



“Meditate
upon these things;
give thyself
wholly to them;
that thy profiting
may appear unto all”

I Timothy 4:15

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How To Read The

Psalter With Profit

1. LUTHER'S "BRIEF DIRECTIVE" (1525)

Translated by ER

It is a special merit of the Psalter that, more than other books of Scripture, it not only teaches and brings examples of what is good, but also with choice words and in a most excellent manner clearly demonstrates how one should keep and fulfill the commandments of God. Thus it shows what the attitude of a truly believing heart should be and how a good conscience should conduct itself toward God in whatever the situation may be, and how it is to be comforted and raised up. In short, the Psalter is a proper school, where faith and a good conscience toward God is taught, exercised, and made strong.

Therefore you will also note that there is hardly a Psalm that does not sing the praises of God's faithfulness and truth, His Word, and His righteousness. Thus conscience is taught to trust in God so that it must become clear that fulfillment of God's commandments is a matter of sincere faith, of comforting assurance of God's grace, and of a conscience that rejoices in His mercy. That is what it takes — a heart that rests in its God. Freely and joyfully will such a heart then do and endure whatever may be God's will.

But on the other hand, in almost every Psalm you also see the cross, you hear cries of lamentation because of persecution, you hear vehement denunciations of the godlessness of the wicked. For he who will live

his faith must, for the sake of God, also endure much adversity from without, even as he must let his own Old Adam be slain. In this manner these two themes are treated powerfully and at length in the Psalter. The one shows how faith lives, strives, acts, and grows — by the Word and the Truth of God. The other demonstrates the slaying of the flesh: how it suffers, is subdued, how it wastes away.

Now he who would properly read and understand the Psalter must note these two things. Thus he will discover what a sweet and fine book it is, and will find in it a wealth of doctrine, comfort, strength, joy, and blessedness, to all his heart's content.

2. HOW SHALL ONE READ IT NOW?

In the foregoing we have offered a rather free translation of Luther's *Kurze Anleitung, wie der Psalter nuetzlich zu lesen sei* (Brief Directive, How to Read the Psalter with Profit). It breathes a spirit of joyful and implicit acceptance of the full content of this entire collection of ancient spiritual songs, every one of which for him was "inspired" in the full and solemn sense of the word. That there is an admitted sharp contrast between its several parts and the sentiments they express is something that seems to have bothered Luther not at all. For him the divine authorship of each part was vouched for by the total acceptance of the entire collection, not only by the Apostles but particularly by Jesus in Luke 24:44.

But Luther wrote in 1525, and we have now entered on the final third of the celebrated Twentieth Century. Does that not perhaps make a difference? Is his profound appreciation of these Psalms possibly the mark of a medieval mind, something hopelessly out of date? Does the advanced learning of our day not make his views obsolete?

If one listens to the pronouncements of modern "liberal" theology it would certainly seem so. In the name of Biblical scholarship, but with a rather transparent effort to get out from under the authority of an inspired and therefore inerrant Word, men do indeed search the Scriptures, but for evidence against themselves, against their divine authenticity. Expressions and incidents reflecting the severity of God's wrath and judgments are cited as though the very fact that they are there already proved, *a priori*, that they are not of divine origin. Men quote John 3:16 concerning the God who loved the world, and rest their case, just as though there were nothing more to be said. But what they have failed to ask and what makes the entire argument a mere begging of the question is whether the very greatness of that love ("so . . . that He gave His only begotten Son") does not in the same degree magnify and intensify the sins of indifference, rejection, and opposition, thus not only calling forth those very judgments but explaining their severity.

Yet the search goes on, not only in other parts of the Scripture but particularly also in the Psalms, which seem to have become a favorite target of such critics. It may well be that the passages which picture the nature and consequences of sin stand in such sharp contrast to those others which reflect the beauty and glory of divine grace that the critic finds the former particularly well suited to his purpose. Be that as it may. No one, however, can question the accuracy of these observations. But to use them as an argument against the divine authorship of the Psalms, that is the tragedy of so large a part of modern theological literature. No thoughtful reader will deny that there are parts of Scripture that are severe to the point of harshness, others that even strike one as cruel, and for which we find ourselves unable to offer any adequate explanation beyond the simple fact that those things would, of course, not have happened or been said, had not this world through the sin of man

become what it is. And let this be coupled with the further admission that to this sin we have contributed our full part.

