity if before the world we present the picture of a house that is divided against itself. While all this is true, we should like to say to the esteemed writer of this letter that we must not over-emphasize the distress of mind which is caused by synodical competition. There is something worse than the pettiness which often accompanies such unwarranted invasions, and that is the spirit of indifference toward the truths of the Gospel, which enters only too easily in territories where congregations are large and synodical rivalry plays no role at all. It may be a waste of manpower and of mission funds when the overlapping in question takes places. It may be, too, that through this spectacle the Lutheran name is dragged into the mud. All that we deplore. If any sheepstealing takes place, we abhor it. But if people are moved by genuine love of the truth to found a church where the Word of God is taught according to the dictates of their conscience, then even if their number is small, the spiritual gain is great. Let us not become onesided in judging of such situations. A.

Outrageous Treatment of Prisoners of War.—In an outburst of holy wrath the editor of the *Christian Century* wrote an article having the heading "Set These Slaves Free," from which we have to quote a few sentences. "With hardly a whisper of protest from the Christian churches of this or other countries, the enslavement by the Allies of over four million prisoners of war continues more than a year after the end of the conflict. This international outrage is being committed by Great Britain, Canada, Norway, Belgium, and France, as well as by Russia. It is being committed with the connivance and help of the United States Government, which turned over to several countries named hundreds of thousands of prisoners after telling the helpless victims that they were being sent home to Germany. It is being committed in open violation of the Geneva Convention concerning treatment and repatriation of prisoners of war, in which our national honor was pledged. It is being committed in cynical disregard of the laws of morality and in contempt for future consequences to international peace. Consider the facts. On July 30 there were 385,000 German prisoners of war in the United Kingdom, according to a statement made by Lord Nathan, Undersecretary of the War Office. The total number of German prisoners held in the empire and by the British army on the Rhine was 520,000, the *London Times* reported on July 12. The difference between the two figures probably represents the number of prisoners held in Canada, the prisoners at work on the continent under the British army, and the former German soldiers being kept under arms (?) in the British zone of occupation. About one million prisoners are being used for hard labor in France. Allied sources in Berlin estimate that between three million and four million German war prisoners are in Russian hands. Russian papers promise the release of 120,000 after Aug. 15. It is not known how many prisoners are detained in the labor camps of Norway and Belgium, but there is no doubt that many such camps exist.

These prisoners are slaves. They are being made to work in involuntary servitude. Over 160,000 of those in England are working under the minister of agriculture of the Labor Government. Their employers pay the government the prevailing wage, which is between \$15 and \$20 a week. Of this wage the prisoners receive from 60 cents to \$1.20 a week. The government's profit is estimated to amount to \$250,000,000 a year. In France the prisoners are fed meagerly and paid little or nothing. They work in coal pits and in mine-infected fields in the war area. They are set to clearing away the dangerous debris of the conflict. This last is specifically prohibited by the Geneva Convention. What is happening to the prisoners behind the iron curtain which surrounds Russia may be left to the imagination." The editorial further states that of the prisoners whom we send back to Europe very few reach their homeland. "England, France, and Belgium wanted them for slave labor. The American authorities—our Government—gave in and handed these hundreds of thousands of men over to those three countries. In France the prisoners were stripped of the good clothing with which we had provided them, clothed in rags and driven to the mines, where they work on a semi-starvation ration." The writer continues, "It is not surprising that many have committed suicide. In all the stockades, including those in England, morale is deteriorating to the point where religious services or any sort of educational activity have become almost impossible." The British conscience, so the editor reports, is becoming uneasy. Leading men in England are protesting against this inhuman treatment of prisoners. Our country shares the responsibility for the treatment of these poor people, who, in spite of the atrocities of their former government, are our fellow men.

A.

