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## Theological Observer. - Kirchlich-Zeitgeschichtliches

J. T. Mueller

*Concordia Seminary, St. Louis*

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**I. Amerika.**

**Interpretation of Scripture.** — In its issue of June 22, 1933, Vol. 21, No. 25, p. 599, the *Watchman-Examiner* makes the following pertinent remarks on Scriptural interpretation: —

“There is no class of men who are doing more to weaken faith in the Bible than those persons who, while contending for an extremely high theory of inspiration, assume that their allegorical and fanciful interpretations of the Bible are clothed with the authority of the Word of God.

“Many of our readers have heard sermons based on texts torn from their connection or upon passages so violently ‘spiritualized’ that no intelligent person could honestly say that a fair reading of the text could by any possibility have suggested the meaning attributed to it. And these fanciful interpreters are quite as certain that the meanings thus read into the Scriptures are from God as that the Bible itself is from Him. Time and again intelligent men have said to us, ‘If anything could make me a skeptic, it is the preaching of So-and-so. He holds the highest view of inspiration, but when it comes to interpreting the Scripture, he throws dictionary and grammar and logic to the winds.’

“Akin to this perversion is the method pursued in some so-called ‘Bible-readings.’ A word, by the aid of a concordance, is hunted through the Scripture. It is assumed that it means the same thing in documents separated by fifteen centuries, and that, when different Hebrew or Greek words are translated by the same English word, the English word is a sufficient guide. Little attention is paid to the connection of passages, and the result is a hodgepodge that insults the intelligence of sensible people. This method of Bible-teaching usually starts out to support some well-established Christian doctrine, and the teacher twists everything that way. The same method could be used with equal facility to demolish every doctrine.

“To interpret the Scriptures according to the principles of grammar and logic will seem to some a very prosaic business. But since God has revealed His will in the forms of human speech and in conformity with the laws of human thought, the basis for understanding what He communicates to us is a knowledge of what the words He employs mean and a familiarity with the principles of grammar and logic. . . . It is only through familiarity with these principles that we apprehend the precise meanings of God’s Word.”

T. L.

**Millennialism Running Wild.** — A few minutes after we had read the item on Scriptural interpretation in the *Watchman-Examiner*, we found the following example of the method of interpretation which so justly roused the indignation of the Baptist editor. In the *King’s Business* of July, 1933, pp. 223—225, Louis S. Baumann, writing on “Present-day Fulfillment of Prophecy,” seeks to answer the question: “Hitlerism: Is It a Presage of the ‘Time of Jacob’s Trouble’?” After an exaggerated report of “continued and indescribable insults, indignities, and indecencies per-



petrated upon the properties and persons of the Jews" by the Hitlerites, the author continues:—

"But what is the portent of all this? Jesus Christ Himself gives the only reason for the anti-Semitic hate that has filled the breast of the Gentile nations through the centuries: 'The prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in me' (John 14, 30) — 'in me,' a Jew and 'the King of the Jews.' 'Ye know that it [the world] hated Me before it hated you' (John 15, 18). 'Salvation is of the Jews,' said He (John 4, 22). Therefore, so long as Satan is not 'cast out' from the kingdoms of this world (Rev. 12, 9, 10), just so long will Israel continue to suffer from his venom.

"Students of the prophetic Scriptures have reminded us that, when the disciples of Jesus asked for the 'sign' of His 'coming and of the end of the age,' Jesus replied that there would be wars, famines, pestilences, and earthquakes such as the earth never witnessed before (Matt. 24, 3—7) and that these we have seen since 1914. But they do not so often remind us that Jesus continued to say unto those inquiring Jews: 'Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted and shall kill you; and ye shall be hated of all nations for My sake' (Matt. 24, 9). . . .

"THE SPIRIT OF 'THE BEAST' ENTHRONED IN GERMANY. — Again, Hitler and his 'Brown Shirts' have proved that the Antichrist, at whose coming our high-stepping age has been inclined to scoff, is not only a possibility, but a probability, and that he will be heartily welcomed and highly acclaimed by our bombastic civilization; for while Hitler is not the Antichrist, yet he possesses the spirit of the Antichrist and is popularly acclaimed in his 'cultured' nation. . . . Antichrist will allow no man to buy or sell without his mark (Rev. 13, 16, 17). Hitler has his mark, the swastika, and while as yet he may not have branded it on any one's hand or forehead, yet 650,000 German Jews can testify that no one in Germany can buy or sell without his permission. . . .

