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Theological Observer. - Kirchlich-Zeitgeschichtliches

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Theological Observer

America's Debt to Luther. — In the *Lutheran Herald* (October Youth Issue) Prof. R. H. Boyd of Lutheran Theological Seminary, St. Paul, Minn., in an article, bearing the title given, says a number of things about Luther which Lutheran Christians should gratefully bear in mind. With regard to separation of Church and State he says: "As over against the view that the Church was supreme in everything, Luther demanded the emancipation of the State from the control of the Church. Each, he declared, had its own province, the Church in spiritual and ecclesiastical matters, the State in civil matters. One had no right to interfere in the affairs of the other. . . . Such a teaching regarding the power of the State is not evidence of servility on the part of Luther to the State. It is an important pillar in the temple of liberty he helped build. We in America, who have experienced the blessings of the separation of Church and State, are the true beneficiaries of Luther's struggle. It was Luther's aim personally to keep Church and State distinct and separate, but the developments and needs of the time brought the Church under the care of the princes and thus paved the way for a state church. But, as John L. Nuelsen has stated in his biography of Luther, 'State churchism was nothing but a makeshift required by the exigencies of the times. As a permanent institution it is not in harmony with Luther's fundamental doctrines.' Again: "Luther upheld the right of the State as over against the autocratic Church of Rome of his day. He did it on the basis of the teachings of Christ Himself (Matt. 22:15-21) and the Apostle Paul (Rom. 13:1-7). In Luther's day the State was in absolute subjection to the Roman Church, obliged to carry out its every bidding. The State was considered but the armed force of the Church to carry out its decrees and execute its will. To lose standing in the Church was to lose standing in the State. Excommunication from the former was but the forerunner of the ban of the latter in which the individual was placed without the pale and protection of the State. Luther himself experienced the working out of this vicious system; for he was excommunicated by the Pope on January 2, 1521, and placed under the ban of the empire after his fearless defense at the Diet of Worms on April 17 of that year. And had it not been for the protection of his many friends, he might soon have been killed." And: ". . . Such tributes are more in keeping with the facts than the abuse he received during the recent war years from those who tried to draw a line of spiritual descent from Luther to Hitler. These maligners of his name have declared that Luther's willingness to allow the German princes of his day to reform the Church paved the way for the cringing servility of the German Church to Hitler's totalitarian government. Nothing could be farther from the truth. As a matter of fact, the Church was the one institution which refused to bow before Hitler, not only in the neighboring lands of Denmark and Norway, but also

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in Germany, as has become increasingly evident since the clouds of war have begun to clear away. As for the charge of Luther's servility to the power of the State, there is no basis for it." And: "It is true that Luther had to turn for protection and aid to the little Saxon princes of his day in his struggle against the entrenched power of the Church at Rome. But as Dr. Roland Bainton, professor of ecclesiastical history at Yale, states in a recent article in the *Christian Century*: "These Saxon princes were risking their lives for the Gospel. Frederick the Wise was threatened with degradation from his position of elector of the empire. John the Steadfast was told by the emperor at the Diet of Augsburg that he must take part in the Corpus Christi procession on pain of dire penalty, to which he answered that sooner than attend, he would kneel down and have his head struck off. John Frederick of Saxony was attacked by the emperor, defeated in battle, and condemned to death because of his Lutheranism. The sentence was commuted to life imprisonment, and the prince served several years before political change brought his release. In accepting the help of the German princes, Luther was by no means selling out to a totalitarian power; for the Germany of his day was far from being a totalitarian state. It was but a disunified group of small political units under the lordship of the Holy Roman Empire. That empire Luther defied. His ringing refusal to recant at the Diet of Worms was addressed to the Diet of that empire by which he was then being tried. Such brave defiance does not smack of servility to the State. It is a boldness that follows in the great tradition of Peter and John." Dr. Boyd closes his fine article on Luther with the words: "In the face of all these contributions to the cause of liberty — the uncovering anew of the inalienable rights of the individual, the separation of Church and State, the founding of the modern public school and compulsory universal education — let no one malign the name of Luther by attempting to draw a spiritual line from him to Hitler. With far more reason let us draw it from Luther to the signers of the Declaration of Independence. We in America have been special beneficiaries of Luther's battles and victories and sacrifices. The principles of human freedom for which he battled have been embodied in our institutions as in no other country. As American Lutherans we can therefore take pride in what he achieved for the cause of liberty and give thanks to our God, the Author of Liberty." Dr. Boyd, perhaps, has written nothing new, yet he presents the old but, nevertheless, ever new and true historical facts in a vivid, convincing way, and for this Lutherans are grateful to him.

