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Theological Observer

AN UNCELEBRATED ANNIVERSARY

The Lutheran Church is just about finished celebrating its confessional anniversaries. It was 450 years for the Small and Large Catechisms of Dr. Luther in 1979, for Philipp Melanchthon's Augsburg Confession in 1980, and for his Apology in 1981; and we can repeat that ritual for Luther's Smalkald Articles and Melanchthon's Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope in 1987. For the Formula of Concord in 1977 and for the Book of Concord in 1980 it was the quadricentennial. The semi-milennium of Luther's birth in 1983 should be celebrated with great fanfare all the way from the officially atheistic birthplace of Luther in the German Democratic Republic to the most traditionally conservative Lutherans in the United States. One anniversary has slipped by unnoticed — the 1600th anniversary of the Constantinopolitan Creed! The Nicaeno - Constantinopolitanum, its official name since the seventeenth century, is more readily recognizable as the Nicene Creed which our congregations are directed to find on page twenty-two in the hymnal. Even in English the solemnity of its cadences echoes the majesty of God. How tragic that homologiophobic Protestants are so averse to creeds in the worship service.

It is too late to arrange any festive solemnities for the creed in our congregations. This is regrettable because it is this creed more than any other statement of faith that symbolizes the true ecumenical and catholic dimension of Christendom. If the sixteenth century confessions bring us back to Luther, the Constantinopolitan Creed takes us back to that time when the nature of God was a matter of dispute in the church. It is the one creed accepted in the East and West, by Roman Catholic and Protestant, by Reformed and Lutheran. No other statement so universally reflects the commonly held faith as the creed formulated at Constantinople in 381 A.D.

The problems connected with the later addition of the *filioque*, the procession from the Son and not the Father alone, cannot be aired here or solved. Compared to the difficulties overcome by churches in recent centuries, this hardly seems insurmountable. What must rather be emphasized is that for sixteen centuries through the disruptions of the eleventh century when West separated from East, the upheavals of sixteenth century readjustment, and the onslaughts of atheism since the eighteenth century Enlightenment — Christians throughout the world have been reciting their faith in essentially the same words formed by the clerics gathered at Constantinople in 381 A.D.

It may be argued that the real date of commemoration should be in the succession of centennials following the year 325 A.D., the date for the Council of Nicea. It was, however, Constantinople that found and resurrected Nicea's unequivocal statement that the Son shared an equal deity with the Father. Constantinople expanded the first two articles by adding "Maker of heaven and earth"; "before all worlds" to "begotten of His Father"; "was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary"; "and was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate"; "was buried"; "according to the Scriptures"; "sits on the right hand of the Father"; and "of whose kingdom there shall be no end."

The most readily recognizable contribution of Constantinople was, of course, the Third Article, as Nicea simply had a statement of faith in the Holy Ghost. Here in the Third Article is the great statement that the church is one, holy, catholic, and apostolic. Baptism is acknowledged as God's activity in the church for forgiveness. More important is the person of the Holy Ghost Himself. Here

He is confessed as absolute Lord, the Yahweh of the Old Testament. It hardly does to Him or the fathers of Constantinople to run the words together as is done in *The Lutheran Hymnal*, to say that He is "The Lord and Giver of life." Another definite article is needed or the conjunction should be dropped to get at the proper sense. He is to be sure, the Source of all spiritual life, but prior to that He is Lord in the absolute sense. He shares in the deity with the Father and the Son and is entitled to share with them all honor and glory.

The Lutheran Reformation asked the anthropocentric question of individual salvation and answered it with a reiteration of the Pauline doctrine of grace as God's active attitude and of faith as mere passivity in man. This was not so much an advance over the fourth century's doctrine of the deity of the Son and the Spirit as it was an application of that doctrine to the specific question of individual salvation.