Protestant Inconsistency Charged.—Are Protestants of the World Council of Churches consistent when they, on the one hand, insist on the recall of Myron Taylor from the Vatican because they allege that his mission constitutes a violation of the principle of separation of Church and State, and when they, on the other hand, call a meeting to discuss World Order and set up a Commission on International Affairs? The following R. N. S. dispatch cannot be brushed aside:

"A charge of 'inconsistency' was made against leaders of the Federal Council of Churches by the *New World*, official weekly publication of the Roman Catholic archdiocese of Chicago. The charge was based on the proposal for an international Protestant commission on world affairs made by members of the Federal Council at the Conference on World Order held at Cambridge, England. The Catholic editorial described the proposal as 'very curious in the light of the current heat which many clergymen have fanned up on the separation of Church and State.' Apparently referring to the controversy over Myron Taylor, presidential representative to the Vatican, the *New World* said, 'the very men who have become wild-eyed with fear over Vatican activities are

shouldering into a field which they themselves have labeled "power politics." "The air has been so recklessly smudged up on this burning issue of the separation of Church and State that people have lost sight of proper distinctions and have begun to grope with only one thought in mind—"only Rome would be guilty of intrusions into the business of the State." Declaring it is not passing judgment on the proposed Protestant international commission on world affairs, the Catholic paper explained that 'we simply suggest that there are many different ways of skinning a cat.' 'Inconsistency is always interesting, especially when it becomes so inconsistent that it fits into the category of entertainment,' it added. 'However, when inconsistency deals with the vital issues of religious thought and action, it becomes definitely unfunny.' A.

Rift in the Ranks of Jehovah's Witnesses.—How one fanaticism begets another can be seen from this Cleveland dispatch (*R. N. S.*) on trouble in the Jehovah's Witnesses camp.

"A minor note of rebellion was sounded at the international convention of Jehovah's Witnesses here as eight former long-time members brought charges that the directors of the society were 'setting up a dictatorship to rule the brethren.' Leader of the 'outcasts' from the society is Roy D. Goodrich, 59, of Ft. Lauderdale, Fla. Goodrich said he had begun as a company servant for the Witness organization in 1913 and had been a full-time pioneer servant from 1918 until 1943. He was ousted, he charged, when he 'reported demonism being practiced in the society's headquarters.' Goodrich was 'pushed around,' he said, when he tried to distribute some of his own literature at the convention charging the society officials with establishing a 'hierarchy.' Police escorted him out of a crowd of about 200 milling Witness adherents after his literature bag had been torn from his shoulder. Others joining Goodrich are his wife; Lawrence E. Drew, Wolfeboro Falls, N. H.; Mrs. J. H. Donovan, Savannah, Ga.; M. P. Fogh, Cheyenne, Wyo.; Earl Van Huysen, Battle Creek, Mich.; Fred B. Dwigans, Orchard, Nebr.; and Mrs. Cynthia Gladin, Savannah, Ga. Goodrich and the others, who said they had all been 'excommunicated' by letter from the society on 'unspecified charges,' came to Cleveland from their homes at their own expense. All had served as literature-vending servants for many years, they said, and had 'hardly been able to exist.'

"Acting as spokesman for the society, Milton G. Henschel, secretary to Knorr, quoted the Bible on 'divisive elements going back beyond Moses.' He said the group of five men and three women 'just don't agree with us; so we go our way and they go theirs.' Henschel added that 'someone has to run an organization, and Goodrich wanted to glorify himself.' Goodrich said he came to the convention 'obeying the command of the Bible to call attention of the honest Witnesses to the hypocrisy of the leaders.'" A.

Jehovah's Witnesses Appeal to the President. — This sect certainly succeeds in its attempt to attract public attention. At its Cleveland meeting in August it passed a resolution which will be handed to President Truman. *R. N. S.* submits this account:

"President Truman was asked by Jehovah's Witnesses, meeting in international convention here, to grant executive clemency to more than 4,000 members of the group who have been sentenced to federal prison during the war for Selective Service Act violations. The resolution, expected to be presented personally to the President by H. C. Covington of Brooklyn, N. Y., legal counsel for the sect, asks the Chief Executive to bestow executive clemency and full pardon, restoring all civil rights to those taken into custody for failing to comply with draft regulations. Covington told the assembly that of the more than 4,000 jailed, 1,300 are still being held. Others, he said, have been given paroles.

