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## Theological Observer. - Kirchlich-Zeitgeschichtliches

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## Theological Observer

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**Ecumenicity and Its Challenge to the Missouri Synod.**—For two decades the ecumenical movement has gained momentum. According to present plans virtually every Protestant denomination will be represented in the World Council of Churches in its Amsterdam meeting in 1948. The leaders in this movement believe that the churches can best discharge their task if they all "share the spirit of oneness in Christ." In the ecumenical Church, as it is envisioned by many Protestant leaders, all the churches allegedly are able to participate in the "religious experiences" of other communions without losing their own distinctiveness. Thus the nonliturgical churches will, so we are told, benefit from singing the liturgy of the Anglican Church, or the Presbyterians will be enriched by seeing the "soul liberty doctrine" of the Baptists in action. The hope is expressed, that all will gain individually by sharing their heritage with others, and all will collectively be strengthened to conquer the enemies of the Christian Church. Indeed, Christians must share their spiritual treasures with other Christians. But they must really be spiritual treasures. And such sharing dare not involve the danger of losing any spiritual treasures. We of the Missouri Synod have an obligation to share with others the great heritage which the Lord has given to our Synod. It is our duty to let the beacon light of the truth which God has entrusted to us shine brightly to guide those who are groping in the present confused world. We are doing this in our "Each One Reach One" program. The program, however, is geared particularly to personal evangelism, and is directed primarily to reach those outside of visible Christendom. And this is unquestionably our Church's primary mission obligation. But we have an obligation to share our Gospel also with those within the Christian Church who do not bask in the sunlight of God's grace as we do. The founding fathers of our Synod did it. We have been doing it in a small degree. But the emphasis which is today placed on the ecumenical movement compels us to re-evaluate our place in the visible Christian Church. During the first century our Synod has become a known factor in the religious life of America and the world. There is a reason for this in God's economy. We are here to make a contribution. Our commission is first and last to build the Christian Church. This means that we must reach those without, but also that we strengthen the weak hands and confirm the feeble knees. The question that demands an answer as we enter the second century is: How can we share with the entire Christian Church our great heritage without entering into the broad stream of a world ecumenicity? Specifically we must ask ourselves: What can we do to present the Gospel message so that it will be understood by the modern world? Have we



probably been very active in condemning liberal theology and fundamentalist aberrations, but have failed in setting forth the positive message which we have for the world? We must, of course, do the one, but we dare not neglect to do the other. "Lehre und Wehre" is as modern as 1947, and yet as fixed as the everlasting Gospel. Every pastor has often given thought to this vital problem of fulfilling his obligation toward the ecumenical Church in his particular sphere of activity. And many pastors have taken this obligation seriously. As we enter the second century of our synodical existence, the "Each One Reach One" program must be pushed with all vigor; but at the same time we must also seek ways and means to bring the everlasting truths to the theological leaders in a manner which will arrest their attention. Pastoral conferences might well spend some time discussing both our obligation and the means to fulfill these obligations. Synod must make provisions that these God-given obligations can be fulfilled. Above all, we must remember that only a deep devotion to the truth entrusted to us, firm confidence in the power of the Gospel, and a deep zeal to spread this by every available means, will, under God's gracious blessing, build His *Una Sancta*, the true ecumenical Church. F. E. M.

**Doctrinal Unity Among the Lutheran Free Churches of Germany.**—Representatives of the Evangelical Lutheran Free Church of Germany and the Evangelical Lutheran Free Church in Prussia (Breslau) met at Wiesbaden in January to discuss the doctrinal basis of a union of these two Free Churches as well as the work which confronts them. Six issues of *Der Lutheraner* have been published at Frankfurt with an edition of seven thousand copies. (The title was suggested by the military authorities, not by our men.) Further steps were taken toward the opening of the theological "high school"—the term "seminary" in Europe denotes a one-year postgraduate school for practical work. The "high school" is to be opened in a small community near Frankfurt in the fall. Here three incomplete barracks on a thirty-acre tract of land are to be purchased; the proseminary has been in operation at Gross-Oesingen since last fall. The conference at Wiesbaden also discussed its eleemosynary work, particularly orphans' and old people's homes. The chief purpose of the meeting was to reach full doctrinal agreement by all participating pastors. Owing to the zonal division in Germany, it was necessary to conduct the meetings for union in two sections. The pastors in the western zone had been able to hold several conferences, and the Wiesbaden meeting proved to lead to a God-pleasing climax of the doctrinal discussions. Full agreement has been established between the "Saxons" and the Breslau churches on inspiration and the authority of Scriptures, conversion and predestination, eschatology, the Church and the ministry. The draft of the union document adopted at Wiesbaden and prepared by Dr. Guenther, Lic. Schulz, and Pastor Heinzelmann of the Breslau Synod, and President Petersen, Vice-President Stallmann, the



Revs. Oesch and Herrmann reached us a few days ago. A number of essays were presented at this meeting dealing with such problems as the relation of the Free Churches to the State Churches. Lic. Schulz read a paper dealing with altar fellowship in the EKID. Problems such as the cordial relation which the Breslau Synod held with the conservative elements in the State Church, especially with the foreign mission societies and pastoral alliances like the Martin Luther Bund, were also discussed, and a temporary *modus vivendi* was agreed upon.

