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Theological Observer. - Kirchlich-Zeitgeschichtliches

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Theological Observer

Lutheranism or Pseudo-Lutheranism.—Replying in the *Lutheran Outlook* of March to some criticisms of his December *Lutheran Outlook* article by Dr. Arndt (cf. C. T. M. for February), Pastor Neve writes (quoted in part): "Dr. A. approaches the Bible with a formulated theory of inspiration, and he tries to make the Bible fit his theory. There is a peculiar twist of reasoning in his exegesis of the Scripture passages in question in order to arrive at a desired conclusion." Pastor Neve next endeavors to refute Dr. Arndt's illustration of how the Scriptures were written by God's penmen and attempts to show that there are "glaring inaccuracies" in the Bible. He then proceeds: "Dr. A. is more concerned about the vessel than he is about the treasure in the vessel. As God used an imperfect and sinful woman to bring the Perfect One, Jesus Christ, into the world, so He uses the Bible with its imperfections [*sic?*] to bring Jesus Christ Himself into the hearts of men. And that Christ who reveals Himself to man, beckons his soul so that he dares flee into His bosom of redeeming love. Christian faith is not so many postulates and theses which man must subscribe to with his intellect. Christian faith is the activity of God in coming to man through Jesus Christ and offering him full redemption and man's response to that gracious offer of salvation. And Christian faith is not a finished product. God's activity is a continuous activity toward and in man and man's continuous response to God by repentance and faith in His redeeming love which will not let him go. Dr. A. says that the doctrine of inspiration divides Lutherans. What is the Lutheran doctrine of inspiration? It is very obvious that Dr. A. wants us to draw the conclusion that his view is the Lutheran view of inspiration, and that there can be no unity of Lutherans before all Lutherans accept his view of inspiration." Pastor Neve now quotes several statements from Luther and remarks on them: "It is very clear from these quotations that Luther did not teach verbal inspiration of the Bible. But it is very clear that he teaches that the Word of God is inspired. By implication Dr. A. raises the question of scholasticism. It resolves itself into the question whether true Lutheranism or scholasticism shall prevail in the Lutheran Church. Scholasticism has been a hard taskmaster for the Church to fight. Luther's great work was to deliver the Church from scholasticism. He restored the Gospel to its rightful place in the Church. But after his death theology gradually slid back into scholasticism. Often it comes in the cloak of pure doctrine. Scholasticism attempts to define every phase of the Christian faith in postulates and theses which must be accepted with the intellect in order to be classified as a conservative Lutheran. Kierkegaard ridiculed such attempts to define Christian faith. Fortunately for the Lutheran Church, men have appeared on the scene who could dis-

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tinguish between true Lutheranism and scholasticism." Pastor Neve here refers to Grundtvig, Kierkegaard, Peder Madsen, Eduard Geismar of Denmark, as also to Soederblom of Sweden, and then continues: "Their theology is based on the thoughts derived from their exhaustive Luther research. I ask in all sincerity: Are men that build their theology on Luther's writings liberals? And scholasticism is questionable Lutheranism. Are men that build their theology on the principles of scholasticism conservative Lutherans? Those that go back to Luther and through him to the Word of God are the true Lutherans. But those that build their theology on the concepts of scholasticism should be called pseudo-Lutherans. I have a great admiration for the Missouri Synod; she has done a great work for the Lord. But she would do still greater things for the Lord if she would rid herself of the remnants of scholasticism which honeycombs her theological thinking." — There is no doubt that Pastor Neve is sincere in his views, but the question is: Is he fair to Dr. Arndt, to the Bible, to Luther, and to what he condemns in our Church as scholasticism? Dr. Arndt certainly does not approach the Bible with a "formulated theory of inspiration, trying to make the Bible fit his theory," but, as the reader may judge from his article, he bases on clear Bible passages the doctrine concerning Biblical inspiration which he defends, passages which certainly Pastor Neve also studied. Why speak of a "formulated theory of inspiration of the Bible" when Biblical inspiration is a clear doctrine taught in Scripture? Again, do the "glaring inaccuracies," of which Pastor Neve speaks, really exist? Certainly the statements in Num. 25:9 and in 1 Cor. 10:8 are not "glaring inaccuracies" as everyone should know who has studied these texts. Furthermore, faith certainly rests upon the Gospel truths, just as the Gospel is the means by which faith is engendered (Rom. 10:17). Or would perhaps Pastor Neve discard the Apostles' Creed with its sacred Gospel "postulates and theses"? The doctrine of inspiration, moreover, does divide Lutheranism, for while some assert it, others deny it, and the twain do not meet. Nor is it fair to cite a few quotations from Luther, in which he expresses himself in terms that may be interpreted in various ways, against those clear and emphatic statements in which the Reformer does teach inspiration, and indeed verbal inspiration, though he does not use that term. An important book on Luther and his doctrine of Biblical inspiration is *Luther and the Scriptures* by the late eminent theologian Dr. M. Reu of the American Lutheran Church. In it Dr. Reu proves some very remarkable theses concerning Luther's doctrine of the Scriptures, as, for example, that the Scriptures were and always remained Luther's sole authority of doctrine and life, that Luther held that there was no error in Scripture, and so forth. On p. 63 Pastor Neve may read Luther's expressions: "So we refer all of Scripture to the Holy Ghost"; and: "Holy Scripture has been spoken by the Holy Ghost," which Dr. Reu purposely underscored. On page 81 Dr. Reu pub-