"Hitler will pass, and we dare predict that Germany, if not from choice, then from necessity, will take her place in the great Russo-Teutonic-Mongolian alliance, where prophetically she belongs, and in this role will start with the nations on their final march to the Gentile sunset. Germany (Gomer) will march with Gog to the bone-pile in Palestine! (Ezek. 38 and 39.) A young man, a member of the writer's church, now in a medical school in Paris, in a letter just received, wrote: 'A Jewish medical student said to me the other day: "The poor, poor Germans! Don't you worry about the Jews! They will come out all right! Anyway, they are used to suffering. But the poor Germans!"'

"ISRAEL'S NIGHTFALL? THEN ALSO ISRAEL'S SUNRISE. — Every student of the Bible knows that the sun of this present age is to set in a sea of Jewish blood — 'the time of Jacob's trouble' (Jer. 30, 7). Read Dan. 9, 26, 27 with Matt. 24, 3—26; Rev. 12, 1—6, 13—17; Dan. 7, 24—28; 11, 36, 37; 12, 1; Rev. 13, 1—7, 15. Note how these passages describe an hour of awful agony that shall break in upon the heads of the sons of Jacob; *but it will be the last*. The absolute and oft-repeated promise is: 'He shall be saved out of it!' 'Don't you worry about the Jews! They will come out all right!' The ancient weepers by all the rivers of Babylon will take their harps from off the willows forevermore. 'But the poor Germans!' 'Poor?' Why so? Shall not they, in Israel's deliverance, together



with all the peoples of the earth, be blessed? Verily, they shall (Gen. 12, 3). Is this Hitlerian hate the final presage to the hour of 'Jacob's trouble'? So it would seem. But if so, it also is a harbinger of the glory that shall follow. Truly, we may rejoice in the falling shadows, dark as they are. If we must have the night before the sunrise, then let the shadows fall."

Here we have indeed millennialism running amuck! What brazen, not to say blasphemous, ignoring of the simplest rules of interpretation, context, logic, to identify the modern unbelieving, materialistic, oft-times atheistic Jew with the believing followers of the Savior, to whom the prophecies contained in Matt. 24, 9 and John 15, 18 are addressed. In fulfilment of these words of prophecy, so we are told, the Gentile world has been, and still is, hating and persecuting the Jew! Why, however, exclude the Jews from the world which hates and persecutes? Why not reason thus: The Jewish world hates Jesus. (Else it would not have killed Him, nor would it reject Him to this day.) Hence the Jewish world, having hated Jesus, will in time to come hate and persecute the Jews for Christ's sake, the King of the Jews. Hence in fulfilment of this infallible word of prophecy there will come, and must come, a time when pogroms, "continued and indescribable insults, indignities, and indecencies," will be "perpetrated upon the properties and persons of the Jews" by the Jewish world. A world-wide persecution of Jews by the Jews, who hate the Jews, because they hate Jesus, the King of the Jews. Logic? Sense? Just as certain and convincing as that of millennialism. — Again, why not refer John 4, 22 to the Jew of modern day? "Salvation is of the Jews." The Jews reject Jesus. Hence salvation without Jesus.

The author assures us that the Germans, poor Germans, shall, "in Israel's deliverance, together with all the peoples of the earth, be blessed. Verily, they shall (Gen. 12, 3)." How will that be possible since the author has assured us just a few minutes before that Germany will start with the nations on *their final march to the Gentile sunset, to the bone-pile in Palestine!* (Ezek. 38 and 39.) How much of Germany and the nations will be left after their final march to the bone-pile? Or is annihilation as a nation the only blessing for poor Germany, and an all-sufficient one, for which she ought to be grateful? Millennialism and logic? Millennialism and Scripture? Their witness agrees not! T. L.

