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Miscellanea

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Miscellanea

Do We Need Inspired Scriptures?

In an article published in the *Watchman-Examiner* and having the title "Apology for Literalism" some worth-while remarks are made showing that we need authoritative, divinely given and divinely fixed information on the basis of our Christian faith. The need of Holy Scriptures is brought out. We quote a few of the paragraphs:

"The disciples needed no verbally inspired and accurate document to inform their faith. They had the presence and speech of Christ. But when it came to passing on that knowledge, a difficulty arose. The image of Christ which they carried in their minds was somewhat less than perfect because of human weakness. If they tried to communicate that image in mere words, the weakness of language would further corrupt it. If their readers could read only their words—and they could not see Christ directly—once more the weakness of mind corrupted perception. In a single transmission, sin blurred the original revelation by three degrees. It amounts to this: if transmission of the Gospel were left only to human resources, the knowledge of Christ would be lost in a few generations. For those who have lived since Christ, his revelation is meaningless unless accuracy of transmission is assured.

"If we have nothing better to pass on to the future than the whole accumulation of Christian thought and experience and speculation, and the future must pick and choose without divine aid, the future will be no better off than the Greeks were, as far as a knowledge of God is concerned. In the last analysis, the future's main resource will be its own judgment and reason. Except for those who saw Christ in the flesh, man's need for a revelation is not practically answered, the revelation is incomplete, unless the transmission is as divine as the original. While I personally agree with Ferré's contention that Christianity in heathen lands should develop in accordance with the cultures thereof, that development nevertheless should revolve around and be based upon the Bible. The pioneer missionaries possessed a profound religious insight into the human needs of those lands when they put first in their efforts the translation of the Bible." A.

The Voice of a Layman in the American Lutheran Church

Under the heading "Let's Unite on Solid Ground" a communication signed "Just an Ordinary Layman" is published in the *Lutheran Standard*, which we here reprint.

"The *Lutheran Standard* has published articles written by both pastors and laymen on the unification of the various Lutheran bodies in America. Invariably it is urged that if unification is impossible at the present time, immediate action should be taken to establish pulpit fellowship. These writers appear to be impatient and cannot account for the delay, since the U. L. C. A. has agreed to the Pittsburgh Agreement.

"I would be more than pleased to see a unified Lutheran Church in

America. A unified Lutheran Church, however, means or should mean more than just an outward union. It must be genuinely Lutheran in a confession of faith and in practice. It must rest on solid ground, and pulpit fellowship cannot be established until the real foundation is under construction.

"I have yet to see a published article that frankly stated the objection or the differences and discussed them pro and con. Even the article on 'Charting the Future Course of American Lutheranism,' by Dr. Ralph H. Long, published in the March issue of the *Women's Missionary Outlook* doesn't bring them out into the open. The article leaves one wondering how, in view of what has been written, Lutherans can remain divided. On further thought one becomes convinced that there is something else which is keeping the Lutheran Church apart, something of greater importance, which must be a conscientious matter.

"What is keeping the U. L. C. A. and the American Lutheran Conference from unification? Is it not the Reformed practices of some of the Lutheran synods in the U. L. C. A.? Furthermore, what about the Masonic pastors in the U. L. C. A.? We all know the stand the Lutheran Church takes in regard to the lodge question. It is bad enough to have Lutheran laymen belong to lodges, but there is absolutely no excuse for a Lutheran pastor being a member of a lodge, particularly the Masonic lodge. The only reason that I can understand why Christians join the Masons or a lodge is that they do not possess sufficient enlightenment of things spiritual, as no man can serve two masters. Masonry makes men brethren and sets up a code to be kept by administering a terrible oath. Christianity makes men brethren by their love for Christ and Christ's love for them.

"If we were to join, or have unification with, the U. L. C. A. under such conditions, we should certainly be going to the extreme left. Where do we differ with Missouri? I do not know! But the way things look to me, we are drifting toward having two bodies in Lutheranism—extremists, or leftists, and the conservatives. There appear to be both of these present in all the American Lutheran bodies, even Missouri. I cannot envision a genuine unification of Lutheranism in America without a purge."

