

THE NEW MELANCHTHON LITERATURE.

DR. KARL SELL, in the book he wrote for the 400th anniversary of Melanchthon's birth in 1897, remarked that since 1883 the personality of Luther has been raised to a new life in Germany. "Such a resurrection," he added, "will not be granted to Melanchthon. He lives on in his work alone."¹ Dr. Sell was not a true prophet, for the past fourteen years have witnessed a remarkable output of Melanchthon literature, of which the greater part has a personal interest. In 1902 appeared the large volume of Georg Ellinger, a literary biography of the first rank, which, though not based on documentary research, supersedes for the general reader all previous "Lives" of the Reformer. The publications of the last three years alone suffice to show that the name of Philip Melanchthon is dear to the German people.

In 1861, when Carl Schmidt published his important biography, it may well have seemed that this particular field of research was covered, and that twenty-eight volumes of the *Corpus Reformatorum*, the last of which appeared in 1860, would be the final and all-sufficient monument to Melanchthon. It was recognized that the editors, Bretschneider and Bindseil, had rendered a service of inestimable value to Reformation scholarship. But all collections of this kind are necessarily incomplete, and the Melanchthon student of to-day dare not content himself with mastering even this extensive library. Its incompleteness was noted by Karl Hartfelder in 1889. "After occupying myself for many years with Melanchthon," he wrote, "I am firmly convinced that in the *Corpus Reformatorum* a considerable number of his writings (especially the smaller ones) are missing."²

¹ *Philipp Melanchthon und die deutsche Reformation bis 1531*, pp. 117, 118.

² *Philipp Melanchthon als Praeceptor Germaniae*, p. ix.

Innumerable misreadings have been discovered, and so many of the letters have been transposed or wrongly dated that Dr. Bossert recently suggested the issue of a small volume rectifying the errors of Bretschneider in this respect alone.¹ Goethe's words become painfully true to the worker who at the beginning trusts confidingly to "C. R." :—

Soll er auf die Felsen trauen ?
Selbst die festen Felsen beben.

It is the fashion with the new critics to comment severely on the errors of Bretschneider, some of which, it must be admitted, are apparent to the casual reader. Ought we not rather to be grateful for the indefatigable industry with which he collected those wonderful volumes of letters, the foundation of the entire modern Melanchthon literature ? The time will doubtless come for a full revision of the *Corpus*, but the expense is for the time prohibitive. Another enterprise, less imposing in its general plan, yet so large as to require the co-operation of a group of eminent men, is now occupying the "Melanchthon Commission" of the Reformation Historical Society.² Under the general title, *Supplementa Melanchthoniana*, it is proposed to publish the writings of the Reformer which are not contained in C. R. The plan was first mooted in 1897, and an Imperial grant towards its prosecution was made in the following year. After preparatory labours, extending over a decade, the first large octavo volume, beautifully printed and produced, was issued in 1910, and the second followed in the spring of this year. In the preface to vol. i., which bears the signatures of Drs. Kawerau and Loofs, the hope is expressed that the work may now advance without any long interruption.

¹ *Theologische Literaturzeitung*. August 20, 1910. p. 530.

² The members of the Commission at present are : Drs. Adolf Harnack, Gustav Kawerau, Theodor Kolde, Max Lenz, F. Loofs and N. Müller. Dr. Drews will, for the future, take the place of Prof. Loofs. The volumes are published by Rudolf Haupt, of Leipzig.

There is a certain class of material—especially the numerous translations of Greek authors and the expositions of ancient writers—which has little historical importance for the present day, and the commissioners have wisely promised not to overload the *Supplementa* with reprints of this sort. The first volume, edited by Dr. Otto Clemen of Zwickau, is chiefly occupied with a German translation of the *Loci Communes*, made by Spalatin. Luther himself entertained for some time the idea of translating a work which he considered worthy of admission into the canon of Scripture, but he was hindered by pressure of business. In Spalatin's rendering, the *Loci* of 1521 and 1522 were spread far and wide among the German people, and exercised an incalculable influence in the progress of the Reformation. Dr. Clemen says: "The many editions, the translation into Low German, and the dispersion of the copies that still exist over all German-speaking countries, prove how eagerly desired and how extensively circulated this translation by Spalatin must once have been."