lishes the judgment of the great German theologian Wilhelm Walther "that an inaccuracy in the Scriptural accounts is not admitted," in which opinion Dr. Reu concurs, as he explicitly states. We wish that we Lutherans would study this fine and useful book; it is in full agreement with what Dr. Arndt says in his article. Again, if it is scholasticism to formulate in clear statements what Scripture teaches, so as to present the various doctrines of God's Word in a lucid overview, then by all means let us have "scholasticism" and much more of it. But such was not the "scholasticism" of Mynster, Martensen, and Soederblom in their departures from Scripture. Their errors rather were due to a lack of the right Christian "scholasticism." Then, too, let us not forget that much of what is called "Luther research" is not that at all, but rather a perversion of Luther's statements and a twisting of his words. It is well known that Unitarian liberals quote Luther as much as do orthodox Lutherans, and when you deal with Seventh-Day Adventists and Mormons, they, too, desire to prove their unscriptural teachings from Luther. The writer finally expresses great admiration for the Missouri Synod, but calls upon it to get rid of its "scholasticism." If faithful adherence to clear teachings of Scripture must go by the name of "scholasticism," then let us frankly state that it was Missouri's scholasticism that helped her, by God's grace, "do great things for the Lord." A Church is as strong as is its adherence to the Word; if it yields the divine Word, it loses its strength and joy in the Lord's work, for, as Luther says: "Where the Word of God is not [found], there is not true knowledge of God, but only ignorance, delusion, and erroneous opinion concerning God" (St. Louis Ed., III:1412); and again: "We should be bound to the divine Word. That we should hear, and no one should teach us anything without the Word of God out of his mind" (St. Louis Ed., III:1667). J. T. M.

"Lutheran Church Quarterly."—A stately new periodical, a quarterly, appears on the scene of the Lutheran Church in America. In it are merged the *Lutheran Church Quarterly*, published by the faculties of Gettysburg and Mt. Airy Seminaries (U. L. C. A.), and the *Augustana Quarterly* (Augustana Synod). The new publication is sponsored by the following seminaries: Mt. Airy, Gettysburg, Capital, Wartburg, Luther, and Augustana. The aims of the journal are stated thus (p. 70): "The aims of this quarterly shall be to provide a forum (1) for the discussion of Christian faith and life on the basis of the Lutheran confession, (2) for the application of the principles of the Lutheran Church to the changing problems of religion and society, (3) for the fostering of world Lutheranism, and (4) for the promotion of understanding between Lutherans and other Christians." The policy of the new quarterly is defined in these words: "The Editors will welcome contributions that are likely to be helpful in the furtherance of the aims set forth above. It will be required of such contributions that they be frank and fair in their discussion of moot questions; that they

be free from controversial animus; and that their contents be of real scholarly and practical value to the readers. Difference of opinion between contributors, or between a contributor and the editors, does not of itself exclude articles from publication, since the editors do not hold themselves responsible for the opinions of contributors." The editorial staff consists of the following professors: Editor, Dr. Conrad Bergendoff; Managing Editor, Prof. Theodore Liefeld; Book Review Editor, Dr. Theodore Tappert; Business Manager, Dr. Andrew Burgess. The price of the journal is \$2.50 a year, to be paid in advance. The price of a single copy is 75 cents. It is evident that the periodical is conceived of as an open forum in which the questions of common interest to all Lutherans, especially those requiring scholarly research, can be aired and surveyed. We hope that in these days of confusion and strife the new periodical will bring many a Scriptural, wholesome, cheering, faith-strengthening message to its readers and help to build the Lutheran Zion here in America. The table of contents for the first number should be submitted here: "Foreward" (Conrad Bergendoff); "Amsterdam: a Symposium" (A. R. Wentz, H. L. Yochum, E. L. Ryden); "Blessings in the Church of Germany" (J. Bodensieck); "The New Crisis in American Lutheran Theology" (Charles W. Kegley); "The Common Liturgy" (Luther D. Reed); "Christianity and the Church College" (O. P. Kretzmann); "Notes and Studies"; "Book Reviews"; "Books Received." A.

