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## THEOLOGICAL OBSERVER

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### THE TWENTIETH-CENTURY BATTLEGROUND OF BIBLIOLOGY

Under this heading Prof. J. A. Witmer of Dallas Theological Seminary stresses in *Bibliotheca Sacra* (April, 1954) the importance of the doctrine of Bibliology in the theological struggle of today. Quoting James Orr: "That battle will have to be fought . . . round the fortress of the worth and authority of Holy Scripture," he thinks that the survey of theological literature in our age substantiates the accuracy of Dr. Orr's prediction, for Bibliology in recent years has been a dominant area of interest in theological study and controversy. He quotes John Baillie as stating in a preface of one of his books "that the topic of revelation is of the first order of urgency as regards the Church's total task in the present age." This is but natural, as the author of the article suggests: "For all doctrine ultimately builds upon the doctrine of Scripture. The chain reaction can be traced even further. The concept of the Bible as a special revelation grows out of the doctrine of the authority of God's Word. The authority of the Bible rests ultimately upon the infallibility of the Scriptures. In turn, the basis of the infallibility of Scripture is its verbal, plenary inspiration." He cites Arthur Temple Cadoux (*Essays in Christian Thinking*, p. 20), who, while denying Verbal Inspiration himself, nevertheless recognizes its importance and says: "For if we ask, 'Supposing you give up verbal inspiration, where can you stop?' it begins to grow clear that with verbal inerrancy the Bible as the final authority in religion goes." Emil Brunner writes in a similar vein: "The substance of Christian theology, the content of Christian faith, is in a stage of complete decomposition. Christianity is either faith in the revelation of God in Jesus Christ or it is nothing." (*The Theology of Crisis*, p. 3.) Barth was struck by the lack of a Biblical point of view at the Amsterdam conference of 1948 and wrote that he experienced at Amsterdam the opposition between "Anglo-Saxon" and "Continental" theology. "To put it simply," Barth said, "it was the different attitude to the Bible from which we each take our start." (The same difference, by the way, between "European" and "American" theology became apparent also at the recent Evanston convention of the WCC.) Describing the difference between "Anglo-Saxon" and "Continental" theology, Barth goes on to say: "They [the Anglo-Saxons] preferred to theologize on their own account, that is to say, without asking on what Biblical grounds one

put forward this or that professedly 'Christian' view. They would quote the Bible according to choice, that is to say, according as it appeared to them to strengthen their own view and without feeling any need to ask whether the words quoted really have in their context the meaning attributed to them. . . . It seemed to be a quite unfamiliar demand that in the church one must not simply speak in general terms of the 'mind of Jesus,' but must always fundamentally think and argue also from definite biblical texts and contexts; and when one put forward this demand, one had to be prepared to be written off as a 'biblicist,' or 'legalist' or 'literalist.'" (Karl Barth, "Continental vs. Anglo-Saxon Theology," *Christian Century*, Feb. 16, 1949.)

Dr. Witmer concludes his article with the words: "Bibliology, therefore, is much more than the touchstone of theological orthodoxy. From this evidence [that supplied in the article] it assumes the position of the cornerstone of the theological structure; remove it and the superstructure crumbles and disintegrates. Therefore the twentieth-century battle over the doctrine of Holy Scripture is no insignificant quibble over the insertion or omission of *filioque* in a statement of faith, but it is a conflict of basic proportions involving the very existence of theology and Christian faith in the traditional meanings of those terms."

J. T. MUELLER

#### CHRISTIANITY AND ITS CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE LANGUAGE PROBLEM

Sometimes by-products are almost as valuable as are the products themselves. During the past summer it was a source of unending pleasure to the writer to discuss with *Oberstudienrat* Frederick Vogt, director of the Oberursel *Proseminar* and an authority on Greek and Roman literature, the problem involved in the general present-day dislike of, if not contempt for, the languages of the sacred Scriptures, not to speak of Latin, which for centuries has been the official language of the Christian church. The discussion drifted at times also to the consideration of how much, or rather how little, the Greek and Roman classics have done to preserve for posterity the languages of peoples which they regarded as barbarians, and how much, on the other hand, linguistics owes to the Christian church and, in particular, to its missionaries, who in the interest of bringing the Gospel to all nations have studied hundreds of languages and created for them alphabets, grammars, lexicons, and ultimately a vastly important Christian and secular literature.

So far as Professor Vogt could recall, there is only one quotation of Teutonic speech in the Roman poets, and this concerns the elemental wants of man, while Bishop Ulfilas (ca. A. D. 311—82) preserved

for posterity the beautiful language of the Goths in his excellent Bible version and a number of writings of which a few fragments still remain.

