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Theological Observer. - Kirchlich-Zeitgeschichtliches

W. Arndt

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis

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Theological Observer

Does the Belief in an Infallible Bible Make This Belief More Important Than to Believe in Christ as Savior?—The debate on the question What is meant by the inspiration of the Scriptures? the forum for which is chiefly the *Lutheran Outlook*, is proceeding apace. And that is as it should be. We agree with the venerable editor when he says in the July number, "Let's find out whether twentieth century Lutheran theologians believe in an inspired Word of God."

In the July issue just quoted, the Rev. A. V. Neve, with whose views on inspiration I have expressed disagreement in the columns of the *CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY*, says, "As I see it, Preus, Lono, Dr. Arndt, and Dr. J. T. M. consider it more important to accept a theory about the Word of God than to have the living Christ in your heart." I shall not presume to speak for the other men mentioned; I shall merely state my own personal reaction. Where does Pastor Neve get the view that I hold it more important to accept a theory about the Word of God than to have the living Christ in your heart? I am amazed to see such a thing said about me, because I know it is the very opposite of what I believe with every fiber of my being. Did I, in anything I have said, justify the assumption of the critic that I hold such a position? If I did, I shall retract it at once. It is one of my convictions which I hold most precious that whoever believes in Jesus Christ as the Savior is a child of God, errors on the doctrines, for instance, of Baptism, the Lord's Supper, and the inspiration of the Scripture notwithstanding. To have the living Christ in your heart is the thing that makes a person a Christian. It is not mere acceptance of correct dogmatic formulations that does it, but the faith of the penitent sinner who grasps the loving, saving hand of the divine Redeemer. I am shocked to find that any other position should be ascribed to me.

Does belief in the inerrancy of the Scriptures possibly constitute a conflict with the position that it is most important to have the living Christ in your heart? How can it? Does belief in the deity and infallibility of Christ militate against my accepting Him as my all-sufficient Redeemer, whom I love and whom I ask to fill my heart and lead me forward on the narrow way?

Pastor Neve, I am sure, will avow belief in the authority of the Scriptures, and still he will say that his giving the Scriptures such a high position does not keep him from considering it most important to have the living Christ in your heart. The fact that my view of the nature of the Scriptures is different from his certainly does not have to keep me from giving full acceptance to the words of Paul and Silas, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." If a debate is to be fruitful, it is important that we do not ascribe views to our opponents which they do not hold.

W. ARNDT

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The United Church of Christ.—After several years of conferences, the Basis of Union of the Congregational Christian Churches and the Evangelical and Reformed Church, prepared in 1946, has now received the approval of a majority in both uniting groups. A group within the Congregational Christian Churches, under the leadership of James W. Fifield, Jr., of Los Angeles, has threatened to challenge the merger. The strength of this anti-merger movement is variously estimated. The group known as Congregational Christian Churches is a merger of the Association of Congregational Churches, whose underlying principle is the complete freedom given to each congregation in matters of doctrine, and the Christian Churches, who reject all creeds, make Christian character the only test of membership, and for good reasons were known as Unitarian Baptists. The former Evangelical Synod is an outgrowth of the Prussian Union. Until recently Lutheran tendencies were quite pronounced in certain sections of the Evangelical Synod. But the spirit of latitudinarianism and indifferentism gradually gained the upper hand, leading first to a union with the Reformed Church, whose theology is that of the Heidelberg Catechism, and now to a merger with the Christian Congregational Churches. In the light of this historical background the articles of faith are significant, not because of what they confess, but because of what they fail to state.

The articles of faith in the Basis of Union read as follows:

"The faith which unites us and to which we bear witness is that faith in God which the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments set forth, which the ancient Church expressed in the ecumenical creeds, to which our own spiritual fathers gave utterance in the evangelical confessions of the Reformation, and which we are duty bound to express in the words of our time as God Himself gives us light. We seek to preserve in all our expressions of that faith unity of mind and spirit with those who have gone before as well as with those who now labor with us.

"In token of that faith we unite in the following confession, as embodying those things most surely believed and taught among us:

"We believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ, His Son, our Lord and Savior, who for us and for our salvation lived and died and rose again and liveth evermore; and in the Holy Spirit, who taketh of the things of Christ and showeth them to us, renewing, comforting, and inspiring souls of men.

"We acknowledge one Holy Catholic Church, the innumerable company of those who, in every age and nation, are united by the Holy Spirit to God in Christ, are one body in Christ, and have communion with Him and with one another.

"We acknowledge as a part of this universal fellowship every particular Church throughout the world which professes this faith in Jesus Christ and follows Him as Lord and Savior.