"Reading the resolution, Covington said 'other political prisoners in countries conquered by the Allies have been released.' 'Even many Nazis who persecuted Jehovah's Witnesses have been granted amnesty. A United States Supreme Court decision of last Feb. 4 gave us the right to be heard,' Covington said. The delegates roared their approval when adoption of the resolution was moved by N. H. Knorr, Brooklyn, president of the Watch Tower and Bible Tract Society. The delegates also approved a resolution rejecting 'a rule by human creatures.' They pledged themselves to uphold the 'kingdom of God' as the only government of peace, security, and righteousness. In an earlier resolution the Witnesses voted to continue their work of 'bringing the message of Jehovah God' to the public in house-to-house campaigns 'pointing the people to the law and testimony and all the word of God' by means of Bible education. 'We will obey Jehovah's command to refuse to join in with the people of Christendom in recommending a world conspiracy to quiet the fear and dread of men and that thus a rule of human creatures be put in world control as a substitute for His kingdom by Christ since A. D. 1914.' Led by Knorr, the Witnesses also pledged to 'continue to give the truth to God's recorded Word by preaching in all the habitable earth the glad tidings that His kingdom was established toward this earth in 1914 and that it is the only government of universal peace, security, and righteousness.'"

Disciples Plan Union with Northern Baptists. — On this topic an *R. N. S.* dispatch from Columbus, Ohio, where the Disciples met in August, gives this information:

"A proposal that a specific plan be drawn up for organic union between the Disciples of Christ and the Northern Baptist Convention, was approved here at the Disciples' International Convention. It was requested that the union plan be prepared by a joint committee of Baptists and Disciples and be presented to the next International Convention for study and discussion. Another resolution recommending that the Northern Baptist Convention be invited to participate in a joint meeting with the Disciples in

1948 to prepare for the gradual merger of the national agencies of the two churches was referred to the joint committee for further study. A resolution urging the opening up of conversations with the Congregational-Christian Churches 'with a view toward organic unity' was referred to the executive committee of the Convention. The Disciples' body approved, without a dissenting vote, the proposed interchurch agency to be known as the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Officers of the Convention were authorized to 'take such steps in the achieving of this end as may be required.'"

An American Observer on Conditions in Germany.—That the outlook in Germany is desperate, is reported from many sources. We submit in the following news item remarks of Mr. Kline of Iowa on this point:

"Every day now travelers return from Europe. Those who have visited Germany agree that little or nothing is being done there toward reconstruction. Allan B. Kline, president of the Iowa Farm Bureau, walked through the rubble-filled streets of Berlin a few days ago. He told the *Des Moines Register* that he saw no industry or business—nothing but people digging in the ruins for scraps to exchange for food. 'The only impression that an American can get by walking through is that the people are slowly starving to death,' he said. He reported that the diet in the American zone is down to 1,180 calories a day. That is about the equivalent of an average breakfast here. Mr. Kline agreed with other observers that "next winter will be still worse if something is not done to improve conditions.' He returned a convert to measures designed to send more food and to an aggressive program for stimulating German industry and business. But that is impossible so long as the Potsdam policy is in effect. Persons who are inclined to consider that policy as nothing more than a mistake which President Truman made a year ago and which has now been remedied by recent efforts to increase the amount of exportable food should take note of the mounting mass of evidence that it is still fully in force. Furthermore, our government has no intention of relaxing its punitive rigor. The latest sign in this direction is the action of the House of Representatives appropriations committee, which slashed \$150,000,000 from the funds requested by the army for relief in occupied zones. When it is recalled that the army has borne the main burden of relief in Germany, which does not receive UNRRA aid, this cut raises the question as to how the House Committee proposes to deal with paralyzing hunger. It supplied the answer when it gave the \$150,000,000 and \$25,000,000 more to the army for atomic bomb development. When the starving ask for bread, give them bombs!"