**Catholicism Aggressive in Ireland.** — To make Ireland one hundred per cent. Catholic is, as E. Gordon reports in the *Sunday-school Times*, the object of a campaign which recently has been launched by Romanists in that country. The methods employed in the campaign include the following: increasing the Roman Catholic birth-rate, controlling education, capturing labor, acquiring Protestant property, especially land, and the like. In the interest of the campaign, farm after farm once owned by Protestants is now being purchased by Romanists, as are also large estates, which commonly are turned into Catholic institutions.

In spite of all these efforts, however, Mr. F. C. Gibson of Belfast, whose recent report on the new movement forms the source of this bit of news, affirms that the one outstanding fact in the religious situation in Ireland during the past ten years is the waning power of the Catholic priesthood. There was a time, he says, when because of the opposition of the priest



the circulation of the Holy Scriptures was carried on under the greatest difficulties and with great personal risk on the part of the colporteurs. To-day, however, Ireland is open in every direction to colportage work. There was a time when no true Roman Catholic would have dared to purchase the Bible from a Protestant or to keep it in his home in defiance of the priest. To-day the Scriptures, sold by Protestant agencies, are to be found in thousands of Roman Catholic homes. There was a time when no true Roman Catholic would have dared to enter a Protestant church. To-day Roman Catholics are increasingly finding their way into Protestant churches. There was a time when no true Roman Catholic would have dared to listen to a sermon preached by a Protestant. To-day, in the streets of Dublin and in fairs and markets of Southern Ireland, they will stand by hundreds and listen to the preaching of the Gospel; and every Sunday evening, in thousands of homes all over the south and west of Ireland, Roman Catholics are listening to evangelical sermons broadcast from England, Scotland, and the north of Ireland. Mr. Gibson writes: "We are convinced that the entrance of God's Word into these Roman Catholic homes will bring light and that the Gospel thus mysteriously falling on the ears of tens of thousands of our Roman Catholic fellow-countrymen will not return void." It is quite evident that the Eucharistic Congress recently held in Ireland was a part of the aggressive Romanistic campaign to check the victorious inroads of Protestantism and to regain what has been lost.

J. T. M.

**Bible Victories in Italy.**—In Italy the public press has recently championed the cause of the Protestant Bible. In a report published in the *Sunday-school Times* we read that two prominent Italian papers, *La Gazzetta del Popolo* and *La Stampa*, declared that "there is no difference between Protestant Bibles and those authorized by the Church of Rome, so that it is absurd to harbor a spirit of distrust toward these so-called Protestant books, especially since they have promoted a more serious mentality in Italy. As people are reading the Bible, it is no longer the vogue to read questionable novels." This claim is supported by the *Carrière Emiliano*, which says that this is so "because spirit and soul need at this time more than ever that special blessing that overflows from Bible-reading. Everybody has friends or acquaintances who witness to the great benefits which they received from the Book of God." From *Avvenire d'Italia* the report quotes the following passage: "In former days people who wanted to read the Bible were allowed to do it only by special permission given by their own bishop through a request of their own confessor, and that only for a brief period of time. Permits for a longer time were granted only by the Pope. So before the war the Bible was not a popular book; but now the general demand for it has required additional printings by Roman Catholic societies in six different cities: Brescia, Alba, Torino, Milan, Rome, and Gravia di Puglia." Every year, according to the report, a day is set apart in Italy for the "Festival of the Book," when book-dealers set up their stands in the open air and sell their volumes at reduced rates. The motto of this popular *Festa del Libro* is: "At least one book into every Italian home." On this day the Protestant Bible colporteurs are especially active.

J. T. M.



**Dissension among Romanists.**—A letter written by a Roman Catholic of New York City, addressed to the editor of the *Commonweal*, brings out two interesting facts: first, that our charge as to the condemnation of religious liberty by the Pope and the general hierarchy of Romanism is absolutely correct; and secondly, that not all Catholics living in the United States endorse this position. We here present this interesting letter:—

“Sir: Your article ‘Religious Freedom’ (issue of Mary 12) is misleading and beside the mark and is wrong in its parallels; and most intelligent American Catholics will agree with me in this. The *Christian Century* is perfectly right in criticizing the action of the Pope, who publicly condemns, and wants to suppress, the activities of Protestant bodies in Italy while at the same time the Pope wants, and the Catholic Church demands, every possible right and liberty for Catholic bodies in Protestant countries to engage in all activities for the spreading of the Catholic religion. In other words he says to the Protestants: Gentlemen, when you are in power, I will avail myself of your liberties, for that is your principle; but when I am in power, I will deny you liberty, for that is my principle.’