But those statements that some find so disturbing are indeed there. When God says to His Son, the Messiah-King, that He shall break His foes with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel (Psalms 2:9), or when His enthronement is accompanied by a vivid word-picture of the dead bodies which shall fill the places when He shall strike through kings in the day of His wrath (Psalms 110:5-6), the impact of those expressions is obviously by no means unintentional, even as the terms themselves are chosen with great deliberation. And when David can say that God has smitten his enemies upon the cheekbone, that in the process He has broken their teeth (Psalms 3:7), or when we read that the God who is first described as "the helper of the fatherless" is with the very next words asked to break the arm of the wicked and evil man, there seems to be a needless (our generation would add "sadistic") emphasis on the torture involved. (Psalms 10:15) Or take the next, which says, "Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup." (Psalms 11:6) Finally, when a penitent king humbles himself, makes public confession of his sin, and utters his touching plea for mercy (Psalm 51), it seems almost impossible to adjust to the next, also by David, which begins with a scathing indictment of Doeg, the informer. When this psalm calls for God's curse upon him; which describes the righteous as laughing at the plight of this traitor — it seems almost impossible to find the psalm closing with a word of praise for God, that *He* hath done it.

So one can go on, noting for example a group of psalms (Psalms 54-59) which are an unbroken sequence of prayers against the psalmist's foes. One comes to the 69th, that powerful description of the sorrows of the

One to whom they gave gall for meat, and vinegar to drink in His great thirst (69:21), and finds oneself confronted with the verses that describe the judgment, the curse that shall befall them for what they have done. (69:22-28) The climax comes in Psalm 109, which almost in its entirety is one continued call for judgment, punishment, an invoking of a curse. Surely, we would recognize neither the Speaker of those words nor the one to whom they refer, were it not for identification that is made when the Book of Acts describes the election of a successor for that one of the Twelve who sold his Lord for thirty pieces of silver, the one who brought the fulfillment of all these judgments upon himself by his final act of despair and self-destruction. But even now, where we have undertaken to list at least some of the passages that constitute the problem, we cannot close without a reference also to the Song of the Exiles, Psalm 137, which gives such beautiful expression to the longing of the captives for their homeland, for their beloved Jerusalem, and yet leaves one almost in a state of shock when it anticipates the fall of Babylon with those terrible closing words, "Happy shall he be that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones."

This is the problem. What can one say when critics use these "Imprecatory" Psalms as an argument against the divine origin and quality of at least these portions of Scripture, as evidence of a foreign and utterly human element in the Bible? Is it possible to construct a line of thought, to try for an explanation which will furnish at least some basis for justifying one's acceptance of these passages, one that would be reasonable, if not to others, then at least to oneself?

The attempt has been made, and a valiant one at that. In his "Reflections on the Psalms," Prof. C. S. Lewis of Cambridge discusses the problem with engaging candor. Frankly admitting how deeply these passages have disturbed him, he persistently searches for some

solution, submitting it finally to the judgment of others for whatever it may be worth. Many of his observations are refreshing and stimulating. They will add substantially to our understanding of the Psalms, particularly at these points. Even where one cannot follow him, it is only with profound regret that we must decline. For what he is doing in this little book is obviously a labor of love, love for the Psalms as they were written and as they stand, regardless of the efforts of others, and which he is not willing to surrender to the tender mercies of the critics. Yet, when all is said and done, the best that can be said is that the effort is still simply love's labor lost. For when one reviews the overall results one looks in vain for an unqualified affirmation of the inspiration and consequent inerrancy of the Bible in its entirety. For all his literary skill and keen understanding he nevertheless seems to have found it impossible to hold fast to all of the Word. The effort to find a reasonable explanation has failed, as all such efforts finally must. And so it happens that what has been offered is no more than a rear-guard action, covering a retreat which he apparently accepts as an inevitable necessity.

