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Concerning the Doctrine of Inspiration

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Mueller: Concerning the Doctrine of Inspiration
 He was a cruel, bloodthirsty tyrant, who waged war and himself headed the soldiers in battle. He swore at God for giving the victory to the French troops and said, "Holy Swiss, pray for us!" (Clarke, p. 248. *Ev. and Ep. in Rel. Hist.*)

The Pope would strike a deadly blow against the hated Council of Pisa and in May, 1512, called his own "reform" council, the Fifth Lateran, where the bandit heard a speech that the Pope must be "like a second god on earth." (Krueger, p. 157.)

He had Michelangelo decorate the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel; he had Raffael do his deathless paintings; he had Bramante draw the plan for the new St. Peter's on the site of the old, which was built by Constantine the Great in Nero's circus. Despite the protests of Michelangelo, old St. Peter's was pulled down, old mosaics and venerable tombs, even that of Pius II, were carted off. On April 6, 1506, Julius laid the foundation-stone and spent 70,000 ducats on the building — finished a hundred and fifty years later.

The Laocoon was dug up from the baths of Titus.

The custom of kissing the Pope's toe on Good Friday had to be given up. Why? The Pope's master of ceremonies says the holy Father's foot was covered with sores of "the disease of the Curia." What's that? Syphilis.

"The terrible Pope," as the Italians called him, was thought to be at the point of death in 1511, and Kaiser Maximilian had the weird plan of taking the tiara himself and uniting the Papacy and the empire.

"The old lion with the white mane," as Luther described him, died on February 20, 1513, leaving 400,000 ducats.

Milwaukee, Wis.

WILLIAM DALLMANN.

Concerning the Doctrine of Inspiration.

Under the heading "The Place of the Holy Spirit in Biblical Inspiration" J. Huebner of Lincoln, Nebr., in the *Lutheran Church Quarterly*, presents to his readers for renewed consideration and study the doctrine of the inspiration of the Bible. The article is clearly written and challenges the Lutheran Church of to-day to express her mind on "the question of the place of the Holy Spirit in the creation of the sacred Scriptures." In spite of the author's efforts to remain conservative, the essay is somewhat imbued with the spirit of modern German theology. While space does not permit a detailed discussion of the points we take exception to, they should at least be briefly pointed out. The author writes: "Lutheranism has, strictly speaking, no dogma on the subject, although it has from the beginning recognized the Bible as God's Word, unique in origin and character.

Unlike Calvin, Luther made his theology as occasion arose. The divine inspiration of Holy Writ was not among the articles of faith that were disputed in his day. The mechanical theory, as taught by dogmaticians of the seventeenth century, came to Wittenberg by way of Geneva; it is not part and parcel of the genius of Lutheranism." This, as is evident to all who have studied modern German theology, is only a repetition of what such of these theologians as still wish to be Lutheran claim on the subject.

The writer continues: "It is well to recognize at the outset that we believe in God before we believe in the Bible. Some of us remember distinctly that we believed in God before we knew there was a Bible. The character of our faith or theology which we bring along to the Bible will have a bearing on what we find in it. If we follow Luther and think of God as Holy Love revealed in Christ, we shall incline toward one conception of inspiration; if, like Calvin, we think of God primarily in terms of Will, we shall arrive at another. Calvin's theology was theocentric rather than Christocentric, and therefore it is not surprising that Calvinism revived the mechanical theory." The argument here advanced is somewhat misleading; for, while it is true that some believe in Christ without having had the privilege of formal instruction in the Bible, it is likewise true that whoever has true faith in Christ will also accept His Word in every particular, without any hesitation, and whatever the divine Christ in whom he places his trust says about the Scriptures he will regard as the absolute truth. One cannot conceive of a Christian's placing his trust in Jesus as his Savior and at the same time rejecting His Word.

Our writer proceeds: "This view, which makes the sacred writers mere amanuenses, is still adhered to by some, even within the Lutheran Church, who stress the literal inerrancy of the Bible in all particulars. Not without justification, Bowne calls it a heathen theory and traces it back to Plato, who in *Phaedrus* gives an account of four forms of madness." We must confess we are perplexed at finding a Lutheran theologian penning such a paragraph. He unhesitatingly identifies belief in the literal inerrancy of the Holy Scriptures, which the Lutheran Church has always held, with the view of those who teach a mechanical theory of inspiration. To him it seems impossible to believe that the Holy Scriptures are divine and errorless in every particular without at the same time holding that the holy writers were mere machines when they gave us the oracles of God. Of Luther the writer says: "What did Luther teach on the subject? He held to an inspiration which was peculiar to the Scriptures alone, but not in a mechanical sense. He recognized human individuality and human cooperation. Even in what he calls '*die rechten gewissen Hauptbuecher*' he does not attribute all utterances equally to higher revelation. His touchstone was, '*ob sie Christum*