“Now, in its specious attempt to justify the Pope’s intolerance and bigotry the *Commonweal* cites certain non-Christian religions which teach doctrines palpably hostile to the welfare and stability of the modern civilized state and it then asks the *Christian Century* if it would favor the granting of complete legal freedom to them. The *Commonweal* cites polygamy and the Hindu religion of the goddess Kali, known as thuggism, and whose chief ritual consists in the strangling of human victims. In citing such impossible and unfair examples and in making such ridiculous, objectionable, and uncalled-for parallels, the *Commonweal* of course openly affronts, and does injustice to, the Protestant bodies by assuming that the Pope and the Catholic Church have the same grounds for objection to the Christian teaching of Protestant religion as all Christians have toward such non-Christian religious doctrines as polygamy and thuggism, an assumption quite offensive and wholly unwarranted. There is no fair comparison between polygamy and thuggism and the teaching of the Methodist and other Protestant bodies. The Protestant religion either in Italy or America teaches and practises no doctrines which are hostile or destructive to the stability, welfare, soundness, and happiness of the modern state. Any comparison between the social and political conditions existing in Catholic and Protestant countries affords no justification whatsoever for any such discrimination against the natural liberties and legal rights of Protestants, and legal by the very laws of Italy and other Catholic countries, which discrimination the Catholic Church wrongfully practises and approves of.

“If a point were to be made, rather is it the other way around; for undeniably it is exactly in Protestant countries that the greatest amount of liberty, enlightenment, prosperity, and good government exists to-day. Confusing Protestant teachings with polygamy and thuggism is certainly a poor argument for the *Commonweal* to make and a poor excuse for denying to Protestants rights which the Catholic Church demands for



herself. Though a Roman Catholic myself, I am also an American, and I know that most American Catholics agree with me in this. (Signed:) Robert V. Costello."

How Mr. Costello harmonizes his rejection of the Pope's position with his remaining in the fold of the Pontiff and thereby subscribing in principle to the doctrine of the latter's infallibility, he unfortunately does not tell us.

## II. Ausland.

**Konjunkturtheologen.** Was dies Wort bedeutet, wird klar, wenn man liest, was hierüber einleitend ein studiosus theologiae in der „N. C. Z. N.“ schreibt. Wir lesen da: „Die augenblicklich relativ günstigen Ausichten des theologischen Studiums haben einen übergroßen Andrang zu dieser Fakultät zur Folge, der überall als schwere Gefahr für die Kirche erkannt wird. Eine große Anzahl von Kommilitonen anderer Fakultäten sattet um, und noch größer ist die Zahl derer, die sich nach bestandnem Abiturientenexamen dem Studium der Theologie zuwenden, weil es ihnen als das aussichtsreichste erscheint. So entsteht jene Gruppe von Konjunkturtheologen, vor der man sich schützen will.“ In dem Folgenden nimmt dann der genannte Student die Konjunkturtheologen in Schutz und schließt endlich seinen Anruf mit einem argumentum ad hominem: „Doch ich darf meiner — und mit mir vieler Kommilitonen — Freude Ausdruck geben über den Vorschlag der freien Probezeit vor der festen Anstellung. Gebt uns Gelegenheit zu zeigen, was wir taugen! Laßt uns an die Aufgabe der freien missionierenden Tätigkeit im Volk, die heute gewiß schwieriger ist als je, herangehen, und wir wollen beweisen, daß aus den Konjunkturtheologen Kämpfer geworden sind, Streiter für das Wort Gottes.“ Wir zitieren das Obige, weil hierzulande ähnliche Verhältnisse obwalten. Mancher bereitet sich jetzt für das Predigtamt vor, der vorher nie daran gedacht hätte, eben weil sonst wenig Ausichten auf feste Stellungen vorhanden sind. Gegen solche Konjunkturtheologen, die im Predigtamt nur die Lösung der Brot- und Butterfrage suchen, muß die Kirche sich allerdings schützen. Immerhin bleibt es wahr, was studiosus Hans Knust schreibt, nämlich daß auch aus diesen Theologen wirkliche Kämpfer für das Wort Gottes hervorgehen mögen. Seine Bitte um Gelegenheit, „zu zeigen, was wir taugen“, ist berechtigt, wie auch die Bitte unserer jetzt müßig am Markt stehenden Kandidaten berechtigt ist, man möge ihnen wenigstens zeitweilige missionierende Tätigkeit zuweisen. Urteilen wir nicht zu hart über Konjunkturtheologen! Hat nicht Gott seine Hand im Spiel, wenn er durch die obwaltenden Zeitumstände junge Männer in die theologische Laufbahn weist, die sonst vielleicht nie daran gedacht hätten?