Ulfilas gave to the world his Bible translation in the fourth century. It was not until the first half of the sixth century that the Roman poet Luxorius of Africa preserved for posterity a few Gothic words. At that time the Gothic language was so generally used in Rome that he became peeved and in his *Carmen 285* (cf. Codex Salmasianus, 7th century; A. Riese, *Anthologia Latina*) vented his spleen in the following words:

*"Inter eils goticum scapia matzia drincan  
Non audet quisquam dignos edicere versus."*

Professor Vogt translates the Gothic words in this verse as follows: *Heil! Schaffe uns zu essen und zu trinken.* The Romans commonly regarded the Teutonic people as voracious consumers of meat. Caesar Maximinus Thrax, whom certain racial fanatics looked upon as the first Roman emperor of Nordic blood, is said to have been chosen by his soldiers as emperor because he could devour in rapid succession huge amounts of raw meat.

As we compare these few, and perhaps even unreliable, Gothic words quoted by a late and by no means great Roman poet with the rich treasure of Gothic preserved in the Bible translation of Ulfilas, we see at once how much the science of Germanics owes to the love of a Christian bishop for the evangelization of his people. But what Ulfilas has done for the Goths many other missionaries have done for uncounted peoples throughout the Christian era, especially in the great modern mission period. Christianity ennobles and dignifies the languages of the world just as it ennobles and dignifies the nations themselves. It recognizes the confusion of tongues as God's judgment upon the arrogance of the builders of Babel; but it recognizes also the unifying and uplifting power of the Gospel proclaimed in all the languages of men.

We dare not ignore the importance of the science of linguistics; much less dare we ignore the sacred languages in which God was pleased to present to us His precious Word. There is perhaps a deeper meaning in the superscription of Pilate in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin on the cross on which our Savior died. To preach the Gospel of His redemption worthily and adequately we cannot set aside the languages in which God chose to present to the world His saving Word. And as we publish the Gospel by word or pen with a thorough knowledge of what Luther called *die Sprachen*, we shall confer untold valuable by-products of a secular nature upon mankind.

J. T. MUELLER

## BRIEF ITEMS FROM "RELIGIOUS NEWS SERVICE"

*Frankfort, Ky.*—Some 460 Marion County residents have filed suit in Franklin Circuit Court in an effort to reopen Bradfordsville high school and halt the employment of Roman Catholic nuns in the county's public schools.

The suit charges that the policies of the county school officials were calculated to "promote the Roman Catholic faith."

By a vote of four to one the Marion County School Board recently decided not to operate Bradfordsville high school this year. Students were ordered transferred to a high school in Lebanon, 10 miles away.

Protesting parents and students went on strike. The high school students refused to board buses to Lebanon, and parents kept about 275 children out of the Bradfordsville elementary school.

In their suit the Bradfordsville residents charged the Marion County Board with a pattern of discrimination against the community in an effort to "destroy the public school system of Marion County."

Their petition further charged that the board showed favoritism towards some schools which, it said, were in effect being operated as "Roman Catholic schools." The petition noted that these schools bore the names "St. Francis" and "St. Charles"—although supported with public tax money.

The citizens asked Circuit Judge William B. Ardery to issue an injunction requiring the board to reopen the Bradfordsville high school, staff it adequately, and halt "the discrimination."

The suit alleged that the board members are violating Federal and State constitutions in employing Roman Catholic sisters as teachers. It asked that State officials be prevented from distributing public money to the Marion County Board until it halts allegedly illegal practices. It also asked that the State Board of Education be made to exercise its lawful powers in the control and management of the common schools, particularly in Marion County.

*New York.*—Membership in Lutheran churches of the United States and Canada reached a new high of nearly seven million in 1953, according to the annual statistical summary compiled by the National Lutheran Council here.

Reporting a total membership of 6,869,066, the summary said this was an increase of 195,121, or 2.9 per cent, over the previous year. The percentage gain has been about the same during the past five years.

Of the total members, 6,666,181 are located in the U. S. and 202,885 in Canada.

Confirmed (adult) membership in both countries increased by

106,835 persons to total 4,658,715, a gain of 2.3 per cent, as compared with an increase of 102,246 persons and the same percentage gain in 1952.

The 195,121 increase in baptized membership was distributed among the 17,006 congregations in the two countries, representing an average of about 11.5 new members per church.

The council's summary is based on figures supplied by 16 church bodies and the Negro missions conducted by four groups associated in the Lutheran Synodical Conference. Of the 16 bodies, 10 recorded gains in membership, while six reported no change—as their figures were taken from statistics compiled in previous years. A slight loss was reported by the Negro missions.

