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SOTERIOLOGY.

(Concluded.)

THE CHURCH AND THE MINISTRY.

A. THE CHURCH.

The church in the widest sense of the term is the whole number of the children of God. These are, collectively considered, *the household of God*,¹⁾ united under the *one God and Father of all*,²⁾ *the whole family in heaven and earth*,³⁾ comprising *all the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven*,⁴⁾ the multitude gathered from out of *every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation*,⁵⁾ whom Christ has *made unto God kings and priests*,⁶⁾ the aggregate of the *heirs of salvation*.⁷⁾ In this sense the church has also been defined as the whole number of God's elect. This is, in its full compass in which it shall endure for ever as a perpetual and permanent whole, the church described by St. Peter as *a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people*.⁸⁾ This is the mystical body of Christ,⁹⁾ *the fulness of him that*

1) Eph. 2, 19.

2) Eph. 4, 6.

3) Eph. 3, 15.

4) Hebr. 12, 23.

5) Rev. 5, 9.

6) Rev. 5, 10.

7) Hebr. 1, 14.

8) 1 Pet. 2, 9.

9) Eph. 4, 12. Col. 1, 18.

SCIENCE AND THE CHURCH.

In *The Lutheran* of December 5, 1901, we read:

**“Will The Independent
Please Notice.**

The New York Independent is not up-to-date in its knowledge of the Lutheran Church. In its issue of November 21, it expresses surprise that there is in this country ‘a denomination of German Lutherans who reject the Copernican system of astronomy, and hold that the earth is in the center of the universe, and that the heavens revolve around it after the Ptolemaic fashion.’ It has come to the possession of this information, so startling to it, through a pamphlet of Prof. Pieper’s of the Concordia Seminary, and through another of Rev. Lange’s, of Pacific Grove, California. It is a surprise to us that *The Independent* is so far behind the times. Years ago Andrew D. White, first in *The Popular Science Monthly*, and then in his book on ‘*The Warfare Between Science and Religion*,’ pointed out this matter in a very elaborate way. *The Lutheran Church Review* has also pointed it out at length, and, if we mistake not, reference has been made to it in the columns of *THE LUTHERAN*.

“The position of the Missouri Church on this point is similar to its teaching on all points of science and history, including chronology. It holds that the Bible teaches the Ptolemaic astronomy, and that therefore the latter must be true. It does not see any room whatever for the teachings of science in its major premise. It unceremoniously casts all science to a side in so far as the latter is in conflict with what seems to ‘Missouri’ to be the teaching of the Scriptures.

“The weakness of this position has all been pointed out at length by other branches of the Lutheran Church, and though Missouri Lutheranism is a powerful and aggressive factor in America, and has been extolled as being such by *The Independent* itself in years that are past. Yet ac-

ording to the judgment of multitudes of Lutherans it by no means constitutes the best representation of sound Lutheranism, and the Lutheran Church in America should not and cannot be judged by the teachings, good and bad, which are promulgated with such masterly aggressiveness by the Missouri Church.''

This is as sorry a piece of paragrapher's work as we have seen for a long time. The item in *The Independent* upon which it comments was not much to the credit of that periodical; but the commentary is decidedly worse than the text. A gentleman connected with the Missouri Synod had published a pamphlet, which he had dedicated to Gen. J. W. de Peyster, author of *The Earth Stands Fast* and hundreds of other works, and in this pamphlet of 19 pages the author advanced his opinions on Copernican astronomy and advocated the Tychoic theory, not with theological arguments or references to texts or statements of Scripture, but merely on what he considered scientific grounds or the testimony of the senses. The booklet is, from beginning to end, a private affair, coming from an individual writer to individual readers irrespective of religion or creed, and *The Independent* might with equal propriety have booked the writings of Gen. de Peyster or the lectures of Mr. Parallax to the debit or credit of the Missouri Synod or the Shah of Persia.

But we are not now settling accounts with *The Independent*, whose remarks could not have induced us to enter upon this matter in the QUARTERLY. *The Lutheran* is published "under authority of the General Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of North America." *The Lutheran* is neither a business enterprise as *The Independent*, nor a private pamphlet, but the acknowledged organ of a large ecclesiastical body, and such utterances as those above quoted cannot be allowed to go unnoticed and unanswered, but must be scored against the body from which they come, and placed in the light of truth and sound theological principles.

In the first place, the paragrapher of *The Lutheran* says, *The Independent* "has come to the possession of this information, so startling to it, through a pamphlet of Prof. Pieper's of the Concordia Seminary, and through another of Rev. Lange's, of Pacific Grove, California." How does the writer of *The Lutheran* know this? *The Independent* has not told him any such thing. And if it had, the statement would still be false. For Prof. Pieper never wrote a pamphlet from which such information might be gathered, never published a pamphlet on astronomy or any kindred subject. But *The Independent* is not responsible for the *Lutheran's* assertion, and the purported pamphlet by Prof. Pieper is wholly and solely a fiction of the person or persons who wrote or inspired the false statement in *The Lutheran*.

