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Contents:

Hungarian Churches against Christian anti-Semitism	1
Ecumenical work in Hungary	6
Some news of Hungarian Reformed Church life	6
The journey of Prof. Thurneysen and Rev. Lüthi in Hungary	5
Some news of the Hungarian Lutheran Church life . .	8
Addresses of representatives of Hungarian Christian Churches at the unveiling ceremony of the cenotaph of Israelitic victims	9

HUNGARIAN CHURCHES AGAINST "CHRISTIAN ANTI-SEMITISM"

Hungarian Christian Churches both Catholic and Protestant published the findings of the Seelisberg Conference of 1947. Each Church published these, according to its own particular creed, in many thousand copies, dealing with the significance of these points.

Any kind of public manifestation of anti-Semitism is made impossible by the Government of the Hungarian Peoples' Democracy as, according to paragraph 49 of the new Hungarian constitution: "Discrimination of any kind against any citizen on ground of sex, religion or nationality is a severely punishable offence." Thus the fight of the Churches against anti-Semitism is mainly confined to anti-Semitism wrapped into Christian teachings, or hiding in the congregation.

In the tract of the Hungarian Reformed Church Dr. John Victor, theological professor writes among others the following:

"The warning that within the Christian Churches teachings have been voiced, which gave rise to views suitable to foster hatred against the Jews, must give a serious pang to every Christian's heart. The mere fact that the proclamation of the

Gospel of love during two thousand years failed to prevent manifestation of hatred among Christians towards the people of Jesus; would be more than sufficient reason for a humble self-examination of every Christian. This does not mean that under the pretext of Christian teachings an intentional attempt to incite hatred against Jews had been made. Where anything like that occurs, it is an obvious abuse committed by individuals, proclaiming something under the pretense of Christianity that is sharply opposed to it. The warning mentioned above refers to ideas which might unintentionally, and by lack of the necessary vigilance be proclaimed and find root among Christians fostering anti-Semitic hatred. The Christian with a partial and hateful mind towards Jewry is at war with the whole Bible itself, objecting to the very fact which ought to bring him to his knees, that it pleased God to give His revelation contained in both the New and Old Testament to all people through the Jews. Moreover Jesus Christ Himself too, went about and distributed His spiritual and physical gifts among His people with a devotion as if there had been no other people in the world. Therefore, however loudly one may refer to Jesus Christ, it cannot be but a spirit alien to His, that regards the Jewish people with any other eyes than that of the love which lived in Him towards His own people.

Even the first fruits of the ministry of Jesus Christ grew in the midst of the Jews. And even if His people as a whole failed to open their hearts before Him, - and where is a people who did not, yet, the first ones who joined and believed Him were of this people.

The first professing witnesses were Jews, and the whole Christian Church was at the outset, a spiritual community of Jews round Jesus. In the course of later centuries the emphasis in the Christian Church might have passed on to other people, but even then it could only be the continuation of a building, the foundation of which was laid down by the Christians of the early times and they were of the Jewish people.

Let us avoid presenting the story of the sufferings of Jesus Christ in a way that would pour all hatred for His death solely upon the Jews. It is not merely the Jews who are responsible for the death of Jesus, because according to the Gospels, Jesus died on account of the sins of all of us.

Also according to History, beside the death sentence of the Jewish Sanhedryn, the approval of Pilate in the name of the Roman Empire, which at that time practically meant the whole world, played an equally decisive part. And the agitated Jewish mob following Jesus to Calvary were no more heartless than the armed soldiers recruited of the Gentile world.

But we have to raise the question, did anybody ever stop at the Cross of Jesus truly in the spirit, who does not see more than a historical event in it, the cause of which must be only sought for in human factors responsible for it? And did anybody grasp the faintest ray of the significance of the Cross, who, by apportioning the responsibility for it, brings forth hatred against anybody? Before the Cross, provided we have grasped some its significance, nothing but genuine repentance on account of our own sinfulness can find its way into our hearts, because of the cruel reception which the living incarnation of the love of God found in our world, and at the same time an unspeakable gratitude must fill our hearts that Jesus was willing to accept even this reception, enduring it, because He could not help being that Love ready for any sacrifice even unto death. And it is this gratitude that must link the believer in Jesus Christ to the Prince of Love and to the service of His Gospel, and to the commandment of love for everybody, for He, too gave His life for everybody.

