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## Theological Observer. - Kirchlich-Zeitgeschichtliches

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**Theological Observer — Kirchlich-Zeitgeschichtliches**


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**I. Amerika****The Denial of the Inspiration of Holy Scripture a Fundamental Error.**

The *Presbyterian* of June 10 writes: "Christianity is founded upon a divine revelation, a revelation that is therefore authoritative in all matters pertaining to faith and practise. Apart from this foundation upon a God-given Book there would be no certainty of salvation, no true hope of eternal life and no clear authority as to the moral requirements of God. But since Christianity claims to be the one true religion, she has always established herself upon an infallible, inerrant revelation that God has given to men under the guidance and control of the Holy Spirit. In view of this fundamental doctrine of the inspiration of the Scriptures a serious problem is confronting the Presbyterian denomination. A large number of the recent graduates of our seminaries who are coming into the active ministry and becoming the pastors of many of our churches do not accept the doctrine of the verbal, or plenary, inspiration of the Scriptures. The 'higher criticism' of modern scholarship, which is so wide-spread today, has succeeded in permeating their minds with doubt and skepticism and is destroying their faith in the Word of God. It is a serious question that we must face. The Confession of Faith does not distinguish between the great spiritual truths of the Bible and the historical facts and details that are recorded; it does not grant more authority to the ethical teachings of Jesus than it does to the writings of St. Paul; nor does it separate the passages that speak of God's love from those that record His wrath and justice and say that the former are divinely inspired and that the others are false ideas of bigoted Jewish writers. But the Confession of Faith of our Church accepts the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as a complete whole and says of them, as a whole, that they are the Word of God. . . . If one does not accept the full authority and inspiration of the Scriptures, but sets himself up as the standard by which he selects those portions of the Bible to which he ascribes divine inspiration, then the Supreme Judge is no longer the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scriptures, but the individual man himself. Recently a candidate for the ministry who does not accept the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures admitted to the writer that the standard which he used in finding those portions of the Bible that, he felt, were divinely inspired was his own conception or idea of God. When one comes to such a view of the Scriptures as this young man has, he ceases to believe that the Bible is the infallible rule of faith and practise. . . . If we lose this trust in the full and complete authority of the Holy Scriptures, there will be little left to our religion. The infallibility of Christ stands or falls with the infallibility of the written Word, and if we lose one, we must give up the other. Let those who love the Christ of a complete God-inspired revelation affirm and defend their belief in this foundational doctrine. May the ministers of the Gospel, whose duty it is to proclaim the message of Almighty God as it is revealed to



us in the Scriptures as the infallible, inerrant, divinely inspired and God-given Word of Truth."

"A serious problem is confronting the Presbyterian denomination," and the same fundamental error is disturbing the Lutheran Church. There are many Lutheran seminaries in Europe and America whose graduates have been filled with aversion to the Biblical doctrine of the verbal inspiration. Prominent men in the Lutheran Church are spreading the doctrine that only parts of the Bible are inspired, only those passages which deal with Christ directly. They absolutely refuse to subscribe to the teaching that Holy Scripture is in every way inerrant. And that is a fundamental error, an error which cannot be tolerated in the Church one moment. For "if it cannot be said that the Bible is the Word of God, but only that it contains it, the authority of the Scriptures is set aside, and the consequence is that, faith in the inspiration of the Scriptures being lost, faith in Christ, of whom the Scriptures testify, will also be lost." (C. H. Little, *Disputed Doctrines*, p. 19.) "The denial of the doctrine of inspiration is the subversion of Christian theology. Yielding the doctrine of inspiration, Christian theology would lose its only source, the word of Scripture. If the Bible is no longer the infallible Word of God, but only a fallible record of the things which it relates, the *loci classici* and the *dicta probantia* have lost their force." (F. Bente, *Lehre und Wehre*, 1902, p. 130.) There are those among American Lutheran theologians "who do not yet dare to regard the Bible as the Word of God and to treat the objective Word of God as the only principle of theological knowledge. By their denial of verbal inspiration — and there is no other kind of Scripture inspiration — the whole order of things in theology still remains turned topsyturvy in principle. When determining what is Christian doctrine, these theologians do not take their stand on Scripture as the deciding factor, but on their 'experience' or on their human ego. This should not be overlooked by the American Lutheran Church." (F. Pieper, *Conversion and Election*, p. 89.) "With the Biblical doctrine of the inspiration of Holy Scripture stands and falls the certainty, truth, and divine character of Scripture itself and of the entire Christian religion." (C. F. W. Walther. See *CONC. THEOL. MTHLY.*, 1936, p. 732.) "Darum heisst's rund und rein, ganz und alles geglaubt oder nichts geglaubt. Der Heilige Geist laesst sich nicht trennen noch teilen, dass er ein Stueck sollte wahrhaftig und das andere falsch lehren oder glauben lassen. . . . Des wird mich (achte auch wohl, auch keinen vernuenftigen Menschen) niemand bereden ewiglich, dass ein Mensch (so er anders ein Mensch ist, der bei Vernunft ist) sollt' mit Ernst glauben koennen einem Buch oder Schrift, davon er gewiss waere, dass ein Teil (schweige denn drei Teile) erlogen waere, dazu nicht wissen muesste, welches unterschiedlich wahr oder nicht wahr waere, und also im Sack kaufen muesste." (M. Luther, XX, 1781. 2275.) "Wo das Buch endet, da endet die Kirche." (M. Luther, Erl. Ed., 26, p. 100.) Let those who love the Christian Church, let those who love Christ and the Gospel, affirm and defend their belief in the fundamental doctrine of verbal inspiration!