International Affairs Commission of World Council of Churches.—On account of the frequent references to this commission which one may expect to see in the daily press, we submit this information on it from *R. N. S.*

"Baron Frederick van Asbeck, professor in the University of Leyden, Holland, was named chairman of the newly formed Commission on International Affairs at final sessions of the Conference on World Order convened at Cambridge by the World Council of Churches. The appointment, however, is tentative, pending Baron van Asbeck's acceptance of the post. Named vice-chairman of the commission, which will seek to exert Christian influence in political matters, was John Foster Dulles of New York, chairman of the Commission on a Just and Durable Peace of the Federal Council of Churches, who presided at the Cambridge sessions. It is expected that another vice-chairman, representing China, will be nominated later. Kenneth G. Grub, of the Church of England Missionary Society, indicated he will accept appointment as director of the commission, with Dr. O. Frederick Nolde, of Philadelphia, as vice-director. United States members of the commission include Methodist Bishop G. Bromley Oxnam, president of the Federal Council of Churches; Protestant Episcopal Bishop G. Ashton Oldham, Albany, N. Y.; Professor Reinhold Niebuhr, Union Theological Seminary, N. Y.; and Dean Virginia Gildersleeve, Barnard College, New York. British members are: Sir Alfred Zimmern, emeritus professor of international relations at Oxford University; Dr. George K. A. Bell, Anglican Bishop of Chichester; John Edwards, M. P.; and S. A. Morrison, British missionary in Cairo. Germany is represented on the commission by Dr. Rudolf Smend, professor of law at Goettingen University; and Japan by Dr. Toyohiko Kagawa, noted Christian leader. Invited members from other countries include Professor Hamilcar Alivisatos, of Athens, Greece; Frank Bednar, Czechoslovakia; Professor J. Ellul, Bordeaux, France; Arvid Broderon, Norway, social science counselor to UNESCO; Professor Werner Kaegi, Zurich, Switzerland; Dr. Nicholas Berdyaev, Paris; George Brown, president of Emanuel College, Toronto; Kenneth Bailey, Australian Solicitor General; Bishop John Cullberg, Sweden; Professor Reinhalt Jones, director of the Race Relations Institute of the Union of South Africa; and John Matthae, India. Representatives will also be named, the conference indicated, from Latin American countries and Korea. In addition to Dean Gildersleeve, another woman on the commission is Senora Perez, of the Philippine Islands Public Welfare Department. American delegates have urged that a member be appointed from the international Young Women's Christian Association. It is also expected that the world Y. M. C. A. and the World Student Christian Federation will be invited to name candidates.

The conference issued a nine-point statement on the Commission's functions which states that one aim would be to encourage the setting of national commissions 'in each country and each church,' and another to gather and distribute information on the relation of churches to public affairs. Other functions will be to issue studies on economic and social problems; assign special tasks

to subcommittees, and organize study conferences of leaders of different churches. The commission will also suggest ways in which Christians 'may act effectively on special problems touching on conscience' at particular times; formulate principles bearing on the relations of nations, focusing on immediate issues; and join other organizations occasionally in advancing particular aims. The latter purpose was taken as referring especially to Roman Catholic and Jewish groups. The remaining function, the statement said, is to represent churches in contacts with such international bodies as the United Nations and its related agencies. These contacts, it was stated, would assist in the codification of international law, encourage respect for human freedoms, 'especially religious liberty,' promote the international regulation of armaments and further economic co-operation and the development of dependent peoples."