"We hold the Church to be established for the public worship of God, for the confession of His name by word and deed, for the

administration of the sacraments, for witnessing to the saving grace of God in Christ, for calling men to repentance and faith, for the upbuilding of the saints, and for the universal propagation of the Gospel; and in the power of the love of God in Christ we labor for the progress of knowledge, the promotion of justice, the reign of peace, and the realization of human brotherhood.

"Depending, as did our fathers, upon the continued guidance of the Holy Spirit to lead us into all truth, we work and pray for the consummation of the Kingdom of God; and we look with faith for the triumph of righteousness and the life everlasting."

F. E. M.

A Plea for a Latitudinarian View of the Lord's Supper.— It is increasingly recognized in English-speaking religious circles in our country that one of the great differences dividing Reformed and Lutheran churches is the doctrine of the Lord's Supper. In the Summer Number of *Religion in Life* the Rev. Oliver Read Whitley, who formerly was a chaplain in the Navy, submits an article in which the divergent teachings on the Lord's Supper of the two main Protestant branches are sketched, but the importance of the differences is minimized. The article is entitled "The Lord's Supper: Challenge to a Divided Christendom." After outlining the Roman Catholic position on this Sacrament, Luther's, Zwingli's, and Calvin's conceptions are considered. The author reaches the conclusion that while the Roman Catholic position is altogether *sui generis*, the views of the three Protestant leaders mentioned have so much in common that the doctrine of the Lord's Supper should not be a point of division. All three hold that faith is required if the Sacrament is to be of benefit to the recipient, that is, all three reject the so-called *ex opere operato* conception; all three hold, furthermore, that the Sacrament is a sign, a pledge of God's promises given us in the Gospels; and, besides, all three actually believe that Christ is present in the Eucharist, even though they are in disagreement as to the precise manner of His presence. Taking for granted that these points of agreement are not fictional, can we say that the differences are so unimportant that they need not be divisive? It is understandable that a Reformed theologian will answer, Yes; there is not much at stake for him. But the Lutheran has to say, No. The Lord's Supper is precious to him because Christ here in the most intimate manner possible convinces him that He is his Savior and confers on him forgiveness of all his sins by handing him the very means by which this forgiveness was procured, His body and His blood. In contending for our doctrine of the Lord's Supper we are actuated not only by the strong desire to remain faithful to the teachings of the Holy Scriptures, but by a sense of the extreme importance which the Lord's Supper has for our spiritual life. A.

Existentialism.— This word is used a great deal these days. Is existentialism a discovery of our age? We think not. In our opinion it is merely a new label for an old article. When people

nowadays say that theology must be existential, they, at least in some instances, do not seem to have anything else in mind than what our fathers called a *habitus practicus*. What our old theologians opposed was the idea that theology should be considered as being merely a science offering to its devotees a certain body of information which had to be absorbed. Opposing that view, our old leaders insisted that theology had to have a practical aim and that it had to be something to which all the energies of a person were dedicated. These are the cogitations that came to our mind when we in the *Union Seminary Quarterly Review*, published in May, 1949, read an article written by Ray Ryland, a graduate student of Union Seminary, on the subject "Another Handmaiden for Theology." The handmaiden in question is psychiatry. Discussing his topic, the author says: "If theology is not to become arid scholasticism, as some of its most passionate expressions tend, it must become more existential. The use of this much-banded term has no reference to any particular school of theological thought. Whether a theological viewpoint calls itself 'existential' is irrelevant. The important thing is that all theology must regard itself as an effort to work out for Christians a proper orientation to their God and to their fellow men." That seems to agree quite well with the old dictum that *theologia*, when properly considered, *est habitus practicus theosdotos, . . . ut homines . . . ad regnum coelorum perducantur* (Gerhard). A.

Doctrinal Differences Between the Churches of the East and of the West.—On account of the historical information which it contains we reprint the following RNS item from Chichester, England: "A three-year study of the political and historical differences that keep Protestant and Eastern Orthodox Churches apart was authorized here by delegates to the conference sponsored by the Commission of Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches. Attending the conference were representatives of ten confessional groups from fifteen countries, including Czechoslovakia and Finland. The study, it was announced, will be undertaken by top-ranking theologians from countries throughout the world, and their report will be presented to a world meeting of the Faith and Order Commission to be held at Lund, Sweden, in 1952. A memorandum was read to the conference by Prof. Hamilcar Alivisatos, of the University of Athens, dealing with 'the nature of the Church according to the teachings of the Holy Greek Orthodox Church.' The Greek Church, Professor Alivisatos declared, claims that it alone 'has the right to be the only true Church on account of its historically unbroken continuity with the undivided Church.' Professor Alivisatos previously attended sessions of the World Council of Churches' Central Committee at which he cited reasons why, in spite of its doctrinal position, the Greek Church has authorized continued participation in the World Council of Churches. The Church in Greece is one of seven Eastern Orthodox bodies affiliated with the Council, others being the Ecumenical Patriarchate at Istanbul, the Patriarchates of An-

tioch, Alexandria, and Jerusalem; the Romanian Orthodox Church in North America; and the Syrian Orthodox Church in America."