The manifesto of Seelisberg also refers to the curse of the agitated crowd to be found in the Scriptures: "His blood be on us, and on our children", and advises to abstain making any comment in connection with it, as -this exclamation can in no wise triumph over the powerful prayer of Jesus: "Father forgive them for they know not what they do." The history of the sufferings and death of Jesus can be well brought home without dropping a word about that curse what the agitated frantic crowd shouted before the judgment seat of Pilate. Three of the four Gospels may serve as an example, as they chose to keep silent about this incident of that painful history. But the fact, that in one of the Gospels, in the Gospel of Matthew even this incident is recorded, may serve as a further lesson to us. This Gospel, the most "Jewish" of all, that is, it was written by a Jew, first of all for his Jewish readers. He presents his subject

from the very outset to the end, so as to show what the ministry of Jesus meant just for the Jewish people, and what it might have meant, should events have taken another term. This peace of writing is therefore imbued with painful love towards his own people and he only records that incident, for he sees the final deterioration in the process, which generally speaking turned the soul of his people away from Christ. Where the atmosphere of this love is present, that incident of the Gospel may also be referred to, because the shouting of a desolated irresponsible crowd is overruled by the word of love which was louder, and which even amidst the terrible sufferings of the Cross was praying for forgiveness for those, who sinned against Him.

But where this atmosphere of love is missing, moreover where the menace of the opposite must be reckoned with, it is best to pass by this incident in silence. To plant this incident into an atmosphere of lovelessness, is an abuse, which the evangelist himself would most energetically object to. Do not let us give credit to the godless opinion "that the Jewish people is despised and cursed, and condemned to suffer."

All those conclusions which would like to see the terrible sufferings the Jewish people had to endure from the hand of so-called Christians, all along the past centuries justified by the teachings of the New Testament, is a slap in the face of the Christian faith and a fundamental truth of Christian life. Whenever despisal suppression or persecution was the share of the Jews in the name of Christianity, it was first of all trampling upon Christianity itself.

According to the will of God, Jewry was the soil out of which the Word, contained in both Old and New Testament, the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Christian Church sprang up, in order to become the common treasure of all people. Therefore a man living in the Christian faith, when thinking of the Jews, must see first of all in it the people of whom Jesus Christ Himself said: "Salvation is of the Jews". That is why somebody justly remarked recently: "The Jewish problem is in reality a God-problem." It means that at the bottom of our attitude towards the Jews, our real attitude towards God is also hidden, Whom it pleased to proclaim through the instrumentality of His people His redeeming Love for all of us." concluded Prof. John Victor.

THE JOURNEY OF PROF. THURNEYSEN AND REV. LÜTHI IN
HUNGARY

The Gazette de Lausanne /Sept. 1949/ writes:

"It is known that Prof. Thurneysen from the University of Basel and Rev. W. Lüthi from Bern had been charged in May this year to visit the Hungarian Reformed Church. They could freely travel in the whole country and study its religious life. In a sermon preached recently in the Basel Cathedral, Prof. Thurneysen made certain statements, which are useful to know.

What has most struck our observers is the frame of mind of most of Hungarian Reformed Christians. Like all their fellow-citizens they have surely much suffered. The war made them bathe in tears and blood, and the most courageous of them would have reason enough to get discouraged and distressed. But instead of all that a most impressive spiritual revival is taking place. "All we went through, we had deserved it on account of the many faults committed." They confess also in a spirit of faith and repentance: "We have also deserved the nationalisation of our lands, as we made idols of our land, sacrificed our descendants to it in order to prevent its being split. And it was God Himself Who pulled down this idol."

"We had our schools which were our pride and we made them and their system a question of prestige towards the Roman Catholic Church. They were a part of our Church policy. And it was again God, Who destroyed also this other idol, giving instead a hunger and thirst for the Word of God to our youth."

"And what about the Jewish question? We tolerated the petrification of Jewish persecution and thus we brought upon ourselves God's well deserved punishment. And yet we are alive. God permitted a new life to spring up out of our churches, where His Word can be freely proclaimed."