On Recent Luther Research.—In the section of the new *Lutheran Quarterly* which is called "Notes and Studies" there appears an article which we wish very much every reader of the CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY could peruse. It has the title "Some Questions Concerning Recent Luther Research" and is written by Uuras Saarnivaara, whose position is that of "Instructor of Systematic and Exegetical Theology at Suomi Theological Seminary in Hancock, Michigan." Several years ago we had the pleasure of reading his scholarly dissertation on Luther's teaching on Justification and Sanctification—a very penetrating and valuable study. It is evident that Dr. Saarnivaara has devoted much time to Luther research. The main point in the little article appearing in the *Lutheran Quarterly* is that modern scholars have paid too much attention to what was written by the young Luther and in a one-sided way were led to neglect what was written by the Reformer in the years of maturity. It was especially Karl Holl who, according to our author, was guilty in this respect. Dr. Saarnivaara says: "There are several theologians who feel that Karl Holl, influenced by Albrecht Ritschl, 'ethicized' Luther's teaching by giving the ethical or moral too central a place. In reality, the true center of Luther's faith was occupied by the religious relationship of man to God. This ethical point of view exerted a particularly detrimental influence on Holl's interpretation of Luther's doctrine of justification. He stated that according to Luther God's act of justification has its basis in man's renewal or sanc-

tification. This renewal is effected by the grace of God. Since God has determined to perfect this renewal, He regards or reckons it as already complete, thus 'imputing' or reckoning to man a righteousness, although it is as yet in a state of becoming. Man is not justified by the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, but by the renewal of sanctification. The actual basis of the divine judgment which justifies is not the merit of Christ, but the renewal of man (Holl, *Gesammelte Aufsätze*, III, pp. 530 ff.). Holl's interpretation of Luther occasioned a far-flung theological controversy, which resulted in some light being thrown on the question of Luther's doctrine of justification and sanctification."

Next, our author speaks of the influence of Luther on Karl Barth. Here, too, some investigators think they find that it was especially the young Luther who helped to shape the thought of Barth. Continuing, Dr. Saarnivaara protests especially against the view that the teachings in the writings of the mature Luther, which are divergent from those of his early works, are classified as "Melancthonian." We have to distinguish clearly, says our author, between the pre-Reformation and the Reformation teachings of Luther. Where was the dividing line? Dr. Saarnivaara says: "Luther himself states that through the help of Staupitz, soon after his becoming a doctor of theology, he was able to believe in the forgiveness of sins, but he did not discover the evangelical insight into justification until the late fall of 1518. Our finding is that the evangelical conception of justification is not found in Luther's writings and lectures before the fall of 1518." It will be seen from these remarks that Dr. Saarnivaara dates the famous "tower experience" of Luther not before 1517, as it is so often done, but in the late fall of 1518, a dating which agrees with what Luther in 1545, when he wrote an introduction to his collected Latin works, says on this subject. A.

Whither Lutheran Theology in America? — In the new journal *The Lutheran Quarterly* an article by Prof. Charles W. Kegley of Chicago Lutheran Theological Seminary, Maywood, Ill., is published which has the caption "New Crisis in American Lutheran Theology." Whoever wishes to inform himself on current theological thinking in the world as seen from the Lutheran point of view is advised to read this article. Dr. Kegley surveys the theological scene at home and abroad and classifies the chief phenomena. What he sets forth elicits these remarks from us. There are two great movements in present-day theological thinking that woo those who study theology in a special, systematic way, modernism and neo-orthodoxy. Modernism is the type of theology represented, for instance, by Fosdick, Shailer Matthews, and Wieman. It is man-centered, man's intellect is made the arbiter of what is true and what is false; the brief creed that results is altogether a rationalistic product. The neo-orthodoxy theologians, led by Barth and Brunner abroad and Reinhold Niebuhr in the United States, insist that a divine revelation has taken place to which man must

listen. But while it bitterly contends against a self-confident modernism with its hollow optimism, it shares some of the positions of the enemy; for instance, those that have to do with Higher Criticism, the negative conclusions as to the authenticity of a number of books of the Scriptures and the inerrancy of the Bible. There is a third group of theologians, called Fundamentalists, whose positions, resulting largely from a literalistic interpretation of the Scriptures, the Lutheran theologian cannot accept *in toto*. It seems that many Lutheran scholars here in America incline toward neo-orthodoxy. Professor Kegley does not. He rejoices to see that the Lutheran World Federation has been founded, he says, and Lutheran thinking, he believes, will be stimulated. What will it produce? Will a new Lutheran theology result? What should be its character?