But even if a Professor or other officer of the Missouri Synod had published such a pamphlet, *The Lutheran* would not be justified in basing upon such publication any strictures on "the teachings" of the "Missouri Church," as long as it could not point out anything therein contained as being at variance with the word of God. The Missouri Synod, as a consociation of Christian congregations or churches, is charged by the Head of the Church to preach the Gospel, to teach men to observe all things whatsoever he has commanded his disciples, that and nothing more. In the discharge of this duty the "Missouri Church" as well as the General Council Church is bound to adhere to the Law and the Testimony, the written word of God. By every deviation from this rule, be it to the right or to the left, *in excessu* or *in defectu*, a church exposes itself to just censure by those who continue in Christ's word. The truths which the church is to transmit are the truths of the divine word, of which Christ says, Thy word is truth. Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, and to inculcate these things is the task of the church. Beyond this the church has no commission to teach. It is not of

the province of the church to teach Medicine or Engineering, just as it is not the business of a School of Mining to teach Pastoral Theology. Thus, also, a church cannot properly be committed to any scientific method or theory, and a person, no matter of what station, when discussing a scientific subject as such, must not presume or be understood to act as an organ of the church any more than when he casts his ballot as a citizen or fires a gun as a soldier. If a theological Professor in one of his lectures, or a religious editor in a dogmatic article, or even a synod in its doctrinal discussions, should go on record as having approved or professed a scientific system or theory, such utterances must not be looked upon as properly teachings of the church, and nobody in the world, either within or without the church, is free to charge or bound to respect them as part and parcel of the legitimate doctrine of the church. A teacher of the church is obliged to give answer to any of his brethren who may ask him what he holds and believes concerning any point of Christian doctrine, and there is no good excuse for him if he is ignorant of any doctrine clearly revealed in holy Scripture, or not fully persuaded of the truth of every doctrine taught and believed by the orthodox church. But a teacher of the church, to whom the church should look for the correct exhibition and defense of its doctrine, needs no excuse if he prefer to leave science to scientists, or if he should candidly declare that he knew too little of astronomy to have an astronomical opinion, and had no astronomical creed as very many have who perhaps know considerably less about astronomy than the average theologian. The present writer happens to have devoted three of the best years of his life chiefly and assiduously to the study of physical sciences, and has been in touch with these sciences for many more years. But if he has profited anything by these studies, it is, besides a few other things, a habit of speaking with more modesty on certain scientific topics than the college sophomore who knows all about them, and many

others who have forgotten the better part of what they knew, or thought they knew. And he has learned to rate, not only from a theological, but also from a scientific point of view, such assertions as this, that "the Missouri Church holds that the Bible teaches the Ptolemaic astronomy." We do not know whether the writers of *The Lutheran* would be bold enough to assert that the General Council held the Copernican theory. But we do know that, considering the elements which constitute a synod, there is no synod on the face of the earth which would not stultify itself if it voted an endorsement of the Copernican or any other system of astronomy.

There is, however, one thing in which a Christian synod can be and should be a unit, and that is the doctrine of the inerrancy of the Bible, the whole Bible, from Genesis to Revelation. And as the word of God is truth, God's truth, and as two contradictory propositions cannot both be true, a Christian synod can and should unanimously reject whatever, be it in theology or elsewhere, it may find in open conflict with any statement of the word of God. The Bible is not a text-book of Zoology or Biology or Astronomy, claiming for itself the authority secured by the most careful and extended human investigation, observation and speculation. Its claims are infinitely higher. The authority of human scientists is never more than human; that of the Scriptures is everywhere divine. The omniscient Creator knows more about his handiwork than any created mind. Where the statements of many and great scientists are in conflict with those of the Bible, the latter must prevail, not although, but because, the Bible is not a scientific text-book, but more, the word and truth of God. A Christian may not, and a whole church, under present conditions, cannot, be familiar with the science of Biology, and no man is competent either to approve or to disapprove what he does not know. But when Darwinists assert that man is a product of ages of evolution from inferior organisms, while the Bible plainly

teaches a different origin and descent of man, every Christian of average intelligence may consistently and promptly reject the said Darwinian error where or in whatever form it may confront him, and a synod might and should unhesitatingly condemn it whenever it crossed its path, though no member of the synod had read the *Origin of Species* or the *Descent of Man*. Likewise, when geologists tell us that for millions of years the earth was in a state which rendered vegetable and animal life on its surface impossible, or when astronomers maintain that the Copernican system necessitated the assumption of millions of years of sidereal existence in our universe and excluded the possibility of the creation of the sun and the moon and the stars on the fourth day of the hexaemeron and after the appearance of vegetation on the earth, and that, consequently, the Mosaic record of the creation must be laid aside as untenable, every intelligent Christian and every convention of Christians ought to be competent and ready to stand by the truth of the plain words recorded in Genesis against the opposing errors advanced in the name of science. To do this it is by no means necessary to follow up the methods and arguments of geological research, or the calculations and measurements and inductions and deductions of generations of astronomers, or to define and balance the merits or demerits of scientific theories and systems, which cannot be the task of the church. A man is competent to judge that there is something wrong with the clock on the wall, if he finds that it loses or gains fifteen minutes every day, simply by comparing the position of its hands and that of the midday sun. It is not necessary that he should suspend his judgment until he had made a thorough investigation of the interior mechanism, or learned the watchmaker's trade, or assured himself that there was not something wrong with the sun. When the results of human investigation or speculation are at variance with the explicit statements of Scripture, the Christian scientist will, on finding the discrepancy, review

