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Theological Observer — Kirchlich-Zeitgeschichtliches

I. Amerika

Is the **Episcopalian Complimenting or Censuring the Lutherans?**—Reviewing the *New Testament Commentary*, edited by Dr. H. C. Alleman, the *Living Church* of February 6, 1937, writes: "It is a Lutheran principle—largely realized in practise—that all preaching and teaching should rest directly on the Bible as the sole rule of faith, and the result is an extraordinary dexterity in the handling of Biblical passages; Lutherans are trained to make the text immediately available for practical ends. This training is likewise manifest in the present volume, where the comment is not presented in detached notes, but in continuous exposition that weaves the exegesis into the problems of present-day life. American Lutheranism may well pride itself in assembling twenty-eight scholars capable of sustaining throughout the high level of this volume; could any other denomination do the same? Since American Lutheranism also prides itself on its conservatism in Biblical matters, a markedly conservative note is only to be expected." That is high praise for Lutheranism. Lutheranism is indeed committed to the *sola Scriptura*. When the Episcopalian writer recognizes that, we feel highly complimented. And we shall take this statement, too, as a compliment that "American Lutheranism prides itself on its conservatism in Biblical matters." The prominent groups in European Lutheranism stand for liberalism in Biblical matters. We do not. We are glad, too, to note that this reviewer finds "a markedly conservative note" in this commentary.

But the reviewer feels himself compelled to add something to this. And we do not know whether what he adds is meant as praise or censure. The *Living Church* is none too conservative itself, and we do not know whether the reviewer is in sympathy with the men responsible for the *New Testament Commentary* or is reprimanding them—perhaps reprimanding them for being out of harmony with the old Lutheran spirit—when he proceeds: "Yet it is not vigorously maintained. Dr. Berkemeyer, for instance, who edits the Pastoral Epistles, states frankly that these letters are sub-Pauline; they display 'the intuition of authority rather than the authority of intuition.' Dr. Stamm, in an extremely able treatment of St. Mark, recognizes explicitly the difference between the evangelist's material and the purpose for which it is used. Dr. Flack in his comments on Revelation writes entirely from the standpoint of historical apocalyptic. And while Dr. Alleman's introduction is conservative in its conclusions, the selection of material in the commentary is such as to avoid the more burning critical problems. . . ." The reviewer points out that the markedly conservative note "is not rigorously maintained." He means to say that some decidedly liberal notes are sounded. And he is right. On pages 581 and 582 Prof. W. C. Berkemeyer presents "the most decisive argument against the Pauline authorship" of the Pastoral Epistles. "We must conclude that behind them and in them there is a genuine Pauline tradition. . . . They are sub-Pauline, but based on genuine Pauline notes." Most likely Luke wrote these letters and simply

substituted Paul's name for his own. "It seemed legitimate in that age to put words on the lips of a man whose mind was being interpreted." And the letters were not addressed to the historical Timothy and Titus. And so "we shall do well to enter into the spirit of the writer and therefore regard them generally as if they came from the hand and brain of Paul and were addressed to his two fellow-workers Timothy and Titus." Now we understand why these men abhor the article of the verbal inspiration of Scripture. You cannot expect Professor Berkemeyer to make the Holy Spirit the author of this *fraus pia*. We submit in this connection some of Professor Berkemeyer's remarks on 2 Tim. 3, 16. "Note that the only true inspiration and the only true authority which is claimed for the Scriptures is spiritual; and it is the spirit of man alone which can discern God's Spirit and thereby recognize this inspiration. In his work Timothy can use any writing which is thus recognized as inspired of God and therefore authoritative with regard to the things of the Spirit. 'The best test of the inspiration of any writing is its serviceableness for the moral and spiritual needs of men' (White)." — In *Conc. Theol. Month.*, 1936, p. 610, the shocking story of the editing of Mark's gospel by a contributor to the *Lutheran Church Quarterly* (April, 1936) is told. This editor finds that some of the incidents related by Mark concerning the cursing of the fig-tree (chap. 11) never really happened. Mark's story originated when "some day some brother with the gift of insight, as he would probably put it, and with singular zeal for the authority of the Christ" added certain features to the story as originally, truthfully, told. "Perhaps it was Mark himself. . . . He failed to edit out the incongruities." One is naturally curious about what the *New Testament Commentary* thinks of Mark's story. Prof. R. T. Stamm writes: "All of these explanations spring from a mistaken literalism which fails to see that what was originally a parable of judgment as in Luke 13, 6-9 has here undergone a process of dramatization. They shatter on the simple observation that green figs are inedible and that figs in Palestine do not ripen before June. It is therefore better to take the story of the cursing of the fig-tree as having been a parable of judgment." (P. 282.) Take also the story of the man with an unclean spirit, Mark 1, 23-26. "Judging from the symptoms described, it may have been what we call hysteria. But that was not Mark's explanation nor that of Jesus and the people of His day. For them it was a living, personal spirit, or demon, having a rarefied physical organism which could penetrate into a man's body by way of his mouth or his nose or other openings and so take possession of him that he became its slave."

