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Has Our Church a Quarrel with Science?

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(p. 14), and in the German: *". . . das unueberwindliche Buechlein des Philipp Melanchthon, Loci Communes, welches nach meinem Urteil wert ist, nicht allein, dass es ewig bleibe, sondern auch, dass es* IN DER KIRCHE ALS RICHTSCHNUR GELTE." The German rendering is less liable to misconception. — "ILLUDIT *autem sese Diatribe ignorantia sua, dum nihil distinguit inter Deum praedicatum et absconditum.*" (P. 222.) "But the *Diatribe* is *deceived* by its own ignorance, in not making a distinction between God preached and God hidden." (P. 172.) *"Die Diatribe macht sich aber selbst* ZUM GESPOETTE *durch ihre Unwissenheit, indem sie keinen Unterschied macht zwischen dem gepredigten und dem verborgenen Gott."* (P. 1795.) It is hard to decide which is the better translation. — *"Et id sequenter probat per experientiam, quod* INGRATI DEO *tot vitiis subiecti fuerint."* (P. 327.) "This he proves to them afterwards from experience, showing them that, being *hated of God*, they were given up to so many vices." (P. 332.) *"Und das beweist er folgends durch die Erfahrung, dass sie als* UNDANKBARE GEGEN GOTT *so vielen Lastern unterworfen waren."* (P. 1920.) The English translation might be preferable; the preceding sentence speaks of the wrath of God revealed from heaven. — If one of the brethren who can find the time for it would note the passages of the German and the English translations which differ and publish such a compilation, together with the Latin original, say in the CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY, that would prove a welcome help to those who will be studying *The Bondage of the Will.*

And surely many will be studying it. Those Lutheran pastors who are more familiar with the English language than with the German (and with the Latin) will want this edition of *De Servo Arbitrio.*

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Has Our Church a Quarrel with Science?

(Essay delivered before the convention of the Western District of the Missouri Synod, June, 1931.)

He who makes clear distinctions teaches well. So says the old Latin proverb. Or: He whose definitions are clear at the outset, will most likely succeed in presenting his subject in a convincing manner. Let us therefore begin with some definitions, in keeping with the wording of our topic.

Has our Church a quarrel with science? is our question. The term *our Church* here does not refer to the Christian Church in general nor to the Protestant denominations as they have been organized during the past four hundred odd years. We are speaking of the *Lutheran Church,* specifically of that body which is represented in the present convention. It is the church organization which un-

equivocally, without restriction, accepts the Bible as the verbally inspired Word of God, in which, as the Lord gave it by the mouth and pen of His chosen prophets and apostles, there is no mistake, neither in substance nor in form, neither in doctrine nor in questions of life, neither in historical account nor in incidental reference. It is the church organization which, just as unequivocally, preaches the way of salvation through the vicarious atonement of Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the Son of Mary, and through Him alone. — And our definition of *science* is taken from the Standard Dictionary: "Knowledge gained and verified by exact observation and correct thinking, especially as methodically formulated and arranged in a rational system." The same dictionary explains *science proper* as "embracing a) exact knowledge of *facts* (historical or empirical science), b) exact knowledge of *laws*, obtained by correlating facts (nomological science), and c) exact knowledge of *proximate causes* (rational science)." Note the use of the adjective exact and the insistence upon facts, laws, and causes that can be clearly seen or logically developed. It is clear that speculations and logical absurdities are alike excluded in true science and that facts and processes demonstrated beyond the shadow of a doubt are alone admissible in any discussion worthy of the name of science.

On the basis of these two definitions the answer to our question should offer no difficulties, provided we can accept the situation as presented in the explanations involved. The Lutheran Church has never had a disagreement, a quarrel, with true science, while science actually worked in its own sphere. The word of Luther according to which he would place all arts in the service of the Gospel could just as well be applied to the field of the sciences, especially the natural sciences. To us the book of nature is the second great book of the revelation of God, for we do not hesitate to place it immediately after the one book of the absolute revelation of God, the Bible. — On the other hand, true science has never considered itself an absolute possessor of the truth, but only an open-minded searcher for the truth. It has never presumed to be dogmatic and dictatorial in matters which actually were and are beyond human ken. It was less than three decades ago that science still spoke of the atom as the smallest unit of an element, whereas now we have been forced to admit that even ions and electrons seem to be infinitesimal worlds of matters under electrical control. Our physics text-books of two decades ago spoke of Newton's law of gravity in an altogether self-evident way, whereas now we are assured that it has apparently been superseded by Einstein's theory of relativity. Or glance at the history of medicine. Although even Galen had shown that the arteries contained only blood, yet most physicians of the seventeenth century before the days of Harvey believed that "the object of the pulse was the same as that

of the respiration," namely, that, when the artery was at its point of greatest expansion, it was "filled with air, which had been drawn through the skin," and that, when the artery had contracted, it had emitted through the pores of the skin "the air, spirits, or fuliginous vapors." And think of the enormous advance that has been made in the science of medicine since the days of Harvey (1578—1657)! Even the layman in the field finds in such recent publications as *Chemistry in Medicine* such an amazing amount of information that his mind can hardly grasp the significance of some of the recent discoveries.