But have we anything better to offer? We have, indeed, if we will only let Scripture speak. For there we learn how it was made clear from the very outset that after man had heeded the voice of the Tempter his salvation could be achieved in one way only, and that the price would be fearfully high. For to the Tempter God said, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, between thy seed and her seed: It shall bruise [shatter] thy head, and thou shalt bruise [strike] his heel." (Genesis 3:15) This was God's declaration of war, a war that has as its goal the liberation of men from the power of the Devil. And war it has been, with all its tremendous toll of bloodshed, suffering, and death. It has been total war, with all men involved, either on God's side or that of the Adversary, the original Aggressor. If it has been costly, let it not

be forgotten who has paid the greatest price. For in this struggle and for this goal "God spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all." His was the most precious blood that was to be shed, His death the final price of victory.

When the principals in this war go to such lengths of sacrifice, surely we of the rank and file cannot stand idly by, fearful of perhaps becoming involved. The judgments indeed are God's, and righteous they are as such. But they are neither arbitrary nor capricious. When Satan had reared such citadels of sin as Sodom and Gomorrah, is it not significant that their day of judgment should come at that very time when a barren Sarah had been assured that even in her old age she should bear Abraham a son, the first one in that long line of descendants, that *Seed* in whom eventually all nations of the earth should be blessed? This is why Satan must lose his prize provinces, to make room for the first one of those through whom God's plan of salvation should be fulfilled. That is why a proud pharaoh must be humbled, his mighty army slain so that Israel might go free, to become the Chosen People from whom God in the fulness of the time would bring forth His Savior-Son. But let us remember again that the decision and the action were God's. And when He subsequently pressed the sword into the hand of Joshua with the specific instruction that it should not rest until the idolatrous Canaanites should be destroyed, root and branch, was it not still *God's* judgment and will that was thereby being carried out?

This gives us the measure of this struggle, a scale both of its wide scope and its fearful intensity. That is why there can be no neutrality which could be acceptable to Him who is the Captain of our Salvation. "He that is not with Me is against Me; and he that gathereth not with Me scattereth abroad." (Matthew 12:30) Here it will not be enough for anyone merely to be sympathetic to His cause. The issue is so great

that it calls for total commitment on our part. But when we take that step, we shall have neither time nor inclination to be critical of those who have borne the brunt of the battle.

Let that be how we read the Psalms. They are full of beautiful promises, wonderful praises of God, priceless comfort for the afflicted. But they also reflect the war that was even then going on. When God had sent Samuel to anoint the youngest of the house of Jesse, when subsequently He had sent another prophet to that same son of Jesse, now Israel's king, to give him the promise of a Greater Son, One who would sit upon His throne and whose kingdom should have no end — *could* David, confronted with foes on every hand, do less than pray *against* these enemies, pray that *God* might bring them to destruction? It matters not whether these enemies were an aging and evil Saul, or a rebellious Absalom plotting to usurp his father's throne, or a horde of Philistines out to avenge their past defeats at the hands of this upstart king. They all had become tools of Satan who was using them now to thwart God's gracious purpose and promise. Under such circumstances it was surely not human malice, not carnal hatred when Psalm 94 begins: "O LORD God, to whom vengeance belongeth, *show Thyself!*" And the hatred which David frankly confesses comes into focus: "Do I not hate them, O LORD, that hate *Thee*? And am I not grieved with those that rise up against Thee? I hate *them* with perfect hatred: I count them *mine* enemies." (94:21-22) But one thing more. As we read or repeat this part of David's words, let us not overlook the prayer that follows immediately: "*Search* me, O God, and know my heart: Try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." (94:23-24) This surely throws a new light on the "hatred" of which David speaks, putting it on to the same plane as that which the Savior mentioned when He used the same word, but with a completely spiritual meaning: If any man come to me, and *hate* not his

father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and *his own life also*, he cannot be my disciple." (Luke 15:26)

