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Soederblom and Harnack in a Swedish Estimate.

PROF. W. H. T. DAU, St. Louis, Mo.

During March Prof. Adolph von Harnack, of Berlin, visited the principal ecclesiastical and academic centers of Sweden. His visit attracted a great deal of attention. A conservative paper like *Nya Dagligt Allehanda* celebrated the coming of the distinguished guest with fulsome praise.

The Twelfth General Convention of the Swedish Lutheran State Church had just closed its session when the renowned German Gnostic arrived. There is no apparent connection between the convention and Dr. Harnack's visit, except that both events aroused a great deal of public interest, and both afford glimpses of Swedish church-life under state control.

The convention was attended, not only by representatives from every part of Sweden, but also by invited guests from the adjacent countries to the East, the former provinces of Russia bordering on the Baltic, which had sent their bishops to the convention. *Nya Vaektaren*, for April, calls them the Swedish Archbishop Soederblom's "suffragan bishops." The preparations for the convention had been on a scale to excite great expectations. From a meeting of the leading men of the Swedish state church the public had a right to expect important deliberations bearing on Swedish church-life. In this the confessional Lutherans of Sweden were disappointed. Editor Svensson has called the great doings "a delusion," because "the convention, in fact, was not permitted to take the initiative in any matter or to issue any important declaration on the burning questions of the day." The archbishop, as usual, was charming and impressed the convention with his skill as chairman and general manager. He delivered a remarkably informing address on the state of affairs throughout the world and present-day politics, in which "he sided with both the French and the Germans, the Socialists and the Conservatives." He told

Luther's Principle: The Bible Only.

REV. ARTHUR H. C. BOTTL, Chicago, Ill.

The wisdom of Frederick the Wise had prompted him to prevent Luther's return from the Diet of Worms to his usual activities in Wittenberg and to keep him in hiding in some unknown place, as the best means of protecting the life and cause of his bold and renowned professor. Relieved of the burden of his daily duties and secure from the intrigues of his enemies, Luther spent the ten months from May 4, 1521, to March 1, 1522, in the seclusion of the Wartburg, the romantic hunting castle of the Elector of Saxony. While his sojourn in the old halls, which are so famous in the history of literature and music, brought Luther a much-needed and indeed well-earned respite, it did not materially hinder him in furthering the work of the great Reformation, but rather gave him the opportunity of beginning an undertaking which he might not have attempted under the stress of official duties and the lack of composure in Wittenberg, *viz.*, the translation of the Bible. Though he devoted much time to other literary labors, he made such rapid progress with his translation that he could take the nearly completed manuscript of the New Testament with him when he left the Wartburg. In Wittenberg he revised his translation with the assistance of Melancthon, and in September, 1522, the first printed edition was placed in the hands of the people.

The translation of the Bible was a cardinal event in the history of the Reformation. From the beginning of his labors Luther had appealed to the Scriptures in order to establish the correctness of his teaching and, consequently, to prove that his opponents erred. To him the word of Christ, "It is written," meant more than all the authority and wisdom of the Church and the world. But up to the time when he gave the common people his version, there were none but the learned who were able to investigate

whether he really based his doctrines on the revealed Word of God or not, because they alone were able to read the original text of Scripture. To meet this exigency there was but one thing to do, and that was to give the common people the Bible in their mother tongue. And this Luther did in the most masterly manner, in a manner unsurpassed even to-day, in his translation of the Bible.

When Luther appealed to the Scriptures for the proof of his doctrine, he might have spoken in the words of St. Paul: "For Christ sent me . . . to preach the Gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the Cross of Christ should be made of none effect. For the preaching of the Cross is to them that perish foolishness, but unto us, which are saved, it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. . . . Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men." 1 Cor. 1, 17—25. "I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. Howbeit, we speak wisdom, . . . yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to naught; but we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world unto our glory. . . . For who hath known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct Him?" 1 Cor. 2, 3—16. In these words St. Paul tells us, better than any one else can state it, that human wisdom cannot discover the truths of our Christian religion, but that God Himself must reveal them to us. If God had not revealed our faith, we would know nothing of it and would never find it. The source of our Christian faith is divine revelation. To this source Luther returned, and from it he drew his faith.

The divine revelation was not only preached by word of mouth, but was written down in one certain and definite form, so that there never could be any doubt about what was revealed and what not. We have this revelation in Holy Scriptures. Our Bible is the Word of God. In it God speaks to us. On it we

must base our faith. For the correctness of this statement we find abundant proof in the Old Testament as well as in the New.

