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Miscellanea

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Miscellanea

Reason or Revelation?

Prof. R. T. Stamm of Gettysburg, one of the editors of the *Lutheran Church Quarterly*, does not like this formulation and the truth it expresses. He is for Reason and Revelation. In the article headed "Fractional Thinking and Lutheran Inhibitions," published in the April issue of the *Quarterly*, p. 124 ff., he says: "Before Lutheranism can make the greater contribution toward the coming of the kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven, which is rightfully expected of it and which it ought to be making, it must overcome certain inhibitions which have arisen in connection with its justifiable desire to safeguard its theological and confessional tenets. These inhibitions are due to an unfortunately frequent way of stating our attitude toward the social applications of the Gospel in the form of dilemmas which are as paralyzing to progress as they are specious and unnecessary. We need a saw to cut off the horns from six self-imposed and false dilemmas in order that we may substitute wholeness of thinking for the 'either-or' fallacies involved in them:

"1. Either an individual Gospel with an evangelical theology or a social gospel with a modernistic, humanistic theology.

"2. Either salvation out of this world for a future life in heaven or an effort to achieve the good life in this world without reference to personal immortality.

"3. Either salvation by the grace of God in Christ through faith, with good works as the consequent fruits motivated by gratitude, or activism and self-salvation by one's own merits, with good works motivated by the perception of the present penalties for neglecting them.

"4. Either a religious and spiritual approach or a moralistic and materialistic philosophy of life.

"5. Either submission to the authority of the Scriptures or the assertion of the proud pretensions of human reason.

"6. Either the preservation of the Lutheran Confessions by insisting on the individual Gospel and isolating ourselves from other churches and from cooperative religious movements or the loss of these by joining with other denominations to establish the kingdom of God on earth."

The section dealing with the "false dilemma" No. 5 reads: "When we begin to ask just *how* God gave His revelation and inspired the Scriptures, we do not get far before we realize how false is the dilemma, either the Scriptures or human reason. For God will be seen to have used every faculty of the writers of Scripture in giving His revelation. That included their reason. It included also their wills as they responded to God's will. They were always asking, 'What does the Lord God require of me?' And their answers were given, not in timeless abstractions but always with reference to the total life situations — political, social, and religious — in which they found themselves. They did not overemphasize the concept of God's transcendence at the expense of His

immanence, or *vice versa*. Their God was not a far-away abstraction but a Person at work in, and in control of, history. To translate the record of their experiences from the Greek and Hebrew languages into modern English and stop there is not enough. We must also translate from their environment into ours, and here again it is not a question of human reason versus revelation. Human thinking inspired by God's Spirit must guide us at every step. Times without number in our Lutheran literature we see the human reason made synonymous with human pride and wilful self-assertion against God and His revelation. Now, a warning against the pride which goes before destruction is always needed. But, on the other hand, we must never forget that it is impossible to construct a systematic theology without employing the same human reason which too many of our writers have tried to deprive of all validity at the outset! And such writers are often the proudest of men, claiming to boast only in the Lord, while their self-confident assurance in the completeness and finality of their own dogmatic constructions of revelation equals or exceeds the 'pride' of the most arrogant humanistic or communistic opponents of religion who call upon the name of reason and modern science to justify their dogmatism. It is not a question of revelation or reason but of revelation given, received, interpreted, and applied through the human reason which is energized and guided by the Spirit of God."

Dr. Stamm's argument "God will be seen to have used every faculty of the writers of Scripture in giving His revelation. That included their reason," is related to the argument examined on page 333 f., current volume of this magazine. The "human reason which is energized and guided by the Spirit of God" is the "enlightened reason" examined in the July number.

E.

The Meaning of 2 Tim. 3:16

On account of the importance of 2 Tim. 3:16 in all discussions pertaining to the character of the Scriptures, some remarks which recently were read to an intersynodical gathering with reference to this passage are here submitted.

When St. Paul says, 2 Tim. 3:16: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God," he ascribes the quality of being inspired to the *written* Word. We admit, of course, that the passage refers to the Old Testament Scriptures, to those that Timothy had known from a child, according to the context. But, at any rate, that the Old Testament is inspired is here stated very explicitly. Mark well, the Scripture, the *writing*, is said to be inspired, the *writing* is said to be God-breathed. It will not do to try to escape the conclusion that the Scriptures are completely inspired and infallible by saying: What the apostle asserts is that the *thoughts* of the Old Testament are divine. We reply: He is not saying, The thoughts, the ideas, are God-given, but, The writing is given by inspiration, is God-breathed, *πᾶσα γραφὴ θεόπνευστος*. Γραφή, a writing, consists of words; the very words of the Scriptures have a divine origin, and not merely the thoughts.