The second volume, edited by Dr. Zwicker, belongs to the philological department of the enterprise, and is entitled *Melanchthon's Dispositiones Rhetoricae*. Here we have many examples of his classwork for juniors, with stories and *obiter dicta* which throw light on the social and religious conditions of his time. His lectures, as Wilhelm Meyer has remarked, were full of agreeable chatter. His *Postilla*, or Sunday explanation of the Gospel of the day, is enriched with many anecdotes, many touches of quiet humour, and may still be read with enjoyment. In the new volume we have model letters, and short skeleton essays. The chapter headed "De apibus" is a charming addition to the letters in C. R. which show his interest in the habits of the bee. We note also his gifts as a story-teller. Æsop's short fable of the Wind and the Sun is expanded into a racy German

narrative covering two pages. Many of his students, it must be remembered, were lads between the ages of fourteen and seventeen, and for him it was a pleasure, as well as a duty, to bring his lectures within their compass. Harnack calls him the model German professor, and in other circumstances he would have been a model elementary schoolmaster. He wrote many letters of encouragement to village teachers, and when taking leave of his beloved Camerarius a few days before his death he said, "We have both been schoolmasters and faithful comrades, each in his own place, and I trust our labours have not been in vain, but have been profitable to many."

Under the form of class exercises, he gives advice on practical matters. No. cxv. is a warning against the habit of eating unripe fruit, and he tells of a promising student whose fatal illness was brought on by a surfeit of pears. He watched with fatherly care over every detail in the daily life of his boys.

The *Dispositiones Rhetoricae* are placed by the editor in the years 1552-53, and it is noteworthy that No. xxvi. is a clear argument against the infliction of capital punishment on heretics. Servetus was burned in 1553, and in the following year Melanchthon approved of his execution on the ground that he was a blasphemer. He must have done so with grave misgivings.¹ The labour spent on these first volumes of the *Supplementa* must be apparent to every reader. Dr. Zwicker, for example, has worked upon a manuscript which is the copy of notes actually taken in the classroom, so that Melanchthon's words here reach us at third hand. The editor has endeavoured to verify, as far as

¹ The "Epilogue" to No. xxvi. is as follows: "Itaque, cum dilectio tum mandatum dei piorumque exempla ostendant non licere haereticos interficere, abhorrendum est ab hac crudelitate, et parcendum illis, ut emendentur" (p. 19).

possible, every classical allusion. He has discovered a number of errors, for some of which the student may be responsible, and for others the professor. Sixteenth century scholars were seldom strictly accurate in their quotations from the classics, and Melanchthon, in preparing his illustrations, trusted largely to the inexhaustible stores of his memory, and did not always verify his references.

THE 4,000 NEW LETTERS.

The heaviest burden of the undertaking rests on Professor Nikolaus Müller of Berlin, who is responsible for the editing of some 4,000 "new letters." To the efforts of Dr. Müller Melanchthon's birthplace owes the richly-furnished "Memorial House," whose green roofs may be seen from the train as we approach Bretten from Heidelberg. Himself a son of the Bavarian Palatinate, he visited Bretten for the first time in his student days, and brought away from this pilgrimage an earnest desire to honour the great teacher's memory. He had hoped, as he tells us,¹ to find at Bretten the actual birthplace, but he found only the uninteresting house erected on the site of that historic structure after the conflagration which destroyed almost the whole town in 1689.

We need not linger here on the practical side of Dr. Müller's lifework; on the courage with which, single-handed, he devised a noble monument for the quater-centenary of the Reformer's birth, or the patient zeal with which he collected the necessary funds, enlisting the aid of princes and scholars, gathering contributions from lands so remote as Iceland and South Africa. Every scarred and blackened stone that was saved from the fire at Bretten, every morsel of old painted glass that bears the arms of the Schwartzerdts, every scrap

¹ In the *Festschrift zur Feier der Einweihung des Melanchthon-Gedächtnishauses*. (Bretten, 1903.)

of fading parchment in the Rathaus, is as dear to him as the dust of Jerusalem was to the Hebrew saints. The entire Protestant world shares the gratitude felt by his own countrymen for Professor Müller.

It is not only as a builder that he has been active. In 1884, while working at Rome, he made his first independent researches into the life-story and literary remains of his hero. His contributions to the *Supplementa* will bring us the harvest of nearly a generation's toil among archives. He has been closely occupied with Wittenberg manuscripts of the sixteenth century, and has come to the conclusion "that the Wittenberg of the Reformation age is still in many respects a *terra incognita*." At the time of writing he has in the Press an important book dealing with Melancthon's house in the Collegienstrasse. Three or four months ago he published a valuable collection of documents on the obscure subject of the Wittenberg agitations of 1521 and 1522.¹ In the Introduction he remarks that both the German and the Latin texts printed in C. R. are swarming with errors due to incorrect reading of the manuscripts. "The copies of the pieces which refer to the Wittenberg events of 1521 and 1522 were made under a peculiarly unlucky star. Such errors, for instance, as 'neun etc.' instead of 'crucifix' must be regarded as monstrous blunders. It must be added that the first editor of the *Corpus Reformatorum*, Bretschneider, is unfortunately not the only person who deserves blame. The letters and State papers published in later years contain many proofs that even in the most recent times there has been a lack of the necessary care."