Under date of March 23 President Petersen reports that also in the Russian Zone the "Saxon" and those Breslau pastors who have been able to meet for doctrinal discussions have reached perfect agreement on the doctrines which had formerly separated the two groups. However, not all pastors of the Breslau Synod in the Russian Zone have been able to participate in the union meetings; some have hardly been apprised of the union efforts. The *Kirchenrat* of the Breslau Synod, with headquarters in Berlin, has held several joint meetings with our pastors, and has wholeheartedly subscribed to the "Berlin Theses," drafted and adopted shortly after Dr. Behnken's visit in Berlin. In the Russian Zone the document for doctrinal unity has thus been accepted only by the official leaders of the two church bodies, but the consensus of opinion is that all pastors of both bodies will subscribe to the document, so that a God-pleasing unity is assured. Unfortunately, the Hessian, the Hanover, and the Hamburg-Hermansburg Free Churches have not joined, but organized the Independent Free Church of Hessia and Lower Saxony, comprising about thirty parishes.—For the moment it is not planned to establish an organic union between the "Saxons" and Breslau. A number of problems require solution, especially the matter of church government. The Breslau Synod has a quasi-consistorial government, while the "Saxons" have a synodical form of government. But this difference will not cause any difficulty, because there is a sincere desire to establish a God-pleasing unity. While altar and pulpit fellowship has not yet been declared, the bodies can now jointly undertake the great tasks confronting them: gathering their scattered congregations; missionary expansion; proclamation of the Word through the press; relief among orphans, widows, and old people; and last but not least, the opening of the school of the prophets. The members of our Synod rejoice with our European brethren that the Lord has blessed the union efforts.

F. E. M.

**Clouding the Issue.**—Under this heading Dr. Herman A. Preuss of Luther Seminary, St. Paul, in the *Lutheran Outlook* of March summarizes correctly the problem which confronts the Lutherans of all countries respecting the reconstruction of the German Evangelical Church. It is evident that two alternatives face the German church leaders: "Either they will build one great Evangelical Church embracing all Protestants and elimi-



nating, or at least minimizing, all denominational lines with complete altar and pulpit fellowship between Lutherans and Reformed," or they will "build a strong Lutheran Church to take its stand side by side with the Roman and Reformed churches, preserving and revitalizing the heritage of the Reformation." Here, then, is the issue: "Do we want to preserve the Lutheran Church in Germany, or are we ready to give it up in favor of one large Protestant Church?" Dr. Preuss believes—and not without cause—that this issue is being clouded. The fact is that the leaders in the movement to unite the Lutheran state churches have not received the support from extra-German Lutherans for which they had hoped. True, the Lutheran state churches have according to the most recent reports organized the United Evangelical Lutheran Church (VELKD), in which all the historic Lutheran state churches are represented, with the exception of Wuerttemberg. This step in strengthening Lutheranism is either being ignored completely or critized, while the case of the EKID is being placed into the most favorable light and given much publicity. Dr. Preuss lists a number of factors which in his opinion are inimical to the cause of Lutheranism. He calls attention to the efforts of the World Council of Churches which is providing leadership, literature, and financial help to the EKID. He also evaluates the influence of Niemoeller's dynamic personality and stirring message upon the thinking of churches of the Federal Council in general and of the American Lutheran Churches in particular. Pastor Niemoeller makes much of the fact that he was ordained on the Lutheran Confessions, but like many Lutherans in Germany, so also Niemoeller has subscribed to the Halle Resolutions of 1937. The Confessional Synod of the Evangelical Church of the old Prussian Union in its meeting at Halle agreed on the following formulation concerning the doctrine of the Lord's Supper: "Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, who came in the flesh for our sake, who offered Himself upon the cross for us and who bodily rose from death, He Himself is the gracious gift of the Supper to His congregation, instituted by Himself." This formulation erases completely the line of demarcation between Lutherans and Reformed concerning the doctrine of the Real Presence. This view is being propagandized to the extent that one may fear that Article X of the Augsburg Confession and Article VII of the Formula of Concord will be completely scuttled. Dr. Preuss rightly fears that the balance of power will be thrown toward such men as Bishop Wurm, who has refused to join the VELKD, stating that the separate organization of the Lutherans would impair the larger fellowship which the EKID is striving to establish. In a statement publicized last July and reiterated only recently, Bishop Wurm refuses to take part in the movement to establish the Lutheran Church, since it would prevent the establishment of the EKID as a fellowship or even as a Church. The point of Dr. Preuss's article is to give expression to his fear that American Lutheranism has failed to



support German Lutheranism. If we understand Dr. Preuss correctly, it is a plea to American Lutheranism not to harm the cause of Lutheranism by doing nothing or by smearing men like Sasse, but rather to support the leaders of Lutheranism by word and deed.