No listing was made of independent congregations in this year's summary.

For the ninth successive year, the largest numerical increase was registered by The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, which gained 69,226 baptized members, or 3.7 per cent, over 1952. With a membership of 1,916,510, the Missouri Synod is the second largest Lutheran body in America.

The United Lutheran Church in America, largest of the bodies, reported an increase of 55,427, or 2.7 per cent, making a total membership of 2,143,372.

Greatest advance on a percentage basis among major bodies was shown by the American Lutheran Church, which added 33,546 members, representing a gain of 4.2 per cent. This church, with 824,535 members, is the fourth largest Lutheran group in America.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church, which up to 1953 showed the greatest gain on a percentage basis for seven successive years, reported an increase of 12,716 members, or 1.4 per cent, in 1953.

The ELC explained, however, that its actual gain was 88,000, or 9.7 per cent, but that this was not reflected in its latest figures because of a revision in standards of membership statistics. A truer picture, it added, will be shown in figures for 1954. The ELC, with 919,840 members, is the third largest Lutheran body.

In the field of parish education, the combined churches had 2,996,923 pupils, with 288,550 teachers, in 29,466 schools.

These comprised 16,111 Sunday schools, with 2,101,975 pupils; 1,662 weekday released-time schools with 94,622 pupils; 9,846 vacation Bible schools, with 667,038 pupils; and 1,526 parochial schools, with 136,288 pupils.

Of the parochial schools, 1,155 were conducted by the Missouri Synod.

The number of ordained ministers rose to 15,613, an increase of 324 over 1952. Organization of 122 new congregations, 20 more than in 1952, raised the number of churches to 17,006. And the total of preaching stations showed an increase for the first time in a decade, rising by 55 to a total of 530.

Congregations in 1953 spent locally \$196,550,259, an increase of \$24,322,217 over 1952. Their contributions to the church at large, however, decreased by \$4,964,573 to \$47,985,621 as compared with \$52,950,194 the previous year. This drop was attributed to the fact that several church bodies conducted special financial campaigns in 1952 and raised large extra sums in that year.

Property valuation passed the billion-dollar mark for the second straight year. Values were boosted \$94,705,938, or 9.2 per cent, to a record high of \$1,115,677,076.

*Burlington, N. C.*—Some 150 Southern Presbyterian laymen from half a dozen North Carolina counties met here to declare themselves opposed to the proposed union of their church with the Northern and United Presbyterian bodies.

They adopted a resolution describing the merger plan as one threatening the absorption of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. (Southern) and the loss of its "more conservative theological and social emphasis."

The laymen said they felt that "the present-day ecumenical trend toward bigness and oneness will not necessarily result in more souls being saved for Christ or in a more effective witness to the unity of the church or in the impact of the church on the divided and sinful world."

*Lansing, Mich.*—The State Supreme Court ruled here that three Seventh-Day Adventists were eligible for unemployment compensation despite their refusal to work on Saturday, the denomination's Sabbath.

The court said that obviously Seventh-Day Adventists have not removed themselves from the labor market by refusing to work on Saturday, because many employers hire them.

*Evanston, Ill.*—A South American Protestant bishop and the leader of a native Eastern Church in India are among six new presidents of the World Council of Churches elected by its Second Assembly here.

The new presidents are:

Methodist Bishop Sante Uberto Barbieri of Buenos Aires, Argentina, presiding bishop of the Methodist Church in Argentina, Uruguay, and Bolivia. Mar Thoma Juhanon, Metropolitan of the Mar Thoma Syrian Church of Malabar. The Rt. Rev. Henry Knox Sherrill, presiding bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the U. S. Archbishop

Michael, head of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America. The Very Rev. John Baillie, principal of New College, University of Edinburgh, Scotland. Bishop Otto Dibelius of Berlin, head of the Evangelical Church in Germany.

*Evanston, Ill.*—An affirmation of "oneness in Christ, in spite of our disunity as Churches," keynoted the report of the Section on Faith and Order received here by the Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches and commended to its member bodies for study. The report dealt with the apparent contradiction between "oneness" and "division" among Christians and suggested next steps towards closer unity. It emphasized that churches affiliated with the World Council not only "intend to stay together," but "beyond that, as the Holy Spirit may guide us, we intend to unite." Such union, it said, was "in obedience of faith and hope in our one Lord."

But the report did not ask the World Council of Churches to initiate plans for union, because, it said, the Council is not "in any sense a 'superchurch.'" However, it did call upon the Council "to keep providing occasions for honest encounter between divided Christians."

The report contained three main sections: "Our Oneness in Christ," "Our Disunity as Churches," and "The Action of Faith."