J. T. M.

Some Resolutions of the Wisconsin Synod.—In the *Northwestern Lutheran* of September 14 Professor E. Reim of Thiensville, Wis., publishes an article with the caption "The Debate on Union at the Watertown Convention." Our brethren of the Wisconsin Synod met at Watertown August 6—12, and naturally the action they took on the question of union with other Lutherans or on matters of controversy in Synodical Conference circles is of

special interest to all the readers of this journal. Professor Reim quotes the greater part of the report of the standing committee on Church Union, and we reprint here the sections which he submits.

"A. The Question of Union with the American Lutheran Church. Important resolutions in this matter are those by which the Missouri Synod states that it is not ready at this time to enter into fellowship with the American Lutheran Church; at the same time declares its willingness to continue doctrinal discussions with the American Lutheran Church; and requests its constituent Districts to sponsor intersynodical conferences wherever possible. Most important, however, is the following: 'That Synod declare that the 1938 resolutions shall no longer be considered as a basis for the purpose of establishing fellowship with the American Lutheran Church.' The general thought is to use the Brief Statement (and such other documents as it may be necessary to formulate) and to make every effort to arrive ultimately at one document. If one compares this with the text of the 'friendly invitation' and the clearly expressed principle in which it advocates 'an allowable and wholesome latitude of theological opinion on the basis of the Word of God,' it seems certain that unless this principle be rejected from the very outset by the representatives of our sister Synod, subsequent discussions will still be held on dangerous ground (see *Proceedings*, 1939, and the principles expressed there)."

"B. The Question of Membership in the National Lutheran Council. The situation here is very similar to the foregoing. The Missouri Synod is being urged by some of its members to join the National Lutheran Council. Reasons given were that the Synod is already using the facilities of the Council in certain matters, and that the constitution of the Council would permit the Synod to choose the activities in which it would participate, thus allowing it to limit itself to co-operation in externals. In spite of these arguments the Missouri Synod did not join the National Lutheran Council, but agreed to study the matter by means of an interim committee. It also resolved, however, to 'again officially express to the National Lutheran Council its willingness to co-operate in matters agreeing with Synod's principles.' As a result a co-operative movement which is still in need of being studied will continue. Since experience has shown that such co-operation almost invariably trespasses on spiritual ground, we deplore not only the continuance of this trend on the Synodical level, but also the encouragement which is thereby given to the many instances of intersynodical co-operation in smaller circles which are causing such confusion in the Church." Professor Reim reports that the reaction of the convention to these two sections of the standing committee's report can be seen from its acceptance of the following recommendation: "That because of the bearing which these questions of fellowship have upon our mutual relations in the Synodical Conference, your Committee be instructed to avail itself of what-

ever opportunities may be offered in order to present our Synod's point of view, and to remain in close touch on these matters."

One more section is submitted: "C. The Question of Scouting. The Memorial in this matter which your Committee addressed to the Missouri Synod was referred to a committee, which after reviewing it presented its report. The Missouri Synod resolved that since the Synodical Conference has requested its constituent Synods to restudy the matter and consult with one another, a committee of three men be appointed by the President of Synod who in conjunction with their Bureau of Information and the Board for Young People's Work are to restudy the matter and report to the next convention. Your Committee further recommends: 1. That we stand ready at all times to discuss the matter with the brethren; 2. that this convention take up the 'Study of Boy Scoutism,' which appears on page 46 of the convention program, in order to determine how it stands toward this unofficial document." The reaction of the convention to point C is thus reported by Professor Reim: "Upon recommendation of the floor committee, which had reviewed this report, the Synod expressed its approval of the action of the standing committee in addressing our sister Synod with a Memorial on this question. Thereupon the entire convention took up the aforementioned 'Study of Boy Scoutism.' The discussion was deliberate, with particular emphasis on the Scripture passages that were quoted in support of the position which our committee had taken against the introduction of Scouting into our Church. The entire 'Study' was then adopted, first in its individual points, and then as a whole." Evidently the "Study of Boy Scouting" is a document drawn up by a brother or committee of the Wisconsin Synod. Professor Reim states that the convention resolved to make this "Study" available to the congregations and conferences of the Wisconsin Synod. He adds: "It was emphasized that its principles are not to be applied in a mechanical and legalistic manner, but that by patience and careful instruction we seek to win any and all who still may have their doubts as to the Scriptural soundness of our position."