Yes, there are very pronounced and distinct liberal notes in this commentary. Much conservative theology, too. But the *Living Church* reviewer felt that, to be fair, he would have to take note of the liberal elements. What we do not know is whether he thinks these liberal elements mar the book or enhance its value. His review bears the caption "A New Testament Commentary of Great Value." E.

Either Verbal Inspiration or No Reliable Principium Cognoscendi.— Last year we quoted several times from Professor Loraine Boettner's fine articles on the Christian doctrine concerning the Bible which were

published in *Christianity Today*. From the "conclusion" of this excellent series of articles (in which, of course, we do not subscribe to every expression and statement), entitled "The Plenary Inspiration of the Bible: Conclusion" (December, 1936), we offer a few more excerpts because they set forth certain vital truths which merit special consideration today also in our own Lutheran circles. We read: "Sometimes those who hold a low view of inspiration attempt to evade the issue by merely saying that the Bible contains the Word of God. This loose formula, however, means practically nothing. A river in India 'rolling down its golden sands' certainly contains gold. But just what the relative proportion is between the sand and the gold may be very hard to determine. If the Bible only contains the Word of God, as even the Modernist is willing to admit, then certainly it may lack a great deal of being infallible, and we are then left to the mercies of 'higher criticism' or to our own individual opinions as to just which elements are the words of God and which are only the words of man. As Dr. Clarence E. Macartney has recently said, 'Those who have departed from faith in an infallible Bible have made desperate, but utterly vain efforts to secure a suitable substitute and other standing-ground. But as time goes by, the pathetic hopelessness of this effort is more and more manifest. Such catchwords as 'progressive revelation,' 'personal experience,' 'devotion to truth,' etc., are one by one being cast into the discard. Modernism and Liberalism, by the confession of their own adherents, are terribly bankrupt; nothing but 'cracked cisterns,' into which men lower in vain their vessels for the Water of Life. *There is no possible substitute for an inspired Bible* [italics our own]. No one can preach with the power and influence of him who draws a sword bathed in heaven and who goes into the pulpit with a 'Thus saith the Lord' back of him. When man faces the overwhelming facts of sin, passion, pain, sorrow, death, and the beyond-death, the glib and easy phrases of current Modernism and flippant Liberalism are found to be nothing but a broken reed. Therefore he who preaches historic Christianity and takes his stand upon a divine revelation has, amid the storms and confusions and darkness of our present day, an incomparable position. There are not wanting signs today that men will return to the Holy Scripture, to drink again of the Water of Life and strengthen their souls with the Bread of Life, and that a prodigal Church, sick of the husks of the far country, will return to its Father's house. Those who reject the church doctrine of inspiration in favor of some lowered form have never been able to agree among themselves as to which parts of the Bible are inspired and which are not, or to what extent any part is inspired. If this high doctrine of verbal inspiration is rejected, there is no consistent stopping-place short of saying that the Scripture writers were inspired only as was Shakespeare or Milton or Tennyson; and in fact some of the critics have consistently followed out their premises and have reached that conclusion. We submit, however, that, if the other miracles recorded in Scripture be accepted, there is no logical reason for rejecting the miracle of inspiration, for inspiration is simply a miracle in the realm of speaking or writing. Most of the objections which are brought against the doctrine [of verbal inspiration] today can be traced more or less

clearly to the assumption that the supernatural is impossible." When we compare these fine Biblical statements on the doctrine of inspiration with the downright modernistic teachings which in recent years have appeared again and again in periodicals of the United Lutheran Church, we can understand the criticism made not so very long ago by a non-Lutheran, that "there is more Modernism in some Lutheran circles than in the Reformed churches of our country." It is to the reproach of all Lutherans if we must admit the truth of that declaration. At any rate, the time has come when *all* Lutherans must take up the study of the doctrine of Biblical inspiration and confess it in terms as clear (if not clearer) as those of the Reformed theologian Dr. L. Boettner. J. T. M.