It is only too true that the ecumenical spirit born partly out of the need of jointly confessing Christ against Germany's neopaganism and partly out of the infiltration of Calvinism from Switzerland is today threatening to stifle Lutheranism in Germany. Conservative Lutheranism therefore has a tremendous task to meet the challenge of the day. It must be stated that the European representatives of the Missouri Synod have taken every opportunity to point out to the leaders of the EKID, to Dr. Asmussen, Pfarrer Niemoeller, and others, that the organization of the EKID as a union Church will spell the ruin of Lutheranism. The Missouri Synod has endeavored by word and deed to encourage the conservative leaders in the Lutheran state churches to work toward the establishment of true Lutheranism. For that reason the Emergency Planning Council is now distributing ten thousand copies of Dr. Pieper's *Dogmatik* and a like number of Dr. Walther's *Law and Gospel* among the German clergy. The voice of confessional Lutheranism is being heard in Germany, since a special edition of the *Lutheraner* is today reaching nine thousand subscribers in Germany.

F. E. M.

**VELKD Organized.**—The formal organization of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church in Germany (VELKD) has been announced by Bishop Meiser. All the Lutheran state churches were represented at a meeting at Treysa in February. The stated purpose of the union of all Lutheran state churches is to establish the Lutherans as a separate church body in opposition to the plan to unite the Reformed, Lutheran, and Evangelical Churches in a union church. However, the various Lutheran State Churches plan to constitute a separate bloc within the EKID merely as a federation for "co-operation in externals." Bishop Meiser's plan for a separate Lutheran group within the EKID was outlined in a document, *Kirchenordnung und Bekenntnis*, published under the title "Church Order and the Confession," C. T. M., XVII, p. 128.

The *Christian Century* through its German correspondent, Chester L. Hunt, reports as follows: "German Lutherans are planning a united Lutheran church to weld together the various provincial Lutheran bodies in one organization. The new organization will in turn be a part of the state-supported (?) Evangelical Church in Germany. At present, German Protestantism has creedal variations, but its organization is along geographical rather than denominational lines. Within the Evangelical Church are Lutheran, Reformed, and United (combined Lutheran and Reformed) churches. While the denominations have theological autonomy, the bulk of their finances, periodicals, and organization is controlled by the Evangelical Church setup. Local church leaders



look upon the Lutheran move as an ecumenical venture which will actually bring a greater degree of unity to German Protestantism. . . . The recent conference of church leaders in Treysa took the view that the Barmen declaration of the Confessional Church in 1934 was a statement of belief common to all Christian groups, but did not furnish the theological basis for a united church. For the present, the various elements in the church will work together without seeking organic unity. Whether the Lutheran move will increase or diminish the cooperation of the different denominational groups is a question which only time can answer."

The organization of the VELKD has prompted Dr. Asmussen, chancellor of the EKID, to ask a number of theological faculties of German universities for an opinion concerning the confessional question as it confronts the EKID. He hopes to have an answer to the following questions: What does it mean that a confession is in force? How is one to understand the rejection of errors in the Lutheran Confessions? What significance do the Barmen Theses now have; are they a confession? Does a confession in general, or the Barmen Declaration in particular, have the character to found a Church?—It must be mentioned that the Wuerttemberg Church through its leader, Bishop Wurm, did not enter into the VELKD.

The movement toward union within the Lutheran state churches seems to be a definite step in the direction of awakening a confessional Lutheran consciousness, and thus it will serve, under God, as a bloc to stem the tide of Calvinistic theology which at present is a real threat to Lutheranism in Germany. May this union lead more and more nominal Lutherans to a real understanding of the three great Lutheran Reformation principles.

F. E. M.

**Lutherans to Meet at Lund.**—The Lutheran World Federation will meet at Lund, Sweden, June 30 to July 6. More than a thousand delegates and visitors from 18 countries are expected to take part in the meetings, 40 delegates coming from America and 40 from Germany and a proportionate number from the Scandinavian countries and other Lutheran sections of the world. Bishop Eidem, president of the Lutheran World Federation, will open the meeting with divine service and the celebration of Communion. The general topic of the sessions will be "The Lutheran Church in the World Today." Dr. Long will speak on "The Place of the Lutheran World Federation in the World Today"; Dr. Anders Nygren, on "The Testimony of the Lutheran Church"; Dr. Lilje, on "We Face the Problems of This Day." Provisions are made in the calendar for sectional meetings. In the first three sections the following topics will be discussed: (1) "The Lutheran Church Confessing the Truth in a Confused World on the Word of God, the Sacraments, the Church"; (2) "The Lutheran Church Performing Her Mission in a Devastated World"; (3) "The Lutheran Church Facing the Problems of Materialism, Secularism, Nihilism, Race Relations, Refugees and Displaced Persons." The proposed constitution for the Lutheran World



Federation will come before the meeting. According to the new constitution the Federation shall be a free association of Lutheran churches with no legislative power. The assembly will no doubt consider the recommendation of the American delegation for confessional representation in the World Council of Churches. Under the proposed constitution of the World Council, Protestant representation is allocated on a geographical basis. The Lutheran proposal, however, asks for recognition of Lutherans on a denominational basis. Among the American delegates are the presidents of six Lutheran bodies: Dr. Franklin Clark Fry, United Lutheran Church; Dr. J. A. Aasgaard, Evangelical Lutheran Church; Dr. Emmanuel Poppen, American Lutheran Church; Dr. P. O. Bersell, Augustana Synod; Dr. T. O. Burntweidt, Lutheran Free Church; and Dr. Alfred Haapanen, Finnish Suomi Synod.