The E. L. C. to Begin Work in Japan.—According to press reports the Evangelical Lutheran Church, the former Norwegian Lutheran Church of America, will begin mission work in Japan. The mission board has issued a statement that it believes "a more favorable period for dissemination of the Christian Gospel has never been seen in the history of Japan." The beginning of the endeavor is scheduled for this fall. The first station will be established in Tokyo, and the region in which the emissaries are to work will extend from Tokyo to Nagoya. When Dr. Ralph A. Syrdal, who is the executive secretary of the E. L. C.'s Foreign Missions Board, returned from a tour of Japan, China, and the Philippines, he warmly recommended the beginning of mission endeavors in Japan. By those who are somewhat acquainted with developments in the mission field it will be recalled that the Evangelical Lutheran Church carried on mission work in Japan years ago, but by and by decided to drop this undertaking and to concentrate on China. Now, on account of the difficulties in China, most of the E. L. C. missionaries working in that country had to be moved elsewhere or called home. It is expected that some of them will be given work in Japan. A.

Dismantling of German Factories.—While we have no right or intention to enter the field of politics or statesmanship, whenever anything inhuman or cruel comes before us we have to protest. The dismantling of German factories decreed by the victorious allies, and widely protested against in England and America, has not been entirely discontinued. Pastor Niemoeller, addressing the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches in Chichester, England, pointed to the sufferings of 12,000,000 German refugees from the Soviet zone of Germany, and declared that industry in Western Germany must not be interfered with but expanded, so that these homeless people can be provided for. He pictured the process going on of dismantling all industry in Western Germany as "a great crime against humanity." The Central Committee, while it stated that it was "fully seized with the importance of establishing in Europe the necessary guarantee of a secure peace," expressed the hope, according to *RNS*, "that the policy of dismantling the German factories not exclusively related to war potential may be handled so as to afford a reasonable opportunity of work to this new influx of population and thus avoid creating again in Germany a situation of danger to mass misery and unemployment." According to all accounts, the situation is simply desperate. A.

The Present Trend in the Churches Towards Socialism and Communism.—In an informing article entitled "Communism a Threat to America's Churches," published in *United Evangelical Action* for Aug. 1, 1949, George Washington Robnett describes briefly the rise of the social gospel preaching in our country and

its gradually becoming tinted with advocacy of State Socialism and Communism. The movement, so he holds, started with Horace Bushnell's publications in favor of the social gospel about 1850. He was followed by Washington Gladden, a Congregationalist like Bushnell, and Walter Rauschenbusch, a Baptist. It was a liberalizing movement and was accompanied by a "divergence from orthodox biblical interpretations pertaining to the 'Virgin Birth' and other doctrines. Liberalism in theology went hand in hand with liberalism in economics. (It is in this area where we cannot entirely follow the author. He seems to be of the opinion that the Bible teaches the economic system which is called Capitalism. We fail to see that he is right. If our reading of the Holy Scriptures is correct, neither Capitalism nor Socialism is there insisted on as divinely prescribed.) According to Mr. Robnett some powerful organizations are at work, each displaying the flag of religion, spreading socialistic and communistic tenets. He lists 1) Church League for Industrial Democracy, 2) Rauschenbusch Fellowship of Baptists, 3) Methodist Federation for Social Action, 4) Evangelical and Reformed Council for Social Reconstruction, 5) Presbyterian Fellowship for Social Action, and 6) Unitarian Fellowship for Social Justice. All of these in 1936 combined to form the United Christian Council for Democracy. Attention is likewise drawn to the National Religion and Labor Federation.

The closing paragraphs should be quoted. Having stated that it is difficult to understand why the Soviet brand of atheism has so wide an appeal, Mr. Robnett continues: "Two major reasons for this are generally ascribed. (1) the rise of 'Christian Socialism' (under different guises) has inculcated a feeling of suspicion and distrust of private enterprise—it being the nature and purpose of 'socialism' in any form to discredit private enterprise so that State ownership can more easily be superimposed upon the people. (2) There has also been an unconscious acceptance on the part of some of our good pastors that Communism was not atheistically predatory toward Protestantism. This deception has been skilfully maneuvered by Communist leaders under the old strategy of 'pick one off at a time.'