We may have been a little hasty in putting all our eggs into the sixteenth-century basket during these years of confessional multcentennial celebration. We missed the equally important fourth century. Yet the celebration of the origin of our sixteenth-century confessions will make a less lasting impression on the religious consciousness of our people than the constant reiteration of these words: "I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, . . . And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and (the) Giver of life, . . ." Perhaps nothing is still more alive in our churches today than what happened in Constantinople in 381 A.D.

David P. Scaer

THE RISE AND FALL OF CLARK H. PINNOCK

The Controversy in the 1970's over Biblical inerrancy was not confined to the Missouri Synod but had its parallels in other Protestant groups. At this date the same matter is a draw among the Southern Baptists. An armistice but not a final peace describes the current situation. Such disputes point in a negative way to the catholicity of the church, since similar problems afflict dissimilar denominations almost simultaneously. Roman Catholics at the other end of the scale have their problems here also. During the inerrancy conflict in the Missouri Synod, support in the sense of scholarly research was provided by a group generally referred to as the "Evangelicals," even though the use of such nomenclature may ignite a semantic debate over the proper use of that term. Because of the Missouri Synod's concept of fellowship and the strongly anti-Reformed formulation of its understanding of the sacraments, real personal contact between the Synod and the Evangelicals has been minimal. Nevertheless, Synodical scholars continue to make use of the research of Evangelical scholars. Edward Young, Carl Henry, Harold Lindsell, Gleason Archer, Robert Gundry, and Kenneth Kantzer are just a sampling of the luminaries in the Evangelical galaxy whose light has shown into the Missouri Synod through their literary productions. The name of Clark H. Pinnock also belongs to this stellar collection as a luminary of the highest magnitude for his past defence of inerrancy. It could safely be argued that among the Evangelicals Pinnock ranks as class valedictorian.

The problem is that, according to many Evangelicals, the star has fallen. Writing in the June 1981 issue of the *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, Rex A. Koivisto, an instructor of the Multnomah School of the Bible in

Portland, Oregon (an unlikely name for a theology school), graphically outlines the rise and fall of Pinnock as a defender of Biblical inerrancy. The *Journal's* approach is intriguing, since Pinnock's response immediately follows Koivisto's critique and basically agrees with it. The inerrancy matter has been churning in Evangelical circles for several years, but here is a good chance to see the opposing views side by side, or rather face to face. It is hard to imagine what Evangelicals think about the defection (and this word is used only with the greatest hesitancy), but it must be similar to what Lutherans may still think of Melancthon's change of heart. Or was it a change of heart after all? Like Melancthon, Pinnock may have felt *essentially* this way all the time. This is what Koivisto has discovered, and Pinnock in his follow-up article hardly disagrees.

Pinnock's fall is placed after 1974. Before that he was generally recognized as a staunch defender of Biblical inerrancy, especially in his 1971 books *A Defense of Biblical Inerrancy* (Presbyterian and Reformed) and *Biblical Revelation* (Moody). As Pinnock is not only one of the most intellectually gifted of the Evangelicals, but one of the most prolific with books and essays, his positions are easy to trace. Now, according to Koivisto, Pinnock criticizes inerrancy for being devisive, being a recent innovation, neglecting the phenomena, misplacing the emphasis, being only an inference, requiring qualification, and neglecting the Bible's human side. While not denying that he has undergone changes in his thinking, Pinnock claims that he has always held to a "nuanced inerrancy." By this he means an inerrancy conditioned by the Bible's salvific purposes. As already mentioned, Pinnock's response is really a grateful endorsement of Koivisto's critique. He does, however, add three points to the discussion: (1) inerrantists (i.e., those critical of his position), following in the steps of Benjamin Warfield, put all Scripture on the level of *prophetic* inspiration; (2) their solutions to an "uncomfortable feature" is solved by an "implausible theory," e.g., the cock crowed six times instead of three; and (3) a greater emphasis should be placed on the present working of the Spirit. It is hard to believe that Pinnock could offer these as serious arguments for his theory of "nuanced inerrancy".

