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Theological Observer. - Kirchlich-Zeitgeschichtliches

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Theological Observer

Luther and Dry Kansas. — In the May 7, 1949, issue of *America*, William Brennan, S. J., presents a downright curious comment on the perennial struggle between the American wets and dries.

He gives a somewhat oversimplified description of the theology which caused prohibitionists to outlaw alcohol. "Fermentation is decay, corruption of nature, and consequently evil."

"The full import of the principle lies in its argument that a creature of God is intrinsically evil, rather than placing moral evil in man's improper use of that creature. There is an abyss of difference between these two theories of evil in the world. Millions of people who share the name of Christian embrace one or other of them.

"Behind the prohibitionists' fundamental principle, and behind the people who have argued eloquently on behalf of a 'dry' Kansas, stands the figure of a man whose writings and teachings have filtered down through the network of many, many generations. He is the historic figure who preached that man's nature became essentially evil after the fall of Adam, incapable of cooperating to achieve justification in the sight of God. He is the man who, by proclaiming man's nature to be basically vitiated, opened the door to the theory that others of God's creatures could also be basically evil.

"That person is Dr. Martin Luther, whose shadow loomed large in the liquor controversy in Kansas."

For Lutherans this discussion is humorous on two counts. The first is that Lutherans had very little to do with making Kansas dry. No poll has been made of Lutheran sentiment now that the State has returned to local option; certainly Father Brennan has not made one.

The other humorous point is that Luther would be the last man in the world to get caught on the side of the dries. Lutherans have been if anything somewhat embarrassed by his gusty enjoyment of life. For him the freedom of the Christian man involved taking Psalm 104 literally. Martin Luther taught not merely original sin, but — Father Brennan will not understand this — he taught the new birth of the Christian man through Christ to a life of full enjoyment of God's good gifts.

Somehow the dizziness that pervades the reader as he seeks to follow Father Brennan's history seems appropriate to the subject.

R. R. C.

"A Logically Concatenated Explication of an Absolutized Bible." — The attention of our readers has before this been drawn to *Religion in Life*, a Christian quarterly, now appearing in its 18th volume. It is published by the Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 155th Avenue, N. Y. In the first number of the current volume appeared a review article of the book issued in 1947 *What Lutherans Are Thinking* (all copies of which, we have been informed, have been

sold). The author of the article is the Rev. Joseph Sittler, Ph. D., D. D., professor of Systematic Theology, Chicago Lutheran Theological Seminary, Maywood, Ill. The review is partly favorable, partly critical. There are one or two sentences in it which we should like to submit to the readers of this journal for purposes of self-examination. We are sure that all of us are agreed it is always wise that a person sees himself as others see him. The sentences in question read thus: "The very impressiveness of its scholarly and systematic achievements are no longer to blind the mother church of the Reformation to the deepening cleft between the faithful nature of its religious gifts and assertions, and its fundamentally rationalistic theological articulation. The Reformation's religious dynamism has been rather too generally reduced to a logically concatenated explication of an absolutized Bible."

This is a severe judgment on the present status of theological thinking and teaching in conservative Lutheran circles in America. The author does not mean to hurt, we are sure; he is speaking his honest mind and wishes to help those Lutherans with whom he does not agree. But it must be admitted that he delivers heavy blows. If what he says is correct, confessional Lutherans should hurry to change their outlook and their whole theological approach.

It will be seen that there are two accusations contained in the sentences quoted. One charges that the Holy Scriptures have been made an absolutized Bible. What the author has reference to seems to be the slogan of conservative Lutheranism: *sola Scriptura*. In all the religious debates since the days of the Reformation, Lutherans have carried on their warfare with the sword of Holy Scripture. What they have insisted on is that the Bible must decide all questions for us. Where the Scriptures have spoken, God Himself has spoken, and we have to bow. Human reason, speculation, tradition, the Church, the State, have no right to oppose themselves to the Bible as counter-authorities. The authority of the Scriptures is declared to be absolute. *Quod non est Biblicum, non est theologicum*, the fathers said. This has been the position of conservative Lutherans. Is it wrong? Can it be said that we are misleading ourselves and other people when we proclaim the absolute authority of the Scriptures? Is it wrong for us to insist on the inerrancy of the Bible? If taking this position constitutes a fault, we are guilty. But we are convinced that our Lord Jesus Christ is right when He says, "Heaven and earth shall pass away; but My words shall not pass away"; and when He tells His opponents, "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of Me"; and "The Scripture cannot be broken."