"Recent arrest of Protestant leaders in Soviet satellite countries should awaken the most naive as to the anti-religious purpose of Communism. An official magazine *Communist* (April, 1935) carried a story by Communist Earl Browder entitled 'Religion and Communism.' This was a reprint of a 'discussion with a group of students of the Union Theological Seminary' (NY) led by Browder. His line of double-talk to these students is exemplified in this statement—'. . . the Communist Party is absolutely opposed to any form of coercion on religious matters. Communists are for religious freedom unconditionally. The Communists do not consider religion a private matter when it concerns revolutionists.' Communists are dedicated entirely to revolution; so Browder, with his Aesopian language, made a statement for the students, then contradicted it in language they

might not grasp. But he did tell them frankly that "The Communist Party takes the position that the social function of religion and religious institutions is to act as an opiate to keep the lower classes passive, to make them accept the bad conditions under which they have to live in the hope of a reward after death."

"Browder admitted that . . . 'it is quite clear that the Communist Party is the enemy of religion. We Communists try to do the opposite of what we hold religion does.' Then he stated—'You may be interested to know that we have preachers, preachers active in churches, who are members of the Communist Party. There are churches in the United States where the preachers preach Communism from the pulpits, in a very primitive form, of course.' He meant, presumably, that they went as far as they dared.

"One of the problems in facing this challenge is unawareness. Too few understand the subtlety and trickery of the Marxist movement—and those behind it. Another problem is the confusion that results from a continuous barrage of propaganda and double-talk that uses such high sounding phrases as 'tolerance' and 'brotherhood' when, in truth, these crusaders are often the most intolerant and unbrotherly people one can meet unless one agrees with them one hundred per cent. Too many of these 'brotherhood' doctrinaires have found this an easy way to push the 'classless' doctrinology of socialism and communism.

"Still another problem that arises in dealing with this great challenge is the real meaning of liberalism. One great preacher who recently went from the Middle West to one of the oldest churches in New York City has expressed to us the opinion that about the most illiberal people he ever meets are those who make the most noise about their liberalism.

"We have, herein, already discussed the confusion that 'new social order liberalism' has produced. We will add only this comparison. Thomas Jefferson was known as a great liberal. He believed in limited government. The crusading 'liberals' of today want big government socialism. Jefferson believed in the dignity and greatness of individualism. Our new 'liberals' profess to want socialistic collectivism. Jefferson believed in thrift. The 'liberals' of today are all out for extravagance—for deficit spending. Jefferson believed in the security of self-support. Modern 'liberals' believe that Government owes every man a living—and must support him when he quits work for any purpose. These are critical days. Turbulence and confusion are rampant. A tidal wave of revolution is sweeping the world. It is time to be careful what we are following and what we are abandoning. Our hope for the future is to hold fast to Christianity and Americanism."—In general, we approve of the above. If the view is held that Christianity and Americanism are both divinely taught, we demur.

A.

The Spellman-Roosevelt Controversy.—In New York, when the summer season on account of the heat was threatening to

become drab and dull, epistolary bombs were exploded which caused much excitement and furnished editors, reporters, and the public in general a new and stirring topic of discussion. Cardinal Spellman before a gathering of fifteen thousand people at Fordham University launched a bitter attack on the Barden Bill now before Congress. This bill is called an Aid-to-Education measure. If adopted, it will provide \$300,000,000 annually for the public schools of the country. Private and church schools are not included among the beneficiaries of the proposed legislation. The cardinal said in part, "For any man to vent his venom upon children is a sin as shocking as it is incomprehensible. Yet Congressman Barden and his associates, shamefully fostering discrimination against parochial school children, are urging Congress to vote for a bill that expressly declares that all expenditures of Federal money for educational purposes will be restricted to benefit only those children who attend public schools. . . . A vote for the Barden Bill is a vote against parental rights, against constitutional rights, against American education as a whole, against America itself." Mrs. Roosevelt in her regular newspaper column entitled "My Day," in altogether objective fashion, disapproved of these remarks of the cardinal, holding that whatever schools are aided by public funds should not be under private or religious control. The general principle to which she appealed was that of separation of Church and State, which she termed of extreme importance to all citizens. The wrath of the cardinal was aroused. He wrote an open letter to Mrs. Roosevelt which was remarkable for its vehement, acrid language, leaving the plane of objective argumentation and descending to the level of personal vituperation. Mrs. Roosevelt was accused of manifesting anti-Catholic prejudices, and her attitude was called "a disgrace to American motherhood." The letter would probably not have caused much of a ripple if it had not been for its vitriolic character. A number of voices at once were raised in defense of Mrs. Roosevelt. Finally she herself replied in an open letter in which she calmly disclaimed any intention of attacking the cardinal or the Roman Catholic Church, and firmly repeated that in her opinion it is essential for our Government to adhere to the principle of separation of Church and State. It was highly interesting to read the letters from the people published in the press on the debate between the two prominent disputants. Of the communications which we have seen, those that opposed Mrs. Roosevelt rarely constituted an attempt to argue the question objectively. She was told to "stick to her knitting, and that in a literal sense," "not to presume to know anything in the field of religion and the State," etc. The appeal accordingly was usually to feelings and descended to the level of mudslinging. On the other side one observed more calmness and a willingness to treat the issue in objective fashion. The old principle of separation of Church and State was stressed; what State support of denominational schools really involves was pointed out. Generally speaking,

one got the impression that the cardinal had overreached himself and had hurt his own cause. Nobody but a blind partisan could sanction the startling descent to defamatory tactics resorted to by Mrs. Roosevelt's opponents. For the American public it was a wholesome thing that the debate occurred. Once more the principle of separation of Church and State was brought to the fore, and the American people were reminded of their possessing the priceless boon of religious liberty.

