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# Theological Observer. - Kirchlich-Zeitgeschichtliches

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## I. Amerika

**May Lutherans Reject the Verbal Inspiration and the Authority of the Scriptures?** Some time after the *New Testament Commentary*, issued under the general editorship of Dr. Alleman of Gettysburg in 1936, appeared, Dr. Reu, in the *Kirchliche Zeitschrift*, wrote a withering review of this work, calling attention to the Modernism which vitiates it in large sections. Among the things Dr. Reu criticized were positions taken by Dr. William C. Berkemeyer, who furnished the section dealing with the pastoral epistles of Paul. This commentator had expressed the view that the pastoral epistles were probably not written by Paul, but by a later writer, a view which, together with other matters, Dr. Reu severely castigated. Defending himself, Dr. Berkemeyer writes an extended rejoinder in the *Lutheran Church Quarterly* of January, 1938. He gives his article the heading "A Lutheran Right and Duty: a Reply to Dr. Reu." Having stated he felt that in honesty he would have to give to his readers the views of modern critical opinion on the authorship of the pastoral epistles, he continues:

"But Luther's principle 'Does this writing preach Christ?' has a deeper significance, even on its formal side, than the mere application to the question of authorship. It suggests that within the acknowledged writings of a man we must ask: 'Is Paul or John or Peter speaking here with the characteristic touch of his real genius, or is he but reflecting and passing on ideas which belong to the thought-world of his day or perhaps giving practical directions which have a temporary but not a permanent value?' Asking this question, I ventured to play the Paul of Gal. 3:28 against the Paul (if it should be Paul) of 1 Tim. 2:9-15. I felt I had a right to point out this conflict and even to take sides in the matter. Surely all we want — all the world can expect from a man, even an inspired man of God — is that prophetic insight by which he shows himself to have a word from God for us. The rest of the man and his thought we can afford to let go. At any rate, we must not regard him as infallible because he is inspired. That would be to deny and ignore his obvious human limitations and make of him a creature of a wholly different order. The facts of history will not permit such a conclusion. The writers of Scripture were not angels, but men. Nowhere is there a better illustration of the need and value of this application of Luther's principle than in considering Luther's own writings. There is both wheat and chaff in Luther, both inspiration and limitation, and woe to him who cannot or will not distinguish.

"Now, Luther's principle has still another aspect, the most significant of all. As a material principle it demands that we judge Scripture by Christ. But the Scriptures are themselves the great source of knowledge of the historical Jesus. This means that a man must not only judge the Scriptures by the Gospel of Christ; he must first of all determine from Scripture what the Gospel really is. On that matter Christendom has never been in perfect agreement. Luther's conception of the Gospel was

 

neither Calvin's nor Rome's. We follow in Luther's tradition. But being conscious of that tradition is something different from being fettered by it. Face to face with the Scriptures the Christian of today, and especially one who would comment upon the New Testament, must keep asking the question: 'What is the Gospel?' For even of the New Testament it must be said as it was of earlier Jewish writings: 'The Gospel is there, the whole Gospel, but how much more!' When we wrote concerning the place of women in the Church that we need not accept the conclusions of the writer of the pastorals or the literal implications of the passage in Gen. 3:16 as binding upon us, we were giving expression to a value-judgment based on a particular conception of the Gospel which we believe to be both Paul's and Luther's. We believe we can and must do this. If our Christianity is to remain a spiritual religion, we must be allowed to keep asking and answering the question: 'What is the Gospel?' True, only men of the spiritual stature of Paul and Luther can give us a clear and simple answer to the question because the Gospel is the Gospel of God and of Jesus Christ. Men must approach the wisdom and goodness of God Himself to understand and interpret His will to us. But we must keep the way open for men of this caliber to arise and speak to us. The fact that we have a written record of God's revelation does not make this unnecessary. Spirit and life cannot be contained or preserved or handed down in words — only in lives. For us, as for Luther, not the writings of Scripture but the living word of the Gospel is the means of grace.

"Right here, in the matter of the authority of the Scriptures, lies the chief difference between the viewpoint of some of the men who wrote the *New Testament Commentary* and Dr. Reu. He himself has recognized this in his review. For us the authority of the Bible is a spiritual authority, not only that it pertains to spiritual matters alone, but also that it is an authority which can be applied and felt only in a spiritual fashion. The Scriptures maintain their authority for us because of the truth they reveal. That truth is the Gospel of Christ. But the Gospel is itself a spiritual reality which can be recognized and felt as binding on men only through personal, moral, and spiritual experience. The Holy Spirit within a man, and the Spirit alone, can convince him of the meaning of the Gospel, of its validity, and of its spiritually authoritative character.