Without sharing all the analyses of Dr. Kegley, we wish to say that we have read his article with delight and profit. The fear that many Lutheran theologians seem to entertain that loyalty to the Confessions will simply lead to a theology of sterile repristination, we do not consider justified. Is it really necessary for theology, if it is to be live and active, to produce new systems, to construct new edifices of thought that are different from those of the Fathers? Luther, it must be admitted, so it seems at least to this writer, did not produce anything new in the line of doctrine. His theology was in its fundamental tenets that of the early church councils, and its driving force was the teaching of justification by grace through faith, taught especially by the Apostle Paul. This doctrine had become obscured and almost lost in the bewildering mazes of scholastic speculations. Luther rediscovered it through his study of the Scriptures. How can we desire to go beyond these positions if we really accept the Scriptures as divine, Christ as our all-sufficient Savior, the doctrine of justification by grace through faith as the central teaching of God's revelation? To proclaim the saving truth of the Gospel to poor sinners will, of course, not bring anybody fame as a profound original thinker, but it will do something far better, it will lead thirsty souls to the fountains where spring the waters of everlasting life, and it will extend the gracious rule of God's kingdom. Incidentally, is a person not here reminded of the position taken by the old Lutheran theologians that theology is a *habitus practicus theosdotos*? Lutheran theology, as the Fathers thought of it, must have practical aims, its objective must be to lead sinners to Christ, its work must be done *sub specie aeternitatis*. Not speculative wisdom, but the Cross of Christ must be its glory. Were they wrong? A.

Is Separation Right?—Recently there have appeared several articles in the *Lutheran Companion* which concern themselves with this topic. One of them is found in the issue of January 12, in "The Spectator" columns, and reads thus: "The Lutheran World Federation was right in insisting that membership in the World Council of Churches should be on a denominational rather than a

national basis. That means that the World Council recognizes as fact that there are different denominations in Protestantism today. The Spectator is glad that the interdenominational enthusiasts from America were overruled on this point. There is a difference between the teachings and practices of the Congregational and the Lutheran Churches, for example. To deny this is a falsehood, and to ignore it is cowardice. However, we agree with the World Council that, after recognizing differences, the denominations can and ought to work together for the common good insofar as they possibly can do so. Thus we recognize the principles of freedom and truth and love. Because of this decision, despite disappointing omissions and weaknesses, we believe that the World Council has started 'on the right foot,' far more so than the United Nations. But, of course, the Spectator is not omniscient. Neither were the fortunate few who made history in Amsterdam."

The other one appeared in the December 29, 1948, issue in an article written by Dr. Conrad Bergendoff, president of Augustana College, in a report on the Federal Council meeting early in December. The article has the title "Federal Council Observes 40th Birthday." After having stated that a commission on the "Witness of the Church in Our Time" had rendered a report which was enthusiastically received and after quoting from this report to the effect that if the Church is to do its work it must have the Holy Spirit today, Dr. Bergendoff continues: "As further proof, if any be needed, of the doctrinal ground on which the Council stands, it may be mentioned that a request had been made of the Council to make clear if the Federal Council agreed with the doctrinal article of the World Council. The latter defines Christ as 'God and Saviour.' In 1942 the Executive Committee had gone on record as interpreting the Federal Council's constitution as meaning exactly what the World Council's statement said. Now in 1948 the whole Federal Council assembled in convention voted that it agreed with the definition in the World Council's constitution."

"This action and the statement quoted above should be pondered by those who question the Christian faith of those who would make the Federal Council a real force for winning America for Christ. Of course, there are different ideas of what the Church is or should be. But this is a Council of *Churches*, and each has the right to witness to the truth as it has been persuaded. No one questions this right, but we may well question the right of any group to say that all others than itself are wrong, and so to have nothing to do with others. True Christianity can recognize the rights of others as well as one's own, and Christ's example is not on the side of those who make themselves the measure of the faith of all."

May we be permitted to add a few comments. The fact that a church body is small and that the great majority of Christians

in the church take a different position from the one it holds should indeed induce all the members of that small body to examine their course carefully, but does not by itself prove that they are in error. Roman Catholics are more numerous than Protestants, but no Protestant will admit that this superiority in numbers shows that Protestantism is wrong and Roman Catholicism right. There are far more non-Christians in the world than Christians, but this is no evidence for the correctness of the position held by the non-Christians. Furthermore, aloofness may be wrong: it is wrong when it proceeds from a spirit of stubbornness, self-righteous Pharisaism, spiritual pride, or something else of that category. But just as emphatically we have to say that the truth must be loved and upheld, and no alliances must be formed through which error would be sanctioned and God's revelation be negated. It is true that there is a borderland here, a sort of penumbra, where doubt may arise whether the one course should be followed or the other, and we hold that in such cases the message of 1 Corinthians 13 must not be overlooked; but as to the general duty of Christians, who love the Gospel of Jesus Christ and would like to see it remain unimpaired, to be witnesses of the truth, contend for it, and rather to undergo the pains of separation than to give tacit approval to its being crushed, there can be no doubt.