F. E. M.

**On Teaching Doctrine.**—In the *Calvin Forum*, April, 1947, Henry R. Van Til, associate professor of the Bible at Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Mich., under the above heading writes about a most serious problem facing him in his school as teacher of Christian doctrine. He says that he was called to teach Reformed doctrine in a Calvinistic college, but "the attitude toward this required subject is one that ranges from mild interest by way of absolute indifference to that of belligerent disapproval." He complains that this "is a matter so patent and so much in evidence on the faces of the students that it slightly unnerves the beginning instructor." He adds: "By conversation with other Bible teachers and from information volunteered in the faculty room during lunch hour the conclusion that this has been the state of affairs for many years is unavoidable. Some students just rebel at taking doctrine courses, and it is generally considered an endurance contest because the school requires it and it means two hours of credit." He explains that he would not divulge "this rather personal soul-struggle if it were not for the universal aspects of [his] experience." He projects the problem to receive the "reactions, suggestions, and criticisms" of the readers. Analyzing the phenomenon of disinterestedness over against doctrine, he suggests as its first reason the "firmly ingrained prejudice against doctrine" of the students that enter the college, and he points out that somewhere in the early training of the boys and girls in the home, the Sunday school, the parish school, the church itself, something must have occurred to prejudice the young mind against the study of doctrine. Of course, there is the natural opposition of the human heart to the truth of God, and this too is no insignificant reason why youngsters seemingly do not care for Christian doctrine. But in a larger way (and this is perhaps a major cause) present-day resistance to indoctrination must be recognized as part of the general picture of the times. He writes: "I have no hesitation whatever in ascribing the classroom phenomenon of indifference and even hostility to the truth of God as part of the eschatological phenomena predicted by the



Apostle." Nevertheless, he warns, we must not "hide our incompetence or our listless presentation of the truth behind the above-mentioned factors." We must rather seek to remedy the situation which calls for new techniques and skills in presenting the subject. There must be aroused in the student the will to study doctrine by showing him that it is neither unprofitable nor impractical but relevant to daily living. Intellectualism must be avoided by all means, and the student must be shown that doctrine is neither unintelligible nor old-fogyish, but vibrant and dynamic. In short, the study of doctrine must be made more engrossing, for while the truth is unchangeable, we must adapt ourselves "to the changing conditions and adopt a more vigorous orientation program in teaching that truth." There is much food for thought in Professor Van Til's analysis of the problem and the remedies he suggests. The teaching of Christian doctrine has never been easy. It demands special techniques and special endowments. Above all, it requires an ardent love not only for the truth itself, but also for those to whom the truth is to be taught, and with it must go the prayer for God's blessings upon the task that is both a chore and a privilege.

J. T. M.

**The Bible for Overlooked Tribes.** — The *Sunday School Times*, April 5, 1947, reports on the work of the Wycliffe Bible Translators, an organization founded a few years ago, to help solve the problem of Bible translation for the "un-Bibled tribes of the earth." The society does not intend to compete with existing missionary and Bible societies, but desires to supplement and serve them. Its main course is given in the Summer Institute of Linguistics at the University of Oklahoma. For Canadians the work is made available at the Canadian branch in Saskatchewan. Last summer three hundred missionaries and candidates from about thirty different boards and churches took the course. After the students have successfully completed the prescribed work, they are sent out to reduce unwritten languages of primitives to writing, to translate the Scriptures into their languages, and teach the people how to read their own tongue. The Bible societies have offered to print the translations that are being supplied, and different missions stand ready to distribute them. In Mexico there are more than one hundred Wycliffians pioneering for Christ. They are scattered among more than forty Indian tribes from Chiapas to Sonora. Two Indian tribes in the United States have Wycliffians laboring among them, and in Peru there are now twenty-three linguistic pioneers endeavoring to give the Word to seven semisavage tribes of the Amazon jungle. The work in Mexico has been established for eleven years. The work in Peru was begun in April, 1946. A base has here been established in the jungle at a central point, and a medical clinic has been opened both for the translators and the natives that need medical help. About forty tribes in Peru remain without translators. In South America as a whole about two hundred. In addition, there are



hundreds of tribes without the Bible in their tongue in Africa, Siberia, India, and the Islands of the South Sea. The Wycliffe Bible Translators are asking for 150 more young men and women to answer the Macedonian call of these Bibleless tribes every year. The Lord indeed finds willing workers to make known His Word to men before He comes for the final Judgment, thus fulfilling His prophecy in Matt. 24:14. And shall we Lutherans merely stand by?