Brief Items.—The Board of Directors of Auburn Theological Seminary (Presbyterian), Auburn, N. Y., recently elected a new president, the fourth one. It is Dr. Paul Heath, a Presbyterian minister of Wilkes-Barre, Pa. He succeeds Dr. H. L. Reed, who retires after thirty-four years' service. The plan to erect a building on the campus of the Rochester Colgate Divinity School, Rochester, N. Y., a Baptist institution with which the Auburn Seminary is to be affiliated, will be pushed. This is unionism *kat' exochen*.—As a gesture of friendship the Archbishop of York, who will prominently assist at the coronation of George VI, has chosen the son of the presiding bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States to be one of his chaplains when the great ceremony is enacted. This means that there is at least one American who will get a good view of the proceedings.—The list of waiting candidates of our sister Synod of Wisconsin has dwindled down to seventeen names, and some of these young men are already temporarily employed. We are glad to see that the situation is improving.—How cheering and faith-strengthening is not the venture of that Lutheran grandmother in New Mexico belonging to Pastor Arnold Meyer's church in Las Vegas, who in a part of the granary which was arranged as a small schoolroom installed a Christian day-school teacher for her four grandsons! That is the faith which overcomes the world.—A chance remark of a Protestant Episcopal dean reported in the papers shows that his church-body operates fourteen theological schools. He maintains that five would be plenty and that for the good of the Church combinations should be made resulting in that number.—In Memphis the Baptists prevented the holding of services by the Federal Council Preaching Mission. They discerned its true character more clearly than some Lutherans we have read about.—On February 2 Princeton Theological Seminary installed its new president, John Alexander Mackay. Dr. Mackay did notable work as a missionary in South America.—A reviewer in the *Presbyterian*, writing on the book of Emil Brunner entitled *Our Faith*, says: "While studying under Professor Brunner last summer at the University of Zurich, the reviewer met an English student at the university who told him that he had taken a complete course of three years in one of the English divinity schools. He said that at the end of those three years he had not the slightest knowledge of what the Gospel was which he was supposed to get out and preach. His study of eight months with Professor Brunner had remedied that situation, and I found him enthusiastic over his first

genuine understanding of the Gospel of the Mediator." This eloquently testifies to the confusion reigning in English divinity schools today. Too bad that Brunner could not lead this inquirer into the whole truth of God's Word!—From Greece comes the news that the so-called Zoe (life) Movement has resulted in the organization of many Sunday-schools, where thousands of children are instructed in the teachings of the Bible. Even prominent leaders of the Church are now assuming a favorable attitude toward the movement, and many of the priests urge that the Scriptures be read. An account quoted by the *Presbyterian* says: "There has been a strange awakening of priests to the significant influence of the Scriptures upon the people, while they themselves have been fettered by dead formalism for so many years."—It is a little more than two hundred years ago that the Salzburgers were fiercely persecuted in Austria and driven from their homes. At present there is a resurgence of the Roman Catholic offensive against Protestantism in Austria. The present Austrian government is proving itself a loyal servant of the Roman Catholic hierarchy and making life for the Protestant minority, which numbers about four hundred thousand in a population of six million, quite difficult and miserable. We are told that in certain instances the erection of churches has been forbidden, that Bible-class meetings have been prohibited, that pastors have been interfered with in their endeavor to give religious instruction, and that criticism of the Roman Catholic Church has been punished with arrest. It costs something to be a Protestant Christian in Austria today.—From a pamphlet issued by the Conference on Education and Race Relations of Atlanta, Ga., the *Lutheran* quotes some interesting statistics on the Negroes of our country. In 1930, so we are told, the Negro population of the United States numbered 11,891,143, or a little less than one-tenth of the total population. The white population increased a little faster than the colored, with the result that "the proportion of Negroes in the total was smaller in 1930 than ever before in the nation's history. In 1790 this proportion was 19.3, or practically one in five; in 1930 it had fallen to 9.7, or not quite one in ten." "Of the 882,850 Negro farm operators reported by the 1930 census, 7,911 were landless renters and tenants. Only one in two hundred of these families had a telephone, and but one in three hundred had water and lights in the home. More than three-fourths of their houses were valued at less than five hundred dollars each." These are figures which should arouse our heartfelt sympathy.—From the *Brethren Evangelist* one of our exchanges quotes this report: "A year ago in X. we stopped all suppers and rummage sales and discontinued our solicitation among the business men and went on the tithing plan. Since then the income of the local church has increased five hundred per cent. over any and all previous years. All bills have been paid, and the church has a surplus of one thousand dollars. The attendance has increased three hundred per cent., and five hundred have been added to the membership."—How eagerly magazine writers who no longer accept the Holy Scriptures use opportunities of discrediting the Bible is shown by an article in the *American Weekly* on Belshazzar's feast. It is stated that Nebuchadnezzar never had a son by the name of Belshazzar and that Babylon fell to Cyrus and not to Darius the Mede. The critic has to admit that

"essentially the story seems to be based on historical facts." He maintains, however, that persons and events belonging to different times are mixed up. That according to prevalent usage Belshazzar could very well be called the son of Nebuchadnezzar because he was one of his descendants and that Darius the Mede was in the employ of Cyrus are facts which, ignorantly or maliciously, are suppressed. A.

