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I. Amerika.

Lutheran Union and the Doctrine of Verbal Inspiration. — Reviewing Dr. Lenski's commentary on Revelation in the *Lutheran Church Quarterly*, October, 1935, Prof. E. E. Flack of Springfield, Ohio, highly praises the book, but takes Dr. Lenski to task for his adherence to the doctrine of verbal inspiration and declares that such teaching stands in the way of Lutheran union. He writes: "Many men even in Dr. Lenski's own branch of the Church will find themselves unable to share his view of inspiration by dictation as set forth in such statements as the following: 'Jesus dictates the letters; John takes the dictation and writes at once as the dictation proceeds' (p. 83); 'The idea that John composes these seven letters should occur to no mind' (p. 92); 'Despite those who tabu the word, the Lord here *dictated* these seven letters to John, and that in the literal sense' (p. 93). Is not the inspiration of Scripture too high and holy a reality to be defined in terms of stenography? Does one exalt the Word of God by dehumanizing it? The appearance of this commentary with its unsatisfactory assumption suggests once more that Lutheranism in America stands in peculiar need of a thorough, historical, and creative study of the doctrine of revelation and inspiration. And it may be confidently asserted that the achievement of closer unity among Lutherans in this country, and indeed throughout the world, will require, for one essential, a higher view of Scripture than is represented by the theory of inspiration by dictation." (P. 417). This is plain language. Agreement on the doctrine of the inspiration of the Bible is, according to Dr. Flack, — and we agree with him, — essential to the Lutheran union. But in order to reach such agreement, says Dr. Flack, it will be necessary that the verbal-inspiration men yield their position. So long as Lutheran synods teach a verbal inspiration a closer union with them is impossible.

The *Lutheran Church Quarterly* has lent its columns to a determined and persistent attack on the doctrine of verbal inspiration. In the July issue of 1935 Prof. T. A. Kantonen wrote: "Resting upon the theory of the verbal inspiration of the Bible, it [this approach] has overlooked the progressive stages in the unfolding of divine revelation and quoted Scripture quite indiscriminately, as though a passage from Genesis had equal weight with the words of Christ. . . . The adherents of this approach have regarded the stories of the Temptation and the Fall as mere historical narrative rather than profound prophetic philosophy of history." (P. 210 f.) In the same issue another writer states: "The idea of verbal inspiration and the practise of literal interpretation may destroy the reality of the Bible's message. . . . The generation to which our preaching is addressed asks for more than the claim of authority for a book, a claim which is considerably weakened by the controversies of those literalists who have constant recourse to the words *infallible* and *inerrant* and who affirm utterly untenable and most fallible theories of geology, astronomy and millennial events because, say they, 'the Bible is an infallible book.'" (Pp. 255.

260.) In the April issue, 1935, Prof. J. Aberly writes on the "weakness of the theory of verbal inspiration." "What is meant when we call the Bible the Word of God? In times past and for not a few now the answer is a very simple one. The very words of Scripture are the Word of God. The Bible and the Word are one and the same. Should one question that they may be thus equated, he may be sharply rebuked or be pronounced guilty of equivocation, for they are either that or are not, and there is no middle ground. . . . I found that I could not meet these [men of a modern *Weltanschauung*] by falling back on the claim that this Bible was the literal Word of God by quoting passages of Scriptures that are supposed to support this view. . . . It compels one to do what Dr. E. Stanley Jones found himself compelled to do, to shorten his lines of defense. He states that, when he went to India, he felt called on to defend the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, but that he soon found it necessary to retire into the citadel and limit himself to Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." (P. 115 f.) In the same issue Prof. A. E. Deitz writes: "The question arises as to how far this assurance concerning the origin and reliability of the Bible extends. Does it cover all that is in the Bible? . . . The presence of some doubtful matters at the circumference of Bible teaching should not be allowed to throw any shadow over the great central region of unquestioned assurance and certitude." (P. 129 ff.) And in the January issue Prof. M. H. Valentine voices his dissent from the "Missouri doctrine of verbal inspiration." He refuses to accept the statement that "all those who deny the verbal inspiration of the Bible and substitute for it 'personal inspiration' or 'thought inspiration' deny the Scriptural doctrine of inspiration altogether" (p. 83). The *Lutheran Church Quarterly* has made its position clear. Its editors and the writers just quoted are determined that the doctrine of verbal inspiration, which identifies Scripture and the Word of God and posits an absolutely infallible and inerrant Bible, shall have no place in the Lutheran Church. That doctrine, says Dr. Flack, must be dropped if the Lutherans are to unite.