Mueller: Concerning the Doctrine of Inspiration *treiben.*' While he would not acknowledge in them an error or contradiction in the presentation of saving truth, discrepancies touching historical events give him very little concern. He does not hesitate to acknowledge errors." This is absolutely a misrepresentation of Luther's attitude toward the doctrine of inspiration. Of course, it merely repeats what modern theologians have time and again said of the supposed *freiere Stellung* which, they say, Luther adopted with regard to the Holy Scriptures. But the writer continues: "Can inspiration be defined? Yes and no. The fact can be established, but not the mode. Like electricity it is known by its manifestations, effects, and results. Just as the proof of the Gospel is not logical, but dynamic, so is the proof of inspiration, so is inspiration itself. Is it verbal? Yes; for a man thinks in words. In dynamic inspiration the Spirit concurs with the writer in thought formation. Verbal inspiration in the sense that the *word* is inspired, but not necessarily the words, is taught by Philippi in his *Glaubenslehre*. He makes the distinction between *Wortinspiration* and *Woerterinspiration*, explaining it in the following way: 'The inspired writer originated a sequence of ideas that as a whole was inspired dynamically both in thought and language. But the words, taken one by one, were not separately suggested.'" *

Unless we have misunderstood the article, the writer holds the following views, which we have to criticize: 1) He rejects verbal inspiration in favor of a qualified dynamic inspiration, a *Wortinspiration*, which, however, implies that "the words, taken one by one, were not separately suggested." 2) He rejects plenary inspiration, condemning the teaching of those who "stress the literal inerrancy of the Bible in all particulars." 3) He presupposes a discrepancy between the doctrine of Luther and that of the later dogmaticians and maintains that the great Reformer occupied a rather free position ("*freiere Stellung*"), while the later dogmaticians taught a mechanical theory of inspiration. Both charges, advanced by modern German theologians, are ably refuted by Dr. F. Pieper in his excellent *Christliche Dogmatik*, I, 262 ff. This thorough and objective treatise deserves conscientious study on the part of all theologians at this time, the Lutheran doctrine of inspiration being again called into question. Then the harsh criticism directed against the older Lutheran theologians (Quenstedt, Calov, etc.) will give way to a due appreciation of their intense loyalty to Holy Scripture, and the charge that they taught an "artificial inspiration theory," in opposition to Luther, will fall, as also the unjust accusation that they stood for a theory of "mechanical inspiration." Indeed, as the Lutheran theologian examines both Luther and the later Lutheran dogmaticians

* This position was rectified in Philippi's third edition of his *Glaubenslehre*. — *Editorial Note.*

objectively, freed from the prejudice which modern German theologians have injected into the matter, he will find that Lutheranism has always had "a dogma on the subject" and that this dogma is thoroughly Scriptural, so that no Lutheran theologian ought to depart from it, even by a hair's breadth. This dogma is presented by Dr. A. L. Graebner in his *Outlines of Doctrinal Theology* as follows: "The Bible was written by divine inspiration, inasmuch as the inspired penmen performed their work as the personal organs of God, especially of the Holy Spirit, who not only prompted and actuated them toward writing what they wrote, but also suggested to them both the thoughts and the words they uttered as they wrote." This nicely formulated proposition agrees with what orthodox Lutheran theologians have at all times believed concerning the inspiration of Holy Scripture.

JOHN THEODORE MUELLER.

Testimonials for the Lutheran Position in Education.

We Lutherans of the Synodical Conference are sometimes inclined to be somewhat apologetic with regard to our whole system of religious instruction. This is true even of our catechetical training in preparation for the rite of confirmation and the admission to adult or communicant membership in the Church. How else shall we explain the lowering of standards of indoctrination, particularly in adult classes? And yet, apart from Scripture precept and example, we have the support of some of the stanchest champions of the Bible, as when J. Gresham Machen writes, in his book *What Is Faith?* (p. 156 f.): "It should, I think, be made much harder than it is now to enter the Church; the confession of faith that is required should be a *credible confession*; and if it becomes evident upon examination that a candidate has no notion of what he is doing, he should be advised to enter upon a course of instruction before he becomes a member of the Church. Such a course of instruction, moreover, should be conducted, not by comparatively untrained laymen, but *ordinarily by the ministers*; the excellent institution of the *catechetical class* should be *generally revived*. Those churches, like the *Lutheran bodies* in America, which have maintained that institution *have profited enormously* by its employment; and their example deserves to be generally followed." 1)

But just as little as we have reason to be ashamed of our traditional thorough course of instruction preceding the admission to adult

1) Cp. the present author's *The Religion of the Child, and Other Essays*, pp. 54—62, *passim*. — The italics throughout this article are ours.
 13