Very decidedly, then, we declare that we have no quarrel with science when it remains within its province, namely, that of discovering facts and laws and searching for proximate causes, provided always, of course, that every scientist is an honest searcher for truth and insists upon exact knowledge and correct logical deductions. We rejoice that such an enormous advance has been made in the field of *physics* that the forces of nature are better understood from day to day and that many of them are properly put into the service of man by new inventions. And our respect for the men working in this field is certainly not lessened by the fact that Michelson, who died only very recently, told the American Association for the Advancement of Science very clearly about the limitations of science and that Millikan, the other American winner of the Nobel prize in the field of physics, said in an essay on "Science and Religion," published a few years ago: "My fourth obvious fact is that every one who reflects at all believes in one way or another in God. . . . It seems to me as obvious as breathing that every man who is sufficiently in his senses to recognize his own inability to comprehend the problem of existence, to understand whence he himself came and whither he is going, must in the very admission of that ignorance and finiteness recognize the existence of a Something, a Power, a Being, in whom and because of whom he himself lives and moves and has his being. That Power, that Something, that Existence, we call God." (*Science and Life*, 56 f.) Similarly we are pleased to note that Shepardson, a university professor of electrical engineering of international fame, does not hesitate to state, in his *The Religion of an Electrical Engineer:* "The evidence obtainable from study of material phenomena gives us confidence in concluding that a Supreme Being exists, that He is profoundly intelligent, that He designed and constructed and governs the universe, and that He encourages those who seek to learn of His works and ways" (p. 63). And on another page: "The scienticulist with a smattering of second-hand knowledge may presume to ridicule the simple statements of remarkable events; but the real scientist recognizes that what he does not know is far more than what he does know, and his mind is on the alert for additional knowledge" (p. 91). And on still another page: "Jesus Christ was either the Son

of God or else a deceiver, and the evidence all points to His being genuine" (p. 131).

We have the highest regard also for the science of *chemistry*, and that in all its departments and subdivisions, geochemistry, organic chemistry, inorganic chemistry, physical chemistry, sanitary chemistry, agricultural chemistry, and particularly biochemistry as it correlates with medicine. The advance of the last thirty years in the conquest of dietary diseases, in the study of the internal secretions, in the progress in the field of anesthesia, in the combat against various germ diseases, is greater than that of the previous three hundred years. But here again we are glad to find that some of the foremost scholars in the field, like Doctor Kelly of Baltimore, have retained their simple faith in the one absolute truth, the revelation of the Bible.

Our interest in the field of *archeology* is great and abiding. We follow not only the popular, but also the scientific accounts of the American School at Athens, of the American Academy in Rome, of the American Schools of Oriental Research (Jerusalem and Bagdad), of the School of American Research at Santa Fe, with its recent work in Chaco Canyon and Jemez Canyon, N. Mex., and even of the American School of Prehistoric Research; we read the accounts of the work done in the valley of the Euphrates, especially at Ur, of that carried on in and near Jerusalem and in various parts of the Holy Land, at Ephesus, at Corinth, in various parts of Italy, in the ancient Mayan cities of Central America, and other centers of prehistoric civilization. Much outstanding work is being done and much of it has been made accessible in sets like *Wonders of the Past*, edited by J. A. Hammerton. And we are happy to find that the first article of this set, by Prof. A. H. Sayce, contains a passage which certainly is of great interest to all those who have consistently maintained the truth of the Bible. He writes: "If we turn from the world of practical politics to that of science, there is another question relating to mankind upon which archeological discovery throws light. Ever since the establishment of the doctrine of evolution it has been assumed that man started like a child and slowly grew into what he is to-day. Our primitive ancestor has been seen again in the modern savage, whose nearest representative he has been held to be. The brain and mentality of civilized man, it has been assumed, have developed out of small beginnings; he started almost on the level with the brute beasts and has become a Newton or a Napoleon. But here again archeology stands in the way. The men who carved the hardest of stones into living portraitures in the Egypt of six thousand years ago or, at a later epoch, erected the Parthenon at Athens were in no way inferior to the most gifted of ourselves. We have accumulated more