Pastors and "the One Thing Needful"

A member of the editorial staff of *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Prof. John Henry Bennetch, has written an editorial in the April-June number of the journal mentioned which every pastor will read with interest. The editorial has the title "Unpopularity" and considers the startling fact that theological journals have a comparatively small circulation. The reminder of the editorial that we ministers have to continue the study of the Word and of theology is needed by all of us. Let the words of Professor Bennetch be pondered.

"Ayer's well-known *Directory of Newspapers and Periodicals* tabulates with the religious publications to be listed in its pages nine theological magazines. Doubtless, two or three times as many as this are being printed. The significant fact for editorial comment, then, is not the small number but the small circulation which theological material

enjoys today. Several of the nine journals are issuing articles other than the strictly theological type along with religious themes. And yet only one among them can boast a circulation surpassing the 1,000 mark. (A few periodicals had fewer than five hundred copies printed.) Included with the nine magazines were noteworthy productions unrelated to a denomination as well as denominational organs.

"How is the unpopularity of theological journalism to be explained? Poor editorship, poor articles, or poor interest in the ministerial world—which will account for the low tide of productivity? Defects in editing there must be. None of us has passed beyond the realm of imperfection and error. But the mere fact that hundreds of religious and denominational periodicals flourish today would argue against any dearth of editorial acumen, not to speak of the publications which fairly bulge from every newsstand in the country. Editors are legion, if not always acute. Defects in the contributors and contributions there also must be in a world like ours. Yet that has not prevented a literary flood of substantial proportions from sweeping over all. The high water caused by the appearing of many volumes and pamphlets with sermonic material is receding gradually since the new world war has made itself felt, absorbing both the time and thought of serious-minded men. Such a recent flood, however, has left behind its mark. So it can hardly be said that the church lacks penmen with ready pens.

"If the unpopularity of theological literature be due to neither editor nor author, then what else can be the cause of the present situation but our theological public? Denominational papers are much in evidence; devotional writings and commentaries on the Sunday school lessons vie one with the other on the market. But the theological magazine goes unheeded, unwanted, unsupported. Ministers must simply not be reading systematic theology or the Greek New Testament. They must not be expounding the Bible verse by verse, book by book, doctrine by doctrine. Both pulpit and pew, therefore, need revival, not the pew alone. Clergymen may be too busy with things of less importance than 'prayer and the ministry of the Word' (Acts 6:4). They may be acting out the part of deacon (Acts 6:2), of statesman (to plan 'a just and durable peace'), or of religious politician (to unite denominations, missions, schools).

"When will 'the cloth' come to its senses and learn again what our Lord meant by the words: 'Thou art careful and troubled about many things; but one thing is needful'? The minister is no better than what he does. If he fails to study the Bible and theology, what will he have of spiritual verity to preach? What message will he have for the war widow, the fatherless, the fighting man ready for combat? How can he support his country at war with prevailing prayer, if he knows so little about the God of glory and battles, revealed fully only in the Scriptures? How can he proclaim a gospel of peace which transforms men whose father is the devil into sons of God, thus to make possible what is real peace, both individual and national? Only, we believe, by knowing whereof he speaks, studying in order to know, having the material with which to study, and using it."

A.

Roman Catholic Marriage Documents

A brother kindly sent us the complete text of the documents on the signing of which the Roman Catholic Church insists in the case of mixed marriages. Our pastors should be acquainted with this text.—
Ed. NOTE.