"The Scriptures are for us like a garden in which God has planted many trees, and in the midst the tree of life, of the knowledge of good and evil, of the power to do the good and reject the evil. That tree is Christ Himself. Of the fruit of this tree we must taste in order that we may be able to distinguish among the other plants of the garden. Only so can we differentiate between fruit- and shade-trees, evergreens and flowering shrubs. It may happen that others, first entering the garden, will be found to be eating leaves for fruit, using fruit-trees for shade, mistaking a berry-bush for an apple-tree, admiring beautiful blossoms instead of tasting of the fruit of the tree of life. We must be concerned for them. They, like ourselves, may have been directed to this garden by a sign-board outside which others who had enjoyed its

fruits had placed there. But we have come to recognize the divine nature of the garden by the fruit we have tasted, not by the sign-board. We must teach others to recognize divine truth in the same way. Otherwise there is no future for Christianity as a spiritual religion."

One is amazed not only at Dr. Berkemeyer's repudiation of the inerrancy of the Scriptures but at his reasoning and his failure to apprehend the meaning of certain passages in Paul's writings. That Gal. 3:28 and 1 Tim. 2:9–15 are not in disagreement ought to have been evident to him. If anything is clear, it is that Paul in the former passage is not speaking of social or official rank and privileges but solely of a person's status in the sight of God. When Paul, for instance, there says that in Christ there is neither bond nor free, he certainly does not mean to contend for the abolition of slavery, as can be convincingly shown from other passages in his writings. One notes with surprise that Dr. Berkemeyer seems to think that those who teach the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures and insist on their infallibility hold that the holy penmen were infallible in everything they said and did apart from the writing of the Scriptures. Again, when he appeals to the case of Luther to illustrate what he means by inspiration, one is startled to see a Lutheran theologian place the Reformer on a level with the apostles and prophets.

What the author says about Luther's "material" principle, asserting that it demands that we judge Scripture by Christ, rests on a thorough misunderstanding of the words of Luther which he has in mind. For Luther it was one of the great facts of religious truth that the Holy Scriptures portray Christ to us. He would have considered Dr. Berkemeyer's position very strange indeed, because it puts Christ and the Scriptures into different categories. For Luther they were simply inseparable. He had his doubts, it is true, whether certain books of the sixty-six which constitute our Bible belong to the Holy Scriptures, but he did not doubt that whatever is Scripture preaches Christ. Furthermore, are we in danger of being fettered if we follow Luther in his conception of the Gospel? Yes, if the Gospel is something fluid which changes with the coming and the going of the various generations, but not if the Gospel is eternal truth, given once for all by our gracious heavenly Father and relating to us the greatest fact of history, the redemption of Jesus Christ. Certainly every person must ask himself the question, What is the Gospel? But what folly to say that this universal obligation makes of the Gospel something subjective, a variable quantity. "Spirit and life cannot be contained or preserved or handed down in words — only in lives," says Dr. Berkemeyer. And still his next sentence is, "For us, as for Luther, not the writings of Scripture but the living word of the Gospel is the means of grace." "The living word of the Gospel" — is it written, or is it something we meet only in human lives? We must confess that we are perplexed. We cannot follow the author. We fail to see consistency in his presentation.

Finally, when Dr. Berkemeyer says that for him "the authority of the Bible is a spiritual authority, not only that it pertains to spiritual matters alone, but also that it is an authority which can be applied and felt only in spiritual fashion," the implication seems to be that, when the

 

Bible speaks of things which are not spiritual, its authority ceases. If we understand him, he wishes to express the view that in matters of external fact (history, zoology, etc.) the Bible cannot be regarded as inerrant. But does he not see that the Gospel, whose authority he wishes to uphold, is largely a record of external facts, of the birth of Jesus, His deeds of mercy, His suffering and death, and His resurrection? The Christian religion, it has been correctly said, is a religion of great historical facts. That the true interpretation of these facts can be given by the Spirit of God alone and that it is the Spirit Himself who must make us willing to accept this interpretation, we readily admit. But if a person professing Christianity denies that the Bible reports facts correctly, he not only paves the way for the introduction of stark subjectivism and uncontrollable emotionalism into his religion as its determining element, but he is helping to destroy the very basis of Christianity itself. A.