Incidentally, that the cardinal committed a very serious strategic blunder can be seen from the tenor of the comments in the Protestant press. Quite universally his name-calling and vilifications are condemned. The *Watchman-Examiner* says editorially, "Spellman's letter to Mrs. Roosevelt spreads over the whole category of Roman Catholic propaganda, covering 'rights of innocent little children,'—which are in no sense menaced; 'helpless men like Cardinal Martyr Mindszenty'—although the Mindszenty issue has nothing to do with America's domestic politics; rights of Roman Catholic 'veterans'—as if a Catholic veteran has any greater privilege and 'rights' than any other veteran in this country; and several other phases of Catholic agitation which becloud the real issue, which is that the Roman Catholic hierarchy is making its boldest and most highly organized bid for public tax money in support of its sectarian institutions."

Withering are the remarks of the *Christian Century* in its editorial of August 3. "When he [i. e., Cardinal Spellman] discovered that the Barden bill (H. R. 4683) had widespread support, his fury vented itself in vituperation against the author of the bill. But when supporters of constitutional aid to public schools refused to be intimidated, the cardinal singled out Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt for one of the most disgraceful attacks made in recent years. He declared that Mrs. Roosevelt had used her column, 'My Day,' to spread 'misinformation, ignorance or prejudice,' that she had delivered a 'personal attack' on him by mentioning his blast at Mr. Barden, that her advocacy of using public funds for public schools constituted an 'anti-Catholic campaign.' He charged her with repeatedly pleading 'causes that are anti-Catholic,' held that her 'record of anti-Catholicism stands for all to see' and declared that her column consisted of 'documents of discrimination unworthy of an American mother.'" The remarks of ex-governor Herbert H. Lehman of New York hit the nail on the head. "The issue is not whether one agrees or disagrees with Mrs. Roosevelt on this or any other public question. The issue is whether Americans are entitled freely to express their views on public questions without being vilified or accused of religious bias." A.

Belief in Religion Essential for Officeholders in Maryland.—Apparently the courts of Maryland will have to decide a delicate question pertaining to a provision in its statutes according to which a public official taking the oath of office has to "declare orally his belief in the Christian religion, or, if he professes to

be a Jew, his belief in a future state of rewards and punishments." As reported in the daily press, a certain man by the name of J. Milton Stanford was elected a member of the town council of Brentwood, Md., in 1947. With respect to his religious views he is described as a practicing pantheist. Two years ago, when he took his oath of office, he felt no compunction when he heard the phrase included in the oath "I believe in God." Since that time the oath has been changed to conform to the statute quoted above.

Last June another election was held, and he again was successful. The matter of the oath presented itself, and he refused to take it in its present form. Thereupon the authorities of Brentwood refused to acknowledge him as a member of the council. He now has appealed to the Prince Georges County circuit court with a request that he be seated. He has prepared a brief setting forth his view that the Maryland statute in question is contradictory to Amendment 14, Sec. 1, of the United States Constitution. The decision facing the court is a difficult one. This section of Amendment 14 reads: "All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law, nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws." A.

Lotteries Suppressed.—While we all prize liberty, every thoughtful citizen frowns on license. Innocent pleasures should not be interfered with by the Government; but when pleasures or entertainments take on a form that threatens public morals, the State has a right to call a halt. The *Watchman-Examiner* (Baptist weekly) in its issue of Aug. 4, 1949, has an interesting editorial on the manner in which lotteries are dealt with in New Zealand. We quote: "They have a way of dealing with the lottery evil in New Zealand which is commendable. That a reputed 'church' should sponsor and promote such a scheme as wholesale gambling is a libel on Christianity anywhere. In Hamilton, New Zealand, a man and his daughter were fined a total of fifty-five pounds (\$230.00) by a court which described the selling of tickets on an automobile raffle organized for a Roman Catholic charity as 'a by no means trivial offence.' The magistrate declared, 'Lotteries of this kind are an encouragement to people to spend beyond their means.' He stated that the fact that the proceeds of the raffle were for church purposes was 'no mitigation of the offence,' and that to refrain from entering a conviction would 'amount to favoring sections of the community.' Lotteries, raffles, bingo, and all such schemes for the raising of money by churches means that they are encouraging the people to break the tenth commandment:"

A.