This approach to these passages should also help us with regard to Psalm 137, the one that ends on that shocking note describing the Babylonian children as they are being dashed upon a stone. The act was utterly inhuman, and to long for this to happen even to their oppressors seems to be the height of vindictiveness. But without a doubt the Babylonian Exile must have seemed like the end of the road to the captive Jews mourning the destruction of their beloved Jerusalem. Their nation, the Chosen People to whom such great promises had been given, seemed to have forfeited its future. Taunted by their captors, these exiles could only weep, apparently for a lost cause. Yet long before all this had happened a great prophet had spoken of a conqueror who would come from the north, who would break the power of Babylon, who would set the captives free and return the exiles to the land of their fathers. He would speed the rebuilding of the city and lay again the foundations of the Temple. (Isaiah 45: 4-6) But all this would be by the usual way of bloody conquest, with Babylon this time being the victim rather than the author of the atrocities. As they had done to others, so would it now be done to them, even to the extent of the gruesome detail of the murder of innocent children. Yet the remnant of Israel looked with longing for the day of their deliverance, even though they well knew what horrors would be involved. And since the former overshadowed the latter to an extent where even these horrors were accepted as part of the process, the words do not necessarily imply any intention of condoning the brutality of war as it was waged in those days. And it is more than strange that our century which has outstripped all others with its cold-blooded military efficiency should suddenly become so self-righteously squeamish in its judgment over the methods of those days. Was it not our own generation

that once rejoiced over a victory won by way of Hiroshima and Nagasaki?

But if we can understand, at least to a degree, how the Babylonian exiles could speak as they did, what about those Psalms which, on the basis of their correspondence with New Testament fulfillment (Matthew 27: 34, 38; Acts 1:20) we accept as clearly Messianic? We are referring specifically to the 69th and the 107th. Is not the doom that the first of these foretells for all those who rejected the Messiah (Psalms 69:22-28), as well as the judgment invoked over the one who betrayed his Lord (Psalms 109:6-20), simply incompatible with the character of Him who came to seek and to save that which was lost, who described Himself as meek and lowly in heart? These attributes are precious indeed. Yet it would be a grave mistake were we to emphasize them to the point of eliminating certain others that are equally true of Him whom God gave for our salvation. For John first tells us that God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved, that he that believeth on Him is not condemned. But then he adds the inevitable counterpart, that he that believeth not *is condemned already*, going on to explain that this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and *men loved darkness rather than light*, because their deeds were evil. (John 3:17-19) And so He who was indeed meek and lowly in heart was, by the sheer necessity of His complete mission, also and just as truly something else. Not only could He say of Himself that the Father "hath given Him *authority to execute judgment also*, because He is the Son of Man." (John 5:27) He simply had to say it. To have said or done less would have been to leave part of His work undone. And we who need and claim a complete Savior certainly need nothing more urgently than to accept these Psalms in simple, childlike faith. That may sound quaint and old-fashioned. But it is certainly infinitely to be preferred to the bitter alternative of

subjecting them to the suspicious scrutiny of modern criticism.

What then is the answer to our question: *The Psalter — How shall one read it now?* The first part of our answer is derived from the foregoing discussion. Let the passages in question be read in their Messianic context and with constant recollection of that divinely ordained warfare which constitutes the background of it all. There lies the key to prayerful understanding. And then let us do what Luther did in his "Directive," simply accept the two themes of the Psalter as we find them side by side, each as equally true, equally instructive, and equally worthy of the God of Truth. Luther has summed it up for us in his exposition of the Third Petition of the Lord's Prayer, where he explains how the will of God is done: "When God *breaks* every *evil* will and counsel, and hinders whatever would not let us hallow the name of God nor let His kingdom come, such as the will of the Devil, of the world, and of our flesh; but *strengthens* and *keeps us* steadfast in His Word and in the faith unto our end. *This is His gracious good will.*

E. Reim



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The Editor

The Pentateuch And Its Critics

Foreword: This is the second major section of the Journal's translation of an article from Lehre und Wehre, Volume 49 (1903). Comments have been added by the translator. Vide pp. 2-3 of the October 1966 Journal.

II.