J. T. M.

**"Predestination Versus Foreign Missions."**—The *Lutheran Church Quarterly*, January, 1947, calls attention to the fact that in the year 1647—three hundred years ago—the House of Commons approved the Westminster Confession, which afterwards was to play so important a role especially in Presbyterian Christendom. The *Lutheran Church Quarterly* uses this opportunity to compare the Westminster Confession with the Formula of Concord, which had been adopted seventy years earlier, in 1577, with special reference to the doctrine of predestination, which is treated in both these confessions. Unlike the Westminster Confession, the Formula of Concord, as the *Quarterly* shows, does not teach that God decreed absolutely "to condemn all others for their sins by passing them by and leaving them to die in their sins" (p. 85). Nevertheless, the writer of the article finds it strange that this important Confession, which so greatly stresses the *gratia universalis*, should not have emphasized the Church's "missionary obligation and exacted the spirit of Christians missions." He says: "Had the Formula of Concord or some other Lutheran Confession included the missionary obligation and exacted the spirit of Christian missions, the Lutheran Church would have become preeminent in carrying out the great commission of the Savior of the world. The Lutheran Church, now having advanced beyond its Confessions in this respect, may make up for lost time by ardently pursuing the imperative task of taking the means of grace to as many as it still can possibly reach by its foreign mission effort." We certainly are in full agreement with the mission spirit reflected in the last statement and express the hope that the Lutheran Church will surpass other churches in doing mission work both at home and abroad. Still we wonder whether even this mild criticism of the Formula of Concord is justified. Historians have said that the modern era of missions begins with the Reformation; and this is true, even though Luther and his collaborators did not undertake any foreign mission work. This was not because they did not appreciate the importance and necessity of foreign missions, but because they had to deal with conditions which at that time made such work almost an impossibility. The Lutheran Reformers did a splendid job in evangelizing practically all of Europe, but beyond that they could not go. Even when the Formula of Concord was written, conditions within the Lutheran Church were such as obligated the writers of this monumental confessional document to confine themselves to the problems which they faced. Still, Luther, and especially also the writers of the Formula of



Concord, we believe, laid the foundation for modern mission work by their emphasis on the doctrine of the means of grace and, in particular, of universal grace. Nor do we believe it quite correct to say that "it remained for the Pietistic movement in Europe to resolve the antagonism between the doctrine of Calvinistic predestination and the foreign mission enterprise by restoring in the Church the apostolic spirit of missions" (p. 89). While the Pietistic Halle School indeed deserves much credit for its efforts in behalf of foreign mission work, already in 1559 Gustavus Vasa of Sweden sent Lutheran ministers to the Laplanders in the far north for the purpose of bringing to them the pure Gospel of Christ, and his followers continued this work. Here, then, is a case of foreign missions begun by Lutherans. But after all, that is secondary. Our interest attaches not so much to the historical data here given as rather to the title "Predestination Versus Foreign Missions." A better title, and one more in accordance with the spirit of the Formula of Concord, would perhaps be the following: "Foreign Missions Just Because of Predestination." The writer in this article finds it strange that Calvinists in spite of their *decretum horribile* were among the first to establish foreign missions and have pursued this work with unusual energy ever since. But the solution of this apparent paradox is not hard to find. According to Calvin the duty of the Church is to bring all men under the jurisdiction of the "Gospel." He states: "The nature of the apostolic office is manifest from this command: 'Go preach the gospel to every creature.' No certain limits are prescribed, but the whole world is assigned to them, to be reduced to obedience to Christ; that by disseminating the gospel wherever they could, they might erect his kingdom in all nations. . . . The 'apostles,' therefore, were missionaries, who were to reduce the world from their revolt to true obedience to God, and to establish his kingdom universally by the preaching of the gospel. Or, if you please, they were the first architects of the Church, appointed to lay its foundations all over the world." (*Institutes*, IV, iii, 4.) Somewhere Calvin also states that no one knows who the elect are and so ministers are to preach the Gospel to all people in such a manner as if all men were elect. Lutherans may apply this argument with still greater vigor. Scripture tells us that the great multitude of the glorified in heaven are brought in from "all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues" (Rev. 7:9). The same truth is taught by the Old Testament Prophets, especially by Isaiah in his Epiphany prophecies (cf. Is., chap. 60, and others). Since, then, we know that God's elect are everywhere among all nations in the world, we are to "make disciples of all nations . . . baptizing and teaching them" (Matt. 28:19-20). Had the opportunities for doing foreign mission work which are ours today been given to Luther and his colaborers, we are sure they would have engaged in it very actively, but besides other difficulties, as mentioned above, there was the iron curtain of Roman Catholicism. The papists still controlled the world, even



though Luther had caused the light of the Gospel to shine in Central Europe; and so the Lutherans simply could not go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.

J. T. M.

**Brief Items from Religious News Service.**—A bill to provide public transportation of parochial school pupils was killed by the Maine Senate.

Holy Week observances in America were short-waved in 25 languages to Europe, Latin America, and the Far East over the State Department's Voice of the United States of America.