**This Sounds Familiar.** — Discussing the Report of the Commission on Christian Doctrine (Church of England), the *Living Church* of March 9, 1938, says: "The interpretation which the Commission has attached to the inspiration of Scripture may be, and doubtless is, a commonplace of present-day thinking, but certainly it is not yet a commonplace of doctrinal statement. In this field Anglican doctrine has not been restated since the days of the Reformation, when scientific Bible research was unheard of, when Higher Criticism was undreamed of except by solitary prophetic souls of the following of Rabbi Ben Ezra, and when Charles Darwin and his Genesis-upsetting account of origins were by several centuries still unborn. Even at that date the Church of England, owing to 'the tendency common to Anglican and Orthodox thought to distrust rationalizing theology,' was saved from stereotyping theories of inspiration then prevalent into the quite unscriptural dogma of the inerrancy of the Bible; and when in due time Darwin was born, wrote the *Origin of Species,* and died, happier than Galileo or Bruno in his lot, he was buried in Westminster Abbey. The dogma of the inerrancy of Scripture, ineptly termed Fundamentalism, received a mortal blow in Edinburgh last summer in the report on the Word of God which was adopted, *nemine contradicente,* by the Second World Conference on Faith and Order. Scholars engaged in scientific Bible research read in its recognition of the legitimacy of their work and its insistence that the freedom for carrying out their work be not denied to them the Magna Carta of their liberties. In the report of the Anglican Commission so-called Fundamentalism receives its *coup de grace.* Not by implication, as in Edinburgh, but explicitly and in forceful terms the Commission states its conviction that 'the tradition of the inerrancy of the Bible cannot be maintained in the light of the knowledge now at our disposal'; that 'the authority must not be interpreted as prejudging conclusions of historical, critical, and scientific investigation in any field'; and that 'stages of Biblical revelation are to be judged in relation to its historical climax,' the standard being 'the mind of Christ as unfolded in the experience of the Church and appropriated by the individual Christian through His Spirit. . . . The effect of this section of the report is unpredictable.

In the nature of the case the Roman Church, which is doctrinally immobilized by its dogma of the inerrancy of Scripture, will reject it, as will several small Protestant denominations, which in this respect concur with Rome. In the larger Protestant denominations it may lead the way for similar official or semiofficial restatements of the doctrine of Biblical inspiration. As for its influence upon Orthodox thought, it would appear to the writer that the new intellectual life now stirring in Orthodoxy, the ancient heritage of freedom which it is now recovering, and above all its 'pneumatological' as distinguished from legalistic character are good auguries for a sympathetic reception of the report as a whole. . . . As 'the method of direct appeal to isolated texts' is so evidently liable to error, it is to be expected that preaching from isolated texts will gradually give place to genuine expository preaching in which the Word of God *contained* [italics in original] in the Scriptures will be sought, studied in all the light that modern scholarship affords, and then applied to problems of the modern world."

All of this sounds familiar. Spokesmen for certain sections of the Lutheran Church in America have been using the identical language of the Anglican Commission's report. We can assure the Commission that the liberal section of the United Lutheran Church is ready to adopt its report. It is a commonplace of doctrine there. All or nearly all the statements of the report and of the *Living Church* article can be matched by similar or identical statements there current. The phrase "Word of God *contained* in the Scriptures" is familiar to United Lutherans. Also the term "immobilized." United Lutheran publications speak of "canned theology." When the Anglican Commission speaks of "the mind of Christ" and the "Word of God contained in the Scriptures" as being the standard and final authority, the liberals among the United Lutherans will say: That is a commonplace among us; and all these years we have been protesting against the proof-text method.

One statement made in the article is not a commonplace. It was news to us, too. It is the statement that the "tendency to distrust rationalizing theology" saved the Church in the Reformation days from "the unscriptural dogma of the inerrancy of the Bible." The doctrine of the verbal inspiration and the inerrancy of the Bible is due to rationalistic thinking? We were always told that the *denial* of these doctrines is one of the chief achievements of the age of rationalism. E.