There is, it must be admitted, a wrong way of making the Bible the absolute authority. Such a thing is not merely conceivable. It was done in the Middle Ages, when people used the Holy Scriptures in what might be called magical procedures, opening the Bible at random and thinking that the answer to their problems was contained in the words on which their eyes first fell when the

pages were turned. There is another wrong way of "absolutizing" the Scriptures against which we probably have not guarded as earnestly as we should. It consists in this, that one wrests Scripture passages out of their context and then makes them say things which in their connection they do not teach. It may be, furthermore, that here and there a person absolutizes the Scriptures by using them as a textbook in science and study of nature in general. While we believe that the Bible is true in everything it says, we strenuously assert that the Scriptures were not given us to form a textbook in matters of science, for instance, physics and chemistry, but that they were given us to make us wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. It is conceivable, too, that somebody wrongly uses the Scriptures by swearing by a certain translation, Luther's or the Authorized Version, or another one. In that case not the Scriptures would be absolutized, but a particular translation. Strange to say, some people have spread the rumor that The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod considers Luther's translation of the Holy Scriptures infallible, with the result that in as far away a land as Palestine the writer of these comments heard a missionary say that according to the information which we had received The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod taught the verbal inspiration of Luther's version. That any such view of a version is wrong, all of our readers will grant at once. But while there are wrong ways of absolutizing the Scriptures, we state emphatically that we believe they are God's Word, that they are without error, and that they are our absolute authority in matters of faith and morals. This is nothing to be ashamed of; it agrees with Scripture teaching itself.

The other charge with which we are here concerned has to do with what is called a "logically concatenated explication." A further glimpse of what the author has in mind is granted us when he speaks of a "fundamentally rationalistic theological articulation." What does this signify? Evidently these words contain an attack on the dogmatical systems which Lutheran scholars have drawn up and which are quite impressive in size and in the methods employed. What he points to has frequently been called scholasticism. The great dogmatical works of the seventeenth century, those of Gerhard, Quenstedt, and Calov, are often declared to be representative of Protestant scholasticism, constituting an attempt to arrange all the teachings of the Bible in certain categories according to principles of logic that have been carefully defined. That the modern mind rebels somewhat against works like those of Quenstedt, with their formalistic logical and categorizing procedure, must be granted. It may be that these old Lutheran giants became somewhat enmeshed in methods of argumentation and presentation which we today find cumbersome and ineffective. But was it wrong that Lutheran theology, generally speaking, concerned itself with teachings which by logical processes are obtained from passages of the Holy Scriptures? The Bible comes to us in human speech. To understand it, one must apply the laws of language and of

human thought. If it were not so, we could not understand what God reveals. Hence the rules of ordinary logic are constantly employed when one reads the Holy Scriptures. That is true even of the wholly untutored reader. He finds in the Bible translation that he peruses his own speech and applies the everyday grammar and laws of thinking by which he himself is guided, without being aware of the precise nature of these mental processes. To use one's own mental faculties in this manner in order to arrive at a proper understanding of Holy Scripture is not sinful rationalizing; it is simply employing the abilities with which God has endowed human beings. When the attempt is made to arrange the various teachings of Holy Scripture in categories, then it is true, the danger arises that unholy rationalization will set in. Against that we have to guard.

Another caution requires mention. For us theologians who fully accept the authority of the Scriptures and their plenary inspiration there exists the pitfall that we make our study of the Scriptures chiefly an exercise in acute, logical, and effective argumentation, treating the teachings submitted there much in the same way as we employ propositions and theorems in geometry, or as a lawyer employs the decisions handed down by judges and courts in the past and collected in voluminous compendiums. Whatever amount of logical acumen the Creator has endowed us with, must be utilized, to be sure; but what a pity if the waters of life are handled by us mainly for tests and demonstrations in mental chemical analysis. They are meant for parched human beings traveling through a desert, not for the scientific laboratory. In speaking of "a logically concatenated explication" Dr. Sittler may advert to some misuse of the Scriptures of this nature.