That is plain language. Those who believe that the Bible is verbally inspired, meaning that every word of Holy Scripture issued from the mouth of God, the holy penmen writing down what God gave them to write, use equally plain language. They will not unite with those who deny the verbal inspiration of the Bible. The *Theological Forum* declared in its October, 1934, issue: "One of the grave dangers that are threatening the Christian Church to-day is that many who profess to be its members no longer accept the Bible as God's inspired Word. Even among Lutherans strange sounds are sometimes heard regarding this subject. 'There are some Lutheran theologians who find it rather difficult to declare unequivocally their exact position on the doctrine of the verbal inspiration of the Bible. To some of these it seems an unpleasant task to make their position clear, and often the distinction in sounds is such that it is impossible to say what has been piped or harped.' Let us bear in mind that a correct understanding of the nature of the Christian Church requires acceptance of the Bible as God's inspired Word in the sense that our fathers accepted it." (P. 187.) (Be it noted that the *Lutheran Church Quarterly* of 1935 has succeeded in making its position clear.) The *Lu-*

theran Herald wrote on June 11, 1935, referring to the April number of the *Lutheran Church Quarterly:* "The consequence [of these statements] will be to discredit the old inspiration teachings of the Lutheran Church and open the door to doubts and questions as to the reliability of the Bible. . . . Our Confessions took it for granted that the Bible is the Word of God and speak about the 'Scripture of the Holy Ghost.' . . . We are afraid of any theories which raise questions as to the inerrancy of the Bible. It has worked havoc in many churches. *Vestigia terrent,* which means: 'The footsteps frighten me,' said the fox as he saw that there were no footsteps backward from the lion's lair." And Dr. M. Reu states: "*Ich fuerchte, mit der Veroeffentlichung dieses Werkes und der Billigung und Empfehlung desselben durch die offizielle Behoerde ist fuer andere lutherische Kirchenkoerper die Tuer zur gegenseitigen Anerkennung in dem Augenblick zugemacht worden, da sie sich eben zu oeffnen schien.*" (*Kirchliche Zeitschrift,* June, 1935, p. 383.) The books referred to are *The Old Testament; The New Testament,* by Herbert C. Alleman. These books, written by a professor at the Gettysburg Seminary, endorsed by the Parish and Church Board of the United Lutheran Church and commended by the *Lutheran,* take the same position as that championed by the professors writing in the *Lutheran Church Quarterly.* Their modernistic trend has been shown up in the Concordia Theological Monthly, April, 1935. (Definitely does the author insist: 'It is impossible to be dogmatic about Bible dates. The chronology of the Bible is not a matter of divine revelation.' The episodes of Gen. 3 'all are pictures that belong to the naivest folk-lore period of primitive culture.' ") And pointing out that Dr. Alleman's books fail to bring out the fact that Scripture is the product of a special operation of the Holy Spirit Dr. Reu declares: "I fear that the publication of these books and their approbation and recommendation by the official board closes for other Lutheran bodies the door to mutual recognition at the very moment when it seemed to be opening." E.

The Danger of Silence when Divine Truth is Attacked. — When about twelve years ago the so-called Auburn Affirmation was drawn up by Presbyterian clergymen, conservative Christians at once saw its heretical nature, because it declared freedom of acceptance or rejection with respect to the virgin birth of Christ, the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures, the historicity of the miracles of Jesus, the bodily resurrection of Jesus, and the vicarious atonement. Soon after this antichristian document had been put into circulation, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of North America (Northern Presbyterians) was asked to express an opinion on it. This was in 1924. A writer in the Presbyterian tells what happened at the convention of the Assembly in that year.

"This Assembly was organized and controlled by the conservative element of the Church. Dr. C. E. Macartney was moderator; the late Hon. William Jennings Bryan was vice-moderator, and Dr. Maitland Alexander was chairman of the Committee on Bills and Overtures. Mr. Bryan was also a member of this committee.

"The Cincinnati overture was referred to this committee. After a careful and prayerful consideration of the Auburn Affirmation, the committee 'recommended that no action be taken,' all members of the committee con-

curring in the report. No minority report was presented. The Assembly with unanimity adopted the report of the committee.

