

L I T E R A R Y D I G E S T

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Nearly a Million New Members in Procession to the Pew

Last year churches and religious bodies showed a net gain of 929,252 members—Baptists again have largest increase among Protestants

LIKE the prodigal son who returned to the house of his father, the people of the United States are turning to the Church after the wild years of the profligate era. In religion, it seems, they find solace for their economic affliction. There will be no hard times in Heaven; nor will a golden key unlock any mansion in the sky.

Nearly a million more people took the path to the pew in 1932. Church membership, according to the *Christian Herald* annual report of church statistics, prepared by Dr. George Linn Kieffer, has reached by far the largest total in its history. Not only that—the church is paying its way.

In 1932, churches and religious bodies show a total net gain of 929,252 members thirteen years of age or over—one of the largest gains ever recorded—and the total membership, thirteen years or more of age, reached the record figure of 50,037,209. The twenty-five largest Protestant bodies, taken as a separate unit, showed a gain for the year of 921,941.

A striking fact brought out in the report is that growth in church membership in the United States has steadily outstripped growth in the country's population. From 1900 to 1933 church membership increased from 27,383,000 to 50,037,209, or 82.8 per cent., while the population increase in the same period was 65.8 per cent.

The Protestant denominations are again led by the Baptists with an increase of 347,353 during the year. The Eastern Catholics gained 222,237, the Methodists, 94,697, and the Lutherans 58,523.

Financially, the churches made a better showing than most secular enterprises. Contributions for all purposes were \$19.02 per capita in 1932, compared with \$22.62 in 1931, and the per capita contributions for benevolences were \$3.12 in 1932, compared with \$3.71 in 1931.

It is also significant, says Dr. Kieffer, that since the depression began one out of every six banks has failed, one out of every forty-five hospitals has closed, one out of every twenty-two business and industrial concerns has become bankrupt, but only one out of every 2,344 churches has closed its doors.

"However," comments the *Brooklyn Eagle*, "it has to be remembered that church buildings are exempt from taxation and



DR. GEORGE LINN KIEFFER

Who finds church membership has reached the largest total in its history

would still stand as places for voluntary worship if not a cent were contributed. Also those which were mortgaged are pretty safe from foreclosure. A one-purpose building is not likely to find a market."

And the fact that people turn in times of depression to the consolation of religion is nothing new in world history, observes *The Eagle*. "That the impulse is egoistic, not altruistic, is a thought that demands more of analysis than can be offered in a single editorial or a single sermon."

STATISTICS OF THE RELIGIOUS BODIES AND GROUPS IN 1932 IN THE UNITED STATES

RELIGIOUS BODIES AND GROUPS	Summary in 1932 Total Membership	Summary of Gains and Losses in 1932 Total Membership
Adventists (5 bodies)	173,159	7,504
African Orthodox Church	3,345	307
African Orthodox Church of N. Y.	717	.....
American Ethical Union	Est.3,500	.....
American Rescue Workers	7,975	10
Anglican Universal Church*	702	702
Apostolic Episcopal Church*	5,650	5,650
Apostolic Overcoming Holy Church of God (Col.)	3,000	.....
Assemblies of God	129,392	7,826
Assyrian Jacobite Apostolic	2,425	.....
Bahais Movement	1,247	.....
Baptists (18 bodies)	9,929,962	356,609
Brethren Dunkards (5 bodies)	183,534	6,813
Brethren Plymouth (6 bodies)	22,961	.....
Brethren River (3 bodies)	5,813	55
Buddhist Mission of North America (formerly listed as Buddhist Japanese Temples)	7,000	1,361
Buddhist Society of America	220	.....
Catholic Apostolic	3,408	.....
Church of Armenia in America (Apostolic) (2 Prelacies)	117,487	14,187
Catholic, Eastern (Orthodox) (9 bodies)	924,018	296,767
Catholic, Western (3 bodies):	20,270,718	33,340
Christadelphians	4,024	.....
Christian and Missionary Alliance	27,897	2,114
Christian Union	20,515	.....
Church of Christ Scientist	202,098	.....
Church of God (Reformation Mov't)	49,260	11,368
Church of God in N. A. (Gen. Eldership) (Winebrenner)	29,797	1,039
Church of God in Saints of Christ (Col.)	3,311	.....
Church of God (General Assembly)	12,043	2,879
Church of the Nazarene	99,975	8,666
Church of Christ Holiness U. S. A.	4,919	.....
Church of God in Christ (Col.)	199,970	28,287
Church of God Holiness	3,100	.....
Churches of the Living God (2 bodies)	10,800	d3,509
Churches of the New Jerusalem (2 bodies)	6,529	80
Communitarian Churches (2 bodies)	1,134	d23
Congregational and Christian Churches	1,047,200	9,486
Congregational Holiness Church	1,647	147
Churches of Christ (formerly listed under "Disciples of Christ, 2 bodies")	433,714	.....
Disciples of Christ	1,563,937	22,209
Divine Science Church	3,466	.....
Evangelical (2 bodies)	240,147	2,573
Evangelical Synod of N. A.	425,000	7,000
Evangelistic Associations (13 bodies)	20,833	d9,299
Fellowship of the Universal Design of Life	582	.....
Federated Churches	59,977	.....
Free Christian Zion Church of Christ (Col.)	187	.....
Free Church of God in Christ	874	.....
Friends (4 bodies)	107,025	d237
Holiness Church	600	d261
Italian Church of God*	660	660
Jewish Congregations	4,081,242	.....
Latter-Day Saints (2 bodies)	719,823	15,884
Liberal Catholic Church	1,799	.....
Liberal Church of America	358	.....
Lithuanian National Catholic Church	225	d25
Lutherans (17 bodies)	4,315,311	87,053
Mennonites (16 bodies)	102,145	d24
Methodists (19 bodies)	9,088,022	106,129
Moravians (3 bodies)	42,450	d396

Procession to the Pews

New Apostolic Church	3,929	d71
Original Church of God	1,869	.....
Pentecostal Churches (3 bodies).....	40,462	2,781
Presbyterians (9 bodies).....	2,717,331	22,122
Protestant Episcopal Church.....	1,854,918	22,940
Reformed (4 bodies)	757,886	5,365
Reformed Episcopal Church.....	8,653	.....
Salvation Army	102,619	2,846
Scandinavian Evangelical.....	53,699	811
Schwenkfelders	2,094	338
Social Brethren	1,214	.....
Spiritualists (3 bodies)	10,002	2,595
Temple Society in America	350	d22
Theosophical Societies (3 bodies).....	5,955	d10
Unitarians.....	62,775	4,707
United Brethren (3 bodies).....	417,395	3,686
Universalists.....	47,288	d2,485
Vedanta Society.....	40	10
Volunteers of America.....	28,756	50
Independent Congregations.....	40,381	.....
Grand Total 1932.....	60,886,445	1,088,594
Grand Total 1931 (Corrected).....	59,797,851	Not reported

*Not listed last year nor 1926.

d—decrease.

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