Much akin is another fault which easily besets us. It consists in forgetting that Christ is the center of God's revelation and that all theology is sterile which does not constantly bear in mind Paul's statement 1 Cor. 2:2, "I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and Him Crucified." What made Luther's teaching so dynamic and effective was the constant endeavor to remain in touch with the heart of all divine teaching, the message of Christ, the divine Redeemer. Where a theologian follows in the footsteps of Paul and Luther, the mere, formalistic, lifeless, and, alas, often heartless concatenation of prooftexts from the Scriptures will be avoided.

May we mention another way in which a sinful use of our reason may be brought on the scene. It appears when we think we have to explain rationally the great truths that God has revealed to us. We teach, for instance, that Baptism is a means of grace. In meditating on this teaching we are in danger of submitting as divinely given our own speculations as we endeavor to explain how Baptism may be conceived as communicating to us divine blessings. By doing this we violate the majesty of God's Word, adding to it things that are the product of our own little minds. If such rationalizing is criticized, we concur.

If the author's intention is, however, to castigate the course which conservative Lutheranism has always followed, that of taking the great Scripture passages and obtaining from them the teaching which they contain and proclaiming this in its fullness, rejecting at the same time the views that human speculation in the course of time has submitted as supplementing the divine teachings, we do not agree with him.

There are excrescences and abuses that must be avoided; but if Lutheranism desires to remain true to itself, it must continue to practice loyalty to the *Sola Scriptura* on its flag and to interpret faithfully and to apply humbly the dicta of our great God. A.

Spain and Religious Liberty. — When certain spokesmen of Spain, the country where the Inquisition celebrated its chief triumphs, discuss the attitude of their nation toward Protestants, one wonders whether sweet light, peace, and a decent respect for consciences have entered in where formerly autos-da-fé struck terror into all nonconformist hearts. Let the reader peruse this report of the RNS on remarks made by a Spanish representative in Jersey City, N. J.

"There is no such thing as a 'Protestant problem' in Spain, according to Pablo Merry del Val, cultural counsellor to the Spanish legation in Washington, D. C. Speaking before a St. Peter's College group here, the diplomat denied that Protestants were suffering persecution in Spain. 'There is more freedom of religion in Spain,' he said, 'than there is in many countries inside and outside the United Nations.' He said that in Sweden, teachers must be Lutheran, and that the king and cabinet must also be Lutheran. 'In Sweden, Jews and Catholics are barred from office,' he added. 'In both Norway and Sweden the bishops are nominated by the kings. This is far more control than Spain even attempts over its own particular and ancient faith.'

"Merry del Val said it was true that Protestant processions were 'occasionally forbidden.' He explained that such demonstrations would be as unwise as a rally staged by American Catholics 'in the heart of the Ku Klux Klan belt in the South.' Conflicts between Catholics and members of evangelical groups took place most frequently, he said, when the latter approached Catholics with pamphlets attacking their Church. Merry del Val said that a Spaniard, when he left the Catholic Church, seldom joined another faith, preferring to remain outside all Churches. 'Strange as it may seem to you, and despite the propaganda to the contrary, there is practically a total lack of interest in other sects on the part of Spaniards,' he said."

These statements represent at best half-truths. Important facts are omitted. The speaker did not tell his audience of outrages committed in recent years in Spain against Protestant chapels; he did not point out that while in Sweden Roman Catholics can carry on mission work, Protestants are not accorded the same privilege in Spain. This is not written in the spirit of bitterness, but merely

in the desire to let the true facts become known. (Cf. C. T. M., Vol. XIX, 1948, p. 468, under the heading "Religious Intolerance in Spain.")

A.

Southern Baptist Convention.—Baptist conventions may have many faults, but apparently they are not dull. Things happen, eloquent appeals are delivered, feelings are stirred, the atmosphere is charged with electricity. Baptists are highly individualistic. Having come into existence as a persecuted sect, the denomination has always treasured religious liberty and freedom from the control of the State. No strong ecclesiastical organization, which might exercise strict control and become tyrannical, is permitted to develop. These were our reactions when we read the article of Harold E. Fey, managing editor of the *Christian Century*, in the issue of this journal for June 1, 1949. Some of the chief facts which he reports are here submitted.

When the Southern Baptists during the last quarter of May met in Oklahoma City, this Southern capital was hard put to it in its efforts to provide quarters for the hosts that gathered. This is not surprising, for the denomination now numbers 26,822 churches and 6,491,981 members. Amazing are the figures for their Sunday schools. They have 4,308,374 pupils. "And a million persons are in training to instruct in such schools." The latter sentence means, according to our view, that a million persons are either teaching or preparing to teach. Robert G. Lee, a Fundamentalist and very successful pastor, was re-elected as chairman.