II. Ausland

Die Einsamkeit des Luthertums. Einen sehr interessanten, lehrreichen und zeitgemäßen Artikel von Landesbischof a. D. D. Dr. Schöffel, betitelt „Tragik und Triumph des Luthertums“ (ursprünglich ein Vortrag, gehalten auf der Evangelischen Woche in Flensburg), bietet die „Kirchliche Zeitschrift“ (Jahrg. 61, Nr. 2) ihren Lesern dar. Wir sind D. Neu dafür dankbar, daß er uns diesen fein durchdachten, auch für unsere amerikanischen Verhältnisse wertvolle Winke an die Hand gebenden Aufsatz unterbreitet hat, tut uns doch gerade jetzt wieder die Erinnerung sehr not, daß das Luthertum gerade in seiner Isolierung von allen störenden Faktoren seinen Triumph feiert. Drei Bewegungen waren es vornehmlich, wie der Schreiber ausführt, die sich Luther auf dem Höhepunkt seiner reformatorischen Wirksamkeit zudrängten und die er doch alle ablehnen mußte, eben weil sie nicht dem Evangelium, dem sola fide, dienten: die Ritterbewegung (hier besonders Ulrich von Hutten, Franz von Sickingen usw.), die Bauernbewegung und die humanistische Bewegung, mit Erasmus voran. Aus diesen Ablehnungen mußte sich für Luther notwendigerweise eine geradezu tragische Einsamkeit ergeben („Luther wurde plötzlich aus allen Verbindungen herausgestoßen, in eine namenlose Verlassenheit“). „Luther mußte sich von Menschen lösen, die ihm lieb waren; aber was noch unendlich schmerzlicher war: von all dem Großen und Gewaltigen, das gerade damals durch das deutsche Volk brauste und nach Luther schrie.“ Aber just so kam Luthers reformatorisches Wirken zum Sieg, „daß es in die tiefste Tiefe geschleudert wurde“. „Erst aus solchem Dunkel und solchen Wirrnissen heraus stieg es zu seinem einzigartigen Triumph hervor.“ Der einsame Luther ist gerade eben der Reformator geworden, zu dem sich schließlich das wahrhaft Christliche doch wieder hindrängte, als alle pseudoreformatorischen Bewegungen ihren Krach erlebt hatten.“ Am es kurz zu sagen, sie lehrten fast alle zurück: die Ritter und Bauern und die Gebildeten, und lernten die Wahrheit. Menschen ohne Zahl sind selig geworden durch die reine Wahrheit des Evangeliums, die Luther erkämpft hat; und das ist der Triumph des Luthertums.“ — Auch wir in Amerika haben unsere drei pseudoreformatorischen Bewegungen, die sich uns aufdrängen: eine humanistische Bewegung, die ganz antilutherisch eingestellte „moderne Theologie“, die die Vernunft zum principium cognoscendi und die Bibel zum Objekt ihrer Vernunftskritik macht, eine Bauernbewegung, die sich besonders in unserer social gospel-Bewegung breitmacht, und eine Ritterbewegung, die man in Verbindungen wie der des Föderalkonzils der Kirchen Christi in Amerika klar erkennen muß. Die Formen sind wohl anders, aber die Substanz ist doch dieselbe. Und diese Bewegungen richten sich im Grunde alle gegen das sola gratia, worin Luthers Kirchenreformation doch eigentlich ihr Wesen gehabt hat und worin auch noch heute das reformatorische Luthertum sein formale führt. Kurz, will heute das bekennnistreue Luthertum

„der reinen Wahrheit des Evangeliums“ dienen, so muß es die „namenlose Einsamkeit“ auf sich nehmen, die alles strift ausschließt, das nicht von Gott ist; denn darin steckt der Triumph des reinen Luthertums, daß es bei Gottes Wort bleibt.
J. L. M.

