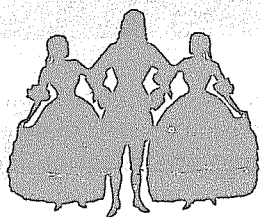


WHEN THE NAME of Philip the Magnanimous, Prince of Hesse, is mentioned, it is almost always in connection with his bigamy—one of the most bizarre incidents in a sensational age. Yet Philip, founder of the first Protestant university (Marburg) and one of the ablest statesmen of his generation, deserves to be remembered for something far more unusual and praiseworthy: in an age of bloody persecution he was the only prince, Protestant or Roman Catholic, who refused to put dissenters to death for their beliefs. During his long reign (1518-67) he defied the law of the Holy Roman Empire, the express instructions of the pope, and the repeated demands of the Protestant Reformers, in protecting the lives of those who separated from the established church.

His "double marriage," the unworthy incident for which he is mentioned by historians, was itself a result of misdirected faith. We must remember that the 16th century was a rough and violent age, and that the Reformers had just dealt the death blow to one of the oldest adjustments in the relationship between the sexes: monasticism. Philip, a deeply religious man and a lay theologian of caliber, became convinced that the marriage which had been contracted for him for political

riage." On the contrary, he found that in times past God had allowed polygamy to his champions and patriarchs. Still uncertain, he turned to Bucer and Luther as to whether he had read aright; they confirmed his exegesis, but advised prudence. After seeking the further assistance of religious and legal counselors in securing papers to guarantee that all involved were satisfied, he married a second wife. His enemies, some of whom had themselves countenanced worse without taking grave offense, found in this foolish act a weapon with which to destroy the sturdy champion of the Protestant cause. If he had practiced a quiet immorality, which was common, the matter would have been no scandal. It was the seriousness with which he attempted to act with a good conscience that made him vulnerable and brought disaster to his cause.

In Philip's literal-minded attention to the Bible's teaching on the methods appropriate to the spread and maintenance of the faith, the consequences were far happier. The generous prince deserves to be remembered first for his conviction that the New Testament church was the true church, and that in the golden age of the faith no sword had been used in things religious except "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God"



**If Philip of Hesse, noble defender of dissenters, had practiced quiet immorality, there would have been no scandal. But when the sturdy champion of the Protestant cause took two wives . . .**

# ONE WIFE TOO

**DR. FRANKLIN H. LITTELL**

*Professor of History and Church History in the Graduate School  
of Emory University*

reasons during his youth was no true alliance. The sacred intent required by the church, and the good conscience which the Reformers demanded, were both missing. His first wife, from whom he was alienated, refused a divorce but agreed to his marrying a second wife. Often in the field of battle for weeks, beset by temptation and sin, he turned to the Bible for guidance. And there he read that adultery and promiscuity were mortal sins, but he found no explicit rejection of "double mar-

(Eph. 6:17). His love of the early church comes out clearly in his confession of faith (February 6, 1550):

That which pleases me, which is not opposed, which was maintained in the first church of the beloved fathers and martyrs, I do because I believe that the followers of the apostles and such as were so near to the death of Christ without doubt knew well the opinion of Christ and the apostles, and we all hold and believe one Christian church. What was maintained by those who lived and were Christian martyrs

2.

so soon after the time of the apostles, that do I desire, that which makes us like to them.

For there can be no other church than that of the old fathers and martyrs who suffered and stood against the Arians and heretics for Christ's sake. No one can or will show me another Christian church.

He shared the belief of the persecuted Anabaptists that in the early church the faith had been spread by preaching, missions, and letter writing alone, and that such was the only sound Christian program.

We must recall to mind the universal brutality toward dissenters to appreciate what a drastic decision it was that led Philip, alone in his territory and against the pressures of both Protestant and Roman Catholic governments and state-churches, to repudiate the death penalty. When Michael Sattler, a nonresistant Christian and author of the first Anabaptist Confession of Faith (Schleitheim, 1527), was put to death in Rottenburg am Neckar, the sentence read:

Michael is to be led to the market place, to have his tongue cut out, to be torn six times with glowing tongs, thrown alive into a fire and burnt to ashes.