One question before the convention was whether churches which normally should belong to the Northern Convention could be received into the Southern group. California and Kansas had been added to the list of States in which the latter is represented. A convention in Oregon and Washington asked to be received into this fellowship, and after a long discussion this request was granted. The principle on which the convention acted was given this wording: "Because of the voluntary principles that prevail, churches, associations, and state conventions of Baptists may cooperate with whomever they will, irrespective of geographical location. . . . Because of moral interdependence of Baptist bodies, cooperation should take place wherever possible between all Baptist individuals, churches, association, and conventions. The general denominational bodies, furthermore, should themselves strive for mutual good will and understanding. This does not mean deviation from conviction, but recognizes that the Christian task is larger than any segment of its followers. . . . No compact or agreement may be formed with any organization, convention, or religious body that would place Southern Baptists in a compromising position, or would appear to be a step toward organic union with religious bodies that do not believe in or practice the aforesaid New Testament Baptist principles as set out in this report." Those who have followed developments in the various denominations of our country will at once see the significance of this statement of principles, which, we ought

to add, was adopted by the convention. Southern Baptists are conservative, and it seems that most of them belong to the so-called Fundamentalists. Northern Baptists show a different tendency. Generally speaking, the Northern Baptist Convention follows the flag of Modernism, and those of this group that are Fundamentalists in their theology face tremendous difficulties.

Mention was made at the convention that Northern Baptists are now considering the question whether they should merge with the Disciples of Christ. The view was expressed that such a step would be contrary to the principles of the New Testament. The convention itself passed no resolution pertaining to this matter. A motion that was seriously debated was to the effect that "no one who belongs to or affiliates with any state or local council of churches which is connected with or sponsored by the Intercouncil Field Department of the Federal Council, or any one or more of its six affiliated councils, shall be eligible to serve on any board, agency, or institution of this convention, either as an official, employee, or board member." According to Dr. Fey, this motion might have carried if it had not been for opposition to it voiced by the esteemed chairman, Dr. Robert G. Lee.

The next meeting of the Southern Baptists, believe it or not, will be held in Chicago, one of the strong centers of Northern Baptists. Still, Southern Baptists have 586 churches in Illinois. The chairman at once stated that the decision to meet in Chicago did not mean that Southern Baptists were attempting to draw away any churches from the Northern Baptist Convention. One big argument for the choice of Chicago as a convention city was the necessity of obtaining accommodations for the large number of delegates constituting the convention. In Oklahoma City 10,000 delegates and their families had to be housed and fed. — Can business be transacted efficiently when the number of delegates is so huge? Plans have been proposed to curtail the number of representatives. While at present the convention follows "the simple townmeeting process," it is urged that business henceforth should be delegated to an annual "administrative convention," "consisting of one representative from each of the one thousand district associations." However, there does not seem to be a live prospect that the proposed change will be adopted. Baptists love freedom and democracy, even though, as Dr. Fey puts it, what they have now is a pretense at democracy. Strict democracy, of course, would mean that all the members of Baptist churches assemble, which naturally would be a physical impossibility and a very grotesque affair, if it could be inaugurated. Southern Baptists, when one looks at the denomination as a whole, still preach Christ and Him Crucified, and in that we rejoice. A.

On Snake-handling and Poison-drinking. — It was a gracious promise which Jesus gave His disciples shortly before His ascension when He said about His followers: "They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them," Mark

16:18. To the Seventy He had said, when they returned from their mission: "Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing shall by any means hurt you," Luke 10:19. With sadness one observes the misuse of these words of our gentle, loving Savior by ignorant, fanatical, would-be, or probably even actual, adherents. The promise of protection in danger and persecution they make the basis of demonstrations, hurling themselves into perilous situations. At times one of these people sees the error of his ways. RNS brings an interesting item that is apropos.