Number of Church Members in the United States. — *Religious News Service* sends the following report from New York:

Publication of the 1949 issue of the *Yearbook of American Churches*, "the only regularly published reference volume giving up-to-date information on every religious denomination in the United States and Canada," was announced here by the Federal Council of Churches.

According to the 200-page yearbook, latest figures from all sources indicate that the total church membership in this country is about 76,000,000. In round numbers, there are 45,000,000 Protestants, belonging to more than 250 separate and independent Church bodies; 25,000,000 Roman Catholics; 5,000,000 Jews; and 1,000,000 Eastern Orthodox.

Dr. Samuel McCrea Cavert, general secretary of the Federal Council, writing in a foreword to the new yearbook, said 97 per cent of all church members are found on the rolls of the 50 largest denominations, while nine denominational families embrace 80 per cent of all Protestants. These nine groups are Methodist, Baptist, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Reformed, Disciples, Episcopal, Congregational, and the Evangelical United Brethren.

Dr. Cavert said more Americans—better than one of every two—are now church members than at any time in history. He pointed out that 150 years ago only one person in 15 was a church member, and observed that the annual rate of increase is running slightly ahead of the nation's population. "On the surface at least," he said, "the United States appears to be a religious country."

Dr. Cavert acknowledged the existence of a wide discrepancy between church membership and churchgoing in America. He pointed out that recent surveys of typical communities indicate that on any Sunday—except Easter—only 30 per cent of those on church rolls attend a service.

"Any thoughtful observer would detect a disturbing discrepancy between the size of churches and their influence on American life," he commented.

According to Dr. Cavert, the great diversity in religion in this country springs primarily from two factors—diversity of population and emphasis on religious liberty.

"The various migrations from the old world to the new brought religious traditions with them," he said. "All of the divisions found in all of the countries of Europe were domesticated in a single nation. Religious fecundity also was encouraged by the fact that this country had no established Church, no political pressure was exerted upon religious conformity and all the churches could expect equal treatment from the national government."

Dr. Cavert noted that, as the first half of the 20th century draws to a close, the stress has shifted from Christian individuality to Christian solidarity. "Today," he said, "there is a fuller recognition of the great central convictions of the faith which the churches hold in common."

He added that this was reflected, not only in a growth of co-operative endeavor through the Federal Council and 700 councils of churches in local communities, but also in full union.

In the past 40 years, Dr. Cavert said, there have been 14 unions. Among the most important of these were the merger of three bodies to form The Methodist Church, the union of the Evangelical and the United Brethren, and the recently-approved union of the Congregational-Christian Churches and the Evangelical and Reformed Church.

New Roman Catholic Bishops for China.—A dispatch of the *Religious News Service* brings this information:

Four new Chinese bishops have been named by Pope Pius XII. The new bishops and their dioceses are: Josef Kiong Szu-Jung (Shanghai), Simon Lei Chang-hsia (Fenyang), Paolo Ten Gangling (Kiating), and Mattia Tuan Inmin (Wanhshien).—As the names indicate, these bishops are natives of China. Evidently the Roman Catholic Church is not willing to cease working in that war-torn country.

The Plight of Displaced Persons.—When the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches recently met in Chichester, England, one topic of discussion was the deplorable situation of displaced persons in Europe and the staggering problems caused by the presence of these people for the churches of the territory in which they are staying. *Religious News Service* reports: Dr. Sylvester C. Michelfelder, executive secretary of the Lutheran World Federation, stated there were 12,000,000 displaced refugees now in Western Germany and Austria. He said: "We are facing a bigger problem than we did four years ago, and we have no idea what the Potsdam Agreement will do to Germany and the churches there." Special pleas for the millions of refugees in Western Germany were made by two German Lutheran bishops—Bishop Hanns Lilje of Hanover and Bishop Hans Meiser of Bavaria. Bishop Meiser declared that between 70 and 90 per cent of these refugees are unemployed, and immediate action is necessary to avert an "explosion" which might start a chain of reaction all over Europe. After hearing these reports, the Central Committee embodied in its appeal to member churches on behalf of Eastern European churches a declaration that aid to refugees is also "a prominent obligation of the World Council."—To everyone who reads these lines comes the reminder that the distress of these stricken people must not be forgotten. A.

Will the Assumption of Mary be Proclaimed as a Dogma?—In the immediate vicinity of Zion Gate in Jerusalem is a beautiful, stately structure called the Church of the Dormition of Mary. It is one of the shrines of Roman Catholicism. A late legend reports that at this place stood a house in which Mother Mary fell asleep, that is, died. Another legend has it that she accompanied John the Apostle to Ephesus and there passed away; but the former seems to be the more widespread of the two. The

legend did not stop with pointing out the place of Mary's demise. It added that the Apostles gathered from the various parts of the globe when the event was drawing near and that as they stood around the bed of Mary, her soul was received by Christ. Her body thereupon, so the story continues, was placed into a vault at Gethsemane. When several days later the vault was opened, nothing but the burial clothes were found; a remarkable fragrance filled the room, and the Apostles gathered that Mary's body had been taken to heaven. The year in which this episode is placed is 47 or 49. The date on which the assumption of Mary is observed in Roman Catholic circles is August 15.