With respect to the first point Pinnock states that he cannot see how such Old Testament books as Job, Song, Proverbs, and Chronicles have a "thus saith the Lord" before them. He could have easily added other sections from the Bible to prove his point. But is not Pinnock making the fundamental confusion between inspiration, which refers to God's total and ultimate responsibility for the Biblical texts, and revelation, which refers to God's giving the prophets and apostles their unique knowledge of the way of salvation? Does anyone really believe that God prophetically *inspired* Job's despair? The recording of that despair took place, of course, under God's direct guidance. Pinnock mentions the crowing of the cock six times to handle what he calls an "uncomfortable feature" for the inerrantists. It may be granted that some may have come up with blatantly ridiculous and hence intellectually offensive solutions in a well meaning attempts to defend the Scriptures as God's word. Their sin was, however, not a false principle, but a misapplication of a true principle. Contemporary serious Evangelical and conservative scholars would hardly endorse such quick solutions to truly difficult problems. Pinnock must be aware that most criticisms of Scriptural veracity since the beginning of the Age of Reason have dissolved without any attention from those committed to Biblical inerrancy.

Pinnock's trust in the current working of the Spirit as opposed His past inspiration of the Bible is not unlike some views afloat ten years ago in the

Missouri Synod that equated the Spirit's inspiration of the Bible with his converting and regenerating power. Pinnock, in criticizing the inerrantists for not paying more attention to the Spirit's current working, says he does not want to sound like Karl Barth. That theologian did not really qualitatively distinguish between these two different workings of the Spirit. Of course, here an explanation of our position must be added. The Spirit who gave the Scriptures works through the same Scriptures to convert. Conversion is dependent on inspiration. They are distinguished but still interdependent and interrelated in a specific way.

The real reason for Pinnock's change is still not given, though the date is almost exactly known. He is at center state in Evangelical circles, and lines are being drawn. Without denying that some of his complaints have validity in some way, the more fundamental (pardon the pun) problem in Pinnock's thinking has not been uncovered. It seems doubtful that he will be debated out of his present position, as he himself may have been one of the best defenders of Biblical inerrancy. It remains to be seen how *Evangelicals* will resolve the issue, if it can be resolved among them at all. If Calvinists and Arminians can worship and work side by side, there should be no problem for inerrantists and *nuanced* inerrantists to do the same. The greater and more immediate problem may have to be faced by the Evangelical Theological Society which publishes the *Journal* in which this frank exchange of expressions took place. Its stated basis is this: "The Bible alone, and the Bible in its entirety, is the Word of God written, and is therefore inerrant in the autographs." If Pinnock's position is really embraced by that statement, what does that statement mean?

David P. Scaer

THE SIMON GREENLEAF LAW REVIEW

Appearing in a bright green cover is the first volume produced by the Simon Greenleaf School of Law with addresses delivered in both Orange, California, and Strasbourg, France. Citing a price of \$5.00, the review will appear annually and describes itself as "A Scholarly Forum of Opinion Interrelating Law, Theology and Human Rights."

True to this description, the first volume has two articles on the veracity of the Gospels, one review dealing with the legal aspects of the trials of Jesus, and two reviews dealing with the concerns of humanity and society. Featured is the reprinted essay of attorney and Anglican churchman, Edmund Bennett, "The Four Gospels from a Lawyer's Standpoint." Another article, written by law school student, Joseph P. Gudel, examines Thomas Paine's *Age of Reason*. The editor and law school dean, Dr. John Warwick Montgomery, reviews three French books, which would otherwise for several reasons remain unknown for most the review's readers.

It becomes clear that the law school and its review are dedicated to demonstrating the truthfulness of the Christian message and the historical authenticity of the Biblical documents. The next issue will feature articles by Professor Elmer Gelinias of St. Mary's College, California, delivered first as essays at a conference partially sponsored by the International Institute of Human Rights of Strasbourg. Those interested in the new periodical may send their inquiries to 2430 Shadow Ridge Lane, Orange, California 92667.

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