In its first section—"Our Oneness in Christ"—the document summed up the "immense range of common practice and intention which we share" as follows:

"We all wait upon one Father.

"We all read the Holy Scriptures and proclaim the Gospel from them.

"We all receive His gift of Baptism whereby, in faith, we are engrafted in Him, even while we have not yet allowed it fully to unite us with each other.

"We all hear His command to 'do this' and His word, 'This is My Body, this is My Blood,' in the Sacrament of the Eucharist, even whilst our celebration of the Lord's Supper is not yet at one Table.

"We all receive a ministry of the Word and Sacraments, even whilst our ministries are not yet recognized by all and not understood in that same sense.

"We are all called to be imitators of Christ and to follow Him in moral obedience as we confess Him before men even though we are still unprofitable servants."

In the section on "Our Disunity as Churches," the document analyzed the nature of divisions among Christians, who share so much in common. Disunity in the church has arisen largely from a "sincere concern



for the Gospel," it said. But, it added, "God has given us today a fresh awareness of the sin which characterizes the divided state which we have inherited."

The report went on to ask "whether we do not sin when we deny the sole Lordship of Christ over the Church by claiming the vineyard for our own, by possessing our 'Church' for ourselves, by regarding our theology, order, history, nationality, etc., as our own 'valued treasures,' thus involving ourselves more and more in the separation of sin."

It said that churches must, at times, be prepared "to offer up some of their accustomed, inherited forms of life in uniting with other Churches without complete certainty as to all that will emerge from the step of faith."

In its closing section, "The Action of Faith," the report said: "We all ought to be united in thinking of our divisions with repentance. . . . But we cannot in sincerity and truth repent of our various understandings of God's will for His Church unless the spirit reveals that our understandings have been in error. Penitence cannot be hypocrisy. Nor can it truly be expressed without desire for forgiveness and amendment of life." While each church believes that it has received divine truths which cannot be forfeited, the report added: "In the World Council 'we are ready to bring our convictions under scrutiny in the presence of our fellow Christians and in the presence of the living Christ.'"

The report warned that "we cannot expect God to give us unity unless we prepare ourselves to receive His gift by costly and purifying prayer."

"To pray together," it said, "is to be drawn together."

*Washington, D. C.*—An Evangelical official here asked the State Department to protest to the Colombian government about anti-Protestant remarks he said were made by President Gustavo Rojas Pinilla in his recent inaugural address. Dr. Clyde W. Taylor, secretary of affairs for the National Association of Evangelicals, said Gen. Rojas had made "misstatements" not conducive to American solidarity.

"Such denunciation," Dr. Taylor added, "does not increase our national appreciation and regard for Colombia."

The Association official said President Rojas' address included these words: "Protestant propaganda in Latin American countries is not conducive so much to the increase of sincere and respectable Protestants but to the loss of all religious faith and inevitable entrance into Communism of all those who have received fundamental teachings contrary to essential doctrines of Catholicism. . . . We see in these

proselytizing campaigns the greatest danger to national unity and American solidarity in its struggle against international Communism."

Dr. Taylor told the State Department that American Protestants "intensely resent the implication that Protestant missionary activity anywhere on earth either deprives people of Christian faith or is conducive to the spread of Communism."

"It is amply proved that Protestantism has stood as the finest bulwark against Communism around the world," he said.

Dr. Taylor also singled out for criticism this statement attributed to the Colombian President: "It is proved that in Colombia crafty advantage is being taken by the enemies of Christian civilization to throw into its arms the naive and ignorant peasants who, on losing their religious faith, lend themselves to the service of international creeds." Dr. Taylor said such a statement would place Protestantism on a par with Communism and was, to say the least, "an obvious misstatement."

He said that "complete religious freedom in Colombia would demand respect from all free states."

*Cincinnati, Ohio.* — A Lutheran television film, "This Is the Life," has been voted best of its category in a nation-wide poll of stations, sponsors, advertising agencies, and film producers and distributors in the TV field, although it was not included on the ballot.

The movie was omitted from the ballot listing because it is not handled by any of the regular commercial distributors. Produced by Family Films TV, Inc., of Hollywood, for Lutheran Television Productions of St. Louis, Mo., an agency of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, it is being shown on 230 television stations across the country.

Results of the poll were announced in the *Billboard*, entertainment industry weekly published here, which conducted the survey—the Second Annual TV Film Program and Talent Awards Poll.

Enough participants in the industry-wide poll wrote in the name of "This Is the Life" to give it a total score of 233 points, compared to 96 for its closest competitor, and thus to designate it the "Best Nonnetwork Religious Film Series."

L. W. SPITZ