The state-church Protestant authorities were as barbarous. Their view of the efficient relations of church and state called for just as rigid conformity, or outward assent, as did that of the Roman Catholics. When Felix Manz fell as the first martyr to Protestant intolerance, he left behind him a hymn, "I will hold fast to Christ." In the sixth stanza, we read:

MANY

Such are the false prophets and hypocrites of this world,  
They curse and pray much, their yoke is utterly awry.  
They call on the government to put us to death,  
For Christ has passed them by.

And stanza 15 says:

Those who show jealousy and hate cannot be Christians—  
Who tend downward to evil, and strike with the fist.  
To act in Christ's presence like killer and thief!  
To shed innocent blood is the falsest love of all.

In suffering and martyrdom the pioneer Free Churchmen found further evidence that they had restored the New Testament church, and therefore were hated and persecuted by the world.

Turn to page 28

JANUARY-FEBRUARY

# FOCUS ON FREEDOM

**T**HOUGH PREMIER KHRUSHCHEV was greeted by a cross in the sky on his arrival in the United States and with another on his departure, only one question asked him during his visit evoked a discussion on religion in the U.S.S.R. It was asked by the American Broadcasting Company's Edward P. Morgan at a news conference held in Washington, D.C., just before the Premier left for Moscow.

Asked Morgan: "Those of us who went to the U.S.S.R. with Vice-President Nixon were surprised at the number of young people in church. If there is an increasing interest in religion, what will be your attitude toward churches?"

Khrushchev's reply: "Well, first of all I believe the question itself confirms the fact that we do have a full freedom of conscience and religion in our country as we have been saying all along.

"Furthermore, I would like to say that . . . the . . . large number of young people in churches perhaps is partly explained by the feeling of curiosity. Young people are curious. I was telling the President the other day that immediately after the war when our Marshal Tolbukhi was returning from Bulgaria, I invited him to my home in Kiev. My grandchildren were very curious to see how a real marshal looked. They hid and looked from around the corners to see what . . . a live marshal was like.

"Many of our young people hear about religion, about God, about saints, about church ceremonies, and they have a curiosity about this. Even if each one of them goes to church only once, they are so numerous that the doors of our churches would never close.

"This feeling of curiosity is very important. For instance, I am sure that many people in this country ran out to see me because they wanted to see a living Communist from the Soviet Union. It is the same way in our country. If a capitalist comes to our country, our people, our young people, want to take a look, to see if he has a tail as an attribute to his person.

"So there is nothing surprising about these things."

It will be observed that Mr. Khrushchev answered well the question, "What do you believe is the reason so many young folks in the U.S.S.R. attend church?" Still to be answered: Mr. Morgan's question, "If there is an increasing interest in religion, what will be your attitude toward churches?"

3.

farfetched after all. What can be done about it? In future articles LIBERTY will explore the problem in depth, suggesting among other things a regaining and reteaching of moral standards and absolute truths, greater selectivity of the verbal and visual communications daily infiltrating the mind, a program to educate parents on the importance and methods of home training.

But first there must be awareness of the problem. We must come quickly to a recognition of the internal dangers of democracy—laxity, laziness, and unawareness. "People have to be aware of the tendency of technology to automatize their minds. They have to become aware of the fact that mass media and modern communication are able to imprint all kinds of suggestions on our brains. They have to know that education can turn us either into weak factories, or strong personalities. A free democracy has to fight against mediocrity in order not to be smothered by mere numbers of automatic votes."<sup>5</sup>

Unless awareness of the forces daily robotizing us comes quickly, like Gulliver in Lilliput, man may awaken to find himself bound by hundreds of threads from the spool of conformity, each of which he could snap without effort, but all of which securely bind him to the will of little people.

<sup>1</sup> *The Rape of the Mind*, Joost A. M. Meerloo, M.D., The World Publishing Company, Cleveland and New York, 1956, pp. 19, 20.

<sup>2</sup> *Time Magazine*, "In Place of Excellence," Jan. 19, 1953.