As we now proceed to a review of similar references in the post-exilic historical books, namely Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah, we may be content with greater brevity. Even negative critics do not deny that in these books a large assortment of passages occurs which refer to the Pentateuch as an extant and familiar work of Moses; they prefer, therefore, simply to challenge the credibility of the books, especially of Chronicles.

We point out that most of the passages previously cited from the books of Kings have their exact parallels in the Chronicles. Compare I Kings 2:3 with I Chronicles 22:13; II Kings 11:12 with II Chronicles 23:11; II Kings 14:6 with II Chronicles 25:4; II Kings 21:8 with II Chronicles 33:8. It is reported that King Jehoshaphat sent princes, Levites, and priests through the cities of Judah to instruct the people. "And they taught in Judah and had the book of the Lord with them," namely the Pentateuch. (II Chronicles 17:9) In an account of the celebration of the Passover under Hezekiah we are told that the priests and Levites "stood in their place after their manner, according to the law of Moses the man of God." (II Chronicles 30:16) The book found in the temple by Hilkiyah the priest is designated as "a book of the law of the Lord given by Moses" (II Chronicles 34:14); and in a report of the

Passover as observed under Josiah we are advised that offerings were brought "as it is written in the book of Moses." (II Chronicles 35:12)

When the exiles returned from Babylon, according to the Book of Ezra, they "builded the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt offerings thereon, as it is written in the law of Moses the man of God. (Ezra 3:2) See also Ezra 6:8. Ezra himself is repeatedly characterized as a "ready scribe in the law of Moses, . . . the law of the God of heaven." (Ezra 7:6, 12)

Nehemiah opens his book with a prayer that includes the confession that "we . . . have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the judgments, which thou commandedst thy servant Moses," and a reminder to the Lord of the words that He had commanded his servant Moses as recorded in Deuteronomy 30:4 and 28:64. (Nehemiah 1:7-9)

The book of Esther probably originated in the midst of unique circumstances and conditions. It may have been written in Persia. Among all the historical books it alone contains no witness for the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. But this is in itself an important fact. For if this book, which according to the modern critics was written during a period in which by common consent the Pentateuch must have existed in its present form contains no mention of it, this argues for caution in attempting to prove the nonexistence of a book from silence concerning it in another book.

It will be of interest, now, to observe how modern criticism, which denies the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, is able to deal with the evidence that we have adduced from the historical books of the Old Testament. Their clear and definite witness is dismissed with a flourish of superficiality! Once again we give the floor to Herman Strack of Berlin as a spokesman for the critics. He writes, "The passages in the Book of Joshua in which the law-book of Moses is

mentioned stem from a deuteronomic elaboration of the Book of Joshua and have reference only to the law contained in Deuteronomy. Neither in the Book of Judges nor in the Book of Samuel is mention made of a book written by Moses (the name of Moses occurs only in I Samuel 12:6, 8). The verses I Kings 2:2-4, where reference is made to the "law of Moses," certainly originated with the exilic reviser of the Book of Kings (Sam Driver, p. 190) and in any case need only be understood as referring to the law in Deuteronomy.

. . . According to II Kings 18:6 Hezekiah kept the commandments which the Lord commanded Moses, and thus must have had them in written form; but there is no shred of evidence that any law save that in Deuteronomy is meant. Compare also 21:8 (Manasseh) and 23:25 (Josiah). The dedicatory prayer of Solomon in I Kings 8:22-61, to which we refer because of vv. 53 and 56, is filled with allusions to Deuteronomy and related portions of Joshua. The Books of Ezra, Nehemiah, Chronicles, and Daniel, since they are post-exilic, must not without further ado be placed in evidence." (*Introduction to the Old Testament*, fourth edition, pp. 24-25)

For good measure we give space to the eloquence of Dr. Carl Steuernagel, a colleague of Dr. Nowack, typifying the critical line: "Neither the Pentateuch nor the Book of Joshua contains a reference to their respective author. They are anonymous works. There is no indication of the author of Joshua in any Old Testament writing. To what extent mention is made of the authorship of the Pentateuch in the remainder of the Old Testament is a question requiring careful investigation. There are quite a few passages in the Old Testament which speak of a 'law-book of Moses.' These could be references to a book written by someone other than Moses but having been so entitled because it contains a law given through Moses and at first transmitted orally. But it would be more natural to understand the title as indicating that Moses is to be

regarded as the author of this book of the law. Nevertheless it would be premature to see in all these passages the assertion that Moses was considered to be the author of the *Pentateuch*. In each case one must pose the question of whether the expression 'law-book of Moses' refers to our Pentateuch or to some other literary production."