In this report our readers will find the direction which discussions in Synodical Conference circles will take during the years that lie immediately ahead. May the Head of the Church grant to all of us a full measure of patience and love and of "firmness in the right as God has given us to see the right." A.

Statistics from the Scandinavian Countries and Finland.—According to information sent the *Christian Century*, Denmark, with a population of 4,041,646, has 2,242 Lutheran church buildings and 1,753 pastors. Five theologians are members of Parliament, 19 are university professors. Of Sweden's population of 6,597,348 all but 307,939 are members of the Lutheran State Church. Among those who are not connected with the State Church there are 41,000 Baptists, 12,341 Methodists, 10,000 Jews, 4,100 Roman Catholics, 3,200 Adventists, 39,976 members of the Salvation Army,

106,266 members of the Swedish Missionary Society, and 100,000 adherents of the Pentecostal Movement. In Norway, whose population is 2,814,194, all but 71,062 belong to the State Church. Of the latter number 2,827 are Roman Catholics, 12,207 Methodists, 7,788 Baptists, and 1,457 Jews. The figures for Finland are: 3,779,166 Lutherans, 70,542 Orthodox, 5,817 members of the Free Church, 2,162 Methodists, 1,907 Baptists, 1,050 Roman Catholics, 1,467 Jews, and 519 Mohammedans. A.

The Baptists at Copenhagen.—The Baptists have a World Alliance which this year from July 29 to August 3 met in Copenhagen, Denmark. We read the account of the meeting written by Dr. John W. Bradbury, editor of the *Watchman-Examiner*, and published in the September 4 issue of this paper, with special interest, because the Alliance assembled in a Lutheran city and country. It at no time harms anybody to see himself as others see him. What this Baptist reporter has to say on religious conditions in Denmark deserves careful reading by Lutherans, especially by those living in the country under consideration. Mr. Bradbury writes: "Christianity has a strong grip on the people of Denmark. It is the root from which stem the remarkably advanced social institutions in the land. Discussions with the Danes reveal, however, that the control of the State Church (Lutheran) is the grip of a dead hand. There is indifferent interest in the churches on the part of the people. Attendances are small. The cold formality of ritualism denies the people the knowledge of spiritual experience and of the supreme duty of men to serve God and to know Jesus Christ as the Lord of their lives. The result is that evangelism in the State Church is almost unknown. . . . Today, the prevailing cult of the Danes appears to be that of physical health, with apparently little interest in spiritual things." We doubt very much that the "cold formality of ritualism" is to blame in this instance. The sad fact is that Modernism has invaded the Danish State Church. Besides, wherever there is a State Church supported by the taxes of the people, real spiritual life may be expected to languish.

A somewhat annoying controversy as to the place where the meeting should be held occurred when the plans for the assembly were drafted. Mr. Bradbury reports: "Before the congress opened, Danish pastors had requested the use of the Grundvigskirken, a large Lutheran church belonging to the State. It is a national monument, paid for partly by gifts and partly out of public taxes. The Danish Baptists had therefore paid a portion of the cost of this building. But the Baptist request was refused on the ground that they rejected infant baptism and the Lutherans did not want that point of view expressed in this edifice. The refusal created quite a stir in the Copenhagen press, which took the side of the Baptists and referred to the refusal as an act of discourtesy to the nation's guests. The Lutherans then quoted a State law which distinctly forbids any views like those held by the Baptists being expressed in their church. The law turned out to be about one

hundred years old." Not knowing all the facts involved, we are unwilling to take sides, but that the Lutherans of Copenhagen did not wish to have any doubt created as to where they stood on Infant Baptism has our approval.

An interesting debate occurred on the question whether affiliation with the World Council of Churches should be sought. Here is the report of Mr. Bradbury: "A characteristic manifestation of Baptist democracy was seen when affiliation with the World Council of Churches was advocated by Rev. Henry Cook of England. While emphasizing our distinctly Baptist position, he urged unlimited co-operation on the part of bodies within the Baptist World Alliance with the program of the World Council of Churches. Following his stirring address, Dr. M. E. Dodd of Shreveport, La., spoke on the other aspect of the question, urging that Baptists cannot be organically identified with the World Council of Churches without surrendering some of their great principles. If we yield on our principles, particularly in the matter of union of Church and State, Baptists will decline and cease to exist. He contended that Baptists cannot enter into organic union with other religious communities without risking their own position, and urged the messengers to keep free from any entangling alliances which might compromise the Baptist faith." The matter was disposed of through a technicality. It was pointed out by a speaker that the constitution of the World Alliance does not permit the body to make any recommendation like the one proposed with respect to joining the World Council of Churches. Alas! it is not the first time that an important issue was put on the shelf through recourse to some kind of technicality.