"Gordon Miller, one-time minister of a snake-handling, poison-drinking 'Free Will Church of God' cult in Northwest Georgia and Tennessee, has renounced his former weird activities in favor of a more orthodox church. Miller issued a statement as follows: 'I have reached the conclusion that it does not serve God's purpose to handle live snakes or to tempt Him by drinking poisons. I am done with that sort of practice.' Miller said he is now aligned with the Church of God of the Union Assembly. Miller attracted national attention in 1947 when he was tried for involuntary manslaughter in the death of one of his congregation, Ernest Davis, a 33-year-old Taylorsville, Ga., farmer, who died after drinking a 'salvation cocktail' containing strychnine at one of Miller's Free Will Church of God revivals. Superior Court Judge Claude H. Porter dismissed the charge against Miller after ruling Davis drank the 'cocktail' of his own volition. News service and magazine representatives flocked to a subsequent pasture meeting of the cult, where members of the dead man's family and Miller handled live snakes." A.

Northern Presbyterians.—The last week of May saw the Presbyterian Church U. S. A., usually called Northern Presbyterians, convened in its annual convention at Buffalo, N. Y. As appears almost inevitably these days, one of the questions that were given attention was that of union with other bodies. The Southern Presbyterians were asked to join the Presbyterians of the North in the attempt to bring about a merger of all the bodies that stand on the Reformed platform.

The denomination has grown; it consists of 8,534 churches and 2,274,259 members. In a financial way, too, it has forged ahead. When one compares what amounts were given during the last two years for benevolent purposes with the amounts that were contributed before that period, one finds an increase of 42 per cent. In one respect the leadership was disappointed: The Church did not make its budget, and this has happened four times in succession. The explanation seems to be that the budget adopted was too high. To remedy conditions, the so-called self-allocation plan was adopted. This plan has the advantage that the differences in financial ability between the various congregations are recognized.

Of special interest was the theological debate that arose. A ruling elder of the Church, a physician, contended that since the West-

minster Confession and Catechisms are never read by the average church member and since these documents contain things that no one accepts any longer, as he averred, for instance, the doctrine of election as applied to infants who die while they are in this tender age, he expressed the view that subscription of the old standards should no longer be required and that the short Statement of Faith drawn up in 1902 should be substituted. But the Assembly did not agree with him; after some discussion his proposal was rejected.

A.

Concerning Episcopalian Unity. — One of the well-known facts about the Protestant Episcopal Church is that there are various schools or parties in it, the High Church, the Low Church, and the Broad Church parties. More caustic and correct is this characterization which has been given some currency: "High and crazy, low and lazy, broad and hazy." What we personally know about members of the Low Church party, who are often called "the evangelical group in the Protestant Episcopal Church," does not justify the epithet "lazy." The Broad Church, moreover, is not merely hazy in its pronouncements, it is downright Modernistic. With interest one reads the RNS report of a speech delivered by a prominent Protestant Episcopal thinker and writer. "Episcopalians must achieve unity among themselves before they talk of unity with other Churches," Dr. Bernard Iddings Bell, consultant on education and religion for the Chicago diocese, declared in Boston.

"Dr. Bell addressed 200 clerical and lay delegates to the annual meeting of the Protestant Episcopal Church Congress. The Congress is an unofficial church body that debates issues that may come up later at General Conferences of the Church. Calling for a restatement of basic Anglican beliefs and an end to 'disunity' in the Church, Dr. Bell urged caution in any approach to mergers with other denominations. He said that the 'danger' in the Protestant Episcopal Church 'originates from those who wish immediately to associate with American Protestantism in ways which involve a surrender of the Anglican heritage and an acceptance instead of a position incompatible with that which justifies our continued existence.' The Episcopal Church, he added, was divided by 'apparent indifference on the part of many Episcopalian, some of them in high places, to the basic theology of historic Christendom, indeed, to all theology.' Those who advocate thoughtless, ecumenical love feasts simply do not know the creeds and the sacramental confusion of those with whom they would associate us. This small minority does us a lot of harm. To promote inner unity we must stop courting other religious bodies until we can make up our minds what, if anything, we have to bring to them as a possible dowry. Let us stop all talk of church unity with Presbyterians and Methodists and the rest until we can get church unity at home to avoid sounding ridiculous.' He called for a study of the basic books and beliefs of the Church and the cultivation of the life of the spirit."

A.