An Important FCC Ruling.—The daily press reports that the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has handed down a ruling according to which radio stations are not to refuse atheists who wish to present their religious views an opportunity to broadcast. Whether religious non-commercial stations are affected we do not know. The ruling states that "freedom of religious belief necessarily carries with it freedom to disbelief," and "if freedom of speech is to have meaning, it must be extended as readily to ideas which we disapprove or abhor as to ideas which we approve." The Commission holds that "an organization or idea may be projected into the realm of controversy by virtue of being attacked," and that persons "should not be denied the right to answer attacks upon them or their belief solely because they are few in number." The decisive factor must not be the high degree of popularity or unpopularity of a certain position, according to the Commission. Of importance, according to FCC, is the fact that the opportunity which is sought by the atheist in question "does not involve blasphemous attacks upon the deity or any religious belief or organization, but only such criticisms as would necessarily be employed in the logical development of arguments supporting atheism. It is true that in this country an overwhelming majority of the people profess a belief in the existence of a Divine Being. But the conception of the nature of the Divine Being is as varied as religious denominations and sects and even differs with the individuals belonging to the same denomination or sect. So diverse are these conceptions that it may be fairly said, even as to professed believers, that the God of one man does not exist for another. And so strongly may one believe in his own particular conception of God that he may easily be led to say, 'only my God exists, and therefore he who denies my God is an atheist, irresponsible of his professed belief in a God.'" In view of the freedom of speech which fortunately obtains in our country, we hold that the position of FCC in this case is sound. A.

Brief Items.—Faith Theological Seminary, a Fundamentalist Presbyterian school at Wilmington, Delaware, has enrolled a highly interesting student. He is Mr. Richard A. Webster, who before entering the seminary labored as an atomic bomb chemist. He took his M. S. degree at the University of California and spent two years in chemical research on the atomic bomb. His desire is to serve the Lord as missionary in China.

Bishop Szeruda of Poland recently declared that of the one million Lutherans in Poland before the war, only 200,000 are left today. These people are said to be in dire need of physical help.

When in 1892 Spurgeon died, Gladstone, the famous English statesman and scholar, in lamenting his death called him "the last of the Puritans." An interesting article on the Puritans appeared in the *Watchman-Examiner* for August 15, having the title "The Last of the Puritans."

"The mass of the people (in Scotland) have drifted away from any save the most formal contacts with the Church. It is estimated that 75 per cent of the Scotch people no longer attend services even at the high festivals of the Christian year."—Paul Hutchinson in the *Christian Century* of September 11.

Writing from Paris, Paul Hutchinson, managing editor of the *Christian Century*, in the September 18 issue of this paper, has this to say about the religious situation obtaining in France: "In France you confront the modern rejection of the spiritual, the acceptance of the purely materialistic and secularistic interpretation of life, bearing its foredoomed fruit. In this country of 40,000,000 people, not more than 600,000 at a liberal estimate can be counted as Protestants, and a recent book by two Roman Catholic priests maintains that, at the outside, there are not more than 5,000,000 practicing Catholics. The overwhelming bulk of the population has cut itself off from the ministries of the Church. It regards the claims of Christianity either with indifference or, in most instances, with outright contempt. It is atheist, and proud of it. And the result is an inner drying up of the moral springs of the national life which now is registering in outer decadence." The "decline and fall" of Rome is re-enacted in European countries. May God have mercy!

Brief Items from *Religious News Service.*—The Winona Lake Christian Assembly was refused real estate tax exemption for the first time by the tax review board of Kosciusko County in Indiana. If the ruling is not reversed, the religious organization is liable for \$1,735 in taxes. The Assembly is expected to appeal the decision to the Indiana State Tax Board. It seems that certain ventures which are conducted for gain are connected with the Winona Lake project and are rented out.

From St. Louis comes the news that a series of "street preaching missions" located on street corners, residential lots, and parish yards has been launched with the aid of priests from seven Roman Catholic parishes. Object of the missions is to acquaint non-

members with the teachings of the Catholic Church. Movable pulpits, loud-speakers, and portable lighting equipment will be used.

The American Lutheran Publicity Bureau has authorized the printing of one million Gospel tracts for nation-wide distribution by the 350 youth groups affiliated with the International Walther League. Distribution of the leaflets was to begin September 1.

President Truman has appointed three nationally known clergymen along with 27 other leaders in various fields to a National Commission on Higher Education. The three are Methodist Bishop G. Bromley Oxnam, New York, president of the Federal Council of Churches; Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, New York, president of the Jewish Institute of Religion; and the Very Rev. Msgr. Frederick G. Hochwalt, Washington, D. C., director of the Department of Education of the National Catholic Welfare Conference. The Commission's duties will be to "re-examine our system of higher education in terms of its objectives, methods, and facilities, and in the light of the social role it has to play," President Truman said. Another commission member is Eleanor Roosevelt.