A Protestant committee of inquiry has been formed in Rome to investigate the alleged forced closing of five Pentecostal churches in Sicily within the past few weeks.

France is suffering from a shortage of Roman Catholic priests, particularly in rural areas. Of 9,000 parishes, 3,000 have no parish priest.

A new religious textbook is being prepared in Vienna to meet the needs of Protestant children in Austria. The book contains the Old and New Testaments, 60 Protestant hymns, and Luther's Small Catechism.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints will observe the hundredth anniversary of Mormonism in Utah this year. Since 1847 the Mormons have increased from a membership of about 45,000 to almost one million.

Pastor Niemoeller was deeply impressed by the strong influence which American laymen exert in church life and thought, and in his opinion this accounts for the fact that the Christian influence is greater in America than in Europe.

Haj Amin El Hussein, exiled Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, expressed in Beyrouth hope that "all Arab states will establish diplomatic relations with the Vatican," to "promote the Arab cause in Palestine among 400,000,000 Catholics the world over."

Polygamy among Oriental Jews in Palestine has been banned by a decree published in the official government gazette in Jerusalem. Heretofore plural marriages have been permitted to members of Sephardic and Oriental (Spanish and Portuguese) congregations.

Church-sponsored aid to Europe's needy, especially from the United States, must be kept at a high level, at least until the spring of 1948, according to speakers at concluding sessions of the five-day All-European Conference of Church Reconstruction Secretaries at Chexbres on Lake Geneva.

A Department of Religion will be established by the George Washington University (non-sectarian) in Washington, D. C., with Dr. Lawrence D. Folkemer, pastor of the Lutheran Church of Our Savior, Lansdowne, Md., as associate professor of religion and executive officer of the department.



**The Rt. Rev. Msgr. Edward J. Flanagan, founder of Boys Town, Nebr., has arrived in Japan, where he will serve as a government consultant on child welfare programs being developed by Japanese authorities. Msgr. Flanagan's services were requested by General Douglas MacArthur.**

**Shauki Effendi Ribbani, head of the Bahai Community, a Persian religious sect, returned to Haifa, world center of Bahaism, after an extended meeting in Jerusalem with European Bahaists. Bahaists believe in the unity of all religions, world peace, universal education, and equality of men and women.**

**A Negro group has been admitted to membership in the International Walther League for the first time. The New York Metropolitan District, which embraces 101 youth societies, now includes the Lutheran Senior Walther League of Mount Zion Lutheran Church, one of the largest Negro Lutheran congregations in New York.**

**Leading Moslem officials visited the Coptic Orthodox bishop in Zagazig to express regret over a recent attack on a Coptic church there by "irresponsible" Moslem elements. A mass meeting was held in the churchyard, at which Moslem and Coptic religious representatives stressed the "traditional friendship between two elements of the Egyptian nation."**

**The association of young Buddhists, dissolved during the war, was revived in Tokyo recently at a meeting in Waseda University. Total membership of the revived group is about 40,000. Fourteen universities and 23 schools have branch organizations. Membership is currently limited to students of schools with Buddhist affiliations.**

**A National Marian Congress scheduled in Ottawa, Canada, for June 18-22 and dedicated to prayers for lasting peace, will be the largest religious exposition of the kind ever seen in Canada, according to Congress officials. Emphasized at the Congress will be the special devotion of each religious order to the Blessed Virgin Mary.**

**Fear that the World Council of Churches might become "a world monopoly of Christian organization and influence" was expressed by Dr. R. L. Decker of Kansas City, Mo., in his presidential address to the fifth annual convention of the National Association of Evangelicals in Omaha. The Association is composed of 29 conservative Protestant denominations.**

**Twenty young people, from 18 to 25 years of age, will participate in a European youth work project this summer under the auspices of the Unitarian Service Committee. The group will help Czech young people rebuild an old villa as a youth center, assist a Czech youth restoration project in Lidice, and participate in gathering the harvest in Warsaw.**



A "Blessing of the Animals" ceremony was conducted at the historic old Mission Plaza church in Los Angeles, with more than 1,000 persons (mostly Mexicans) present to watch the procession of animal lovers and their pets as they paraded past the Rev. Fidel Zapatero, who sprinkled them all with holy water, pronouncing a special blessing for health and fertility upon the animals.

A bill authorizing boards of education to provide health and medical welfare services to private and parochial schools was passed by the New York Assembly. The measure also permits absence of public school pupils for religious observance and instruction, thus giving state approval for the released-time religious education plan.

The Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. will continue to be receptive to suggestions looking toward union which may come from the Protestant Episcopal Church in spite of the action of the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church last September in refusing to submit the proposed basis of union between the two Churches to its constituency for study.

Plans to build more than a hundred churches in war-devastated areas of Germany and Holland by using rubble as well as imported materials were described by George Federer of *Hilfswerk*, relief agency of the Evangelical Church in Germany, at sessions of the All-European Conference on Church Reconstruction which met at Chexbres on Lake Geneva.