**The National Lutheran Council Extends Its Work.** — Several Lutheran papers report that the National Lutheran Council is endeavoring to bring about cooperation between the Lutheran bodies represented in it in the field of Inner Missions. The *Lutheran Companion* of February 24 writes: "Cooperation on a vast scale among the Lutheran bodies of America is in the making. One of the most significant moves in this direction was taken at the recent meeting of the National Lutheran Council in Detroit, Michigan. . . . Heretofore the principal efforts toward Lutheran coordination have been in the province of Home Missions. This time it is in the field of Inner Missions. According to the plan adopted, a new agency of the National Lutheran Council, to be known



 

as the Department of National Lutheran Welfare, will be charged with the task of carrying out the details of the cooperative venture. Eight general Lutheran bodies will participate in the new movement. They are: the United Lutheran Church in America, the Norwegian Lutheran Church, the Augustana Synod, the Icelandic Synod, the American Lutheran Church, the Danish Lutheran Church, the Lutheran Free Church, and the United Danish Lutheran Church. In other words, all Lutheran bodies in America except those belonging to the Synodical Conference (Missouri Synod) will cooperate. More than three hundred agencies and institutions now controlled or operated by these bodies will be affected by the plan. These embrace Inner Mission societies, orphans' homes, home-finding agencies, day nurseries, homes for the aged, deaconess homes, hospitals, hospices, seamen's missions, industrial missions, rescue homes, and settlement houses. It will not be the purpose of the new department to own or to operate any particular institution or agencies but to confine its work for the present to coordinating and stimulating Inner Mission work and determine standards and policies. The executive committee of the National Lutheran Council has been charged with the responsibility of working out the proposal. It will also select a man to direct the activities of the department. It is planned to create State or regional associations similar to the national organization, but concerned primarily with local affairs. The advantages of the proposed set-up are obvious. Not only will it help to eliminate considerable duplication of effort and waste of money and man-power, but it should result in much greater efficiency. With the constant raising of standards by State and secular social agencies it becomes increasingly necessary that the Lutheran Church conduct its Inner Mission activity on a plane that reflects credit upon the Church. The new arrangement will prove valuable in obtaining adequate recognition of Lutheran welfare work from Government bodies and community-chest agencies. Heretofore such recognition has to a great extent been denied because of the competition of various Lutheran groups and because there was no central organization to represent Lutheran interests."

The *Lutheran Companion* then speaks of the value of such cooperation in times of particular stress and difficulty. "The Department of National Lutheran Welfare will also be in a position to direct Lutheran relief work in all times of emergency. In this respect the Lutheran Church gained much from its experience during the World War. It was out of the National Lutheran Commission for Soldiers' and Sailors' Welfare that the National Lutheran Council was born. The depression years have also taught the Church the value of cooperation in the administration of relief in the large centers of population."

The Synodical Conference, as the report states, is not represented in this move. The reasons are well known. Our aloofness is not due to failure to see the value of cooperation or to lack of sympathy with those who are suffering and need our help, but rather to the desire to be found faithful to the Word of our great God, who has told us that "to obey is better than sacrifice." A.

**Dr. Brunner Invited to Join the Princeton Seminary Faculty.** — Most of the readers of this journal are aware that Prof. Emil Brunner of Zurich, Switzerland, is one of the foremost Barthians of today. He has been elected to the Charles Hodge Chair of Systematic Theology in Princeton. It is his intention to come to Princeton as a guest professor for the year 1938—39, in the course of which he will determine "whether he can become adjusted to academic conditions in a new country." The *Presbyterian* prints an "intimate" letter of Dr. Brunner stating his doctrinal position:

"I would feel perfectly free in my conscience to accept your call so far as my theological convictions are concerned. I do not only firmly believe in the godhead of our Lord Jesus Christ according to the teaching of the apostles, especially according to Paul and John, and in the inspiration of the Holy Scriptures according to the commentaries which Princeton Seminary has placed in my hands, but it is more than ever my earnest desire to devote the remaining lifetime which God may grant me to the interpretation, defense, and preaching of this Scripture teaching as the only hope of our poor world. I know that certain questions were raised by you as to my attitude towards the historical facts and the trustworthiness of the gospels. These questions were, if I understand rightly, based on certain remarks in my *Philosophy of Religion*. Now, unfortunately, the translator of this book did not mention the fact that this book was written in 1925, that is, in the beginning of my theological 'revolution,' if I may call it so, and therefore shows many traces of a stage of an evolution which is characterized by a constant and steady concentration towards the sacred history and the teaching of the Bible. My only ambition is to become more and more a Bible theologian and to know nothing but Jesus Christ crucified. If there is a certain difference between Karl Barth and myself, it is this, that I find in his theology certain tenets which are not in accordance with Scripture, *e. g.*, his indifference towards the historical facts as such and the lack of fulness in his witness to the life-renewing power of the Holy Spirit. It is, however, my conviction that faith in the inspiration of the Bible does not exclude, but include, the distinction between the Word of God and the earthly, temporal vessel which carries it.