Agreement and Promise to Be Signed by the Catholic Party

I, the undersigned, a member of the Catholic Church, wishing to contract marriage with the non-Catholic party whose signature is affixed above to this mutual agreement, being of sound mind and perfectly free, and only after understanding fully the import of my action, do hereby enter into this mutual agreement and understanding in contemplation of and in consideration for the consent, marriage, and consequent change of my status, and therefore hereby agree:

1. that I shall have all children, both boys and girls, that may be born of this union, baptized and educated solely in the faith of the Roman Catholic Church. I understand that in case of my death, or in the event of a dispute, the custody of all the children shall be given to such guardians as assure the faithful execution of this covenant and promise;
2. that I will practice my Catholic religion faithfully and will strive, especially by example, prayer, and the frequentation of the Sacraments, to bring about the conversion of my consort;
3. that no other marriage ceremony shall take place before or after this ceremony by the Catholic priest;
4. that I will lead a married life in conformity with the teachings of the Catholic Church regarding birth control, realizing fully the attitude of the Catholic Church in this regard.

Date _____

(Signature of Catholic party)

I, the undersigned pastor (assistant), do hereby attest: that the party whose signature is affixed to the above agreement and promises appeared before me personally on the given date; that I fully explained the import and meaning of the above agreement and promises, and that the said party freely entered into this agreement and signed the above in my presence. I have absolutely no hesitancy in attesting to the fact that the above-mentioned party is sincere in entering into this agreement and in the intention of faithfully executing the promises therein contained.

Pastor — Assistant

SEAL

Agreement and Promise to Be Signed by Non-Catholic Party

I, the undersigned, not a member of the Catholic Church, wishing to contract marriage with the Catholic party whose signature is also affixed to this mutual agreement, being of sound mind and perfectly free, and only after understanding fully the import of my action, do hereby enter into this mutual agreement, understanding the execution of this agree-

ment and the promises therein contained are made in contemplation of and in consideration for the consent, marriage, and consequent change of status of the hereinafter mentioned Catholic party, and I, therefore, hereby agree:

1. that I will not interfere in the least with the free exercise of the Catholic party's religion;
2. that I will adhere to the doctrine of the sacred indissolubility of the marriage bond, so that I cannot contract a second marriage while my consort is still alive, even though a civil divorce may have been obtained;
3. that all the children, both boys and girls, that may be born of this union shall be baptized and educated solely in the faith of the Roman Catholic Church, even in the event of the death of my Catholic consort. In case of dispute, I furthermore hereby agree fully that the custody of all the children shall be given to such guardians as assure the faithful execution of this covenant and promise in the event that I cannot fulfill it myself;
4. that I will lead a married life in conformity with the teachings of the Catholic Church regarding birth control, realizing fully the attitude of the Catholic Church in this regard;
5. that no other marriage ceremony shall take place before or after this ceremony by the Catholic priest.

In testimony of which agreement, I do hereby solemnly swear that I will observe the above agreement and faithfully execute the promises therein contained, and do now affix my signature in approval thereof.

Date _____

(Signature of non-Catholic party)

I, the undersigned pastor (assistant), do hereby attest: that the party whose signature is affixed to the above agreement and promises appeared before me personally on the given date; that I fully explained the import and meaning of the above agreement and promises, and that the said party, duly sworn, freely entered into this agreement and signed the above in my presence. I have absolutely no hesitancy in attesting to the fact that the above-mentioned party is sincere in entering into this agreement and in the intention of faithfully executing the promises therein contained.

Pastor — Assistant

SEAL

A Protestant Voice from Latin America

In the *Watchman-Examiner* Thomas Dixon, a missionary to El Salvador, speaks of the attacks that have been made on Protestant missions in Latin America and submits his reaction to them. On account of the prominence which in the press has been given to Roman Catholic opposition to Protestant mission work in the countries south of the United States, we think it proper to submit to our readers what this Protestant missionary writes.

"We trust that none of you will be tricked into believing the propaganda being made against Protestant missions in Latin America. It is being said that we are causing a great deal of ill feeling towards the United States because we are proselytizing Roman Catholics. This is certainly not so here, nor anywhere where I have been. In fact, I believe that the missionaries are as a rule a very real aid to good understanding and good feeling. Seldom do other folk from the States mix with the people or spend themselves in helping them as do the missionaries. Amongst all classes of people we have an ever-growing number of friends, and we are treated with splendid cordiality everywhere.