E.



**Freedom of Choice.**—In the Question Box of the *Lutheran Companion* this question and answer appeared:

**“Question:** “There has always been a question in my mind about the meaning of Acts 13, 48. Can it be that we cannot change from sinners to God’s elect?”—*M. L.*

**“Answer:** The verse in question reads thus: ‘And as the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the Word of God; and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.’

“This sentence from the *Expositor’s Greek Testament* states my own opinion about this verse: ‘There is no countenance here for the *absolutum decretum* of the Calvinists, since v. 46 had already shown that the Jews had acted through their own choice.’ In v. 46 Paul says to the Jews: ‘Seeing ye thrust it from you and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.’ Kretzmann, in his *Popular Commentary on the New Testament*, has a similar statement: ‘They believed, not all, but as many as were ordained, or appointed, unto eternal life by God, not in consequence of an absolute decree, but in Christ Jesus, through the redemption in His blood. Their belief was the result of this gracious determination and foreknowledge, predestination, of God, which is spoken of at length in other passages of Scripture, Eph. 1, 3—6; Rom. 8, 28—30.’

“God does not compel any one to believe (an absolute decree), nor does He prevent any one from believing; but no one can believe except by the power of the Holy Spirit, on the basis of the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. The ‘ordained to eternal life’ were those who did not resist the Holy Spirit, but yielded and believed when He gave the power to believe. God knew beforehand who they were; but He did not bind the will of any one so that they could not believe. Rather, sin had bound man’s will as well as blinded man’s eyes, so that true faith was impossible; the Holy Spirit, through the Word of God, breaks the chains and pierces the blindness and gives man the power to believe unto salvation. But the Holy Spirit does not compel some to believe and others to disbelieve. The first result of the Holy Spirit’s ministry is to put man in the position of Adam before the Fall. It restores to him a power that was lost, the power of a true freedom of choice. The responsibility for continued unbelief is entirely man’s own; the glory, if he believes in Christ unto salvation, is God’s alone, who through His Word gave man the power to believe. Let each sinner be assured that, when he hears the Word of God, it comes to him in power and that he has a real chance to believe in Christ unto eternal life.”

Thus far the *Lutheran Companion*. While the purpose of the writer is good, endeavoring to show that the view of the Calvinists is wrong, a serious error has crept into his presentation when he says: “The first result of the Holy Spirit’s ministry is to put man in the position of Adam before the Fall.” There is no Scriptural warrant for a view of that kind; on the contrary, when the Word of God describes conversion as the creation of spiritual life in a person (for instance, Eph. 2), it definitely excludes the position in question. A.