The main purpose of the meeting evidently was that of mutual strengthening, which apparently was accomplished. The new president of the organization, who succeeds the well-known Dr. Rushbrooke, is Dr. C. Oscar Johnson of the Third Baptist Church in St. Louis.

A.

The Intersarsity Fellowship of Evangelical Unions.—In Great Britain a society of University men is very active which bears the title "The Intersarsity Fellowship of Evangelical Unions." The members are promoting religious work at the British universities. The word "union" is here used in the sense of "society" or "association." The doctrinal basis of the Fellowship is indicated in the following paragraph of the constitution (Par. 2):

"Its objects shall be to stimulate personal faith and to further evangelistic work amongst students by upholding the fundamental truths of Christianity, including:

"(a) The divine inspiration and infallibility of Holy Scripture, as originally given, and its supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct.

"(b) The unity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in the Godhead.

"(c) The universal sinfulness and guilt of human nature since the Fall, rendering man subject to God's wrath and condemnation.

"(d) Redemption from the guilt, penalty, and power of sin *only* through the sacrificial death (as our Representative and Substitute) of Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son of God.

"(e) The Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

"(f) The necessity of the work of the Holy Spirit to make the death of Christ effective to the individual sinner, granting him repentance toward God and faith in Jesus Christ.

"(g) The indwelling and work of the Holy Spirit in the believer.

"(h) The expectation of the personal return of the Lord Jesus Christ."

The movement represented by this Intersarsity Fellowship is evangelical, as distinct from endeavors of the High Church party. The universities represented are found not only in England, but likewise in Scotland, Ireland, Wales, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. The history of the Fellowship is published in an attractive volume having the title "Christ and the Colleges," the subtitle being "A History of the Intersarsity Fellowship of Evangelical Unions." The work is edited by the Rev. F. D. Coggan, B. A., of St. John's College, Cambridge, and is beautifully illustrated.

The Fellowship publishes a magazine having the title *The Intersarsity Magazine*. Before us lie the summer-term number and the Michaelmas-term number; each one costs sixpence. Other publications sent us by the Fellowship have the titles "Evangelical Belief, the Official Interpretation of the Doctrinal Basis of the Intersarsity Fellowship, Compiled by the Advisory Committee"; "The Anchorage of Life," by Daniel Lamont, professor of Practical Theology in the University of Edinburgh; "The Man They Crucified," by Howard Guinness (a little pamphlet); "The Quiet Time," edited by the Right Reverend F. Houghton. Together with these books and pamphlets came a pamphlet entitled "The Speeches in the Acts," by F. F. Bruce, published by the Tyndale Press, London, price, 2 shillings, sixpence (an excellent scholarly discussion), and another pamphlet having the title "Pauline Predestination," by the Rev. Francis Davidson, likewise published by the Tyndale Press, London, price, 2 shillings, sixpence.

With the theology set forth in these publications we here and there have to take issue, because it represents a moderate Calvinism, but the general purpose of the Fellowship elicits our admiration. The address of the Intersarsity Fellowship of the Evangelical Unions is 39 Bedford Square, London, W., C. 1. The work of these people, many of them medical men, is evidence that even where outward conditions are deplorable and the outlook is very dark, the work of the Church goes on, and God gathers His own to His bosom.

A.

Progress of Protestantism in Brazil.—The correspondent of the *Christian Century* for Brazil, Mr. Joao Del Nero, residing in Sao Paulo, opens his newsletter, written September 11, with an interesting paragraph on the progress Protestantism has made in Brazil.