<sup>3</sup> *Scientific American*, "Teen-age Attitudes," H. H. Remmers and D. H. Radler, June, 1958, pp. 25-29.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 26, 27.

<sup>5</sup> *The Rape of the Mind*, p. 302.



## One Wife Too Many

From page 25

Philip's sister Elisabeth, wife of his ally, the Duke of Saxony, wrote him in reproach: "The gossip is that the Anabaptists are growing in strength about thee and will revolt again." (The state-church people identified all dissenters as revolutionaries, "Bolsheviki of the 16th century.") The theologians of Wittenberg, Lüneberg, and Tübingen sent him a brief to prove that there were only three kinds of dissenters, two of which should be put to death and the third type incarcerated. But the magnanimous prince stiffened by his purpose.

We are as yet unable to find it in our conscience to judge with the sword anybody for the sake of religion, where we have no other sufficient evidence of rebellion. For if our judgment should be otherwise, we could tolerate no Jews or Papists—who blaspheme Christ most of all—but would let them be judged.

Even though he led the forces which put down the Peasant War in Thuringia, even though he commanded the Protestant forces which subdued the revolutionary government of Münster (1535), Philip avoided the common practice of identifying the nonresistant Bible-believing Anabaptists with the religious revolutionaries. He had studied their case and talked with their leaders,

and he was convinced that the Anabaptists were simple New Testament Christians who wanted nothing but a thoroughgoing reform of the church and the enjoyment of religious liberty.

Nevertheless, Philip was convinced that the Free Churchmen were wrong in separating from the established church. Although he tolerated them in their error, he granted no religious liberty. That would have been too much to expect at such a time. But it is not without significance that the first act of religious liberty was granted by a man of Nassau who spent his boyhood but a few miles from Philip's northern capital: William the Silent. Philip sometimes, when the outside pressure was too strong, jailed dissenters and required them to listen to his official preachers. But another event, on which the documents have been published but recently, was more representative: the Marburg Disputation of 1538. The Marburg Colloquy of 1529, in which Philip sought unsuccessfully to unite the Protestant state-church forces represented by Zwingli, Luther, Bucer, Brenz, Oecolampadius, and others, is frequently mentioned, though it was a failure. The Marburg Disputation of 1538, in which Philip supervised a significant series of discussions between the state-church and Free Church Protestant leaders, has been little mentioned, but it was a conspicuous success.

After Zwingli's untimely death on the battlefield of Kappel, Prince Philip turned more and more to Martin Bucer of Strasbourg for guidance in religious affairs. In 1538 he called together some state-church Protestant theologians under Bucer's leadership and staged a debate with Anabaptist leaders of Hesse. The result of this open discussion on the nature of the church, the only one of its kind in that day, was constructive for both groups. The Anabaptists were reconverted to the established church of Hesse, and the leaders of that church instituted confirmation, church discipline, and other measures calculated to lift the level of faith and morality in the congregations. Philip's instructions to his theologians were significant: he advised that they would do well—rather than to use force to compel conformity—to consider the Anabaptists a challenge to purify and reform the established church. This was done, and to this day the Church of Hessen/Nassau is the only Protestant established church in Germany that has a structure of church discipline, learned from the debate with despised dissenters! Philip may be called, in sum, a forerunner of genuinely ecumenical debate, of the effort to achieve through honest "encounter" between different understandings a better and clearer knowledge of the things of the faith:

Philip's policy of tolerance was not only praiseworthy as a matter of principle—and he suffered much political disadvantage for it—but it was also successful. It improved the political situation as well as the religion. Other lands continued to be wracked with religious and civil unrest and rebellion. Of churchly policy he wrote:

4.

The Anabaptists are nowhere more useful to us, and the common man can be watched over and encountered by us in no better way, than we take the matter of Christian discipline seriously.

When one of his fellow princes inquired what to do about unrest and rebellion he wrote candidly that Hesse had not been bothered with such troubles for some time, and advised toleration as a wise policy.