**Tributes to Dr. Machen.**—The value of an essentially honest position is signally demonstrated by the many tributes which his enemies have paid the late bold foe of Modernism, Dr. J. Gresham Machen, after his death. Ernest Gordon, in his "Survey of Religious Life and Thought" in the *Sunday-school Times* of May 8, 1937, writes on this point: "One could hardly find two men more opposed to what Machen stood for than the Unitarian Dr. Dieffenbach and the one-time editor of the *American Mercury*, H. L. Mencken. The former, in his tribute, spoke of Dr. Machen as 'as learned and valiant a spiritual warrior as the Protestant Church has produced in modern times'; and after describing the caricatures of him which were current, he adds: 'Gresham Machen was a gentleman. That is the word.' Mr. Mencken also pays tribute to 'his great learning and remarkable clarity.' With his traducers he deals in no tender terms: 'These Dr. Machen had by the ear,' he declares. 'They sought to retain membership in the fellowship while presuming to repeal the body of doctrine on which that fellowship rested.' Of the 'dis-ingenuous evasions of Modernism' he writes: 'It is my belief that the body of doctrine known as Modernism is completely incompatible not only with anything rationally describable as Christianity, but also with anything deserving to pass as religion in general. Religion, if it is to retain any genuine significance, can never be reduced to a series of sweet attitudes possible to any one not actually in jail for felony. It is, on the contrary, a corpus of powerful and profound convictions, many of them not open to logical analysis. Its inherent improbabilities are not sources of weakness to it but of strength.'" Certainly fine tributes, these, and all the more valuable since they come from men who were personally in sympathy neither with Machen as a man nor with his doctrinal status. Machen's efforts on behalf of the defense of positive Christianity against unbelief were certainly many-sided. He sponsored to the end also a union known as the League of Evangelical Students, which was organized by certain Princeton Theological Seminary students after a session of the Interseminary Movement, in which the deity of Christ had been openly flouted and in which one student had told those present that "Buddha could save as well as Christ." "Those who ventured this new organization," writes Ernest Gordon, "were bitterly opposed by certain Princeton professors. But though to befriend these loyal students meant enmity in high places, Dr. Machen stood openly with them. Their reproach was his reproach. Not for one moment did he forsake those who were standing for the Lord Jesus Christ. Through twelve years he continued one of the League's most faithful friends. When he was needed as a speaker at the League's conventions, he would give liberally of his time and means. Never was an inquiring student neglected. One of his last acts was a lengthy correspondence with a Christian student attending a pagan university. This culminated in his sending to the student a copy of each of the books he had written. This is but one of a countless number of such incidents." J. T. M.

"Why Bother with Dead Languages?" "Why Study Hebrew?"—The *Lutheran Herald*, organ of the United Norwegian Church (March 9, 1937), contains a timely plea for a more efficient and thorough study of



the so-called dead languages, including Latin, with a number of striking quotations from various writers. It says: "The really valuable preparatory course for one who expects to enter the ministry is that of language studies, which enables him to read the literature of the Church." It then quotes Dr. Henry S. Gehman of Princeton, who in the Introduction to a book on the Old Testament by Rev. Paul I. Morentz avers: "In this age, when many of our college students are reared under a system of education that stresses the 'practical' subjects to the neglect of the humanities, our students of theology find that Hebrew and Old Testament exegesis require serious effort and time; in consequence, this fundamental discipline, too often without justification, has been regarded as dull and uninteresting or made elective in a large number of theological seminaries. To speak of an 'educated ministry' unless our theological students are trained in the exegesis of the Word in the original languages is sheer nonsense." Furthermore it quotes Dr. Rudolf Kittel, who says: "If a minister of the Word really wishes to understand the Word of God and to present to his flock the great and inexhaustible riches of this Word, he will find invaluable aid if he can verify his text and Biblical references in the original. To use a commentary with satisfaction absolutely requires a knowledge of Hebrew and Greek." More striking still is another quotation from Dr. S. P. Tregelles, which also is found in Morentz's *The Old Testament*: "A disbelief of the plenary inspiration of Holy Scripture and a neglect of the study of Hebrew are two evils which very extensively and very naturally prevail together. If, in our view, the Bible was only superintended as to matter and not inspired as to terms; and if, in consequence, we virtually consider the text of Scripture not, as we affect to call it, the Word of God, but the word of man, then we shall naturally regard the acquirement of the sacred tongue as of little importance and as scarcely meriting the labor of study. A fair translation will give the general sense; and the general sense is all that we regard as of divine authority. But if we view the Scriptures as literally the Word of God, if we regard it as a book not merely superintended, but suggested by the Holy Ghost [the context indicates that the writer means the *suggestio verbalis*], then surely it will be our object to know exactly what it means, and the sacred language will be studied diligently for that purpose." Finally, the *Herald* quotes Dr. Lewis S. Chafer, president of the Dallas Evangelical Seminary, who says: "The minister should be an able exegete of the Scriptures in the original languages. This competency is possible to the student of average mentality and is imperative if he is ever to speak with authority or exercise a true, worthy leadership in the things of God. Valuable helps are available to those who have not mastered the original languages, and these, it is contended by some, are all a minister needs. No doubt, such helps are a bit more than some ministers seem to need, and if the preacher makes no vital use of the Bible in his ministry, why should the original languages be considered at all? *I have yet to find one man who has mastered the original languages, tasting the depth of the riches which this study unfolds, and who pursues a spiritual ministry, who would sanction anything less than a mastery of these subjects as a preparation for the ministry.*" (Italics our own.)