"As to the Reformed or Presbyterian type of doctrine, I feel thoroughly at home just in this conception of the Gospel truth, and I believe myself to be more true to this tradition than my friend Barth, whose merit, however, in bringing theology back to this line, I heartily acknowledge. There are certain elements of the traditional doctrine which I do not consider as an adequate expression of the New Testament teaching, but I hold that these are minor points, and I am ready to correct my views any time wherever I see that the authority of the Bible stands against them."

It is plain that Professor Brunner is "Reformed" in his theology and that he refuses to accept the whole Bible as the inspired, infallible Word of God. The *Presbyterian* adds that he is forty-eight years of age and has a perfect command of English for purposes of speech and writing.

A.

**A Dubious Venture.** — At the coming General Assembly we shall probably be asked to consider a proposal for "visible unity" which comes to us from the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America. If we approve this proposal, we shall stand committed to a "purpose to achieve organic union." The theological statement incorporated in the declaration of the Episcopal Church is very brief. It is sound in what it says of Jesus Christ and of the Sacraments. It mentions only one other doctrine, that of the Scriptures; and its wording in this respect is unfortunately vague. It reads: "recognizing the Holy Scriptures as the supreme rule of faith." That is all. Here, under this misty phrase, is room for the Modernist as well as the evangelical. We must confess that it comes far short of satisfying us. We are much troubled also by the fact that the Church of England, parent and closer partner of our American Episcopal Church, has just received a report on religious doctrine which is undoubtedly heretical. The report hedges on the question of Scripture, declares that the historical evidence for the Virgin Birth is "inconclusive," is vague about evolution, miracles, angels, the bodily resurrection of Christ, and even the future life. It suggests the possibility of a union under "a Papacy which renounced some of its present claims." This report has aroused tremendous opposition from the conservative wing of the Church of England. We are concerned to know the attitude towards it of the Protestant Episcopal Church of this country. Light upon this question would go far to enlighten us as to our attitude when we come to the General Assembly. Many other questions besides the doctrinal one are involved in any discussion of her union with a liturgical, episcopal Church; but the doctrinal question is infinitely the most important.

*The Presbyterian*, Feb. 17, 1938

**Brief Items.** — With respect to the World Council of Churches which is to be organized at a meeting in Holland in May, the Church of England proceeds with proverbial British caution. Its Church Assembly resolved to participate, but it declared emphatically that it will not assume any responsibility for action taken till it has had an opportunity of examining and approving the respective measures.

Youth is enthusiastic and willing to strike out along new paths. When recently a retreat was held at Union Seminary, New York, participated in by professors, students, and visiting ministers, and a certain group deliberated on the ministry in rural communities, the pastors in the meeting, so a report says, "were concerned with chiefly how to keep the rural church alive, the students with how to relate the church to rural social problems." Apart from the psychological reason pointed to, the attitude of the students may have been due to their not having received the training in Bible doctrine which in former decades was dispensed even in seminaries with radical tendencies.

That Dean Israel H. Noe, an Episcopalian clergyman of Memphis, Tenn., who endeavored to prove immortality by fasting and making his body free of material needs, has been deposed by his bishop, the press has widely reported. We are told in the *Living Church* that the chapter

of the cathedral concurred in the action of the bishop. After a stay in the hospital the former dean seems to be in good health again.

According to a photograph published in the *Presbyterian*, together with pertinent information, the Princeton Seminary faculty numbers sixteen full-time professors.

On February 12 Norway lost a prominent theologian, Bishop Johan Peter Lunde of Oslo. He was born in 1866. It was in 1922 that he was appointed bishop of Oslo. We are told in the *National Lutheran Council Bulletin* that he was the author of many religious books and pamphlets and that his children's sermons are widely used in all Lutheran countries.

In January, Savannah, Ga., saw a big Methodist meeting, held in honor of the Wesleys. It will be remembered that John and Charles Wesley were active in Georgia before the so-called Aldersgate experience of John Wesley, when he, attending a meeting of Moravians in London, heard the preface of Luther to the Epistle to the Romans read and was brought to a fuller understanding of the work of Christ.

In Canada, we are told, a commission is at work endeavoring to perform a task similar to that of the commission of Anglican bishops which issued the much-discussed "Statement of Faith." We are wondering whether the report of the Canada commission will show the same modernistic complexion as that of the British bishops. It is to be noted that the Canada commission represents the United Church of Canada (Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Methodists) and not Episcopalians.

From New York it is reported that the mayor of the city, Mr. La Guardia, will take the leadersip in a campaign to raise one million dollars in order to finish the interior of the cathedral of St. John the Divine (Episcopal) before the opening of the World's Fair in 1939.