The attempt to give a different meaning to the passage by taking *θεόπνευστος* in an active sense = "God-breathing" apparently has been

abandoned; the lexicon of Preuschen-Bauer does not even list it as a possibility.

The charge has been made that our King James Version here is guilty of a mistranslation, that the meaning is not "all Scripture," but "every Scripture." We reply: What is the difference? Whether you take $\pi\alpha\sigma\alpha$ in a comprehensive sense and translate "all" or whether you take it in the distributive sense of "every," in either case the whole Old Testament is covered. "All Canada is British" does not differ in meaning from the statement "Every province of Canada is British," except that the latter assertion probably is more emphatic.

More serious appears the view that we ought to translate as Luther does: "All Scripture inspired by God is profitable" ("Alle Schrift, von Gott eingegeben, ist nuetze zur Lehre") and that the $\theta\epsilon\acute{o}\pi\nu\epsilon\upsilon\sigma\tau\omicron\varsigma$, inspired by God, in this case allegedly has the meaning of a restrictive relative clause, making the sentence read, "All Scripture which is inspired is profitable"; but, of course, the critic adds, not all Scripture possesses this quality of being inspired. It is possible, too, says the opponent, to look upon $\theta\epsilon\acute{o}\pi\nu\epsilon\upsilon\sigma\tau\omicron\varsigma$ as having conditional force. The meaning, it is asserted, might be given thus: All that part of Scripture which is inspired is profitable; or: Every Scripture, if it is inspired, is profitable. The great question is whether $\theta\epsilon\acute{o}\pi\nu\epsilon\upsilon\sigma\tau\omicron\varsigma$ here must (or may) be taken in the restrictive or conditional sense. I reply definitely, No. The context make this view simply impossible. Paul had said to Timothy in vv. 14 and 15: "Do thou remain in what thou hast learned and been made sure of, knowing from whom thou hast learned and that from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus." Without any conjunction he proceeds, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God." I say, It is impossible to take $\theta\epsilon\acute{o}\pi\nu\epsilon\upsilon\sigma\tau\omicron\varsigma$ in the restrictive or quasi-conditional sense. The apostle, according to the context, does not wish to discriminate, or lead Timothy to discriminate, between inspired and un-inspired writings; that thought is entirely foreign to the whole discussion. What he wishes to do is to make an emphatic statement about the $\iota\epsilon\rho\acute{\alpha}$ $\gamma\rho\acute{\alpha}\mu\mu\alpha\tau\alpha$, the Holy Scriptures which he had just referred to. Is it really such a great thing, a matter always to be kept in mind, that Timothy has been acquainted with the sacred writings from the days of childhood? It certainly is, says St. Paul; for the Holy Scriptures are divinely inspired and as such are profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good work. This line of thought of the apostle is so evident that all attempts to give his argumentation a different trend must break down. Let me once more remark that v. 16 starts without a conjunction, which fact makes it very evident that the verse must be closely connected with the foregoing.

In *Das Neue Testament Deutsch, neues Goettinger Bibelwerk*, Joachim Jeremias, who wrote the commentary on the pastoral epistles, translates our passage thus: "Jede Schriftstelle stammt aus Gottes Geist"; and he says in his comments, paraphrasing the words: "Jede Schriftstelle ist durch das Wehen des Heiligen Geistes entstanden — es ist wirklich Gott, der hier redet —, und darum bietet das Schriftwort auch des

Alten Bundes das Mittel zur Belehrung ueber den Gotteswillen, zur Ueberfuehrung der Suendigenen, zur Aufrichtung und Besserung der Reuigen, zur Erziehung in der rechten Lebensfuehrung, wie Gott sie fordert. . . . Das Urtheil des Apostels ueber das Alte Testament in Kap. 3, 15-17 ist das klarste, was in den neutestamentlichen Schriften ueber diese Frage gesagt ist. Beides ist Gemeingut des gesamten Neuen Testaments: 1. die Ueberzeugung, dass das alttestamentliche Schriftwort durch Gottes Geist gewirkt ist, inspiriertes Gotteswort ist, wobei freilich nicht vergessen wird, dass Gott durch Menschen redet (David: Matth. 22:43; vom Geist entzuendete Menschen: 2. Petribrief 1:21 u. oe.), ja, Jesus gelegentlich neben dem Gotteswort auch reines Menschenwort finden kann (Matth. 19:8), und 2. die Gewissheit, dass erst das christuszentrische und christus-glaeubige Verstaendnis des Alten Testaments seine Tiefe erschliesst und es zum Werkzeug der Heiligung macht." One statement in the above requires comment. Is *Jeremias* right when he characterizes the words which Jesus refers to Matt. 19:8 as purely human, "reines Menschenwort"? The passage belongs to the narrative of the debate between Jesus and the Pharisees on the question of divorce. The opponents appeal to the command of Moses pertaining to a writing of divorce-ment when a man puts away his wife. There Jesus states: Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, suffered you to put away your wives; but from the beginning it was not so. *Jeremias* looks upon the words of Moses here referred to as a purely human provision, not ordained by God Himself. I hold that this view of *Jeremias* is unwarranted. There are, of course, purely human legislative acts reported in the Old Testament, but what *Moses* here prescribed to Israel had been given him by God. However, in general, what *Jeremias* says hits the nail on the head and confirms the interpretation which I have given of 2 Tim. 3:16.