The American Friends Service Committee [Quakers] of Philadelphia has issued a warning that the German people will starve if present occupation policies are followed. "Germany's manpower, scientific agency, and industry are being dissipated as the spoils of victory." "Unless proper food is given soon, the people will not have energy to work, and instead of highly disciplined, clean, and methodical people, we will have a lowly, debased, gangster type of people, and be faced with a long-time feeding program."

The National Brethren Youth Council at its recent meeting in Chicago drew up a youth program which includes the enlisting of one thousand young people by 1950 for a year's service in church work. These people are to be volunteers.

The Quaker program up to June 30 called for expenditures of \$400,000 in Austria, \$50,000 in Hungary, \$125,000 in Poland, and one million in Germany. The latter included \$50,000 in the French zone, \$175,000 in the British zone, \$58,000 in the Russian zone, and \$717,000 in the American zone.

The Vatican has announced plans for a holy year in 1950 during which the Holy See will grant extraordinary plenary indulgences to pilgrims who visit Rome to venerate the tombs of the Apostles and the See of Peter. The holy year will actually open on April 2, 1949, the anniversary of the ordination of Pope Pius XII, and will be marked by the opening on the following Christmas Eve of the doors of the basilicas of St. Peter, the Lateran, St. Paul, and St. Mary Major, which are ordinarily kept closed. The last regular holy year was in 1925, but a special holy year was observed in 1933 "to commemorate the Church's 1900th anniversary." Holy years were formerly held every hundred years, but the intervals were reduced to 50 and finally to 25 years by

decree of Pope Paul II (1464—1471).—If anybody thinks that there is no connection between the holding of the holy year and the papal exchequer, he is quite naive indeed.

Four Canadian Jesuit priests will leave for Ethiopia shortly to set up a college for training primary school teachers in Addis Ababa.

According to Dr. Stewart Herman, American official of the World Council of Churches, a number of Lutheran churches in the territory now held by Poland have been seized and turned over to the Roman Catholic Church. Among them is the large St. Elizabeth Church in Breslau.

Activities at Lourdes in France are taking on pre-war proportions. A dispatch from Paris, dated August 23, says that the total number of cures reported for the recent national pilgrimage, the first one since the war, is 10. The five most recent cases are Mlle. Annette Rougier, 25, from Bordeaux, cured of acute laryngitis and a crooked leg; Mlle. Lantine Beauvis of St. Pierre la Cour, cured of tubercular arthritis of the hips; Mlle. Salvayres, 23, of Pessac, restored to health after suffering from bacillary peritonitis; Mme. la Pointe, 36, of Blois, cured of a double congenital dislocation of the legs; and Mme. Berrier, of Blois, mother of three children, cured of both tuberculosis and pleurisy. "If the cures prove to be permanent and medical authorities agree they cannot be attributed to natural causes, the five cases will be validated some time next year."

At the penal farm of the State of Mississippi located at Parchman, eight prisoners were recently baptized in a public service by a Baptist minister.

In Canada the proposal is discussed to pool the salaries of the ministers that are connected with the United Church. Some of the pastors working in Saskatchewan receive only \$600 a year while the salary of the highest paid man of the Church who is stationed in Montreal is \$10,199 a year. It is suggested that the basic salaries should be made \$1,800 plus "furnished manse." Congregations that wish to pay more may do so, but for every extra dollar they pay the pastor, they will have to put a dollar into the ministerial salary fund of the Church. One half of the ministers of the United Church in Canada are said "to be at or below the \$1,800 level."

In England there is an organization which calls itself the National Union of Protestants and whose aim it is to carry on propaganda against "a Roman Catholic form of worship" in Anglican churches. It recently sent a "flying column" into Northern Ireland where there are some Anglican churches in which candles are used on the altar and the congregation "turns to the East," though, generally speaking, Anglican churches in Northern Ireland belong to the "Low Church" wing of Anglicanism. A.