In Vancouver, B.C., the Roman Catholic archbishop complained of the injustice inflicted on Roman Catholics who have to support the public schools and in addition maintain parochial schools for their own children. His plea, it seems, was not heeded. We are told that in the Yukon territory Roman Catholic schools are supported by public funds, the country being very sparsely settled. Undoubtedly the archbishop wished to see the same system introduced in Vancouver.

Brooklyn used to be known as the "city of churches." We are told that one prominent churchman now calls it "the city of too many churches." To prove his view correct, he states that, while in 1921 the expenditures for benevolences by all the churches were $837,000, in 1936 they amounted to only $365,000.

In Mexico the Catholic boycott of public schools has ceased, we are told. It seems that better relations between Church and State have been established. The Mexican government is said to show great zeal in opening new schools and in improving the educational system. The report on which we draw says that in the three years in which President Cardenas has been at the head of the country five thousand rural schools, having an enrolment of 325,000 children, have been opened.

A.

## II. Ausland

**Luthertum und Humanismus.** Angesichts der weiten Verbreitung des neuerwachten Humanismus in unserer Zeit dürfte uns eine Beurteilung desselben von Luthers Standpunkt aus interessieren, die Pfarrer O. Dilschneider-Jena in der „A. E. L. K." (Nr. 8, 71. Jahrgang) unter der Überschrift „Theologie und Weltanschauung" bringt. Pfarrer Dilschneider beginnt mit dem richtigen und wichtigen Gedanken, daß die „theologische Generation von heute in eine Auseinandersetzung von umfassendster Tragweite hineingestellt ist". So auch in eine Auseinandersetzung mit dem Humanismus! Der Humanismus in genere läßt sich, wie der Schreiber darlegt, in den wissenschaftlichen, den philosophisch-ästhetischen und den politischen Humanismus einteilen. Für den wissenschaftlichen Humanismus zeigte Luther ein großes, bleibendes Interesse. Anders aber verhielt er sich dem philosophisch-ästhetischen Humanismus gegenüber. Hier forderte der Humanismus eine „Neugeburt aus Menschengeist", während doch Luther, auf der Schrift stehend, nur eine „Neugeburt aus Gottes Geist" anerkennen wollte. Hier fand Luther die menschliche Vernunft im Kampf gegen Gottes Wort, und darum kämpfte er auch so heftig gegen den rationalistischen Humanismus. Dilschneider schreibt hierüber: „Weder Freundschaft und Aufgeschlossenheit noch Abgrenzung und Zurückhaltung, sondern schärfste Gegnerschaft kennzeichnen seine Haltung gegen den humanistischen Geist seiner Zeit. Wie Luther hier dem Humanismus seiner Zeit den schärfsten Kampf ansagte, so haben auch wir uns im Luthertum darauf zu besinnen, wollen wir die Probleme und Lebensfragen, die uns heute auferlegt sind, nicht von Grund auf verfehlen. Wir müssen hier einmal in aller Offenheit bereit sein, tatsächlich auf das zu hören, was Luther dem Geist seiner Zeit, dem Humanismus, zu sagen hatte." Der Schreiber zitiert dann eine Reihe von Aussprüchen, worin Luther gegen Aristoteles und „Frau Hulde, die natürliche Vernunft", die des Teufels „Hure" ist, ja die „Erzhure" und „Teufelsbraut", so scharf zu Felde zieht, und fährt dann fort: „Alle unsere Aussagen und Erkenntnisse fußen auf einer Autorität. Die Autorität aber im Humanismus ist der Mensch selber, seine höchste Einsicht, die er von den Dingen hat, seine Vernunft. Sie ist der Eckpfeiler der humanistischen Lebenshaltung und Lebensausrichtung. Das hatte Luther gesehen, und darum zieht er gegen sie zu Feld." Hier zitiert er dann die wichtigen Sätze aus Luthers großem Werk „Vom unfreien Willen" (1525) mit der Warnung: „Wir wissen, daß die Vernunft nur törichte und widersinnige Dinge schwatzt, besonders dann, wenn sie in heiligen Dingen ihre Weisheit zu zeigen anhebt"; und aus Luthers letzter Predigt über Röm. 12, 3 (1546): „Darum siehe, daß du die Vernunft im Zaum hältst und folgst nicht ihren schönen Gedanken; wirf ihr einen Dreck ins Angesicht, auf daß sie häßlich werde." Er schließt den ersten Aufsatz mit dem Paragraphen: „Für Luther standen Theologie und Zeitgeist in einem sich ausschließenden Verhältnis zueinander. Wohl arbeitete er mit dem Rüstzeug, das ihm der Humanismus seiner Zeit an die Hand gab. In seinen Händen finden wir die griechischen und hebräischen Texte und Grammatiken der großen Humanisten seiner Zeit; aber in seinem Herzen lebt Christus, und sein Arbeiten und Denken ist allein vom Wort der Schrift getragen und erfüllt. Gerade durch diese Haltung vermochte uns Luther das Vermächtnis einer echten, biblischen Theologie zu hinterlassen."