A.

Frankly and Honestly Admitting Differences of Opinion.—In *Theology Today* (January, 1949), in his special department "Theological Table-Talk," Dr. H. T. Kerr, Jr., calls attention to the fact that the "National Conference of Christians and Jews, Inc." has for some years sponsored a Religious Book Week. Representatives of Protestantism, Roman Catholicism, and Jewry are invited to submit lists of books which are calculated to further the cause of mutual understanding. The last week of October marked the sixth annual observance of Religious Book Week. Unfortunately, as Dr. Kerr adds, the committees which selected the books were subject to a higher censorship so that a list could be prepared which would not offend Protestant, Catholic, or Jews. Thus a book, which had been sold in more than 20,000 copies since it was first published, was found unacceptable to the Roman Catholics, and it was accordingly dropped. This fact induced Dr. Kerr to add a paragraph which might be considered by all denominations that consider better relations.

He writes: "Something might be gained for the goal of the National Conference if it would frankly and honestly admit that there is on many points a difference of opinion among Protestants, Catholics, and Jews. It might indeed be a good thing if a Religious Book Week in the near future were devoted to books which speak in a forthright way of the distinctive features of the three faiths, so that all could see where the conflicts are as well as the possible compromises. Respect for real differences of opinion may well lead to a deeper unity. In any event, there is

little hope of establishing a firm foundation among the three faiths by striking a dead level which obscures real antagonism. The democratic process is not furthered by avoidance of differences, catering to the fear of being offended, vaunting a misleading and superficial comity, or censorship."

It is, of course, futile to expect Catholics, Protestants, and Jews ever to unite in a common faith, though they may at times join in syncretistic worship, which, however, is opposed to the very fundamentals of their confessional principles. But coming nearer home, we may well apply what Dr. Kerr says to the various Lutheran denominations in our country. Let no one assume that differences in doctrine and practice no longer exist among them. The published doctrinal declarations indeed strike a refreshing note of conservative unity. But deviations from the official doctrinal declarations do occur distressingly often, and frequently, too, the denominational practice is in accord with neither Scripture nor the Lutheran Confessions. Here, then, also "something might be gained for the goal of unity if the denominations would frankly and honestly admit that there is on many points a difference of opinion." And here, too, Dr. Kerr's remark obtains: "There is little hope of establishing a firm foundation by striking a dead level which obscures real antagonism. The democratic process is not furthered by avoidance of differences, catering to the fear of being offended." Lutherans, desiring true church unity, should certainly welcome frank and honest discussion of doctrinal and other differences.

J. T. M.

Describes Life of Missionary in Communist-Held China.—A detailed picture of what life is like for a missionary in Communist-held territory is contained in a series of letters brought by messenger to mission headquarters in Shanghai. At the request of mission headquarters, the name of the writer and his whereabouts is withheld.

The mission has a hospital and two schools—a primary school and a junior middle school. The hospital has been run uninterruptedly since the changeover. The schools have recently reopened after the mid-winter holiday.

Communist authorities who called to investigate the hospital refused to take tea and indulged in none of the pleasantries with which official visits usually begin in China. They got straight to the point and asked a series of questions as to the size of the staff, salaries paid, how medicines were obtained, how much money was received each month, how deficits were made up, and the location of mission headquarters in China.

"We answered frankly and freely," writes the missionary, "and in answer to the question, 'What is your object in running this hospital?' we got in a little propaganda of our own. We told them, 'We also are here to liberate the people: the sick by healing, the illiterate by education, and those shackled by superstition, by the Gospel of God.'"

The missionary took advantage of the visit to ask the officials if they could do anything to stop sight-seeing soldiers from over-running the hospital. (The missionary explains in his letter that the soldiers, most of them country boys, came in a spirit of curiosity and had even invaded the operating room during an operation.) The answer to the missionary's plea was unusual, but effective.

A day or two later, a group of soldiers were drawn up in front of the hospital. The officer in charge instructed them to inspect the hospital thoroughly, as this would be their last chance. They were asked not to force locked doors or enter the operating room, "as it might be harmful to the patient." Then the soldiers swarmed over the hospital, looking at everything, for a period of two and a half hours. They have not returned since.

When the mission schools were re-opened, Communist authorities banned the teaching of religion and ordered that the Boy Scout troop be dissolved. Students petitioned for religious teaching after school hours, and such teaching is being given. English teaching has been dropped in the primary school by orders of the authorities. In the junior middle English classes have been cut from six hours weekly to three.