When we read the written records of the ancient prophets, we are impressed with the dignity and authority with which they addressed their hearers. They did not present their message as their own humble opinion nor as the result of scientific investigation, universally accepted by the scholars of their age. No, they demanded a much higher and greater authority for their message, in fact, the highest authority there is, *viz.*, the eternal, never-changing wisdom of God; and they began their address with the sublime words: "Thus saith the Lord." Jer. 23, 1. 27. 31.

Christ Himself dignified Holy Scriptures by appealing to their authority in questions of faith, by quoting them in refutation of the arguments of His opponents, and by recognizing the inviolability of their character. When a certain lawyer asked Him: "Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus said to him: "What is written in the Law? How readest thou?" Luke 10, 25. 26. He had no other answer to give the questioner than the written Word would give him. When the devil tempted Him in the wilderness, asking Him to turn stones into bread, Jesus repulsed Him by saying: "It is written." In imitation of Christ's manner the devil also tried to quote Scriptures, but was again repelled with another quotation, which Christ introduced with the words: "Again it is written." Matt. 4, 1—11. To the Son of God Himself the Scriptures were mighty enough to defend Him against the attacks of the old Evil Foe. When He entered upon His great Passion, He did so, as He stated Himself, because "all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man shall be accomplished." Luke 18, 31. Even the Son of God bowed reverently to the sacredness of the Scriptures. Indeed, "the Scripture cannot be broken." John 10, 35.

On Pentecost Day Peter preached what we may call the first Christian sermon, and he did so under the direct guidance and influence of the Holy Ghost. However, he did not begin to reveal new mysteries, but took his text from the written Word of God and proceeded to show his hearers how the prophecies of Joel and David were now being actually fulfilled. Preaching before Agrippa, Paul declared: "I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come." Acts 26, 22. "Moreover, brethren," he wrote to the Corinthians, "I declare unto you the Gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received,

and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures." 1 Cor. 15, 1—4. He assured the Christians in Ephesus that they were "fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God, and that they were built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief Corner-stone." Eph. 2, 19. 20. Thus the apostles of Christ made the written Word of God the foundation of their faith and preaching. When, therefore, Luther accepted the written Word, the Scripture, as the foundation of his faith, he not only followed an apostolic example, but knew that his doctrine must endure because Christ said, Matt. 24, 35: "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away."

This foundation was wrecked by the Roman Catholic Church, and in its place a new foundation was laid, though no man can lay another true foundation. 1 Cor. 3, 11. The alleged new foundation is the Church, or the tradition of the Popes. In Roman theology disputed questions are not decided by the statements of Scripture, but by the decisions of the councils, the *ex cathedra* promulgations of the Popes, and the opinions of the Church Fathers. Even if Rome would give the Bible into the hands of its members, it would not permit them to use it as the source of faith, but it would insist that the Bible must be subordinated to the Church in its comments and decrees. Against this principle Luther had to wage his fight in the great Reformation.

Though all the Protestant churches claim to use the same Bible, we see how Protestant Christianity is divided into various and contending sects. This division cannot be caused by the Scriptures, which are so clear that a child can understand them, and all factions would of necessity cease to exist if they would but follow the plain words of Scripture. However, it is a false principle which causes the divisions — the principle of interpretation, which supersedes the plain Word. A prominent exponent of this school was Zwingli. He refused to accept certain doctrines which Scripture teaches in plain words, and in their stead promulgated doctrines, which he tried to prove by putting his own meaning into the plain words of Scripture, *i. e.*, by so-called interpretation. It is peculiar that, while we can speak to each other without the use of an interpreter, God should not be able to speak

to us so plainly as not to need an interpreter who is to tell us what God means to say. Of course, this principle cannot be the foundation of our faith, and Luther emphatically rejected it.

Finally we cannot accept the principle of special revelation as the source of our faith. If there really is some special revelation, we know that it must agree with the written revelation. "For the Word of the Lord is right, and all His works are done in truth." Ps. 33, 4. God is not inconsistent, neither does He alter His word. New revelations must therefore agree with the revelation which we have. It strikes us, though, that the new revelations are in direct contradiction to the old written revelation which we have, and therefore they cannot be right, and we must not relinquish the certainty of the written revelation for any special so-called revelation. And because special revelations are no foundation at all for our faith, Luther fought them most vehemently.