"If we were so obnoxious as is being said, these countries themselves have an easy remedy. They could simply reform their constitution so as to exclude us, but the very fact that they have opened their countries to us and welcomed us and sanctioned our work amongst them gives the lie to the propaganda made against us. I have spoken to several men about this—some very prominent men—and they all deny that we are disliked, and some of them have spoken in strong terms against those who say so. In Santa Ana, San Salvador, and in Managua, Nicaragua, our schools receive many students from very prominent families, and we are always filled to overflowing long before the official time for matriculation is over. Strange, if we are so disliked!

"Of course, the United States will never be very well liked by the Roman Catholic Church as long as her people do not place themselves in submission to the Pope. Let me translate a paragraph that appeared in a local paper recently during the first Eucharistic Congress of Central America; here it is: 'The laity, as I have said, . . . secularized the cemeteries, established civil marriage, suppressed religious education, that is, the control of education by the Church, and made a constitution that is indifferent to the Catholic faith, which through our Spanish heritage flows in our veins. . . . And there is given to the face of the earth the greatest of absurdities: a secular state in a Catholic country.'

"You can see for yourselves who is making the hullabaloo and why. You can also see what the Roman Catholic Church wants: control of the cemeteries, of marriage, of education, a constitution recognizing only the Roman Catholic faith, and a laity submissive to a state controlled by Rome. It is 'absurd' to this Roman Catholic spokesman for the people in these countries to control their own government—that should be left to the priests. The laity, however, established their government and made their constitution as they wanted it, and made it so that they might be free to worship God as they pleased. Therefore, since these folk will not keep us out, the Roman Catholics turn to our United States Government and try to persuade it that the 'good neighbor' policy is doomed if Uncle Sam sends his Protestant missionaries down here to irritate the clergy. Do not you believe it!

"One man, not of this country, but a former Vice-President of his own country and a member of its Supreme Court, said: 'That is not true. It is the propaganda worked up by these Spanish priests (those from Spain). I believe we all feel that it is best to have all religions present, as they thus keep one another purer.'

"We should like to recommend to you a splendid book on Latin America by Dr. W. Stanley Rycroft, executive secretary of the committee on co-operation. He has been here in our home and left a most favorable impression. For seventeen years he was a missionary in Peru, and for fifteen years he taught English in the university there. His book is authoritative and very informing. You all should read it. It is entitled: *On This Foundation: The Evangelical Witness in Latin America*, by W. Stanley Rycroft, published by the Friendship Press, New York City." A.

The Westminster Assembly

From the *Presbyterian* we take over the following interesting remarks on the Westminster Assembly, which was responsible for the famous Westminster Confession:

"In the spring of 1643 Church and State in England were falling apart. Parties and plots were rife. Armies were maneuvering. The Great Seal had gone to the King, and Parliament ordered another for its own use. The Church, the Presbyterians, and the Sects were in one another's hair. To assist Parliament in this difficult and dangerous posture of affairs, it was ordered that an Assembly of Divines be convened to sit at Westminster and act as a chamber of reference for matters doctrinal and ecclesiastical. This group convened on July 1, 1643, in Westminster Abbey, and began a nine years' tenure of life. Scottish ministers were invited and came. Episcopalians were invited, but did not come or, when they arrived, were expelled. Revision of the Thirty-nine Articles was the original agenda, but time and need brought much else before this august tribunal. It set about to displace episcopacy. Thirty members came from the Houses of Parliament, but their attendance was perfunctory. Puritan divines filled the benches. The Scottish Covenant was a great problem, and the General Assembly in Scotland was vocal with suggestions. Among the one hundred and fifty members there were Presbyterians, Dissenters, and Independents. (Cf. W. C. Abbott's *Life and Letters of Cromwell*, Volume I.) There is something suggestive in the fact that as we approach the celebration of the three hundredth anniversary of the gathering of this notable group, we should be in the midst of an effort to adopt Episcopalianism into our system and establish bishops among our presbyters." A.