his work, knowing that somehow he must have blundered, just as a schoolboy will do, when he finds that his answer differs from that given in the Key of his Arithmetic. And when the Christian layman in Geology or Astronomy finds a discrepancy between the Scriptures and what confronts him as a result of scientific work, the proper thing for him to do is to abide by the Scripture and to lay that thing of science aside as erroneous, leaving to the scientist the work of correcting his figures, very much as a mother would do who, while unable to solve her boy's problems in higher arithmetic, but holding the Key in her hands, would tell her boy unceremoniously, on the authority of the Key, if his solution is wrong, leaving it to him to correct his work, or to go with it before the Master and suffer the consequences.

After all that has been said it cannot be doubtful what we plead to the charge that "the Missouri Church unceremoniously casts all science to a side in so far as the latter is in conflict with what seems to 'Missouri' to be the teaching of the Scriptures." We say, "Yea and Amen." But when *The Lutheran* goes on to discourse on "the weakness of this position," we object. There is no weakness about this position. On the contrary, this is precisely and has ever been Missouri's strength. What it holds to be the teaching of the Scriptures is for Missouri conclusive against everything in conflict therewith, no matter whence it may come, whether it be a matter of doctrine or of practice, whether it be held by few or by many, by friend or foe. Here also lies the reason for Missouri's "aggressiveness." Missouri holds that of right the world belongs to Christ and his truth, that false doctrine has no right to exist, that there must be no compromise between God's truth and human error, and no terms short of unconditional surrender can be accepted. This, and this alone, is genuine Lutheranism. When Luther opened his 95 Theses with the words, *Dominus et magister noster Jesus Christus dicendo*, he struck the key-note of the Reformation. If Christ is our Lord and

Master, and if he has spoken, such word must be conclusive with all his true disciples. From this stronghold Luther fought the Romanists, the Sacramentarians, the Anabaptists, the Antinomians, the Jews, King Henry, Erasmus, and who else came in his way with any theory or practice contrary to the word of God. *Das Wort sie sollen lassen stahn*, must be the watchword of every consistent Lutheran against all manner of error which would assail any truth set forth in holy Scripture.

But may not the Scriptures be variously interpreted? Certainly. The Scriptures may be interpreted right or wrong, right in one way and wrong in many ways. And he who would use the Scriptures for doctrine, or for reproof or correction, should be sure that his interpretation is right, or defer judgment until he may have gained such assurance. But in all cases he must judge according to what in the light of Scripture he holds to be the teaching of Scripture. Especially must he beware of accommodating his interpretation of the plain words of Scripture to the opposing error which he may be called upon to judge according to the infallible norm of truth, the written word of God. Thus, when the Bible says that *in six days the Lord made heaven and earth and the sea and all that in them is*, and the context and parallelism clearly show that days means days, we must not cast aside the sense of the text and substitute another in deference to the speculations of scientists. If any geological theory cannot stand without the assumption of millions or even thousands of years where the Bible says *days*, then that geological theory must fall. Or again, if the heliocentric system cannot stand with the assumption that the sun and moon and stars were created when God says they were, then the heliocentric system must fall. We cannot correct the divine record of the creation, to make it agree with opposing postulates of geologists or astronomers; so we must leave it to geologists and astronomers to correct their postulates. We cannot even meet them half-way and agree to

leave it in doubt who may be right, they or the word of God. In fact, astronomers have been correcting themselves and one another these many years and centuries, not only since the days of the ancient Greek philosophers and the long rule of Ptolemy's *Almagest*, but also since Copernic's book *De Revolutionibus* was published with a preface by the Lutheran theologian Osiander. What if a revolution in Optics with new discoveries on the nature and laws of light or its conditions in siderial space should turn a leaf for our scientists and open a new chapter *de revolutionibus orbium coelestium*? But be that as it may. One thing we know. When all these temporal speculations and investigations through telescopes and microscopes shall be forever closed, and the objects of physical science themselves, including the earth and the greater and lesser lights which God has made, shall have passed away at the command of Him whose fiat called them into being, and in the light of glory we shall no longer know in part, the word of God, the Book of Genesis not excepted, shall still be true and abide forever.

A. G.

THE PROOF TEXTS OF THE CATECHISM

WITH A

PRACTICAL COMMENTARY.

THE CREED.

John 3, 16: *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

This text may be fitly called an epitome of all Scripture, both the Law and the Gospel. It teaches that, left to itself, all the world must have perished, and no man could have obtained eternal life. For if salvation is by the love