The Present Situation in Jerusalem.—While an armistice is in force between the new State Israeli and the Arabs, prospective pilgrims must be warned that they probably, if they come to Palestine, will be excluded from areas where formerly anybody could visit. A part of the city of Jerusalem is in the hands of the Jews, the remainder is occupied by Arab forces. It seems that the latter are in control of the old city, the section located within the ancient picturesque walls; the Jews, generally speaking, are masters of the new city, containing comfortable hotels, up-to-date business houses, elegant theaters, and many fine residences. This new city is ordinarily inhabited chiefly by Jews; hence it is natural that their army should here hold sway. For the Easter festival, when normally many thousand pilgrims pass through the old gates and visit the Church of the Holy Sepulcher and other venerated spots, only about fifty were permitted by the Arabs to enter the city and to worship at the place which tradition designates as the locale of Christ's burial and resurrection. The usual Good Friday procession, which starts at Gethsemane on the slopes of the Mount of Olives, enters at the so-called St. Stephen's Gate at the northeast corner of the old walled area, and then follows the Via Dolorosa till the traditional site of Calvary and of the Holy Sepulcher is reached, was permitted to be held. Strange to say, it was made unpleasant for the participants by showers of rain and cold weather—features which are unusual in Jerusalem in the middle of April. It is symptomatic of the nature of conditions that the Moslems did not undertake their annual pilgrimage to the so-called Tomb of Moses, located in defiance of Biblical narrative on the west side of the Dead Sea in the wilderness of Judea. This pilgrimage falls about the time of the Christian Easter festival and seems to have been inaugurated as a countermove to the impressive Christian ceremonies, which, after all, are bound to have some influence on the thinking of the Arab population. The Samaritans, too, were not able to conduct their ancient Passover ceremonies on Mount Gerizim, rites to which they, though reduced to a mere handful of people, about two hundred in number, still passionately cling.

A.

At Home **Brief Items from Religious News Service**

First observance of National Leprosy Missions Week will take place next October 9—16, it was announced in New York by the American Mission to Lepers, Inc. Churches of forty-three Protestant denominations and non-denominational groups whose foreign mission boards co-operate with the American Mission in maintaining 125 leprosy stations in twenty-nine countries, will serve during the week as focal centers for special prayers and offerings. Among the Protestant mission boards co-operating with the American Mission are those of five Baptist churches, the Congregational-Christian churches, five Lutheran bodies, five Presbyterian, and the Protestant Episcopal, Methodist, and Reformed churches.

Northern Baptists have contributed \$15,008,000 to date to the denomination's \$16,000,000 World Mission Crusade launched two years ago, it was reported in San Francisco to the annual meeting of the Northern Baptist Convention.

A School on World Order was held at Hartwick College in Oneonta, New York, from June 27 to July 1, under the sponsorship of the Board of Social Missions of the United Lutheran Church in America, in conjunction with Hartwick College and the Lutheran Social Fellowship. Programs of study and action for use of local congregations were developed by church leaders attending the school, who will be prepared to offer help in conducting these programs in their home synods.

Archbishop Richard J. Cushing of Boston and Dr. Luther A. Weigle of New Haven, Conn., retiring dean of Yale Divinity School, were honored in Boston for rendering "distinguished service to boyhood" by the National Council, Boy Scouts of America. The Council, meeting in Boston for its thirty-ninth annual convention, presented the two religious leaders with the Silver Buffalo award, made annually on the basis of noteworthy service to boyhood of a national or international character. Dr. George J. Fisher, National Scout Commissioner, presided.

The Lutheran Welfare Society of Minnesota has inaugurated a clinical training program aimed at placing staff pastors in mental hospitals and other state and private institutions. The plan seeks to "mesh the gears" of the ministry, the medical profession, social case work, and institutional work. Basic elements of the program are the application of Scriptural resources to physical and mental illnesses, orientation of pastors to fields related to the ministry, study of the principles of psychology and psychiatry and education in making case studies. Under the supervision of the Rev. Fredric Norstad, director of chaplaincy services for the Society, a full-year course of in-service training is being given pastors who will become institutional staff chaplains. The initial class of ten pastors is now spending three months at the state mental hospital in Hastings, Minnesota.

Fifteen thousand students are expected to attend the Summer School of Catholic Action, which will be conducted in eight cities between June 13 and September 3 this year. This figure was given in St. Louis by the Rev. Thomas S. Bowdern, S. J., director of the enterprise, which is sponsored by the central office of the Sodality of our Lady. Titles of some of the courses to be given at the Summer School are: Secret of Sanctity; Tools for Human Relationships; Comic Books, Magazines, Movies; Courtship; Communism; and The Catholic Answer to the Social Problem.