We take over this paragraph: "According to the latest census, there are now 1,074,857 Protestants in Brazil—539,298 men and 538,559 women. The prominent Roman Catholic layman Ataide notes in his latest book that Protestantism now constitutes a 'strong minority' in the country, and that it is represented by a 'cultural laity, highly respected by all cultured Brazilians.' He gives two reasons for the fact that Protestantism is growing daily: the indifference of Catholics to their religion and the increasing refusal of educated Brazilians to accept Catholic dogma as expounded by 'unlearned priests.' Ataide calls upon Brazilian Catholics to imitate their North-American fellows by preaching 'Catholic Action' and becoming missionaries. That is the way to strengthen Catholicism, he says—not by combatting Protestantism, a practice which he calls 'futile and unfair.' Protestantism is winning Brazil in spite of its relatively small membership, Ataide declares, because it has great intellectuals and powerful orators in its ranks. 'Protestantism,' he says, 'is filling the vacuum Catholicism has left in Brazil.'"

It may be that much of the Protestantism to which the Roman Catholic layman refers is of the diluted kind and hardly signifies more than a negative attitude toward the Church of Rome. But to the extent that it stresses the Cross of Christ and the open Bible we rejoice in its success and growth of influence. A.

The Church of South India.—On September 27, 1947, there was held at St. George's Anglican Cathedral in Madras, India, a most impressive and, perhaps, also (for future developments of Indian church affairs) most important service. At this first service of the Church of South India nine clergymen were consecrated as bishops. In the course of time former Methodists, Congregationalists, Presbyterians, and Reformed will be confirmed, ordained, or consecrated within the tradition of Apostolic Succession. Then the Church of South India may be received into communion with the Church of England. Dr. H. S. Coffin, Presbyterian, pronounced this union "the most significant event in ecclesiastical history since the Reformation" (which, of course, it was not). Nevertheless, as the fruition of twenty-eight years of constant endeavor, the new Church of about 1,100,000 members means a significant achievement for the unionizers. In 1919, at Tranquebar, south of Madras, where India's first Protestant missionaries had landed, fifty ministers of evangelical churches met to discuss church union. Some of them, namely, Anglicans and members of the South India United Church, consisting of Scottish and United States Presbyterians, Congregationalists, and a few smaller bodies, such as the Dutch Reformed, signed a manifesto proposing union. In 1926 the Meth-

odists entered into the negotiations and served as a bridge between the Anglicans and the other bodies. The uniting churches at last accepted the fundamental truths embodied in the Creeds, above all, the Apostles' and the Nicene, as providing a sufficient basis for union. Thereby, however, they do not intend to demand the assent of individuals to every word or phrase in them or to exclude reasonable liberty of interpretation, a declaration that is indeed significant since it allows liberals and conservatives to worship side by side. One of the most difficult problems facing the churches was the Anglican belief that the ministry must be in the line of "Apostolic Succession." The problem was eventually solved by the creation of a 30-year period, during which the Anglicans will recognize the existing ministries of the other denominations, agreeing to such un-Anglican nomenclature as moderator, presbyter, and elder, with the understanding that no minister ordained before the union can be shifted to any church without the consent of the congregation. When the thirty years are up, it is expected that the clergy of the United Church will become uniform. Another difficulty was caused by the unwillingness of the Anglicans to permit laymen to administer Holy Communion. The compromise was reached at last that only presbyters may administer Communion, but others, appointed by the Church, may assist in its administration. Not all evangelical churches entered the union. Outside the Church of South India are about 100,000 Baptists, who believe that only adults should be baptized, 200,000 members of the Mar Thomas Syrian Church, 200,000 Lutherans who demand acceptance of the Augsburg Confession, and a small number of United States Methodists. *Time* (October 13, 1947), from which we have quoted some of the statements, adds to its report: "Many clergymen hopefully expect that it will eventually spread to England, Europe, and the United States." A most enthusiastic correspondent of the *Christian Century* (October 22, 1947) says: "The centuries of church history hold no parallel to the drama of Christian reunion which was enacted here [Madras] yesterday." Such is the rejoicing at the union of those who see in external ecclesiastical organization the salvation of the Church. Those who are dedicated to the honest confession of the divine Word and its preservation to the Church at all costs and are aware of the dangers of unionism cannot share this exuberant joy. J. T. M.