Churches have been little affected by the changeover. At evangelistic services held on Chinese New Year's Day, the churches were thronged, and some Communist officials were among those who attended. Officials simply inform pastors that church buildings will be used at a specified hour for public meetings, but this has caused no difficulty except in one instance.

When told that a church was wanted for a meeting on Sunday morning, the Chinese pastor informed the authorities that it was not available because church services were to be held. His firmness won him his point.

Economic conditions were hard at first; prices were high and commodities scarce. Later, as Communist currency became plentiful, the situation eased somewhat. "Our sewing project is booming, our garments selling like hotcakes," reports the missionary. Merchants are traveling back and forth between Nationalist and Communist territory without hindrance. Prices are fixed daily at a conference between the merchants and the Chamber of Commerce.

Postal service with the Nationalist territory has been resumed, and letters were received three times in a single week. In his last letter, however, the missionary notes that there was some hitch in the postal arrangement, and no letters had been received for some days.

Anti-Americanism is stressed at public meetings, he reports, but on the other hand, the mission receives a stream of visitors, most of them soldiers, asking "thousands" of questions about the United States. The great number of visitors seemed trying, at first, but the missionary realized it was an opportunity and now sits down with them and tries to tell them all they want to know.

Of general conditions, he notes that officials dress as simply as anyone else; no one is called a "servant" any more; soldiers wear no insignia of any kind; foreign goods are almost non-existent. In this area, the Army has no automotive vehicles of any kind. A hammer and sickle flag is used at party meetings, but at other meetings the flag of the Republic of China is displayed.

The missionary observes that Communist military progress is well ahead of civil organization, and that civil officers must work hard to catch up. Communist officials do not oppress or brow-beat the people, he says, "but there is still a great deal of distress that they do nothing about."

On the whole, the letters are optimistic and hopeful. With twenty-five years' experience with the Chinese behind him, the missionary wonders "if Marxism won't undergo a change in China." [The item is passed on for what it is worth. If the optimism it breathes should prove to be justified by conditions in more areas than one, we shall be happy. A.] RNS

Curious Trends in Israel. — Under this heading the *Intelligence Digest* (March 1, 1949), published in London, in discussing world events, has the following to say: "Finally, we are told on very high Jewish authority that nearly all the Jewish theologians are convinced that the Messianic age is about to begin, and this conviction is going to spread and create a force, the power of which may prove immense . . . we venture a further revolutionary view: There are reasons for believing that Israel will shortly be converted to Christianity. The result might prove comparable to the conversion of Rome. One of the most important experts on this question in the world told us the other day that 1) Israel will adopt Christianity within a measurable time; 2) Britain will make an alliance with Israel; 3) The Middle East will become almost entirely westernized after incredible changes." We know that this is the hope of those who believe in the final conversion of "all Israel," but it struck us as strange to find it in the *Intelligence Digest*. The reports in the daily press do not confirm the belief here voiced. There are indeed orthodox Jews in Israel, but the great majority are Reform Jews who no longer believe in what the Prophets say. Zionism is largely a secular and not a religious movement. J. T. M.

Text of "Declaration on Religious Freedom." — Text of the Declaration on Religious Freedom adopted in New York by the executive committee of the Federal Council of Churches follows: The evidence coming from several areas in Europe makes it clear that there is a systematic attack upon churches by Communist-controlled governments. Although there may be no overt persecution of Christians for the profession of their private faith or for religious worship, it is plain that totalitarian states under Communist domination are determined to prevent the Churches from having any influence in public life. In the light of recent developments in Hungary, Bulgaria, and elsewhere the design of these

states to bring the Churches into subservience is no longer open to doubt. The methods adopted by one totalitarian regime or another in achieving this design include preventing the Churches from maintaining schools for the religious education of their children, banning Christian youth movements or sharply circumscribing their activities, eliminating or controlling Christian publications, forcing strong church leaders out of their positions and supplanting them with submissive personalities, and isolating the Churches from fellowship and contact with Churches in other lands. While these objectives may not be openly avowed, they are pursued by such devious means as public trials on such technical charges as manipulating the currency, black marketing, and espionage. The attack of the Communist-controlled governments is directed against all forms of organized religion which refuse to be tools of a secular policy. All the Churches are involved in the defense of a rightful religious freedom as over against the pretensions of the totalitarian state. They must stand together in resisting, in such ways as are appropriate to the Church, every attempt of a godless political regime to curtail or to destroy the influence of religion.