"If the Auburn Affirmation is heretical, as is sometimes charged, why did the committee, of which two outstanding conservative leaders, Dr. Alexander and Mr. Bryan, were members, recommend that 'no action be taken'? And why did the Assembly with unanimity adopt the report of the committee? This Assembly certainly was not a modernistic assembly. Since, eleven years ago, the Auburn Affirmation was constitutionally adjudicated by a conservative General Assembly, why continue to refer to it as the 'heretical Auburn Affirmation'?"

If the correspondent of the *Presbyterian* is correct in his statement of the facts, much of the blame for the confusion which is now reigning in Presbyterian circles must be placed at the door of the conservative General Assembly of 1924. A.

Answer to the President's Letter.

York, Nebr., October 17, 1935.

The Hon. Franklin D. Roosevelt,
Washington, D. C.

MR. PRESIDENT: —

In reply to your recent letter to pastors for information and counsel we, the undersigned, all being members of the Evangelical Lutheran Missouri Synod and residing in Seward, York, and Hamilton counties, respective, of this State, beg to submit the following: —

With regard to the information desired, the opinion of the people in this section of Nebraska as to the practicability and advantages of the Social Security Legislation enacted by the present Administration, naturally is divided.

As to supplying you, Mr. President, with counsel and advice in matters politic, the only advice that we would offer is this: Let our Hon. President and all his governmental officials perform their duties of office according to the sound reasoning of good common sense, not according to the desires of any particular religious denomination. We are convinced that it is not in the province of any clergyman to venture any more specific counsel. Clergymen should be experts in the spiritual sphere, but are mere laymen in matters of State. As spiritual advisers we must not bring our high calling into disrepute by mixing into politics. We would deem it extremely dangerous to seek advice from governmental officials in matters pertaining to Church. We deem it equally dangerous as clergymen to permit ourselves to become advisers of State.

Moreover, Mr. President, we, realizing the tremendous problems you are facing during these abnormal times, as clergymen want to aid you most loyally in two different ways: —

1. Believing with Daniel Webster, "Whatever makes men good Christians makes them also good citizens," we intend to continue to preach the Gospel and conscientiously to devote ourselves to the duties of our high calling.

2. As in the past, so in the future we intend most fervently to offer up prayer in all our churches for our Government, especially for the Presi-

dent of the United States, that our gracious God and Savior may grant him a wise and understanding heart for the performance of all his official duties, so that all his honest efforts may be crowned with success. We are,

Yours very respectfully,
(Signed individually by all the pastors of the Seward Regional Conference.)

Southern Nebraska District Messenger.

American Lutheran Theologian Deceased. — Hamma Divinity School of Wittenberg College, Springfield, O., mourns the passing of Prof. John Frederick Krueger, who held the chair of New Testament Philology and Criticism. He was born in 1881 in East India, where his parents served as missionaries. Among other important positions which he held can be mentioned that of a professorship in Western Theological Seminary, the presidency of this seminary and of Midland College, now located in Fremont, Nebr., and the presidency of the United Lutheran Mission in Shantung, China. At the time of his death he was a member of the special Commission on Relations to Other American Lutheran Church-bodies.

A.

II. Ausland.

Australia Complains of Offense against Decency. — It is surely a sign of the moral corruption into which we as a nation are rapidly sinking deeper and deeper that it was necessary for a deputation to wait on the Victorian Premier, urging that immediate steps be taken to suppress the circulation of printed matter relative to devices used for the purpose of birth control. The deputation complained about the display in show-windows and indiscriminate sale of certain articles which are a powerful aid to immorality. Some of those who traffic in such goods have become so degenerate that they place samples and explanatory literature in decent people's letter-boxes and even enlighten schoolchildren on their use. Isaiah complained in his days: "Except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah." It looks as if society to-day were drifting into a condition that would have made even the people of Sodom blush for shame.

The Australian Lutheran.

Turkey Forbids Freemasonry. — As in Russia, Germany, and Italy, Freemasonry has ceased to exist in Turkey. Technically the lodges, or rather their grand master, the president of the state-owned Building Bank, pronounced their dissolution, but the general opinion is that this measure was inspired by the government. Legally speaking, the latter would have been entitled to close the lodges on the strength of the law, passed several months ago, forbidding the existence in Turkey of associations with headquarters abroad. The Turkish 1908 revolution and the overthrowing of imperial despotism had their root in Freemasonry. Since the end of the war the extreme wing of Turkish nationalism, as represented by several leading personalities, has been adverse to the lodges, fearing them both as a possible rival organization to the people's party, Turkey's sole party, and as a channel through which foreign political influence might assert itself. The property of the lodge becomes state property.

The Christian Century (correspondence from Istanbul).