Wir bringen diesen Artikel in kurzen Gedanken hier wieder, nicht nur weil er an sich wichtig für uns ist, sondern uns auch einmal wieder daran erinnert, wie sehr man jetzt in Deutschland in ernsteren Kreisen Luther studiert. Aber das erinnert uns auch mit Schmerzen daran, wie sehr man in unsern lutherischen Kreisen in Amerika heutzutage Luther vernachlässigt. Wenigstens findet sich weder in unsern Zeitschriften noch in den aus andern lutherischen Kreisen viel aus und über Luther. Luthers Theologie schlummert hierzulande, und wir laufen Gefahr, daß wir uns in einen „orthodoxen" Schlummer hineinwiegen lassen, der schließlich sehr verderblich für uns werden muß. „Neugeburt aus Menschengeist", das „Fußen auf Vernunft", daß man die Vernunft den „Eckpfeiler der Lebenshaltung und Lebensausrichtung" sein läßt, daß die Vernunft auch hierzulande „ihre Weisheit in heiligen Dingen zeigen" möchte, kurz, daß auch wir in Gefahr stehen, auf unsere Vernunft und nicht allein auf die Schrift zu hören, das alles muß uns doch sehr ernstlich bewegen, zur Schrift, zum lutherischen Bekenntnis und zu Luther zurückzukehren mit einem wahren Todeseifer im Suchen nach den Gottesgedanken in seinem Wort und im Niederdrücken der eigenen Vernunftgedanken. Unser Walther war doch eigentlich nur Lutherus redivivus. Auch wir müssen als Schrifttheologen wahre Lutheri redivivi sein, wollen wir das lutherische Zion in unserm Lande recht bauen. J. T. M.

**Das Bedenkliche beim Quatenus.** Auf D. Sasses feinen Bekenntnisartikel hin „Warum müssen wir an der lutherischen Abendmahlslehre festhalten?" veröffentlicht in der „A. E. L. K." [Nr. 7; 71. Jahrgang], lief in derselben Zeitschrift später eine scharfe Kritik von seiten eines deutschen Pfarrers ein, worin die quatenus-Unterschrift der lutherischen Abendmahlslehre gegen Sasses quia-Forderung Verteidigung findet. Der Schreiber argumentiert etwa so: Um dieses quatenus willen konnte ich [lutherischer] Pfarrer werden; auf der Seite dieses quatenus kann ich Pfarrer bleiben. Ich habe es mir erlaubt, meine Ordination als Ordination auf den Christus, die Wahrheit, zu verstehen. Wenn mich nicht das feste Vertrauen durch meine Ordination geleitet hätte, meine Kirche wolle und könne mich zu nichts anderm, Größerem, Weiterem oder Wahrerem verpflichten, als den Christus, die Wahrheit, zu suchen und festzuhalten als Lernender und Lehrender, dann wäre ich vor der Ordination aus dem Amt geschieden. Eine so verstandene Ordination gibt einem, wenn entschieden sein soll zwischem dem quia und dem quatenus, keinen Weg frei als den des quatenus. Das bleibt mein Weg den Bekenntnisschriften gegenüber und auch der Bibel gegenüber. Denn wenn der Weg zum Christus führt als letztem Ziel, dann gilt auch vor der Bibel noch ein quatenus. Gälte mein quatenus nur im Blick auf die Bekenntnisschriften, so wäre für mich z. B. das natus ex virgine immer noch durch ein Bibelwort gesichert. Nun aber gilt mir das quatenus auch der Bibel gegenüber. So stehe ich zu Bekenntnisschriften und Bibel.