First Dutch Reformed Church of Raritan, more familiarly known in New Jersey as the Old First Church of the Freling-

huysens, observed its 250th anniversary. Parent congregation of all the Dutch Reformed churches in the Raritan River Valley, the Old First opened in 1699, when an itinerant preacher of the Dutch Reformed faith responded to the religious needs of the few scattered settlers in this vicinity. The first pastor was Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen from Amsterdam, Holland, who came to the church late in 1719 or early in 1720. The first church building, erected a short time later, was a log structure which served until it was destroyed by the British in the Revolutionary War.

Dr. Walter C. Langsam, president of Wagner College in Staten Island, New York, announced that the Institute had been authorized by the New York Board of Regents to grant the degree of bachelor of religious education. Wagner thus becomes the only liberal arts college in the state authorized to grant the degree. Wagner, a college of the United Lutheran Church, will award the degree to students majoring in religious education in preparation for lay church work or social work.

More than a billion dollars worth of new Protestant church buildings and improvements are now being planned by architects throughout the country, according to Dr. Elbert M. Conover, director of the Interdenominational Bureau of Architecture in New York. Dr. Conover attributed "this overwhelming volume" of planning to the fact that little church building was accomplished during the depression and war years. Other factors, he said, are the "tremendous" increase of interest in week-day religious education, week-day schools for kindergarten youngsters, church recreational activities, and the growth of pastoral counseling. He further explained that very few congregations are accepting extreme, modernistic exterior designs, but are holding the designs which may be called "churchly."

A Graduate School for the Laity will be launched this summer at Chicago Lutheran Theological Seminary at Maywood to provide qualified workers for parishes, schools, institutions, and agencies of the church, which are "increasingly claimant for trained men and women." A summer session will be held from July 18 to August 5 for student counselors, church councilmen, Christian workers, pastors' wives, social workers, and teachers. In addition, thirty courses in the Biblical, theological, historical, and functional field will be offered during the regular academic year, leading to the degree of Master of Arts.

Presbyterian clergymen who engage in full-time secular employment for two years may be "relieved" of their ministerial status, according to an overture adopted in Buffalo, New York, by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. The overture, which now goes to the 267 prebyteries of the denomination for ratification, is expected to affect 1,500 ministers. Terms of the overture are: "If a minister, not retired because

of physical disability or because he has reached the age of retirement, enters full-time employment in a secular occupation, he may, after two years, be deemed to have left the ministry, and the presbytery, either at his request or on its own initiative, after due investigation of the circumstances, may relieve him of ministerial duties and erase his name from the roll. Such minister, not being under censure, may later apply for reinstatement, and the presbytery may reinstate him and restore his name to the roll if it be satisfied that such action should be taken."

More than 200 persons attended a field and seed blessing service at Zion Lutheran Church in Perry Township, Pennsylvania. The service began in the church and was continued, following a procession, in a wheat field adjoining the church yard. The Rev. Samuel K. Kistler, pastor, and the Rev. C. A. Steigerwalt, pastor of the Friedensburg Lutheran parish, Schuylkill County, presided. It was the fourth annual local revival of the rite, which originated in Germany more than 150 years ago.

A warning that Protestantism will lose rural areas "to the Holy Rollers and the Roman Catholic Church" unless it solves the problems of pulpit vacancies and competition, was sounded in Buffalo, New York, by Dr. Jesse Hays Baird of San Anselmo, California.

Twenty-three Protestant churches in the Peoria area are planning a "Christian day school" to be opened next September under the sponsorship of the National Association of Christian Schools. Church leaders in Peoria are making surveys to determine the number of prospective students. There will be eight primary grades, meeting all state requirements. So far, parents have reacted favorably to the idea, it was said.

A total of 9,716,251 copies of the Scriptures in 151 languages were distributed throughout the world in 1948 by the American Bible Society, it was reported by Dr. Eric M. North, general secretary. Distribution abroad, in more than forty countries, totaled 5,668,336 copies, Dr. North said, and 4,047,915 copies were placed in the United States.

Lotteries, chances, and "other mild gambling devices" at Episcopal church bazaars and fairs were condemned by the Rt. Rev. Granville G. Bennett, Bishop of Rhode Island.