Eighty members of the Amish Reformed Church are abandoning their 75-year-old community near Berne, Ind., and will migrate to Southern Tennessee to keep their children out of the public high school and its "worldly influence." Since Indiana law requires children to be in school until they reach 16, Amish children must go to public high schools.

Damage caused by fire to churches in the United States during the past year will run as much as 20 per cent above the \$4,800,000 loss suffered by edifices of 30-odd denominations in the previous year. In 1945 there were 2,400 church fires in the United States, and the Association's records now indicate there were probably at least 400 more fires in churches during the past year.

Legislation making it a punishable offense to deny or cast doubt upon the validity of any lawful marriage contracted outside the Roman Catholic Church was demanded by the Free Church Federal Council in London. Warning against marriages between Protestants and Catholics, the Council said, "spiritual unity is essential to successful married life, and vital differences in religious conviction tend to mar the peace and happiness of the home."

The American Bible Society announced in New York that it distributed 11,394,200 Scriptures during 1946 in more than 40 countries, including nearly 4,000,000 volumes in the United States.



A total of 105,500 Testaments and Gospels were sent to Patriarch Alexei of the Russian Orthodox Church, 3,000,000 Scriptures to Latin American countries, and several hundred thousand to refugees and German POWS in various parts of Europe.

The Bombay diocese of the Church of England is preparing to become financially self-supporting when grants from the British government are abolished under the impending new independent government in India, it was announced in Bombay by the Rt. Rev. Richard Dyke Acland, Bishop of Bombay. The bishop made the statement as he left for England prior to retiring from the bishopric under the 65-year age limit.

A Trappist monastery is soon to be established in Ogden Valley—the first in western United States. The monastery will be the fifth of its kind erected in the U. S. by the Cistercians of the Strict Observance. The Trappists practice an austere discipline, including frequent religious exercises, study, prolonged fasts, manual labor, restricted diet, and perpetual silence except with superiors or during Confession.

Protestant, Roman Catholic, and Jewish leaders in New York have joined forces to raise more than \$1,000,000 to build a Jewish Community Center in the garment district. The proposed Center is to be "a sort of Town Hall set in the midst of skyscrapers where forums on national and international questions will be held and where inter-faith co-operation will be at work." Its promoters envision the Center as a shining example to the hate mongers that men of all faiths and races cannot only live together, but can work together for the common good.

A campaign to enroll 100,000 children in vacation Bible schools has been launched in St. Louis by the Missouri Lutheran Synod. The drive is a part of the denomination's child evangelization program aiming to strengthen the religious education of children already church members and to reach those who have no church affiliation. Most of the classroom work will be done by parochial and Sunday school teachers, students home from theological seminaries and teachers' colleges, and retired pastors and teachers. Eight sound films of Bible stories and fifteen films on mission work will be used as part of the teaching procedure.

Should the Church give detailed sex instruction? How does modern theology explain supernatural elements of religion? What is the role of prayer in pastoral counseling? Is God a personal God of individual interpretation and experience? These are some of the questions asked by a group of 83 college students from New England and the Middle Atlantic States at a three-day conference in New York to study opportunities afforded by the Christian ministry as a career. The conference was sponsored by Union Theological Seminary in co-operation with the Commission on the Ministry of the Federal Council of Churches.



The Wisconsin Senate Committee on Education and Public Welfare has recommended indefinite postponement of a bill which would permit religious instruction for public school pupils during school time. The measure was introduced by an interim legislative committee studying juvenile delinquency. Under the bill public school pupils would be released from classes three hours weekly in order that they might receive religious instruction, either in school houses or at their respective churches. Opponents of the measure claim the bill violates a State constitutional provision providing for separation of Church and State.

The Missouri State Senate amended a compulsory immunization law to the effect that Christian Scientists' children would be exempt provided they file an affidavit stating that this is contrary to their religious beliefs and that they rely on spiritual means for the maintenance of health. The attorney-general of Kentucky has ruled recently that children of this cult are exempt from health and physical education courses in the public schools under the religious freedom clause of the United States Constitution. However, the Christian Science children must submit to a medical examination, because this is a State law and therefore must be obeyed.

Religious forces in the U. S., Europe, and Asia must overcome an overpowering sense of despair and doom which is gripping the peoples of the world if another war is to be prevented, Dr. Paul Hutchinson, managing editor of the *Christian Century*, declared in an address before the annual meeting of the Associated Church Press in New York. "When one returns from Europe and Asia, where the devastation both physical and moral far exceeds anything imaginable, he becomes sick in his stomach when he sees the American complacency and the people talking glibly of a return to normalcy just as if they did not realize how close to a complete annihilation our civilization is."

British troops, on a farewell visit to the Vatican before evacuating Italy, presented the Pontiff with a wooden replica of the English statue of Our Lady of Walsingham. In a speech acknowledging the gift, Pope Pius declared: "We shall keep it close to our person, and when our eyes rest upon it, a fervent prayer will rise from our hearts that the Blessed Mother may win the favor of her divine Son for you who have given us pleasure by this presentation and afforded us a deep and holy joy. No one doubts that Our Lady, as in olden times, looks with maternal love on the island where for centuries innumerable pilgrims came to lay aside their burdens at her shrine, where grace has been daily shown to men of every age."