knowledge, it is true, but we can claim no superiority in the powers of mind. And if we go back to a still earlier age, the record is the same. The marvelous drawings of paleolithic man of the Aurignacian age prove that on the artistic side there has been little, if any, development. Indeed, when we consider the conditions under which his work was done, in a climate like that of Greenland and amid the darkness of subterranean caverns, we are inclined to regard him as the greatest artist humanity has produced. But long before the Aurignacian artist had drawn his bisons or carved his reindeer, language had been invented, and the use of fire had been discovered. And the invention of language was the highest mental feat ever accomplished by mankind. The brains that evolved it were fully comparable with our own. The savage of to-day, so far from being a representative of those who possessed them, is either a degenerate or the descendant of races which invented nothing."

In the same way we could look at the other sciences: at biology, with its subdivisions of zoology, botany, and human anatomy and physiology; at anthropology, with its fascinating field of religions and customs; at geology, with its study of rocks and minerals; at paleontology, with its research work in fossils and remains of previous faunas and floras of various parts of the world. Everywhere we find interesting and valuable material; everywhere we mark the footsteps of the Creator, of the all-wise and beneficent heavenly Father. There is no quarrel with science on this ground.

No; it is only when science ceases to function in its proper sphere that our Church finds occasion to protest, when science becomes pseudoscience, when it leaves the domain of exact knowledge and descends to the field of speculation, when hypotheses and theories are promulgated on the basis of inadequate data, when the so-called "doctrine of evolution" is regarded as an immutable law to explain the origin of life, and when even the existence of God, the Creator of the universe, is denied. We resent statements like the following: "Natural selection and the change of species by descent, the broad principle of evolution, are now facts not controverted by those who desire to appear intelligent." (Barton, *Medicine, the Science of Health*, 135.) Statements like these could be quoted by the hundreds, and we contend that they are not scientific. We know that the principle of organic evolution as laid down by Darwin has been modified so that very little of his contention remains. We know that leading men in every department of science have deeply deplored the development of a science falsely so called, on the basis of a theory which lacks the fundamental points of proof. George McCready Price has well put it for the science of geology when he writes (*The Geological Ages Hoax*, 21): "It is the supreme folly of all pseudoscience to begin

somewhere away back at the vanishing point of the vistas of a past eternity and to attempt by sheer cosmic dead-reckoning to work up to the present by slow stages, and to arrive here with a sufficiently small cargo of 'living' species unaccounted for, so as to splice on smoothly and easily with the present on the basis of uniformity among the rocks and transformisms among the plants and animals. This is the supreme type of all hypothetical science, a magnificent hang-over from the scholasticism of the Middle Ages; it has no resemblance to the secure sciences of objective facts, after the order of Galileo and Newton, of Bacon, Linnaeus, and Pasteur."

If people calling themselves scientists persist in bringing the theory of evolution into their work, then we have a number of questions to ask which might help them to organize their data. As, for instance: —

Where did the first electron come from? Where do the laws of nature come from? How did life originate? What about religion and the divine image in man? (Cp. Herget, *Questions Evolution Does Not Answer.*)

Or, to take just a few questions from the *Lutheran Witness* (1927, 364): —

How did protoplasm acquire its power of growth and reproduction? Where is a single genealogical link to show that the existences of one race of animals derive their lineage from the existences of another? How could instincts be transmitted when still in a rudimentary stage, hence useless?

What we expect of all human knowledge and endeavor we also expect of science, namely, to take every thought captive under the obedience of the Word of God. This does not cramp research, but rather it consecrates every endeavor of the human mind; it lifts the intellect to the highest levels of its possibilities; it will tend to bring back, also in this respect, the perfect knowledge which belonged to Adam in the state of innocence, when he gave names to all cattle and to the fowl of the air and to every beast of the field, Gen. 2, 20.

We close with a word from Hitchcock, *The Religion of Geology* (33): "Finally, I would throw out a caution to those friends of religion who are very fearful that the discoveries of science will prove injurious to Christianity. Why should the enlightened Christian, who has a correct idea of the firm foundation on which the Bible rests, fear that any disclosures of the arcana of nature should shake its authority or weaken its influence? Is not the God of revelation the God of nature also? And must not His varied works tend to sustain and elucidate, instead of weakening and darkening, one another? . . . (Quoting from Dr. J. Pye Smith) Christianity is secure, and true science will always pay homage to the divine Creator and Sovereign, 'of whom and through whom and to whom are all things and unto whom be glory forever.'"

P. E. Kretzmann.