A small work of rare personal interest is Professor Müller's recent edition of the reports of the Wittenberg professors

¹ *Die Wittenberger Bewegung 1521 und 1522. . . Briefe, Akten, u. dgl. und Personalien.* Leipzig, 1911. This book is revised and enlarged from articles in the *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*.

on Melanchthon's last illness and death.¹ The new Latin and German texts are much better than those in C. R., and the editor provides many notes, as well as careful biographies of the chief persons mentioned. Some of his minor discoveries are really curious. For example, he has found that in the years following Melanchthon's death, the fanatical zeal of Caspar Peucer and his associates actually caused Luther's hymns to be banished from the town church of Wittenberg.

No fresh fact is too trifling to be recorded by Dr. Müller. He has found a note of the quantity of oats consumed by the horse which was lent to Melanchthon by the Elector Frederick for his journey from Augsburg to Wittenberg in August, 1518. The young professor was three weeks on the road, as we see from the words: 8 scheffel, 1 mos, uf 1 pferd, 3 wuchenn, welches magister philippus der greck von awspurg alher gerittenn." Riding and dancing were two accomplishments which "the Greek" brought with him to the Saxon University.

Four thousand new letters! Is it possible to make any forecast of the contents of this promised treasure-store? From the publishers' advertisements and the general preface, only a few vague indications may be drawn. Dr. Bossert, himself an authority on Melanchthon, has pointed out that the first business of the Commission must be that of dealing with the correspondence, and he assigns to the editors a twofold task: (1) They will enlarge, at the earliest possible moment, the collection of letters already existing in C. R. by adding to it the more recent discoveries, especially those of Professor N. Müller. (2) They will revise those letters of Melanchthon already published which would have been printed afresh but for consider-

¹ *Philipp Melanchthons letzte Lebenstage, Heimgang und Bestattung.* Leipzig, 1910.

ations of expense. "The wrong addresses, the inaccurate readings of the text, and, above all, the mistaken dates of Bretschneider, must be rectified."¹

In the new collection we may expect to find every letter written by Melanchthon which has appeared since 1860 in places difficult of access. There are many important letters, for instance, in Bindseil's volume published at Halle in 1874, but this is now out of print.² The letters to Ambrosius Blaurer are reprinted in the correspondence edited by Dr. Traugott Schiess.³ It is to be hoped that the editor will be generous in providing us with full texts and not merely references, in such cases as C. Krause's collection, which throws light on Melanchthon's relations with the Princes of Anhalt.

Theological and historical magazines of the past forty years have, no doubt, been closely searched. The *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* provides interesting additions from the earliest volumes onwards. The July number of this review, which is published as we write, contains fresh material collected by Dr. Otto Clemen. Remembering the many letters now hidden away in old magazine volumes, the student can easily understand how this large new collection has grown and is growing.

We gather from the announcements that the 4,000 letters will scarcely include all the existing correspondence, not contained in C. R., which was addressed to Melanchthon, or which passed between other parties on matters in which he was concerned. If the plan of the Enders-Kawerau edition of Luther's letters were strictly followed the *Supplementa* might extend beyond all reasonable limits. The letters of Luther to Melanchthon, which are printed, accord-

¹ *Theologische Literaturzeitung*, August 20, 1910. P. 530.

² The writer has tried in vain for three years to obtain a copy of it.

³ *Briefwechsel der Brüder Ambrosius und Thomas Blaurer*. (1908, Freiburg i. Br.)

ing to the best modern readings, in the Enders volumes, are not likely to be reproduced elsewhere, but we may assume that Professor Müller will give references to this and other easily accessible sources. Letters in more obscure places, such as Hartfelder's *Paedagogica*, will, we hope, be included in full. It is sad to think that Karl Hartfelder, who died at the age of forty-five, might, if a normal lifetime had been granted him, have worked side by side with the editors of the *Supplementa*. His grave, in an obscure part of the Heidelberg Cemetery, is marked to-day by a half-concealed, ivy-covered stone, which tells us nothing of his services to Reformation literature.