A group of Protestant editors have written Attorney-General Tom Clark, Washington, D. C., repeating a demand they made last November for an investigation of Vatican activities in the United States. The five editors requested Clark to "immediately



call a grand jury investigation to see how the Foreign Agents Registration Act is being violated by the representatives of the Vatican State in America." They asked that the investigation include "an inquiry into the control of the channels of communication by the Vatican State." The editors also urged the Department of Justice to make sure that Roman Catholic parochial schools do not "operate as propaganda agencies of a foreign state, namely, the Vatican State, in violation of the Foreign Agents Registration Act."

Twenty-nine Conservative Protestant denominations were officially represented at the opening of the fifth annual convention of the National Association of Evangelicals in Omaha as progress was reported in various phases of activity. The National Association of Evangelicals provides a vehicle "through which all believers in the Lord Jesus Christ may become united and articulate in relation to matters of common interest and concern." It seeks "to establish a common front for the promotion of evangelical truth against the inroads of heresy (commonly called modernism or liberalism), to challenge all Christian groups and institutions to a positive declaration of the church's evangelical heritage, and to lift the standard against all forms of infidelity, heresy, and apostasy."

After overcoming all the major and petty difficulties and details of obtaining official permission to leave war-torn Europe, a boatload of 2,300 Mennonites—first postwar mass movement of sect members to lands where they seek freedom—arrived in South America recently in the middle of a revolution. The religious refugees, being transplanted under the program of the Mennonite Central Committee, left Holland and the American-occupied areas of Germany late in January on a specially chartered ship. The mass migration of the refugees was financed by Mennonites of the United States and Canada. It is the first phase in a program through which the Mennonite Church hopes over a period of four or five years to evacuate 10,000 more of its members from war-stricken Europe.

The Federal Council of Churches was blasted as "Communistic" and "Socialistic" by John Ebaugh, Jr., Birmingham insurance man and episcopal layman, in a series of addresses to civic clubs in his city. "The literature of the Federal Council," he said, "deals with every conceivable subject of human relations. Running through it, one finds constant emphasis upon socialization of industry, elimination or rigid controls of profits, enlargement of the functions of the Federal Government, and destruction of our means for national defense and our will to defend ourselves. The Federal Council insists that Protestant churches must establish themselves as judge and jury to determine the will of God in every minute detail of economic, political, and social life of the nation, and to hand down to lesser Christians the judgment thus determined."



Veterans training for the ministry constitute 25% of the total enrollment in 119 leading theological seminaries, according to a survey made in New York by the Commission on the Ministry of the Federal Council of Churches. According to Dr. John Oliver Nelson, director of the Commission, the present enrollment of veterans, although large, does not tell the complete story of the interest former servicemen are showing in the ministry as a career. A great majority of veterans interested in the ministry, he explained, are still college undergraduates who plan to study at seminaries later. Some colleges and universities, Nelson said, including Princeton, Yale and Ohio Wesleyan, have a higher enrollment of pre-theological students than ever before. He cautioned church groups and theological schools that growing interest in the ministry by students calls for wise selection of candidates.

A group of outstanding Roman Catholic philosophers gathered in Rome for an eight-day symposium on existentialism and its relation to Catholicism. Participants will analyze the "good and bad" in the teachings of leading existentialists and issue an official judgment. Modern existentialists derive their teachings mainly from Soeren Kierkegaard, Danish religious thinker, who died in 1855, and Martin Heidegger, of Germany, who has had many disciples in the United States. Existentialism teaches that truly to know man one must first approach him through the concrete individual, and must consider all the conditions and circumstances under which he lives. It holds that those who approach him only through the universal and abstract do not truly know him. A leading role in the symposium will be taken by Dr. Jacques Maritain, French ambassador to the Holy See, who will lecture on the existentialism of St. Thomas Aquinas, based on reason and intelligibility as opposed to various forms of contemporary existentialism founded on Kierkegaard and Heidegger.

The Italian Assembly has made the Lateran Treaty of 1929 an internal part of the new Italian constitution. Thereby Roman Catholicism is recognized as the only state religion, the Vatican City, with the Pope as its temporal sovereign, is re-affirmed, and all teachings contrary to the Roman Catholic doctrine eliminated from Italian elementary schools. The Communist party voted in favor, claiming that it did so to preserve the unity of Italian workers. While the Communist spokesman contended for religious freedom, he felt that it was more important now not to create religious controversies. The Protestants of Italy, especially the Waldensian Church, deplore this act of the Assembly, because it virtually "re-enslaves the Protestants." The new constitution merely grants toleration to non-Catholic religions, for according to the Lateran pacts "the parish priests and the police are empowered to ban whatever they consider against the public order." Particular difficulties confront the non-Catholic churches in the establishment of schools, conforming to the Roman Catholic view on marriage and divorce, and receiving money to repair war-damaged churches.