Assurance in the Growth of the Church in India. — Dr. J. Z. Hodge, author of *Salute to India* and for many years a member of the Bihar Mission of the Regions Beyond Missionary Union, also former secretary of the National Christian Council, but now retired in Edinburgh, looks to the growth of the Christian Church in India with much hope. As he says (*Moody Monthly*, October, 1947), he gained knowledge, while working among the Indian masses, which has established in him confidence in the good sense of the Indian people so that he can be more optimistic about Christianity in India than are most observers. He states seven reasons why he believes that "the recent dramatic happenings will

fall out for the furtherance of the Gospel of Christ," namely, 1) India, on the whole, and especially Hindu India, has always been hospitable to Christian missions; 2) Christian missions have achieved more signal success in the native states than in other parts, conquered by British arms; 3) British withdrawal is bound to be for the good of India in general; 4) The native Christian Church has taken root and is growing; 5) The Indian Church welcomes continued help from missionaries overseas; 6) Religious liberty will be guaranteed in the new India; and 7) Bitterness and distrust have already given place to good will and mutual respect in Anglo-Indian relations. These, of course, are the opinions of only one man, but since they come from a veteran missionary who is well acquainted with the people in India, his words of assurance may strengthen the waning faith of many Christians in India's future evangelization. Dr. Hodge, of course, also envisions "adversaries" of Christian church progress in India, and among these the following: "1) The Church is facing an onslaught of secularism, the spearhead of which is Communism; 2) The Church must deal with a recrudescence of ancient Indian religions; 3) Much self-seeking, faction, and complacency are found in the Indian Christian fellowship." These internal perils, perhaps, are greater and much more insidious than are the dangers that threaten the Indian Church from without. If Christians in India hold to the divine Word, then the experience of St. Paul (Phil. 1:12, 25) may indeed be that of the Christian missionary in India. J. T. M.

The Dangers of Modern Dispensationalism.—In an article in the *Presbyterian Guardian* (October 10, 1947), bearing the title "The Glory of the Christian Church," Professor R. B. Kuiper of Westminster Seminary calls attention also to the dangers threatening the Christian Church from the error of "modern dispensationalism." He writes: "The notes in the so-called Scofield Bible have for some decades now exerted a strong and widespread influence on American Fundamentalism. Sad to say, that influence has by no means been unqualifiedly wholesome. On the contrary, the Scofield Bible has been instrumental in gaining many adherents for the errors of dispensationalism. And these errors have done serious detriment to the Church of Christ. Dispensationalism openly deprecates the Church. It says that Christ purposed at His first coming to establish a kingdom with Jerusalem as its capital and Himself, seated on the throne of David, as its king. However, when the Jewish nation rejected Him as king, He decided, we are told, to postpone the kingdom until His second coming and in the interim to found His Church. But the Church is not nearly as important as is the kingdom. In the dispensational scheme it is merely a parenthesis, an interlude, time-out, so to speak, in the divine chronology. The low view of the Church which dispensationalists hold has led many a minister of that persuasion to cease striving for doctrinal soundness of his denomination. More than a few pastors of Presbyterian churches who vowed at their ordina-

tion to strive for the purity of the denomination are today, to say the least, slighting that vow. . . . An outstanding Presbyterian minister of the dispensational school once said: "The denomination means nothing to me." From the viewpoint of the consistent dispensationalist this opinion is absolutely justified. If the coming kingdom of Christ means everything and the Christian Church, as it now appears, is merely an interlude, then indeed it does not matter very much. Dispensationalism is wrong not merely incidentally, but it is basically antisciptural and antichristian, since it overthrows, in the final analysis, the *sola gratia*. J. T. M.

Niemoeller Elected President. — In 1933 the Evangelical Churches of three Districts of Germany, Frankfurt, Hessen, and Nassau, were forced by the Nazi regime to unite and form one organization. They had no choice, the government spoke, they had to obey. After the war this compulsory union was discontinued. Now, however, it has been resurrected, the churches of the three territories voluntarily joining hands. The Church which is the result of this merger will be known as the Evangelical Church of Hessen and Nassau. The new body will be a branch of the Evangelical Church in Germany known as the EKID (Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland). When a president or bishop had to be chosen, Dr. Martin Niemoeller was elected. He is to have the title "President" rather than "Bishop." The reason for this particular title is said to be the desire to indicate that the executive has received his powers from the people of the Church as a whole and not merely from the clergy. The election of Dr. Niemoeller indicates that the leadership of the Church will steer a course of indifference with respect to the doctrines separating the Lutherans and the Reformed. A.