There is no doubt that the emphasis which is here placed on the study of the ancient languages deserves thorough and conscientious consideration by the entire Lutheran Church in the United States. Luther's prediction that together with the knowledge of the languages in which the Bible was written also the knowledge of theology set forth in these languages will be lost has proved itself true in many cases. At any rate, Modernism and neglect of the Biblical languages, on the one hand, and loyal Christian theology and the thorough study of the ancient languages, on the other, have always gone hand in hand. The plea for greater interest in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin does not mean that we despise the faithful work of such ministers as were unable to acquire these languages on account of the peculiar conditions prevailing at the time when they were preparing for the ministry, but it does mean that no one in the ministry has a right to excuse or even justify the neglect of the ancient languages. The Bible in the original is God's gift to us, and that gift we assuredly dare not treat lightly. To us personally it has always seemed as rather peculiar that some of our best scholars of Hebrew, Greek, and Latin were graduates of our "practical seminary" who acquired these languages largely by home study after they had entered the ministry. It is indeed a psychological problem that hundreds of pastors should discard the high advantages accruing from a most valuable study upon which at college they spent so many years. J. T. M.

**Truth and Error Mixed.**—The following item from the *Christian Century*, included in a communication from Boston, dated March 16, is interesting on account of the confession it contains:

"Timely, vigorous, and outspoken was an address by Dr. R. H. Stafford, pastor of Old South Church, before the Twentieth Century Association last Saturday. 'How,' he asked, 'are the churches to meet the tension of the times?' He defined a church as 'any society organized to carry out the teachings of Jesus under ministers as teachers and executives. Its task is to teach faith and morals. Morals include social issues. But the individual must be left free to determine duties. The Church must not command, but teach. On social issues it has kept pace with modern thought, as appears in the "Social Creed" of 1908. But the social gospel must not divert from the real task; and in social matters the minister is a layman. I am thought conservative because I do not agree that Christianity must condemn the profit system. The Church must be outspoken on the moral principles involved. But it has made three mistakes: advocating abolition of slavery, which set back the welfare of the Negro as well as of the South; supporting prohibition, which made drinking fashionable; and favoring the outlawry of war, which is proving futile. Law is not prescription but description of a norm already established. Instincts like sex or the profit motive cannot be suppressed, but may be canalized. How? I favor in the Church freest discussion, the hearing of all sides. One church requires new members to choose some discussion group.' 'What about the Congregational Council for Social Action?' 'It was appointed at the close of a meeting amid confusion. But responsibility has sobered its leaders. It should be "for discussion." How can 1,000,000 Congregationalists assume to act for 120,000,000 Americans?'" A.



**The Strong Faith of the Evolutionist.** — The *Lutheran* of April 21 carried this item: "The 'missing link' turns out to be a woman. Dr. Robert Broom of the Transvaal Museum in Pretoria, South Africa, found her in a cave at Sterkfontein and named her rather forbiddingly 'Australopithecus Transvaalensis Broom.' 'The teeth of this Sterkfontein girl,' says Dr. Broom, 'are almost entirely human, and in my opinion there can hardly be any doubt that she is closely related to the ancestor of man.' Dr. Broom also reveals other interesting items of the girl's private life—that she was eighteen years old when she was killed by a saber-toothed tiger, whose fangs left their mark on her bones; that she 'fed on baboons, rabbits, moles, crabs, and small antelopes, all of species now extinct'; that she used weapons to kill the larger game and tools to dig out the moles. Dr. Broom rather ungallantly reveals her present age as 250,000 years." Dr. Broom, if he really said and believes all this, is a man of strong faith. He has a sublime faith in his own capabilities if he really believes that his observations enable him to prove that the Sterkfontein girl, who lived and hunted moles 250,000 years ago, died at the age of eighteen years. And his faith reaches still greater heights—he believes that the faith of some of us will be strong enough to believe him.