Now that your excellency has desired our counsel and advice, we will in friendship not withhold the fact that in our principality, land and territory, this sect has been for a long time quiet and calm and (praise God) still is. Therefore we have at this time no court action against the Anabaptists, and further there has been no evidence submitted why we should have.

The noble prince could not in his day move on to the position of religious voluntarism. That decision came, in fact, only after two hundred years of established churches, and then in America. But he saw, as it were from afar, that in the New Testament view, the faith is spread by word of mouth and writing, the discipline of believers is sustained by internal church discipline and not by outward coercion, the use of the sword and persecution is out of place. And those who today benefit from a high view of the church and a wise view of public policy, in which it is recognized that "that service only is pleasing to God which is voluntary and uncoerced," may well remember and honor the name of the magnanimous prince who in his last will and testament wrote these words:

The (dissenters) are not all alike, therefore our sons shall order the educated to see if they can't win them away from their sects. . . . To kill anybody because he's of false belief, this we have never done and wish also to warn our sons against it.

So died a Christian prince. And so should be remembered one who was far ahead of his contemporaries—remembered for the vision of the New Testament church he acquired from reading his Bible, and not for his misreading of certain Old Testament texts. ☆☆☆

### A Street Called Liberty

From page 14

1. For repeal of a general statute prohibiting various amusements, sports, and entertainments on Sunday—91 yes, 66 no.
2. For repeal of laws prohibiting ordinary work on Sundays—81 yes, 80 no.\*
3. To amend present laws to allow limited amusements such as movies during nonchurch hours—112 yes, 57 no.

\* The close vote on the Sunday-work issue reflects continuing concern with the wide-open Sunday, most effective charge in the clergy's battery. Yet 162 people surveyed did not believe that a person should be forced to rest on a day he does not believe to be the Sabbath. One hundred eighteen believed the First Amendment guarantees religious liberty to every American. Seventeen did not.



### Of Babes and Blue Laws

Mrs. Lewis Burch, of 735 Fulton Avenue, Spartanburg, was having trouble with her five-year-old son, Mark Burch. "He wanted to go across the street to visit a neighbor and I told him he couldn't go. He kept pleading to go and I finally told him he just couldn't. . . ." The five-year-old pondered this ban and then inquired, "Is it because there is a Blue Law against it?"

From "The Stroller," by Seymour Rosenberg in the August 5, 1959, Spartanburg Herald.



It was not the majority of citizens who spoke for Spartanburg on the referendum vote, but a vociferous minority stirred up by members of the clergy, who equated a vote against Sunday laws with a vote for sin and a "wide open" town—and what "wide open" meant was not left entirely to the fertile imaginations of parishioners. Factories would run, all stores would open, liquor would flow, plagues would fall, and the forces of Satan would gain the ascendancy. A vote to repeal the Sunday blue laws would make Spartanburg "as open as hell itself," the Reverend Fred Dabney, recognized head of the problue law forces, told the Optimist Club on the morning of the referendum.

2. Public apathy and public hypocrisy played decisive parts in the referendum results. As to apathy, only 46 of the 183 interviewed during the LIBERTY survey had voted in the referendum; 46 of the 135 who did not vote were not registered voters. "We knew most people were against the laws," a Jaycee said. "Unfortunately, most of us who opposed them failed to get out and vote."

As to hypocrisy, the question, "Should a new law be passed allowing Sunday movies and other recreation not conflicting with church hours?" was voted down by a 6,798 to 5,112 margin. Yet according to a television audience survey, on a recent Sunday night at seven-thirty—during evening church hours—more than 34,000 people from Spartanburg County were watching a Western movie! The same survey shows that in the Greenville-Spartanburg-Asheville area more than 80,000 families were watching movies at 6:15 P.M.! Chief argument about enforcement of the State blue laws in Spartanburg centered around the operation of movie theaters on Sunday.

3. Confusion and arrests following the referendum cost the Sunday law many of its supporters. "If I had known that the police would go around arresting people like they have," said one, "I would have voted against them. Most of my neighbors feel the same way." "This isn't Russia yet, but it is