Coming now to the "discoveries" ("die neuen Funde") and setting aside the mass of new correspondence dealing with public matters, let us ask frankly, first, What do we want? and next, What is Dr. Müller likely to give us?

The most welcome of all additions to the correspondence would be letters written by Melanchthon to his own family at Bretten, especially during his early years at Wittenberg. He was passionately attached to his home, and named his brother George as the foremost of his friends. The boys had studied together at Bretten and Pforzheim, and George was a fellow-boarder with Philip in the Burse at Tübingen. To him, surely, Melanchthon must have sent his early impressions of Wittenberg. We have in C. R. many of his happy, confident letters to Spalatin, glowing with young enthusiasm, full of plans and promises—letters of which Reuchlin would have approved. Unfortunately, his home letters of these months have perished.

Dr. Müller published three years ago a learned *Life of Georg Schwartzertdt*.¹ In the preface he describes himself

¹ *Georg Schwartzertdt, der Bruder Melanchthons und Schultheiss in Bretten*. Leipzig, Rudolf Haupt, 1908.

as a "path-finder," because he has worked so largely with new materials. Yet even he was only able to supply four letters written by the Reformer to his brother, and these lie between 1540 and 1552. The following passage gives a clue to what we must *not* expect from the *Supplementa*—

"Correspondence was the principal means by which they [the brothers] maintained a permanent intercourse and interchange of thought. We must not indeed assume that letters from Wittenberg reached Bretten and letters from Bretten reached Wittenberg anything like once a week. Even if the two brothers had desired to keep up such an active correspondence, their plans would have been frustrated for want of sufficient opportunities of sending letters to each other. For the number of messengers who travelled between Wittenberg and the Electoral Palatinate was much smaller than that of those who went, for instance, between Wittenberg and Nürnberg. Moreover, as time passed on, the elder brother became more and more overburdened with work. He was often obliged to write ten or more letters on one day, and could only now and then spare time to write a little note to his home. As he mentions by chance in 1550, he, the overworked man, was able at that time to write to his dear brother only twice a year, and that was at the time when the merchants travelled to the fair at Frankfurt-on-the-Main. Unfortunately, owing to Melanchthon's habit of destroying the letters he received, we cannot hope that any larger number of the writings sent to him from Bretten is lying somewhere, awaiting discovery. Schwartzerdts seems indeed to have carefully collected his brother's letters, but in consequence of the many storms of war which passed over South-west Germany, the precious treasure, with the exception of the few relics still preserved in St. Gallen, seems to have completely perished."¹

¹ *Georg Schwartzerdts*, p. 37.

Elsewhere in the same book Dr. Müller says that his long-continued search for unpublished fragments of Melanchthon's correspondence has produced only miserable remnants ("kümmerliche Reste") of the letters that passed between him and his South-German relatives.

There are two letters, ostensibly written by Melanchthon to his brother in 1529 and 1530, which are obvious and clumsy forgeries. They were published more than a hundred years ago in Germany by J. F. W. Tischer, who said he had found them written at the end of an old Vulgate of 1543. Hartfelder took them from Tischer and published them in his *Paedagogica* (1892). He expressed no opinion as to their genuineness, merely asking in a note, "Where can the originals be now?" An American biographer, Dr. J. W. Richard, translates one of these letters from Hartfelder's book, without any apparent suspicion that it was never written by Melanchthon, though the reference to the Marburg Colloquy in the companion letter might have warned him. Professor Müller has made careful inquiry for the "originals," but the Vulgate of 1543 has not been traced.

Will the *Supplementa* enlarge our knowledge of the Reformer's home-life at Wittenberg? Any additional information of this kind would be thankfully received. As Ellinger has pointed out, we know comparatively little of Melanchthon as husband. "Family feeling in the sixteenth century," he says, "expressed itself not so much in the inner companionship of the wedded pair as in their relations to their children."

Luther's married life lies open to all the world. No woman of her generation stands forth more clearly than Katherine von Bora. We feel her presence and influence throughout the "Table Talk," and the last letters she received from her husband, with their gay, child-like humour

and deep underlying tenderness, are the best proofs that no shadow had ever fallen upon their love. We can scarcely imagine Luther without his Katie. "She has served me," he said, "not only as a wife, but as a maid." All the correspondence goes to prove that during his lifetime she was the first lady in Wittenberg.