By the way, it is because of the vociferations of Dr. Broom and the other evolutionists that many theologians, Lutheran theologians, too, begin to doubt the truth of Gen. 1 and read the theory of theistic evolution into it. They would rather believe Dr. Broom than the inspired account of Moses. They tell us that the findings of science have disproved the doctrine of verbal inspiration. Moses cannot be right if Dr. Broom is right.

It seems, too, that the radical evolutionists are beginning to see that the evolution in which they believe needs some sort of divine supporting power. Howard W. Blakeslee, Associated Press Science Editor, on March 20 reported Dr. Robert Bloom (which is the correct spelling of the name?) as saying, after describing his "small ape with near-human teeth": "I believe that all evolution came about under the guidance of non-material forces, so as to result in man, and that man is the end of evolution." Asked by interviewers for a definition of "non-material forces," Prof. Bloom said: "I mean spiritual forces. I mean some intelligence outside. I think there probably were many of these spiritual forces rather than just one. Their combined result was the appearance and development of man." So here we have the theory of polytheistic evolution.

E.

## II. Ausland

Welche Partien der Heiligen Schrift sind Gottes Wort? An uns, die wir glauben, daß „alle Schrift von Gott eingegeben“ ist, 2 Tim. 3, 16, tritt diese Frage nicht heran; aber sie konfrontiert diejenigen, die eine stückweise Inspiration der Bibel lehren. Wenn wir folgenden Passus aus dem „Ev.-Luth. Gemeindeblatt“ vom 21. März hier abdrucken, so geschieht das nicht zu dem Zweck, um einen weiteren Beleg für die zweite Verbreitung der Lehre von einer bruchstückartigen, sprunghaften Inspiration zu geben, sondern um zu zeigen, in welcher einer verzweifeltsten Lage sich die Vertreter der partiellen, sprunghaften, sporadischen Inspiration befinden. — Das „Evangelische Gemeindeblatt für Polen“ spricht sich in einer Rezension also aus: „ . . . Es



steht ja in dem großen Geisteskampf in Deutschland vor allem die Frage im Vordergrund, ob die Bibel noch für das heutige Geschlecht den Wert haben könne wie für die Väter, ob ihre Lehren und Gedanken für uns heute maßgebend sein könnten. Pfarrer Lempp beantwortet diese Frage in den vier von ihm in Stuttgart gehaltenen Vorträgen selbstverständlich bejahend. Er leugnet nicht, daß die Bibel auch ihre menschliche Seite hat und daß sie kein Lehrbuch der Naturwissenschaft oder der Weltgeschichte ist. Es handelt sich in der Bibel ja um ganz etwas anderes: sie ist Offenbarung Gottes. . . . Nicht in dem Sinne, daß Gott die Bibel einfach ihren Verfassern diktiert habe. Das ist gerade das Große, daß Gott seine Herrlichkeit mitten in der menschlichen Schwachheit aufblitzen läßt. Bibellesen heißt daher, in all dem Menschlichen, wovon die Bibel redet, das Ewige herauszuhören. Kämpfend, suchend, fragend muß man die Bibel lesen, und man muß die großen Grund- und Hauptgedanken, die sie enthält, verstehen, statt an Einzelheiten hängen zu bleiben. Die Bibel bleibt von Anfang bis zum Schluß Christus; das ist die rote Linie, die sich durch alles hindurchzieht. Christus ist der Ausgangspunkt, das Thema, das Ziel und der Mittelpunkt der Weltgeschichte. Das sind die großen Grundgedanken der Bibel, und unter diesen vier Überschriften behandelt der Verfasser sein Thema. Wir hoffen, daß das Büchlein, das eine Lebensfrage unsers Glaubens und unserer Kirche behandelt, auch bei uns viele dankbare Leser finden wird.“