To be fair to Luther, I have to advert once more to his translation. Luther, I am sure, did not wish anybody to look upon the adjective *θεόπνευστος* as having restrictive or conditional force, but regarded it as descriptive or causal. His meaning would be brought out by the following rendering, "All Scripture, being God-inspired, or because it is God-inspired, is profitable for doctrine," etc. But I do not think his way of construing the Greek is tenable. Let it be noted that there is no copula (*ἰστί*) in the whole sentence before the purpose clause, which means that the copula must be supplied. It is most natural to supply it for both God-breathed and profitable, which are joined together by "and." The King James Version hence gives the correct rendering. I am aware that both the English and the American Revised Versions construe like Luther, translating, "Every Scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching," etc.; but I hold that this is one of the instances where the King James translators are more correct than their nineteenth-century successors. It is worth noting that the modern Greek version of the New Testament issued by the Bible societies puts the copula immediately after "all Scripture." I may here append several other modern renderings. Goodspeed translates: "All Scripture is divinely inspired by God and profitable for teaching," etc. Moffatt: "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching." The *Twentieth Century Greek New Testament*, however, translates: "Everything that

is written under divine inspiration is helpful for teaching," etc. There you have the view which gives the adjective a restrictive meaning. But even these translators, I am certain, would not wish their translation to imply a rejection of the statement that all Scripture is inspired. They would rather say that Paul here is not distinguishing between inspired and uninspired parts of the γραφή, but that he differentiates between the Scriptures and secular writings and that he would want to have the words "everything that is written under divine inspiration" refer to the Holy Scriptures mentioned by him before. W. ARNDT

Matthew Henry

This excerpt from the *Watchman-Examiner* will interest our readers:

"Matthew Henry was born October 18, 1662, in Cheshire County, England. His birthplace was in a neighborhood where believers of great Christian fortitude 'opposed the pride and usurpation of the See of Rome.' Reared in such an atmosphere, Henry had strong non-conformist convictions. Although he was taught by pious parents from infancy, he nevertheless experienced a genuine conversion. Feeling a strong call to the ministry, the young Christian was placed in the homes of those who had reputations for Biblical scholarship. No institution, therefore, could claim him as a graduate. Henry rejected the superior claims of the Church of England and despised its assertion of apostolic succession. At the time of his ordination he preferred the non-conformist form to that of the State Church. Having been—as it was estimated in those days—irregularly ordained, he had to endure the opposition and censure of devotees of the State Church.

"As the years advanced, Henry's fame as a Bible expositor increased. As we so often hear in our day of some men, 'he was much in demand.' He had a great deal to do with the spread of non-conformity in England. His method of preaching expository sermons was copied by other irregularly ordained men, and churches multiplied. After many years Henry was settled in the vicinity of London; but he was a man with many counties in his parish.

"How could such a busy man write so tremendous a work as *Matthew Henry's Commentary*? First of all, we are convinced of the innate simplicity and sincerity of the man. Concerning his method he declared, 'I affect no singularity; my desire is to please and profit.' Doubtless he had his desire. His hearers were pleased with it to their edification. In preaching, it was Henry's system to write full outlines, and since he took chapter by chapter, we can see how these constantly accumulated.

"Again, his life was constantly under the urge of 'redeeming the time.' His pursuit of holiness led him to live with vigor and industry. Prayer and a careful observance of God's dealings with him and with others permeate his personal chronicle. He was also an early riser. He put great value on the morning hours. By five o'clock he would be in his study, sometimes by four. Only breakfast and family worship were allowed to interfere with his study, which continued until noon. After dinner he returned to his study until four, then he would make calls on the sick."

J. H. C. F.