In bearing this united testimony and standing together in a common protest we must guard against a blind emotion or a heedless hysteria which might seek to defend the Church through resort to war. It would be wholly illusory to suppose that the present tensions could be relaxed by such a method. Our witness in behalf of basic religious freedom is not limited to the states which are under Communist domination. There is also a totalitarianism of a Fascist type which is hostile to religious freedom. States which profess to be defending the rights of religion may in practice be denying those rights by their treatment of minority groups. We cannot be silent about the fact that in Spain, the Argentine, and elsewhere there are today grievous abridgments of religious freedom. In championing religious freedom we mean freedom from coercion by any earthly power, whether political or ecclesiastical, that assumes the prerogative of God and attempts to control the conscience of the individual. We do not know the facts of the situation in the Communist-controlled countries well enough to justify us in fully evaluating the acts of our Christian brethren who are passing through a terrible ordeal. We can, however, have a confident trust that in every country there will be a faithful remnant who under all circumstances of conflict will choose to obey God rather than men and who will not compromise their Christian convictions.

It is out of such fidelity to the Word of God in the face of hardship and danger that the Christian Church in other ages has survived attack and had its spiritual vitality renewed. The greatest service which we can render to hard-pressed Christians in many countries is to stand beside them in a fellowship of the spirit and to pray that they may be sustained by the Divine assurance that the faithfulness will not be in vain. The threat which

the Churches confront in other lands is a ringing call to Christians, in lands that are still free, to redouble their efforts in behalf of social justice and human rights. It is in the soil of misery and injustice that Communism thrives. For Christians to struggle constantly to establish both freedom and justice for all people, remembering especially the poorest and the most oppressed, is to strengthen the Church for its most effective witness in the world today. RNS

Brief Items from *Religious News Service*

Protestants at Home

A national Go-To-Church Movement has been launched in Los Angeles by a group of prominent businessmen and educators. Leaders of the movement, which is non-sectarian, announced they plan to use newspapers, magazines, radio, television, movies, and billboards to urge people to go to church. Gaylord D. Richmond, of the Los Angeles County Art Institute, executive director of the movement, said it was undertaken because of the large number of unchurched adults and youth in the country. "The Go-To-Church Movement," he said, "plans to sell religion back to the American people through a national advertising campaign on a year-round basis."

Some 400 Protestant leaders from the United States and Latin America convened in San Juan, Puerto Rico, to take part in a three-day celebration March 11-13, commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of Protestant mission work in Puerto Rico. In connection with the anniversary observances, Puerto Rican Methodists, Presbyterians, Disciples of Christ, and Baptists celebrated their annual conventions. A mass meeting of Protestants of all denominations held on Sunday, March 13, at the huge Sixto Escobar Ballpark climaxed the celebration. Churches from seventy-seven Puerto Rican municipalities took part in the rally which paid homage to Antonio Badillo Hernandez, who in 1860 became the first Puerto Rican converted to Protestantism.

The Western Section of the Alliance of Reformed Churches Holding the Presbyterian System, at its 3-day meeting in Buck Hill Falls, Pa., took a firm stand in favor of religious freedom throughout the world. The Section, representing 8 Reformed and Presbyterian communions in North America and Mexico, noted that the "sacred principle" of religious freedom had been "invaded by political and ecclesiastical despotism." It expressed "its grave concern" on five situations involving religious freedom: 1) The "growing pressure to divert federal funds to parochial schools"; 2) the "New Mexico public school controversy in which a Protestant group is charging that Catholicism is taught in the public school system"; 3) the "banning of certain periodicals of national reputation from public and school libraries in the United States"; 4) the "systematic persecution of Protestant Christians in Spain both by civil and religious authorities and the growing infringe-

ments on religious liberty and active religious persecutions in Mexico and certain nations of South America"; 5) efforts to effect the recognition of "Fascist Spain and similar situations which tend to deny Christian liberty." The delegates directed the executive committee of the Section to "appoint a vigorous sub-committee, headed by President John A. Mackay of the Princeton Theological Seminary, to make a thorough study of this whole situation" for consideration at next year's session.

Two more Southern California Baptist elementary schools will be added next September to six similar schools now in operation by the denomination.

Protestants Abroad

A Protestant theological seminary will be established in Yugoslavia for the first time according to information received in New York by the National Lutheran Council. The Rev. Franjo Sostarec, superintendent of the Hungarian Lutheran Church in Yugoslavia, notified the Council he will open the seminary in August in Subotica in the District of Backa in Vojvodina Province. Facilities of the seminary will be available to ministerial candidates of all Protestant denominations, although most seminarians will belong to the four national groups in the Lutheran Church in Yugoslavia. These are the Hungarian Lutheran Church, the Slovak Lutheran Church, the Wendish (Slovene) Lutheran Church, and the Croatian Lutheran Church.