Centenary of Mar Thoma Syrian Church.—The southwestern coast of India witnessed the celebration of the centenary of the reformation effected in the ancient Syrian Church in Travancore and Cochin. "Before the arrival of the Portuguese on the west coast of India, in the early years of the sixteenth century, the Syrian Church flourished as a united body, maintaining fellowship with the Eastern churches of Mesopotamia and Syria, as far as such fellowship was possible in those days of slow and unsafe travel and communications. With the coming of the Portuguese into political power the Church was brought under the dominion of Rome, mainly by the use of force. One means taken to bring this to pass was the setting up of the inquisition, by the authority of the Pope, in Goa. After about three generations of Roman dominion the Church asserted her independence and threw off the Roman yoke; but relationship was established with the Jacobite Syrian Church, which had its headquarters at Antioch. Early in the nineteenth century the Church Missionary Society sent a mission of help to the Church, but the missionaries, being of a low evangelical type, could not long cooperate with the bishops of the Syrian Church. Under the influence of the Church Missionary Society missionaries, however, a small group in the Church became alive to the existence of beliefs and practises mostly introduced by the Roman Catholics. This group began to use a revised liturgy and refused to pray to the Virgin Mary and the saints and set their face against other abuses. This brought them into conflict with the authorities of the Jacobite Church and led to the formation of the reformed churches, now known as the Mar Thoma Syrian Church. This Church now has a membership of over 150,000 and is very active in evangelistic work. It is an Episcopal Church presided over by Indian bishops, who are elected by the General Assembly of the Church. It is perhaps the only church-body in India which is independent of any foreign ecclesiastical authority; for the Jacobite Syrian Church still acknowledges the Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch (now living at Mosul) as its head, and the Anglican and other Protestant churches have to look to their mother churches in England and America for guidance on all important matters."—Correspondence from India in the *Christian Century*.

Developments in Germany.—While it is hardly possible at this time to say much about what is happening in Germany just now with respect to the relations between Church and State, our readers will be glad to be given the version of Hitler's decree as it appeared in our press. "In view of the inability of the Reich Church Commission to reestablish harmony among the groups of the German Evangelical Church, opportunity is now to be afforded the Church in complete freedom and according to its own determination to give itself a new constitution and through it a state of order." For the present we can only say that future events will be awaited and observed with the greatest interest.
A.

Reformierte Opposition gegen Barth und Genossen. Die Generalsynode der Gereformeerde Kerken in Amsterdam beschloß: die Synode möge eine nicht allzu umfangreiche Schrift an die auswärtigen reformierten Kirchen senden, in der kurz und bündig dargetan wird, daß die sogenannte dialektische Theologie dem reformierten Bekenntnis durchaus widerstreitet, und in der in aller Bescheidenheit zur Wachsamkeit ermahnt wird. Zugleich sollen Theologen gebeten werden, Artikel gegen diese Theologie in ausländischen Zeitschriften zu veröffentlichen. (Allg. Ev.-Luth. Kirchenzeitung)

Regarding the Royal Declaration Oath.—In the "Open Letter" department of the *Lutheran* a reader submits two forms of the declaration oath which a British sovereign must take before Parliament at the opening of the first session of his reign. The original form, used by King Edward VII on February 14, 1901, reads: "I do solemnly and sincerely, in the presence of God, profess, testify, and declare that I do believe that in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper there is not any transubstantiation of the elements of bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ at or after the consecration thereof by any person whatsoever and that the invocation, or adoration, of the Virgin Mary or any other saint and the sacrifice of the Mass as they are now used in the Church of Rome are superstitious and idolatrous. And I do solemnly declare that I do make this declaration and every part thereof in the plain and ordinary sense of the words read unto me, as they are commonly understood by English Protestants, without any evasion, equivocation, or mental reservation whatsoever and without any dispensation already granted me for this purpose by the Pope or any other authority or person whatsoever or without thinking that I am or can be acquitted before God or man or absolved of this declaration or any part thereof, although the Pope or any other person or persons or power whatsoever shall dispense with, or annul, the same or declare that it was null and void from the beginning." The later form of the declaration oath, which was adopted "by Parliament in 1910, after King Edward's coronation, when some Roman Catholic members of Parliament sought a change in the wording of the oath," was used by George V and will perhaps be employed also by the present ruling sovereign. It reads: "I, George, do solemnly and sincerely, in the presence of God, profess, testify, and declare that I am a faithful Protestant, and I will, according to the true intent of the enactments which secure the Protestant succession to the throne of my realm, uphold and maintain the said enactments to the best of my powers according to law." In this radical alteration of the declaration oath we see reflected the growing influence of Romanism in England (the old form was protested by Roman Catholic members of the House of Commons and by a small band of the House of Lords) as well as the decreasing interest in doctrinal matters among English Episcopalians. In view of the coronation of the new king of England the question is certainly one of interest to many.

J. T. M.