The fruit of repentance is manifest in the Church in a wonderful revival. Sunday became the Lord's Day again. Everywhere Bible classes are started which are attended by many, after the hard work of the day. These Reformed Hungarian Christians do not mourn for their past prosperity, but are looking ahead with a firm faith in God, a God, Who is not confined to the vestry or the quiet room, but Who upsets the power of the mighty to build up His Kingdom."

THE ECUMENICAL WORK IN HUNGARY

The Hungarian Committee of the World Council of Churches held its first working conference since its reorganisation on 16 September 1949 in Budapest at the central headquarters of the Hungarian Reformed General Conventus. Albert Bereczky, reformed bishop and Dr. Ivan Rök, inspector general of the Hungarian Lutheran Church presided at the meeting. Dr. Ladislaus Pap, Theological professor, who performed his tasks as general secretary and vice-president of the Hungarian committee of the World Council of Churches with extraordinary zeal and devotion, has already resigned his office some time before and it was at this meeting that he submitted his closing report, which was gratefully accepted by the committee. Several important decisions were made by the committee, among others the continuation of ecumenical evangelistic campaigns was also resolved. The sub-committee for evangelism received the commission to work out the scheme. Further, the arrangement of an ecumenical conference of ministers of the Gospel to be held at about the 11 November in the Martin Luther Missionary Institute of the Hungarian General Lutheran Church was also decided. All Churches participating in the World Council of Churches are going to organise common Bible weeks each year for the furtherance of the mighty and holy work of the propagation of the Hungarian Bible.

Dr. Ladislaus Makkai, general secretary and Julius Groo Dr. vice-president were commissioned to get into personal touch with the Geneva headquarters.

The re-organised ecumenical committee set to work with full swing and there is every encouragement to look forward to its activities with great expectations.

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SOME NEWS OF HUNGARIAN REFORMED CHURCH LIFE

Debrecen:

Ministers of the Gospel in Debrecen have formed a community of fellow-workers in order to be able to serve their Church and the Lord by common Bible studies, by deeper theological studies, by the inspiration of a closer spiritual fellowship. Also a Bible course of presbyters has been organised by the Church district.

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The working union of Reformed evangelists in Debrecen planned an evangelistic campaign embracing the whole town for the period between the 2 - 9 October. The campaign is preceded and prepared by prayer meetings in all the churches of the town at the same time.

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Budapest:

The community of ministers in Budapest used to have every Friday night evangelistic meetings in the professors' hall of the Theological Seminary. General discussions follow the meetings.

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Every Sunday 75 Reformed divine services are held at 39 different places, churches, missionary homes, chapels, schoolrooms, hospitals and parish buildings.

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OPENING OF THE NEW SCHOOL YEAR AT THE HUNGARIAN
REFORMED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARIES

At the Theological Seminary in Sáropatak 36 students were admitted to the first term. Seven of them are girls and 29 boys. The number of students of the second term increased with 26, that of the third and fourth with 15-15, and the fifth increased with 5. Before the beginning of the school year, theological professors retired for two quiet days to prepare for their services. This time was spent in the undergraduates' holiday camp of Középhuta.

At the Theological Seminary of Pápa, 48 students were admitted. 17 for the first term, two of these are girls.

Statistics of the Budapest and Debrecen Theological Seminaries failed to reach us before the close of this number.

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The Hungarian Reformed Weekly "Az Ut" gives the following report of the opening of the new school term:

Both professors and students gather round the common Scripture portions. The task is not less than the scientific recognition in faith of the Holy Trinity and the reali-

No 12.

Hungarian Church Press

sation of this doctrine of salvation for the congregations. There is a growing hunger and thirst for the Word of God in our congregations. That is why we turn with so much expectation towards our theological seminaries looking for the reviving and strengthening fruits of the common holy activities of both professors and students alike. The most beautiful and most desirous result will be when, all our four seminaries will enrich the congregations with modern ministers of a living faith, profound knowledge and exemplary life. All that does not merely depend upon the faithful endeavours of our professors and students, but rather upon the thanksgiving and supplications of our congregations. Let our congregations pray for the service of training new ministers! When there will be prayers, then there will be also faith, knowledge and life at the seminaries and also material support. For pantries and purses easily open where the hearts were already opened before."