Ever since Luther found the Bible in the library of the University of Erfurt, he was a diligent Bible-student. In later years he very much deplored the fact that he had not been permitted to keep the copy of the Bible which he used during his Erfurt days, and with which he had so familiarized himself that he knew exactly where nearly all the important passages were to be found. When the University of Wittenberg permitted him to lecture on theology, he was delighted; for he detested to lecture on philosophy, but loved the Bible. When he accepted the degree of Sententiarius and shortly afterwards that of Doctor of Divinity, he had to vow allegiance to his beloved Holy Bible, to preach it faithfully and purely. He remained true to this oath all his life.

In 1517 he nailed his 95 theses on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg. In these he stood on the firm ground of Scripture, and at once, right in his first thesis, called on it for his proof, for he began by saying: "When our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, says," etc. His appeal was not to the Fathers, nor to the councils, nor to the Church, but to the Word of God.

In 1519 he disputed with Eck in Leipzig. Eck based his arguments on the writings of the Fathers and the decrees of the councils; Luther, on the Scriptures. When Eck tried to identify Luther with certain teachings of Huss, which had been condemned by the Council of Constance, he replied without fear: "It makes no difference to me whether Wyclif or Huss said it. It is true." At last Luther brought the useless debate to a close by saying: "Eck goes into the Scriptures no deeper than the water-spider

dives into the water; he flees from them as the devil flees from the cross. With all due respect for the Fathers, I prefer the authority of the Scriptures, and this I would impress upon our judges."

In 1521 he was cited to appear before the Diet of Worms, where the most powerful princes of the State and the highest dignitaries of the Church had assembled to sit in judgment on his case. Though his life and cause hung in the balance, he did not falter or waver, but stepped into this illustrious assembly with composure, and with calmness he spoke these immortal words: "Since Your Imperial Majesty desires a clear, simple, and precise answer, I will give one which has neither horns nor teeth: Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Holy Scriptures or by patent, clear, and cogent reasons and arguments (for I believe neither the Pope nor the councils alone, since it is evident that they have often erred and contradicted themselves), and because the passages adduced and quoted by me have convinced me and bound my conscience in God's Word, I cannot and will not recant, since it is neither safe nor advisable to do anything against conscience. Here I stand; I cannot do otherwise! God help me! Amen."

Again we find Luther upholding this principle in Marburg, where he disputed with Zwingli over the doctrine of the Lord's Supper. Over against Zwingli's principle of interpretation he insisted on the plain meaning of the words: "This is My body, this is My blood," which he even wrote on the table at which he and Zwingli sat. The difference between Luther and Zwingli was not a superficial, but a vital one. Zwingli's conception of the matter was that the church must not be founded on the Word, either spoken or written, but on that which shines in us, in our hearts. (*Union in der Wahrheit*, p. 67.) But Luther wrote, already five years before Marburg, December 15, 1524: "This I confess, if Dr. Carlstadt, or some one else could have convinced me that in the Sacrament there were nothing else than bread and wine, he would have done me a great service. I indeed suffered such severe affliction in this matter and wrestled and squirmed to such an extent that I fain would have been free, because I well saw that thereby I could have dealt the papacy the hardest blow. I had two who wrote more cleverly about it than Dr. Carlstadt and did not torture the words in this wise, according to their own notions. But I am caught and cannot get out; the text is too mighty here and will not suffer itself to be robbed of its meaning by words. Why, if even to-day some one would prove, giving me but one

argument to rest upon, that merely bread and wine is in the Sacrament, no one would have reason to treat me so indignantly. I am, I must confess, only too much inclined to it, in as far as I feel my old Adam. But the manner in which Dr. Carlstadt raves about it troubles me so little that my opinion is only strengthened all the more by it." (Luther, Erl. Ed., 53, 27.)

At Augsburg the Lutheran Confession was read. Duke William of Bavaria asked Eck if he were able to refute it. He replied that he would be able to refute it with the Fathers, but not with the Bible, whereupon the duke remarked that he saw that the Lutherans were in the Scripture and the Catholics beside it. The learned Catholic Bishop of Augsburg publicly admitted: "Everything that was read is the pure, unadulterated, undeniable truth." The Augsburg Confession was Luther's work, though Melancthon had written it in the form in which it was adopted.

Throughout his life Luther employed this principle and never lost sight of it. His one great concern was to keep the Bible before the people. Of his own masterly writings he said he hoped they would perish if they would keep any one from reading the Bible. As he himself drew his faith from this divine fountainhead, so he also encouraged and admonished his hearers to do. He worked indefatigably and incessantly to improve and polish his translation, and really never stopped till death ended his efforts. He finished the last revision of his translation in 1545, and a few months later fell asleep, confidently confessing the faith which he had found in his beloved Holy Bible.