Celebrations marking the 100th anniversary of the arrival of the first Church of England clergymen in Sweden were held at the English Church in Stockholm. Among those attending were Dr. Manfred Bjoerkquist, Lutheran bishop of Stockholm, Crown Princess Louise, and the British ambassador.

Oxford University has been given an endowment of 42,000 pounds (about \$168,000) for professorship of Eastern religion and ethics, intended to promote interest in the religions and ethical systems of the East.

An announcement that "we are making progress" has been the only official word received from a thirty-man joint committee of clergymen and laymen meeting in Toronto to discuss reunion of the Church of England in Canada and the United Church of Canada. Reunion negotiations began in 1943 when the General Synod of the Church of England invited other religious bodies to discuss the possibility of such action. The United Church accepted, but the Presbyterians, Baptists, and other Protestant denominations declined the invitation.

Miss Aideen Wade of Belfast has been named superintendent of the Sunday School by Post which is conducted in Kenya, East Africa, by the Irish Auxiliary of the Colonial and Continental

Church Society in Belfast, Ireland. The school sends religious instruction by mail to children in Kenya, Uganda, Tanganyika, the Sudan, and Zanzibar.

The Methodist theological seminary at Gothenburg, Sweden, observed its 75th anniversary with week-long celebrations in which Methodist representatives from England, Germany, Norway, and Finland took part.

The faculty of Protestant theology at Strasbourg University has resumed publication of its *Review of Religious History and Philosophy*, which was forced to suspend at the outbreak of the war. Among items appearing in the current issue is a treatise on love of one's neighbor by Martin Buber (1491—1551), an outstanding Protestant reformer, which had not been published since the Reformation. Before the war, the *Review* was concerned mostly with historical erudition. It has now been widened in scope to give more space to articles on biblical scholarship and dogmatic and ethical theology.

Others

Religious broadcasts in Greece will, in the future, be controlled by the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church, which has appointed a radio committee of three metropolitans. Appointment of the committee followed the banning, at the request of the Holy Synod, of a Sunday broadcast over the Athens radio station sponsored by the Oriental Missionary Society. The broadcast consisted of Bible readings, a sermon, and hymns sung by a young people's choir of the Greek Evangelical Church. *Enoria*, a religious weekly in Athens, commenting on the action of the Holy Synod, stressed that Sunday broadcasts were assuming "a completely Protestant color." — "It is the duty of the state church," it said, "to teach some foreigners as well as some Greek Protestants, who are happily only few, that Greek Orthodoxy is not a vineyard without a fence around it."

A bill calling for censorship of illustrated publications intended for children has been adopted by the French National Assembly. The measure provides that such publications put less emphasis on gangsterism, armed robberies, murders, etc. Heavy fines will be imposed on violators. This censorship power will be exercised by a special commission set up under the Ministry of Justice. The commission will comprise representatives of church and public school teachers, artists, publishers of children's books and magazines, and a mother and father chosen by the National Union of Family Associations.

Pope Pius XII may hasten his anticipated proclamation of the dogma of the Assumption. Some quarters consider it not unlikely that Pope Pius may decide to proclaim the dogma during the coming Holy Year of 1950, in view of developments in coun-

tries within the Soviet orbit. Catholic sources say that efforts inside Iron Curtain countries to create national churches which would have no link with the Vatican have made it more necessary than ever to affirm the supreme sovereignty of the Pope. This could be done most effectively, some Catholics feel, by a solemn proclamation of the Assumption doctrine. The dogma would be the first promulgated since 1870, when the Vatican Council proclaimed the infallibility of the Pope in matters of faith and morals.

Twelve Roman Catholic organizations and their branches, including women's and youth groups, have been closed in various parts of Romania by the government. All property of the organizations involved has been taken over by the government. The official gazette which made this report also stated that a Protestant women's organization with headquarters at Sibiu and a Jewish welfare society in Sacra had been liquidated.

Dr. Albert Schweitzer, who has given more than thirty years of his life to serving neglected negroes in French Equatorial Africa, will visit the United States in July. He will deliver a lecture in Colorado in connection with the 200th anniversary celebration of the birth of the German poet Goethe. This will be Dr. Schweitzer's only public engagement while in the United States.

The American Bible Society and the British Bible Society of Canada have sent 200,000 copies of the New Testament in modern Greek and in the old Greek language to members of the Greek army. Responsibility for distributing the Scriptures has been undertaken by the Welfare Service of the Army's General Staff.

Missionaries of the Church of Latter Day Saints in central and western New York recently held a meeting in Palmyra, New York, near the site of the church's origin, to discuss plans for the annual pageant, July 24, at Hill Cumorah, now a place of pilgrimage for Mormons from all parts of the world. Most of the missionaries are young college students who have enlisted for a two-year period of mission work without pay.