Dazu bemerkt das „Ev.-Luth. Gemeindeblatt“: „Diese Rezension zeigt uns, wie man in vielen Kreisen drüben die Bibel beurteilt. Dieser Beurteilung gemäß ist die Bibel nicht Gottes Wort, sondern sie enthält nur Gottes Wort, das hin und her zerstreut sich unter einem großen Haufen menschlicher Irrtümer, unwissenschaftlicher Anschauungen und kindlicher Ansichten befindet. Wer findet denn Gottes Wort aus diesem Wirrwarr heraus? Der Theolog. Wie weiß er aber, was in der Bibel Gottes Wort ist? Wenn ein Wort auf ihn einen tiefen Eindruck macht, das ist ein Gotteswort. Wie aber, wenn morgen dasselbe Wort auf ihn keinen Eindruck macht? Dann muß er sagen: Es war doch kein Gotteswort. Und kommt ein anderer Theolog hinzu und sagt: Auf mich macht dieses Wort keinen Eindruck, dann haben wir die verzweifelte Lage, daß, was einer für ein Gotteswort hält, der andere nicht dafürhält. Wehe jeder Kirche, in der solche Theologen regieren!“

In einer fatalen Lage (hier wollen wir den Ausdruck „verzweifelte Lage“ nicht gebrauchen) befinden sich diese Leute auch, wenn sie von den ausgesprochenen Feinden der Kirche gefragt werden, ob sie die Bibel durchaus für Gottes Wort halten. Wie müssen sie sich da winden und drehen! Gottes Wort? Ja — nein. Da stellte jemand zehn Fragen an den Evangelischen Oberkirchenrat in Stuttgart, von denen die siebte also lautete (siehe „Wg. Ev.-Luth. Kirchengtg.“, 18. Dez. '36): „Macht der Evangelische Oberkirchenrat wirklich Ernst mit dem Wort ‚Man muß Gott mehr gehorchen denn den Menschen‘, wenn er die Offenbarungs- und Gnadenstunde, die uns Deutschen der große Gott durch Adolf Hitler schenkt, nicht würdigt und sich statt auf das Wehen des Geistes im wunderbaren Götterleben der Gegenwart auf den Buchstaben der Bibel beruft, der Bibel, die im Alten Testament ein Judengeschichts- und Judensagenbuch ist und im Neuen Testament neben der reinen Lehre Jesu manches störende Beiwerk hat?“ War



der Oberkirchenrat bereit, sich auf den Buchstaben der Heiligen Schrift zu stellen? Das war eine fatale Frage. Die Antwort lautete: „Das hier wiedergegebene Urteil über die Bibel besteht aus Schlagsworten, die sich weder auf Luther noch auf die biblische Wirklichkeit noch auf die Ergebnisse der theologischen Wissenschaft berufen können und die auch im Blick auf die religionsgeschichtlichen Tatbestände äußerst fragwürdiger Natur sind. Die evangelische Kirche betrachtet die Bibel als Wort Gottes; nicht im Sinne einer mechanischen Verbalinspiration, sondern als das in Menschenwort gekleidete Zeugnis Gottes von seinem Wesen und Wollen, insbesondere als Zeugnis von seinem eingebornen Sohne Jesus Christus, in dem das Wort Fleisch geworden ist. Gäbe sie dieses Wort preis, um statt dessen Lehren und Strömungen des politischen Denkens zur Grundlage und zum Inhalt ihrer Glaubensverkündigung zu machen, dann fiel sie ab von der Offenbarung Gottes in Christus, sie verriete ihren Herrn und hätte das Recht verwirkt, sich ‚evangelische Kirche‘ zu nennen.“ E.