An article in the *Christian Century* written by Prof. Georges A. Barrois of Princeton Theological Seminary, a former Roman Catholic, raises the question whether the Pope will accede to numerous requests and in 1950, designated as a holy year, add to the doctrines which every Roman Catholic has to believe by issuing a proclamation declaring as a divine truth that Mary's body was taken into heaven. As yet this view is simply a pious belief, and while Catholic theologians have termed rejection of it foolish and wicked, because "probability is in its favor," you may still doubt it without violating divine teaching. But as soon as the dogma has been proclaimed, it is different.

Does not this state of affairs reveal the anti-Christian character of the papacy inasmuch as it presumes to possess the authority to add to the body of divine truth? Dr. Barrois reminds us that neither the Scriptures nor early church history contains one scintilla of information that could be viewed as basis for such a belief. Then he relates how after Mariolatry had crept into the Church the opinion of her assumption was fostered. Rome desires to pose as enlightened. However, the proclamation of Mary's immaculate conception (1854) and of papal infallibility (1870) showed her to favor strange superstitions, and if the assumption of Mary is decreed, this aspect of the course she pursues will simply receive another illustration. A.

Waldensians in Germany.—An interesting historical fact is reported by RNS in a dispatch from Rome concerning Waldensians in Germany. The dispatch is dated July 22 and reads: "Delegates from the Waldensian Church in Italy attended celebrations commemorating the 250th anniversary of the Waldensian emigration to Germany. The celebrations took place at Maulbronn and Schoeneberg, in the provinces of Wuerttemberg and Baden respectively. There are about thirty Waldensian communities in Germany, most of them in Wuerttemberg and Baden. The communities are linked together in the Waldensian *Vereinigung* (Waldensian union), which issues a publication called *Der deutsche Waldenser* (The German Waldensian). Most of the German communities were established during the years from 1699 to 1730, when a wave of religious persecution forced the Waldensians to emigrate from Italy. Ties between the German and Italian Waldensians were never very strong, but since the end of the war

Italian Waldensians have repeatedly expressed their willingness to resume friendly relations with their German coreligionists."

A.

Burial Cave in Jerusalem Found.—RNS reports in a dispatch from New Haven, Conn.: "Discovery of a 1,500-year-old Christian burial cave in Jerusalem by the Rev. Ovid R. Sellers, dean of McCormick Theological Seminary, Chicago, and a noted Biblical scholar, was announced here. The announcement, made by Prof. Carl H. Kraeling, president of the American School of Oriental Research and chairman of the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Literature at Yale, said Mr. Sellers made his find during a year's service as director of the American School of Oriental Research in Jerusalem. Mr. Sellers and his party discovered a number of fourth and fifth century Roman-Byzantine ceremonial lamps, ornaments, and statues. A number of busts were also found, and these were thought to be resemblances of Palestinian Christians buried there. Three lamps dating back to the thirteenth century were found, as were two rings, one bearing the figure of St. George on horseback."

To this dispatch we ought to add the information that Dr. Sellers spent the year from June, 1948, to June, 1949, in Palestine as one of the professors serving at the American School of Oriental Research. In the fall of 1948 the plane in which he was traveling from Beirut to Jerusalem was shot down and he narrowly escaped with his life. For a long time he had to be hospitalized. **A.**

The Vatican Anti-Communists Excommunication Decree.—In Rome a special communication was issued which is intended to clarify the decree of the Pope according to which Roman Catholics who are Communists should be excommunicated. For one thing, so the communication says, the decree had no political significance, but was issued for doctrinal and religious purposes. Furthermore, the penalty of excommunication is said to be imposed upon those only "who wittingly and freely collaborated with the Communists." To give an example, the communication states that people whom the Pope had in mind are propagandists and others who knowingly and willfully accept the materialistic and antireligious theories of Communism. The decree does not apply to "individuals who did not wish to join the Communist party, but were unfortunate enough to find themselves inside the Iron Curtain where a ferocious totalitarianism brings compulsion to bear on the faithful who are state or municipal employees, or engaged in controlled undertakings making acceptance of party membership a question of life or death." But people who joined the Communist party solely to obtain economic advantages, even if they do not adhere to its materialistic or anti-Christian ideas, are affected by the decree. They will not be excommunicated, but will be deprived of the Sacraments. Even if it is conceded that the papal decree was not intended as a political, but altogether

as a religious measure, the difference between its contents and New Testament teaching on excommunication is evident at once.
A.