J. L. M.

Einschreiten gegen die „Ernstern Bibelforscher“. Die scharfe Stellungnahme der kirchlichen Kreise in Deutschland gegen die „Ernstern Bibelforscher“ hat sich jetzt dadurch geäußert, daß ihnen in Bayern jede Tätigkeit untersagt worden ist. Andere Staaten werden vielleicht dem Beispiel Bayerns folgen. „Wie groß die Ausdehnung der ‚Bibelforscher‘ in Deutschland ist“, schreibt der „Friedensbote“, „erfieht man aus der Tatsache, daß bei einer Konferenz in Leipzig im Jahre 1929 nicht weniger als elftausend Vertreter von ‚Bibelforscher‘-Gruppen Deutschlands vertreten waren. Die Lehre Rutherford's gipfelt darin, ihren Anhängern das Himmelreich auf Erden



in baldige Aussicht zu stellen, in dem sie Gesundheit, Glück und Frieden in vollen Zügen genießen können. Diesem Glückszustand stehen die Reichen im Weg, und sie werden daher als Satansdiener bezeichnet. Die Geistlichen, die katholischen sowohl wie die protestantischen, lehren nicht die Wahrheit und stehen daher im Dienst des Teufels. Ähnliches gilt von allen bestehenden Regierungen, die nach angeblicher biblischer Prophezeiung schon in den nächsten Jahren vernichtet werden sollen. Besonders die Arbeitergehenden werden unentwegt von den Werbern und Schriftenverkäufern der ‚Bibelforscher‘ durchgearbeitet, die von Haus zu Haus gehen und als ‚Jehovas Boten‘ die frohe Botschaft der irdischen Erlösung verkünden. Die zersetzende und verwirrende Wirkung einer solchen scheinreligiösen Agitation liegt am Tag.“ In Deutschland nennt der Volksmund die „Ernsten Bibelforscher“ ganz richtig „die ernstlichen Bibelfälscher“. J. L. M.

**Islamic Propaganda.** — The following item, taken from the *Literary Digest* of August 26, makes interesting reading and proves the necessity of retaining the Turk, together with the murderous Pope, in the enumeration of the foes “who fain would tear from off Thy throne Christ Jesus, Thy beloved Son. (Hymn 274.)

“Minaret. Two Oriental domes. Façade pierced by long rows of pointed windows. Architect, Shiekh Abdul Hamid.

“So this is London?

“Not yet, though Shiekh Abdul Hamid has completed his design for the proposed Moslem Center, and a request is to be made to the Crown for a site near St. James’s.

“Paris has long had its mosque for Mohammedans from the French colonies. But in London not all the followers of the Prophet are colonials.

“Recently Lord Headley wrote in the *London Daily Mirror*: ‘After a long and earnest search for a religion which should be as free as possible from gross improbabilities and absurdities, I decided that Islam was the faith I could really say I believed in; for its grandeur and simplicity are so manifest.’

“Very strange such phenomena, and the British attitude toward them, appear to Kenneth Williams, who remarks in the *London Evening Standard*: ‘Few things surprise the Moslem visitor to England more than the freedom with which Islamic propaganda is carried on.’ In Egypt, Persia, and Turkey Christian missionaries ‘have during the last few years had their freedom considerably curtailed,’ while in Jerusalem ‘the activities of the Young Men’s Christian Association (whose new building cost a million dollars), despite its truthful declaration that it works for all, irrespective of race or creed, have increased the fears of the Moslems. They have not only boycotted the Y. M. C. A., but also have created a rival organization of their own, the Young Men’s Moslem Association.’” T. L.

