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Miscellanea

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Miscellanea

Propositions on the Modern Theory of Open Questions

These propositions drawn up by Professor Walther for the Pastoral Conference in New Bremen we herewith submit, since they may serve other conferences also as basis for a more extended discussion of this important question. B. [This note, evidently by Prof. Brauer, introduces the following propositions printed in *Lehre und Wehre*, Vol. 14 (1868), p. 318 f.]

1. It is undeniable that in religion or theology there are pertinent questions which, since they are not answered in the Word of God, may be called open questions in this sense, that agreement in answering them does not belong to the unity of faith and doctrine demanded in God's Word nor to the conditions of ecclesiastical, fraternal, or intimate (*kollegialisch*) fellowship.

2. Even if an individual member of the Church becomes guilty of an error which violates a clear word of God, such error does not at once deprive the respective person of ecclesiastical, fraternal, or intimate (*kollegialisch*) fellowship.

3. Even if an error violating a teaching of the divine Word arises in a whole church-body, this does not by itself make this church-body a false Church, fellowship with which an orthodox Christian or the orthodox Church would have to renounce.

4. A Christian may be so simple-minded that he cannot be convinced of the unscripturalness even of an error in a fundamental doctrine of the secondary type. It may be that he entertains this error and continues in it without being necessarily excluded by the orthodox Church.

5. The Church Militant must indeed strive for absolute unity in faith and doctrine, but it never reaches a higher degree of this unity than a fundamental one.

6. Even if in the writings of sainted acknowledged orthodox teachers we find errors with respect to non-fundamental or even secondary-fundamental articles of faith, these errors do not make these people false teachers and deprive them of the reputation of orthodoxy.

7. No man has the liberty, and to no man may liberty be given, to believe or teach differently from what God has revealed in His holy Word, whether the matters in question pertain to primary or to secondary fundamental articles of faith, to fundamental or non-fundamental doctrines, to matters of faith or matters of life, to matters of history or other things that are subject to human investigation, to important or apparently unimportant things.

8. Every deviation from the Word of God must be taken action against by the Church, whether such deviation be found with teachers or so-called laymen, whether with individuals or with whole church-bodies.

9. Those who stubbornly (*halsstarrig*) depart from the Word of God

must be excluded from the Church regardless of what the point at issue may be.

10. The fact that the Church Militant cannot achieve a higher degree of unity than a fundamental one does not prove that in the Church any error against the Word of God can have equal standing with the truth or demand tolerance.

11. The view that the Christian dogmas are formed gradually and that hence teachings which have not as yet gone through this process of formation are open questions, opposes the doctrine that the Church of all times is one and that the Bible is the only and complete source of knowledge of the Christian religion and theology.

12. The view that those teachings which have not been symbolically fixed must be placed among the open questions ignores the historical origin of the symbolical writings and likewise the fact that these writings do not intend to give us a complete system of doctrine. It ignores likewise the fact that these writings acknowledge everything that the Scriptures teach to be the object of the faith of the Church.

13. The view that those teachings must be looked upon as open questions in which acknowledged orthodox teachers have erred contradicts likewise the canonical authority or dignity of Holy Scripture.

14. The view that there are Christian doctrines contained in Holy Scripture which are not taught there in a clear, plain, and unambiguous way and that these doctrines must be looked upon as open questions, contradicts the principle of the clearness and hence likewise that of the purpose or the divine character of Holy Scripture, which comes to us as divine revelation.

15. The modern theory that among the clear doctrines of God's Word there are open questions is the most dangerous unionistic principle of our time, which necessarily leads to skepticism and finally to a purely naturalistic religion.

Translated and submitted by A.

"The Pastoral Prayer in War-Time"

While our country is not at war at present and our hope is that with God's help our Government will succeed in staying out of the conflict convulsing Europe, the question of the prayers a pastor, as the spokesman of his congregation, should offer in time of war presents itself quite naturally to us also. A writer in the *Presbyterian* submits an article on this topic. After emphasizing that nowhere is there greater need for cautious and balanced thinking than in the public prayers of a minister in time of war, he reminds us "that the pastoral prayer is not the occasion for propaganda, for peace, or for war." He very properly says: "It is a gross misuse of this part of public worship when the minister sees in it only a good chance to air his own convictions as to the rightness or the wrongness of any political cause." Everybody will have to admit that it would be reprehensible if the minister used the prayers in the church to express views which he perhaps would not have the courage to utter in a sermon or in conversation with his members. The writer in the *Presbyterian* says that in the pastoral