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SOME NEWS OF THE HUNGARIAN LUTHERAN CHURCH LIFE

Ten Hungarian Lutheran candidates for Divinity obtained their diplomas:

Ten theological students of the University of Sopron passed their final examinations.

On behalf of the General Churchcouncil Bishop Lewis Vető D.D. was in the chair as commissioner of the examination. Bishop Zoltán Turoczy from the trans-Danubian district was also present. All the examinations were passed with very good results. The ten ministers received already employment. 28 new students were admitted to the first term of the Lutheran Theological Institute of Sopron.

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TWO NEW HUNGARIAN THEOLOGICAL BOOKS

Exegesis of the Gospel of John, by Prof. Charles Karner, D.D.

This helpful book is going to be published by the Hungarian Luther Society. Prof. Karner is the wellknown author of the fine Hungarian exegesis of the Gospel of Matthew and of the Epistle to the Romans.

The Fear of God in the Old Testament, by Nicolaus Pálffy,

This new book of the Theological Lecturer N. Pálffy is likewise obtainable at the Hungarian Luther Society.

HUNGARIAN ARCHITECT BUILT 50 CHURCHES

In the presence of many thousand believers Dr. Lewis Vető, Lutheran bishop placed the foundation stone of the Luther church in Borbánya. Julius Sándy, professor of Polytechnic, inspector of several Lutheran presbyteries, drew the plan of the new church which is going to be the fiftieth church built according to his planning. He received a warm celebration from the part of the Church-leaders present at the occasion. Dr. Iván Róok, inspector general of the Lutheran Church joining the words of the bishop that followed the ceremony, expressed his joy at the new church which is to be another eloquent sign of awakened Hungarian Lutheranism. Emil Margócsy, inspector of the Szabolcs district, announced with joy that this church is the third the cornerstone of which was laid in this district within a short time.

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... I MOURN THE PAST WITH REPENTANCE ...

The addresses of the representatives of the Hungarian Christian Churches at the unveiling ceremony of the Cenotaph of Israelitic victims

The Israelitic Community of Budapest erected a monumental cenotaph in memory of the victims in unmarked graves. Vice-President of the Presidential Council of the Hungarian Peoples' Republic, Daniel Nagy was also present at the celebration. Ladislaus Bóka, Secretary of State, spoke in the name of the Government. In the name of the independent Peoples' Front Imre Szirmay held a memorial address. After the funeral service, Rev. Julius Groo, general secretary of the Hungarian Lutheran Church spoke, and among

others he said the following:

"It is in the name of the Hungarian Lutheran Church that I am standing here, profoundly moved at the memorial of the martyrs. My sense of deep regret is composed of three kinds of sentiments. The first is repentance. All of us, each member of the Lutheran Church cannot but feel deep repentance and make a confession of sins, that this horror of the slaughter of hundred thousands of innocent victims could have taken place and that we could not prevent it.

The second sentiment that fills me is love. It is with deep love that I am turning towards all those who were left behind and whose hearts are bleeding with wounds that can never be healed. How we should like to do all in our power to blunt the edge of this grief.

My third sentiment is a determined resolution. All that took place these five years ago, shall never, never be repeated! There must never be made any difference between man and man, there must be no sowing of the seed of hatred between man and man. God bestowed equal dignity of every man and all his children all equally dear to Him. This human dignity, and the appreciation of human life must be lifted up high above everything and protected. Let us never again permit human dignity being stamped upon.

I mourn the past with repentance and turn with the love of my heart towards the living. I should like to build with a firm resolution a more human future. This is the testimony of the Lutheran Church before the memory of the martyrs. Let me close by greeting them with the words of the Scriptures: "Blessed is the memory of the just."

Dr. John Victor, Theological professor, representing the Hungarian Reformed Church, said among others the following:

"When I come in the name of the General Conventus of the Reformed Church in the place of bishop Albert Bereczky, to convey the deepfelt sympathy of our Church, I should like to emphasize, that the sentiment I am going to impart, is far more than compassionate sympathy. Emotions used to be soon fleeting. Emotions used to pass off very soon. But before this memorial, compassionate sympathy cannot become a passing sentiment, for it recalls the memory of millions of people, who had gone, because Frenzial hatred of vile people drove them into an early grave. The only means to release this sentiment called forth by this memorial is the belief, that the future shall bring the wonderful works of eternal love, things past all imagination.