"Our Pentateuch can be conclusively proved as existing only after the middle of the Fourth Century BC. From that time onward the law-book of Moses is frequently mentioned, especially in the Chronicles. When these record the content, even the very wording, of a passage from the law-book of Moses and we find the same content, or wording, in our Pentateuch (compare for example II Chronicles 25:4 and Deuteronomy 24:16), one can hardly doubt that the chronicler quoted our Pentateuch as the law-book of Moses, that is, that he regarded it as a book written by Moses. But when we reach back into more ancient times, the existence of our Pentateuch cannot be proved with certainty. All passages which have been adduced in evidence essentially prove nothing more than the existence of *certain portions* thereof. But we must *a priori* reckon at least with the *possibility* that the Pentateuch is a work brought into existence through the compilation of a variety of components. Thus the existence of some component parts does not in itself prove the simultaneous presence of the entire work. When, therefore, prior to the Fourth Century, the law-book of Moses is mentioned and a quotation can be traced to some passage of the Pentateuch, we may conclude with certainty only this, that the portion of the Pentateuch containing that passage was ascribed to Moses. Apart from the Book of Joshua, the sources of which remain unknown and which we therefore do not include in this investigation, such quotations are found only in writings dated after the Sixth Century and refer, insofar as can be determined, invariably and only to the section Deuteronomy 12-34 (compare for example II Kings 14:6 with Deuter-

onomy 24:16, and II Kings 22:8 - 23:25 with Deuteronomy 12-34). (We are naturally giving no consideration to passages in which the law-book is not expressly credited to Moses and the quotation cannot with some assurance be traced to a portion of the Pentateuch.)"

"So we arrive at the conclusion that, apart from expressions in the Pentateuch itself, it is not possible to prove with certainty anything more than that since the Seventh Century BC the opinion was voiced that certain portions of the Pentateuch were written by Moses, and that the entire Pentateuch was ascribed to Moses since the time of the author of the Chronicles." (*General Introduction to the Hexateuch*, pp. 250-251)*

To respond to every statement of the critics would be a work of supererogation. We shall touch only upon the high points. The critics must admit with Steuernagel that it would be most natural to understand

* Dr. Robert Pfeiffer has more "information," which he offers in the form of apodictic pronouncements, as follows: "About 550 BC Deuteronomy was inserted into this national history, and the Books of Joshua, Judges, and Kings were thoroughly re-edited in the spirit of Deuteronomy. Finally the Priestly Code was added about 450 BC, and after the incorporation of other materials the entire Pentateuch, ending with the death of Moses, was edited and separated from Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings. . . ."

"The Pentateuch is the final result is the final result of the amalgamation of five narrative sources (J, S, E, D, P) besides a number of poems and legal codes. The editorial work by which these diverse elements were combined began about 650 BC, if not earlier, and ended about 400 BC. This editorial process is so complicated that it can be identified only along its main lines." (*The Books of the Old Testament*, A Harper Chapel Book, 1965, pp. 15, 101)

the passages cited above as saying that Moses was the *author* of the Pentateuch. But after some have conceded this they immediately retreat from the natural sense of the words and seek to evade their force. Such procedure stands self-condemned.