In seiner Antwort auf diesen liberalistischen Heuchelpfarrer, der mit seinem „Christus" nicht den Christus der Schrift, sondern einen „gemachten" und falschen Vernunftchristus will, der daher auch weder lutherisch noch christlich ist, macht Sasse sehr freundlich und milde auf die Not der Gemeinde aufmerksam, indem er schreibt: „Der evangelische Pfarrstand muß, einfach aus christlicher Liebe, wenn er es sonst nicht versteht, um der armen Gemeinden willen, denen er zu dienen hat, die Last und, wenn es sein muß, die Not einer ganz ernsten Lehrverpflichtung wieder auf sich nehmen. Wenn

 

er es tut, dann wird er erfahren, daß er selbst den größten Segen davon hat. Denn nur die ganz ernste und ernst genommene Lehrverpflichtung macht den Pfarrer zum minister Verbi divini, zum ‚Diener des göttlichen Worts'." Weiter: „Ich kann auf die Augustana nur ordinieren, weil ich nach ernstestem Studium der Schrift davon überzeugt bin, daß jene die richtige Auslegung des Evangeliums ist. Nur das quia begründet eine wirkliche Bekenntnisverpflichtung; das quatenus ist in Wirklichkeit nur eine höfliche und milde Form der Auflösung des Lehrbekenntnisses." Weiter: „Die das Bekenntnis auflösende und damit die Kirche aufhebende Wirkung des quatenus wird an der Folgerung klar, die Pfarrer H. ganz richtig zieht. Man kann für die Ehrlichkeit, mit der das geschieht, nur aufrichtig dankbar sein. Er sieht ganz klar, was andere nicht sehen wollen, daß das quatenus dem Bekenntnis gegenüber mit Notwendigkeit ein quatenus der Schrift gegenüber zur Folge hat. Mit der norma normata des Bekenntnisses stürzt notwendig auch die norma normans der Heiligen Schrift. Wer es nicht glauben will, der studiere die Auflösung der Schriftautorität in all den modernen Kirchen, die die Bekenntnisse der Reformation und der alten Kirche außer Kraft gesetzt haben. Was wird dann aber die norma normans an Stelle der Schrift? ‚Christus', lautet die Antwort. Aber wer ist ‚der Christus', der ‚durch die Bibel' zu suchen ist? Wir kennen nur den Christus, der in der Bibel zu finden ist, weil er dort, und dort allein, redet. Wer ist der Richter, der mir im Zweifelsfalle sagt, wo Christus und wo nur die Schrift redet? Habe ich dann nicht meine Vernunft, zu der ja auch mein religiös-sittliches Empfinden gehört, nicht zur norma normans erhoben? . . . Jene Verleugnung [der Jungfrauengeburt unsers Heilandes] bedeutet schließlich Verzicht auf den Schriftbeweis in der Dogmatik. Sie bedeutet damit auch das Ende der Reformation." Gerade das ist es, wozu die quatenus-Verpflichtung hinführt — zum Ende der Reformation, ja zum Ende des Christentums. Das quatenus zum Bekenntnis und zur Schrift bedeutet schließlich nur das, was man hierzulande Modernismus nennt.

D. Sasse schließt seinen Artikel mit den Worten: „Nichts anderes als die Sorge um die Erhaltung des Evangeliums und der Kirche des Evangeliums in Deutschland, soweit diese Sorge dem geistlichen Amt von Gott als Pflicht auferlegt ist, bewegt uns in unserm Kampf um das lutherische Bekenntnis. Möge diese Sorge auch dort verstanden werden, wo man die wirkliche Lage unserer Kirche heute noch nicht versteht, ehe es zu spät ist!" Nicht nur die involvierte Lehrfrage selbst ist für uns wichtig, nämlich damit wir nicht in unserer Stellung zum Bekenntnis gleichgültig werden, sondern auch die Sachlage, wie sie durch die deutschen Volkskirchen geschaffen worden ist. Was von einem Bekenntnischristentum übrigbleibt, wo ein Staatskirchentum die Zügel in der Hand hat und wo noch dazu Unglaube neben Glauben, Laxheit neben Bekenntniseifer geduldet wird, das erkennt man auch sehr klar daraus, wie es heutzutage drüben in kirchlichen Kreisen steht. Die Lösung des Problems bleibt nur die freie, vom Staat unabhängige Gemeinde, und zwar eine solche, die dem Bekenntnis und der Schrift gegenüber eine quia-Lehrverpflichtung fordert. Welch erleuchtete Augen hatten doch unsere Väter, als sie im Jahre 1847 unsere Synode gründeten, und wie gut sind wir durch ihre fromme Wahl gefahren! Daran wollen wir in diesem Jubeljahr ganz besonders auch als ministerium Verbi divini denken.

J. T. M.