Spiritual Interest Manifesting Itself in Greece.—The old Oriental Christian Churches like that of the Copts in Egypt are noted for their dead formalism, for the view that the performance of certain rites constitutes true religion in the sight of God, and the emphasis on traditional liturgy rather than on the Gospel of Jesus Christ, in short, for the *opus operatum* idea of Christian worship. The Greek Orthodox Church in Greece itself has to a great extent been afflicted with this pernicious malady. Now a report in the *Christian Century* of May 11, hailing from Thessaloniki, Greece, states that strenuous efforts are being made by members of the Church to change conditions. It may be significant that the people who are chiefly interested are educated laymen. "So far most of the metropolitans, bishops, and priests are only tolerant of the movement, but they dare not oppose it." The correspondent describes a demonstration which took place in Athens, at which the movement was given a new impetus. We are told that sixteen organizations are affiliated with it. The chairman of the meeting was the former chief professor of surgery at Athens University. The people that attended were in the main professional men or university students. The gathering was held at St. Paul's Center, a four-story building, from which, metaphorically speaking, rays of light are flashed in all directions. Earnest attempts are made to have the children attend Sunday school classes, and at Athens alone 23,000 children are enrolled. Throughout the nation one thousand Sunday schools are in existence which are connected with the movement and whose lists show an aggregate of 150,000 pupils. A number of years ago we heard of the *Zoe* ("Life") weekly, and now the report comes that this paper has 139,000 subscribers. If these figures are correct, new and deep religious currents have begun to flow in old Greece.
A.

Mixed Marriages.—Usually when we speak of mixed marriages, we have in mind marriages between people belonging to different denominations. In South Africa a controversy is being waged at present in which this term is used to describe marriages between people of different races. A bill has been proposed for acceptance in the Parliament of the country which would absolutely forbid marriages between white and non-white persons. It seems that at present such marriages are not prohibited. Perhaps the recent race riots have led to the attempt to have a law of this nature enacted. The Churches of South Africa, with the exception of the Dutch Reformed Church, have raised a protest against the endeavor, stating that the Bible does not forbid such marriages. The issue is quite instructive on account of the principles involved and might well be given careful consideration by theologians. The protesting Churches aver that since the Scriptures do not contain a prohibition of marriages of this kind, the State should

not forbid them either. They are willing to admit that such unions often lead to unhappy results, but they think that on account of the silence of the Scriptures on this subject the State should not legislate concerning it. The reasoning of these people is altogether faulty. The State has to forbid many things which the Bible does not condemn. The Scriptures have nothing to say, for instance, about the material which is to be used in the construction of church buildings. But will anybody condemn the authorities of the city of New York for insisting that no frame churches be erected on downtown Broadway? The Bible does not forbid the erection of such structures, but common sense does, and the State certainly is within its rights when it passes ordinances of this nature. To what extent the case in question is analogous we are unable to say; but, at any rate, the principle that what the Bible does not forbid the State should not forbid is absurd. A.

Concerning the Search for Noah's Ark.—From London comes this dispatch through *Religious News Service*: "According to Ankara Radio, the Turkish Government has changed its mind and has granted permission for an American expedition headed by Dr. Aaron J. Smith, dean of the People's Bible School, Greensboro, N. C., to search for the remains of Noah's ark on Mt. Ararat. The reversal came after the Turkish Government had said on July 15 that permission could not be given for the search because Mt. Ararat lies in a 'prohibited military zone' along the Turko-Russian border. In June it was reported that a young Dutch explorer named Hans Roozen and Dr. Egerton Sykes of Great Britain had been refused permission by the Turkish Government to conduct the expedition. The Dutchman and the Englishman had been scheduled to accompany Dr. Smith. Prior to the Turkish refusal to permit Roozen and Sykes to stage the expedition, the Moscow Radio had accused the three of being spies against the Soviet Union."

Catholic Hospitals in the United States.—According to *Religious News Service* there are 780 hospitals in this country which are operated under Roman Catholic auspices. The authority for this statement is *Hospital Progress*, the official publication of the Catholic Hospital Association of the United States. This publication, which constitutes a directory, lists at least one Catholic hospital in every state of the Union. Of the 780 total, 744 are general hospitals, 24 special hospitals (including children's, maternity, and isolation hospitals), and 12 are simply general hospitals having less than 20 beds each. In addition there are 40 special hospitals for chronic diseases like tuberculosis; 207 other allied agencies for in-patient care, providing limited hospital services such as maternity homes and homes for convalescents, the chronically ill or incurable; and 59 community health agencies such as dispensaries and visiting-nurses' services. In all, the 1,058 different agencies have 130,000 beds and 22,050 bassinets, serving over 3,600,000 patients annually.