Melanchthon, also, was happy in his home-life. His colleague and friend, Veit Oertel, thought he had never seen a man who loved wife, children, and grandchildren so dearly. Yet the careful student of C. R. is astonished by the rarity of affectionate references to his wife in Melanchthon's correspondence. His "enorme Schreibseligkeit" (to quote a phrase of Dr. Sell) did not lead him to send kindly messages from her to his friends. It is doubtful whether she entered at all into his public interests. She is mentioned, with rare exceptions, only at times of severe illness, and the coolness of his tone in more than one such crisis is surprising. The letters in which he refers to her with warm and tender love were written after her death in 1557. As far as the writer is aware, not a single direct communication that passed between husband and wife has been preserved. We have letters from Melanchthon to his son Philip, to his son-in-law Caspar Peucer and to his faithful servant and friend, John Koch, but a veil hangs over the inmost sanctuary of his household. Camerarius describes his friend's wife as *uxor viri amantissima*, and he praises her liberality to the poor, but his language has not the warmth of personal feeling. Caspar Cruciger, one of the closest friends of the family, used a Greek phrase about "female tyranny," which biographers understand as implying that Katherine Melanchthon used her influence at a time of strained relations with Luther, to prevent a frank discussion of differences between the two great men.

Melanchthon's marriage, as is well known, was not origin-

ally a love-match .He followed the advice of Luther, who had feared that his habits of overstudy and complete disregard of personal comfort would result in an early breakdown of health. Disagreeable incidents marked the weeks following the betrothal. Melanchthon's mother was so much displeased with her eldest son for taking a wife in Wittenberg that she herself entered on a third marriage, thereby implying that she had given up hope of his return to Bretten to be the comfort of her declining years. More annoying was the talk of slander-mongers in the Saxon "University village" which threw discredit on the past life of the young bride-elect. Luther mentions in one of his letters that the wedding was hastened for fear of evil tongues.¹ In his *Table Talk* he alludes more than once to the distress caused to Melanchthon by the lying gossip of the place. "The devil," he said, "is an enemy of the state of matrimony, and assails it through poisonous tongues."²

The words of Dr. Ernst Kroker may be cited: "We never once find that Luther, in his letters or his *Table Talk*, refers in cordial language to Melanchthon's wife, although he takes pleasure in greeting the wives of other friends with a jest or a few kindly words. Her husband, also, hardly ever adds greetings from her to his own letters. We never hear of her visiting the Augustinian monastery, though her children were the playfellows of Katie's children, and her husband was often Luther's supper-guest for weeks together. She seems, in fact, to have stood somewhat apart from that close bond of friendship which linked her house with Katie's house during all these years."³

¹ Enders, *Luther's Briefwechsel*, vol. ii. p. 524.

² Ernst Kroker, *Luther's Tischreden*, No. 737c, and see also No. 29, where the reference is certainly to the marriage of 1520, though the word "Tochter" has crept into the text by mistake.

³ *Katharina von Bora* (1906), p. 199. The absence of greetings from his wife in Melanchthon's letters may be partly explained by his habit of

Is it too much to hope that Professor Müller, who is certainly keeping surprises in store for us, may discover a few letters written by Melanchthon to his wife and daughters during his frequent absences from Wittenberg? That such letters once existed there can be no doubt whatever.¹ Are they all melted like snowflakes into the "yeast of waves"?

As we await Dr. Müller's contributions, the thought suggests itself that perhaps some scholar of the twenty-first or twenty-second century may add yet more *Supplementa* to the correspondence of the *Praeceptor Germaniae*. We have not gathered yet the full harvest of these hours of silent sowing before the dawn. Is it not reasonable, under these circumstances, to make allowance for lost letters? Ludwig Geiger accused Melanchthon of ingratitude towards his second father, Reuchlin, because in the letters of 1522 there is no allusion to Reuchlin's death. Ought he not to have mentioned that the family letters of this year have all perished? Geiger ignores the fact that Reuchlin, in his timorous old age, refused to associate himself in the slightest degree with Luther's cause, and sent a message asking his grand-nephew to stop writing to him. It was not ingratitude, but good sense and delicacy of feeling, which forbade Melanchthon to publish a eulogium from Wittenberg immediately after the great man's death.

Even that most fair-minded of critics, Dr. Kawerau, was surprised to find no reference in Melanchthon's letters to the death of his old friend, Justus Jonas.² Where such omissions occur, may we not write on our mental tablets, "a lost letter," and give him the benefit of the doubt?

JANE T. STODDART.

writing in the dark of the early morning, long before the rest of the household were astir.

¹ Note, for instance, the reference to family letters in C. R., vol. iii. col. 1,082.

² *Der Briefwechsel des Justus Jonas, Zweite Hälfte*, p. lvii.