One Leaf of the Bible. — An interesting and edifying story is contained in the correspondence sent the *Christian Century* from Denmark under date of September 24 (cf. *Christian Century* of October 15). The story is told in the following words: Among the students who enrolled at the Danish Missionary School for the fall term was a former lieutenant in the Russian army. A native of Jugoslavia who was reared in Russia, he had been in Vienna when the war broke out and fled in order to escape service in the German army. In Budapest he encountered the Red army and was forced to join it. One day, in connection with his routine duties, he was compelled to search some of his own men. In the pocket of an old soldier he found a leaf which had been torn from the Bible. Frightened, the man told the lieutenant how much the single leaf meant to him. In the twenties, he said, all Bibles in his village were ordered destroyed, but the peasants managed to hide one Bible and later distributed it, leaf by leaf, among themselves. The incident made a deep impression on the young lieutenant. When he was finally demobilized, he says, he felt as if he was a human being again after having lived like a beast. He made his way to Denmark and enrolled in the Mission Training School. A.

Six Federal Council Bodies Ready to Discuss Closer Unity.—

The Federal Council of Churches, representing at present twenty-five denominations, at its meeting in Seattle last December had before it a request from the Congregational General Council, seconded by the International Convention of the Disciples of Christ, to the effect that there should be called a "plenary conference to consider the immediate possibilities of closer unity." The Federal Council took favorable action and authorized its executive committee to send an invitation for participation in such a conference to all its constituent bodies. Not all of these have held a meeting in 1947; of the fourteen that met, six replied that they accept the invitation, three declined to participate (The Church of the Brethren, the Presbyterian Church U. S., usually called the Southern Presbyterians, and the United Lutheran Church of America); the remaining five, while not promising full participation, indicate an interest in the movement. Of the bodies that have not held a meeting, the Methodists are the largest; if all signs do not fail, they will give their full endorsement to the plan.

The bodies that have given their approval to the holding of such a conference are the Congregational-Christian, the Evangelical and Reformed, the Northern Presbyterians (U. S. A.), the Disciples, the United Presbyterians, and the Moravians.

Is the intention to weld the bodies that will participate into one denomination? On that score no answer is available. The request for the meeting merely speaks of "closer unity." It may well be that what the originators have in mind is formation of a new and large Protestant Church which will absorb all the denominations that agree to join it. A Protestant superchurch may be visualized which, if not impressive through anything else, will at least have the asset of tremendous size.

No one should be surprised that something of this nature is contemplated by the bodies mentioned. With the exception of a few individuals or groups in the Evangelical and Reformed Church and possibly among the Moravians, individuals or groups whose religious ancestry was Lutheran and who still maintain that Luther's Small Catechism represents their faith, the constituency of these bodies is Reformed. They are one in their rejection of the Lutheran doctrines of Baptism and the Lord's Supper; in their Christology, too, they hold the Reformed and not the Lutheran position. If one in addition thinks of the indifference toward matters of doctrine prevailing in these circles, one asks the question: Why do they not unite? They probably do not agree in certain questions of polity, but what of it? Such disagreement cannot weigh heavily with them, because to them doctrine is not a matter of primary concern.

We are happy to see that the U. L. C. A. sent a negative response to the invitation. It is our hope that as time goes on this Lutheran body will grow in Lutheran consciousness and enthusiastically carry forward the banner unfurled by men like Doctors Krauth and Schmauk.

A.

Muslims Are on the Move. — So writes Bishop Subhan, grandson of a *sufi*, a "Mohammedan of the Mohammedans," who after his conversion joined the Methodist Church. The *Moody Monthly* (October, 1947) quotes him as saying: "Muslim insistence on a separate dominion is significant. Muslim India is but one link (and the biggest link) in a chain of Muslim states stretching around the globe. Pakistan is the beginning of the mobilization of scattered forces all over the world to challenge Christianity. Christian missions may be permitted in Pakistan, but they [the Pakistan Muslims] may follow Egypt's policy of refusing to allow Christian missionaries to approach Muslims and refusing circulation of any literature with even a remote reference to Islam. Conditions will be different in the Dominion of India, sometimes designated as Hindustan. For some years Hinduism has been losing thirty thousand people a week to the Christian Church, most of them from the depressed classes. Fear of losing masses to Christianity is prevalent, and consequently mass evangelism may be stopped." Bishop Subhan, nevertheless, believes: "The individual Christian will have no restrictions in proclaiming the Gospel, though as a professional missionary from a foreign organization he may encounter some difficulty. The Great Commission points out our obligation as well as our assurance. 'All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. . . . Go ye therefore . . .'. No authority can supersede this power, and those who go in its strength and in obedience to the command will find doors of opportunity for the declaration of the Gospel everywhere. 'India for Christ' can still be our watchword." That "Muslims are on the move" is strikingly attested by a report in the *Living Church* (October 5, 1947), which says: "Mar Shimun, the Patriarch of the Church of the East and of the Assyrian Nation, together with the Assyrian National Federation, have proof that fourteen Assyrian villages were looted and burned, many Christians tortured and killed in cold blood, and numbers of women, young girls, and children assaulted and raped under the eyes of the Iranian Military Forces in the Azerbaijan District of Iran, December, 1946—February, 1947." Upon the request of the Episcopalian Bishop Walters of San Joaquin a large number of bishops appealed to their representatives in Washington and wrote to the members of the House of Bishops, asking them to sign the following appeal to President Truman: "We, the undersigned, strongly urge Your Excellency to bring this matter to the attention of the Department of State and our delegate to the United Nations, with a view of bringing pressure on the Iranian Government to stop atrocities against Christian Assyrians and to provide temporary relief measures until a final solution is found to their problem by the United Nations, and that an impartial commission be appointed to investigate the matter."