Abroad

The Church has a duty to participate in political and social matters, Lutheran Bishop Hanns Lilje of Hanover told a conference of sixty German and foreign clergymen, politicians, journalists, and publishers. The group assembled at the bishop's invitation for a five-day gathering at the Evangelical Academy at Hermannsburg to discuss the general theme of "Social and Political Ethics." Bishop Lilje declared, "The Church should readily

take part in political responsibility, while using discretion so as not to deliver itself into the hands of a single political system."

Britain's Methodist Church has lost ground among coal mining communities which were formerly Methodist strongholds, according to the results of a questionnaire sent out by the denomination's home missions department to 213 circuits. Replies showed that whereas increased interest in Methodism was shown in forty-two coal mining areas, there was decline of interest in sixty-three and a marked decline in thirty-eight others. All those questioned agreed that the proportion of miners touched by the Methodist Church is "very low." Most replies stated that Communism is not so serious an enemy to the churches as some church people thought. Lack of interest in the churches, the replies indicated, is due to counter-attractions as racing and drinking, to which the miners turn for escape from life's problems. According to the Rev. Colin Roberts, secretary of the home missions department, eighty per cent of the British population is indifferent to religion.

Czechoslovakia's Ministry of Education has begun publication of *The Catholic Clergy Gazette*, a new weekly bulletin intended for distribution among the country's Roman Catholic priests. Purpose of the bulletin, according to *Rude Pravo* (Red Right), organ of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, is "to present not only general news and correct misinformation which often circulates, but to give the clergy information regarding new directives by government bodies affecting the church."

A statement on the duties of membership in the Church of England was received in London by the Lower House of the Convocation of Canterbury and ordered sent to a committee for study. The statement, which was transmitted by the Upper House of the Convocation, set forth seven obligations which it said should govern Anglican church membership. First, to go to church at least once on Sunday; second, to receive Holy Communion regularly, and especially at Christmas, Easter, and Whitsunday; third, to be regular in daily prayer; fourth, to read the Bible regularly and seek to understand better the faith and teaching of the church; fifth, to follow the example of Christ in everyday life, and witness bravely to the faith by word and deed; sixth, to give personal service to the church, to neighbors, and to the community; and seventh, to give money regularly, according to means, for the support of one's own parish and diocese, and for the work of the church at home and overseas.

Forty Christian youth delegates from seventeen countries enrolled for a series of lectures and discussions on contemporary problems at the Ecumenical Institute of the World Council of Churches near Geneva. The courses were conducted from May 9 to June 2. The conference was arranged in co-operation with representatives of the World Christian Youth Commission, which

embraces the Youth Department of the World Council of Churches, the World's Y. M. C. A., the World's Y. W. C. A., the World Student Christian Federation, and the World Council of Christian Education. Main topics were: "Forces Molding the Present Generation of Youth," "The Message of the Bible," "Reconciliation through the Churches," "Relevant Christian Ethics," and "Faith in Action."

More than 125 American Protestant missionaries have decided to remain at their posts in various parts of Fukien Province, according to Paul Winant, an architect and engineer for the Methodist Church in China. Winant said the missionaries include forty Methodists and thirty Congregationalists in northern Fukien and fifty-eight of various denominations in the south.

4,000,000 copies of the Scriptures and Scripture portions, printed in 784 languages, were distributed during the past year by the British and Foreign Bible Society. The Rev. A. H. Wilkinson, general secretary, told the Society's annual meeting that Spanish customs authorities had again barred the entry of Scriptures.

The Church must utter "a loud and unconditional no" to the Soviet way of life, Dr. Emil Brunner declared in London at the 117th annual assembly of the Congregational Union of England and Wales. "To follow the policy of appeasement in regard to the Communist challenge," Dr. Brunner asserted, "is the way of death. The Church must beware of being hypocritical. We are witnessing the last phases of a decline of an over-secularized West, and only a resurgence of Christian culture and values can give Western man a reinvigoration."

Grants amounting to \$80,000 have been made by the U. S. A. Committee for the Lutheran World Federation to assure continued publication of church periodicals in Germany's eastern zone and the Christian weekly known as the *Sonntagsblatt*, which is published under the sponsorship of Bishop Hanns Lilje of Hanover.

Bishop A. R. Beverley denounced the proposed appointment of a Canadian envoy to the Vatican in an address before the Toronto diocesan synod of the Church of England in Canada. He said he was opposed to "the recognition of the Roman Church as a political power, or of the Vatican as a state," and to the "granting of special status or special privilege to the Roman Church or to any church."