Die Heidelberger Landluege. — Our readers are familiar with the story of this hoax. They have read about it in their *Concordia Triglotta* (p. 184, Hist. Introd.). Hardenberg, a Calvinist masquerading as a Lutheran, who was dismissed from his office as dome-preacher in Bremen in 1561, “also published the fable hatched at Heidelberg (*Heidelberger Landluege*, indirectly referred to also in the Formula of Concord, 981, 28), but immediately refuted by Joachim Moerlin, according to which Luther is said, toward the end of his life, to have confessed to Melancthon that he had gone too far and overdone the matter in his controversy against the Sacramentarians; that he, however, did not want to retract his doctrine concerning the Lord’s Supper himself because that would cast suspicion on his whole teaching; that therefore after his death the younger theologians might make amends for it and settle this matter.” (Cf. C. F. W. Walther, *Der Concordienformel Kern und Stern*, p. 47.) Now, believe it or not, there are those who in the year 1937 still accept the ridiculous fable as truth and keep on spreading it. *Bibliotheca Sacra* (Jan.—March, 1937) publishes an article entitled “Ulrich Zwingli,” which states: “The great German Reformer [Luther] appears nowhere in a more disadvantageous light than in his treatment of Zwingli [at Marburg]. It is with pain that we revert to these weaknesses in so great a man as Luther. . . . It is gratifying to remember that on his death-bed Luther charged Melancthon to make further concessions and regretted the obstinacy he had displayed in this matter.” (P. 58 f.) The Reformed — at least some of them — consider this a choice morsel. It is interesting to note how Dr. Christoph von Rommel treats the matter. In his biographical book *Philipp der Grossmuetige*, published at Giessen 1830, he states in Vol. I, p. 252 ff.: “So hemmte er [Luther], und er allein (Melancthon schwieg), den Lauf der Reformation um drei Jahrhunderte. . . . So endete das Marburger Religionsgespräch, . . . fruchtlos in dem Erfolg (zur grossen Freude der Papisten), weil nach dem grossen Moment das Spiel der personlichen Leidenschaften wieder begann, besonders von Luther, der erst kurz vor seinem Tode bekannt haben soll, dass er dieser Sache zu viel getan.” Notice the “soll.” But in the note to this statement, contained on page 226 of Vol. II, all doubt has vanished and the



full details of the story are spread out. "Ueber Luthers Reue ist folgendes feierliche Zeugnis des Predigers Alb. Hardenberg zu Bremen, eines Vertrauten Melanchthons, nach des letzteren eigener Erzählung, vorhanden. Als Luther zum letztenmal von Wittenberg nach Eisleben reisen wollte, sprach Melanchthon mit ihm in seinem Hause: er habe die alten christlichen Lehrer vom Abendmahl nunmehr fleissig gelesen und der andern Lehre mehr als der ihrigen uebereinstimmend gefunden. Darauf Luther eine Zeitlang geschwiegen und nachher gesagt: 'Lieber Philippe, was wollen wir viel sagen? Ich bekenne es, dass der Sache vom Sakrament zu viel getan ist.' Als Melanchthon den Vorschlag machte, deshalb eine neue Erklarung an den Tag zu geben, habe er geantwortet, er habe dieser Sache sorgfaeltig nachgedacht, aber dadurch mache man die ganze Lehre verdaechtig. 'So will ich das dem lieben Gott befohlen haben; tut Ihr auch was nach meinem Tode.'" We can understand why the Reformed like to tell and hear this story. If Luther himself was not so sure of his position, perhaps the Reformed are right after all! And so the *Heidelberger Landluege* will not down. (The reader might now turn to page 981 of *Concordia Triglotta*, § 28 ff. Luther foresaw that after his death some such thing as the *Heidelberger Landluege* would be set in motion.)

There are three stories concerning Luther, which men are going to keep on telling. They are too good not to be true. The first is the *Heidelberger Landluege*, current in Reformed circles. The Catholics like to tell the story that Luther turned Reformer because he wanted to marry (or was it because not he, but Tetzel, had received the indulgence concession?). And the liberal theologians take comfort from the story that Luther abhorred verbal inspiration. E.

**French Protestantism.**—A precise statement of the number of French Protestants it is difficult to give. There are computed to be about 777,000 Protestants, of which number 717,000 are attached to French churches, 2,000 to foreign churches, 30,000 to societies for evangelization, 5,000 to the Salvation Army, and the remainder to various sects. The numerical force of French Protestantism is small in comparison with its moral and spiritual force, which is great.—*The Presbyterian*.

**The Roman Church in Europe.**—One of our exchanges reports that Romanism is both attacking, and being attacked in Europe, at present. In Yugoslavia, where the government is considering signing a concordat with the Vatican, a bitter conflict is on, and the officials of the Eastern Orthodox Church are threatening with excommunication those members of the government who sanction and support the proposed concordat. A Yugoslav army officer is reported as saying, "Communists are very bad for a country, but priests aren't much better." In Germany, Romanism is fighting for its life, and its position is becoming increasingly difficult. In Austria, however, it is on the offensive and is boldly attempting to suppress other denominations. That Romanism plays an important role in the present civil war in Spain is undeniable. In Hungary Protestants and Catholics are vehemently opposing each other. The next five years may bring important developments. A.