J. T. M.

Brief Items from Religious News Service.—Dr. Channing Tobias of New York urged the 7th Ecumenical Methodist Conference meeting in Springfield, Mass., to assume leadership of a worldwide spiritual movement among Christians and representatives of the Jewish, the Mohammedan, the Hindu, and Buddhist faiths, "that would focus attention upon the welfare of human beings above considerations of politics and economics and to the earth and its fullness as the birthright of mankind."

The American section of the Lutheran World Federation formally passed out of existence in Chicago, as the National Lutheran Council assumed all responsibilities of the section. The move was made in compliance with the constitutional requirements of the Lutheran World Federation, which met this summer at Lund, Sweden.

Nine additional churches have voted to join the World Council of Churches, bringing membership to 124 communions in 39 countries. The new affiliated bodies are: The Ecumenical Patriarchate at Istanbul, the North China Congregational Church; the Old Catholic Church in Germany; the Evangelical Methodist Church of Italy; the Protestant Evangelical Church, Augsburgian Confession (Romania); the Transylvania Reformed Church; the Evangelical Church in Spain; the Churches of Wales; and the Union of the Armenian Evangelical Churches in the Near East.

Nationalistic uprisings in Madagascar have created acute problems for Protestant churches in that country, according to Dr. Marc Boegner, who reported that in the Tannarive district alone 300 out of 325 churches have been completely ruined and conditions are "equally bad" in the surrounding territory.

One hundred Protestant mission boards and agencies in the United States and Canada spent a total of \$32,829,804 on overseas mission work in 1946, according to the general secretary of the Foreign Missions Conference of North America.

A five-point action program for Catholic men was proposed to the Holy Name Society in Boston: 1. Dissemination of Christian truth; 2. Sanctification of Sunday; 3. Preservation of the Christian family; 4. Wider extension of Christian social justice through a more equitable distribution of wealth; and 5. Promotion of fidelity and honesty in private dealings with others.

First unit in a fleet of station wagons equipped to provide religious and recreational service for migrant farm workers across the nation was dedicated at the Cutchogue Migrant Labor Camp near Riverhead, New York. The fleet of "mobile churches" will be operated by the Home Missions Council of North America. Each unit will have a portable organ, folding altar, motion picture projector, record player, reading material, and first aid supplies. Recreational facilities will include quoits, table games, and softball equipment.

An unofficial movement within the Protestant Episcopal Church aimed at a Christian, socialized society—at bringing sacramentalism to communism—is attracting the attention in Cambridge, Mass., of university students, labor leaders, and clergymen of all faiths. Called the Society of the Catholic Commonwealth, the movement has for its superior the Rev. F. Hastings Smyth, who calls private production for individual profit “unchristian.” Membership in the organization, which has its headquarters in the Oratory of St. Mary and St. Michael in Cambridge, is of two classes—“regular” and “secular.” Regular members are clergymen or laymen of the Protestant Episcopal Church who take annual vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience. Secular members are men and women in the surrounding community who “work to change and reorganize the social structure in ways which shall bring it more clearly into the pattern of Our Lord’s humanity than is the structure of our profit-making, capitalistic order.” Completely orthodox in adherence to the tenets of the Protestant Episcopal Church, the Society carries on its work with the knowledge and sanction of the Episcopal bishop of Massachusetts. A. W. C. G.