prayer in war-time "the minister calls his flock back to the quiet waters and the rich pasturage they had well-nigh forgotten, to certain fixed truths elementary in the very nature of God, such as justice, righteousness, and honor." Alongside of "the assured certainties of the Word of God" the pastoral prayer in war-time, so the writer continues, should "display the uniqueness of our Christian faith." He says correctly: "We are far away beyond other faiths in being commanded to pray for our enemies. Cannot this be set forth in a humble way, so that the world's unbelievers may see, through well-chosen words of public prayer, the clear transcendency of our Christian faith?" What he says as to the form of the prayer deserves consideration: "In no part of the public worship should our words be more even-tempered and devoid of the haste and impatience bred by worries. True, genuine sympathy should dominate every expression." Again he says: "The pastoral prayer should be incisive but not abrupt; persuasive but not dogmatic; pointed but not embarrassing; spiritual but not sentimental." It strikes us that the prayer for peace which is used quite commonly in our churches these days meets these requirements.

A.

The Bible and Evolution

The *New York Times* recently carried an article by Sidney M. Shalett which gave publicity to the opinion of Dr. Franz Weidenreich that the reconstructed skull of the Java Man — *Pithecanthropus erectus* — proved that it was that of a man and not of an ape. "The old theory claiming that man evolved exclusively from one center, whence he spread over the Old World, each time having entered afresh into a new phase of evolution, does no longer tally with the paleontological facts," Dr. Weidenreich, a German exile, told anthropologists. The latest discoveries, he maintained, proved that 300,000 to 500,000 years ago both the Java Man and his cousin, *Sinanthropus Pekinensis*, or the Peking Man, existed. One lived in Java, and the other lived in North China. The Java Man and the Peking Man were contemporaries of the same type but of different temperaments, he asserted. Then he proceeded to make the same silly, trite statement of men of his type: "So there can be no more argument that man came from an anthropological Adam and Eve in an anthropological Garden of Eden. We now have proof of at least two centers of evolution, and I should say that there were at least two more centers somewhere in the world, places where the white men and the Negro evolved, which anthropology has yet to discover."

This last statement must be upsetting to the theistic evolutionists who have tried to reconcile the Bible and evolution. We see no reason why the Bible and evolution should be made to agree. The evolutionist must ever remain a hopeless apologist for his viewpoint. There is no science of origins. Evolution assumptions, which are sometimes improperly classified as "scientific facts," have no place in exact science. The Book of Genesis is a revelation of origins and, when carefully studied, is sufficient to satisfy both our faith and our curiosity. The tenth chapter of the book is regarded by all reliable ethnologists as the best authority on the distribution of the races. Geologists in increasing

numbers are accepting the sixth chapter. The first three chapters still remain the incontrovertible answer to those who are beguiled with the fixation concerning *Pithecanthropus erectus*.

Men like Dr. Weidenreich will not give up their efforts to get rid of the first three chapters of Genesis. Without those three chapters much of the Bible becomes unintelligible, and Christian theology would be incomprehensible. Our Christian view of man is that he was created in the image and likeness of God. He fell from this high estate through sin. The redemption provided by God in Jesus Christ had its inception in the last part of the first three chapters of Genesis. The first announcement of salvation is Gen. 3:15, which is known throughout Christendom as the protevangelium, the first promise of salvation. We can well understand why Satan would like to eliminate these chapters. They reveal how he got such a hold on human life, a hold which he has kept even to this very day. We must not be deceived by the foolish imaginations he leads men like Dr. Weidenreich to foist on a gullible public. — *Watchman-Examiner*.

Kindling Faith

Simple Christian living is a powerful evangelizing force. In *Your Faith* a former utter disbeliever, a Nazi and a member of Hitler's Storm Troopers, has told of going to Switzerland to study so that he might more effectively propagate Hitlerism and of how he was changed there. For a time he lived by working on a farm and lived with the farmer's family, and in this simple life his eyes were opened to the meaning and influence of Christianity.

"They were a happy Christian family, with nine children, who lived high in the mountains with broad acres, which fed their eighty cows. In winter we rose long before daylight, the farmer first of all, and went to the barn to milk the cows. . . . And then, before we went out to our work, the head of the house read from the Bible, and we all bowed our heads and repeated the Lord's Prayer.

"At first I was inclined to sit with a superior air of defiant aloofness while the rest bowed their heads and said, 'Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name.' But no one paid any attention to me, and gradually I found myself drawn into the circle of their worship by the very strength and simplicity of their faith. For this was no formal muttering of words such as I had come to feel Christian worship was. Here was a living faith, part and parcel of their political and social convictions. Here, in this land where three races and languages mingled in peace, French, Italians, and Germans having mutual respect for each other, where a Protestant majority tolerated and respected a Catholic minority, democracy and Christianity were inseparable from each other." — *The Presbyterian*.