But on another score we ask: When one hears the recurring expressions "book of the law," "book of Moses," "law-book of Moses," and in addition finds numerous references and allusions thereto, must one not immediately and without quibbling concede that a specific, well known, and extant literary production is meant? Who in all the world would want to find legitimacy in the argument that, when a quotation from, or a reference to, a book is made, it proves the existence of *only that particular excerpt*? What intelligent person, with the exception of a higher critic filled with prejudicial interests and preconceived notions, would feel compelled to reckon with the possibility that a recognized, well authenticated, well balanced, and complete literary production which comes to his attention might conceivably be a patchwork of variegated materials pieced together by a mysterious, ghostly redactor? Or what shall one say when the witness of the Book of Joshua is simply eliminated, or when, as Strack does, the relevant passages are credited to "a deuteronomic elaboration of the Book of Joshua," that is, to a later unknown who allegedly made additions and interpolations in the book? Or when the first verses of the Book of Kings in which mention is made of the law of Moses are declared as "certainly originating with the exilic reviser," in other words, as interpolations of an anonymous writer of a later era? This is in truth a convenient method of eliminating unwelcome testimony: one simply brands as counterfeit those passages which contradict one's opinions and thus robs them of their weight in evidence.

There is but one argument of the critics which could conceivably, at first glance, arouse misgivings.

It is the allegation that all cited expressions and references deal only with the law contained in Deuteronomy. This assertion is similar to one that we considered in an earlier issue with regard to passages in the Pentateuch. (*Journal of Theology*, December 1966, p. 7) The book which Hilkiyah found in the temple and handed to King Josiah was also, we are told, only Deuteronomy. According to the so-called "positive" critics it was actually an ancient law-book which had for a time been forgotten in Israel; but the disciples of Wellhausen's radical school of critics* claim that it was a product of cunning priests who wrote it, placed it in the temple, and then deceitfully passed it off as the genuine article.

But even if in the passages we have listed only Deuteronomy were being cited, the point would not be lost. For the unity of the Pentateuch is such that, even if reference were made only to a part thereof, the entire Pentateuch would be validated. But we have previously established beyond doubt that the words "*this law*" in Deuteronomy cannot involve Deuteronomy separately but designate the entire law. Even Strack must express himself laboriously when he says, "The verses I Kings 2:2-4 need be understood only of the law in Deuteronomy." And to II Kings 18:6, 12, he avers, "No firm evidence compels us to think that any law outside of Deuteronomy is meant." The "need" and the "compel" are an admission on Strack's part that in the passages adduced by him one can also find quotations from other books of the Pentateuch. Which is indeed the case; and thus his entire argument falls by the wayside.

When, for example, King Josiah says, "Keep the Passover unto the Lord your God, as it is written in

* A recent, brief treatment of the critical position of Julius Wellhausen can be found in the paperback title, *Hath God Said?*, by Dr. Uuras Saarnivaara, Osterhus Publishing House, Minneapolis, \$3.50.

the book of this covenant," (II Kings 23:21) it is legitimate and correct to think of the stipulations for the festival not only as in Deuteronomy 16:1 but also as in Leviticus 23:5-8 and in the original institution Exodus 12:15-20, 13:6-7, and 23:15, most certainly in the latter passage which was contained in the very "book of the covenant" that Moses wrote, Exodus 24:4-8. Moreover, when the Book of Nehemiah relates that the children of Israel celebrated the feast of Tabernacles eight days in accord with the "law which the Lord had commanded by Moses," (Nehemiah 8:13-18) the reference cannot possibly be to Deuteronomy, since this provision for the eight-day observance is not found in Deuteronomy at all, but in Leviticus 23:33-44. If the expressions "law," "law-book of Moses" in these passages, then, designate the entire Pentateuch, it is pure arbitrariness to insist upon reading a different concept, such as Deuteronomy, into the other quoted passages.

We thus conclude: The witness of the historical books of the Old Testament for the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch is conclusive and irrefutable.

(To be continued)

E. Schaller

===== P A I D E I A =====

REFINDING FUNDAMENTALS

A most rewarding experience is to read an old book and find new ideas. Quite often that is the place to find them, even as the same old ideas, not especially exciting, are often rehashed in the new books. But this requires doing one's homework, and until some greater person comes along to tell us something, we had better "give attention to reading."

Another way to get the same result is to listen carefully to others who have done both some reading and thinking and speaking and writing on this education business. It is amazing where one will find some nugget of rediscovered truth. Again, this requires some reading, pencil and notebook in hand, without which helps much reading is wasted.

What you are bound to find if you are faithful in looking is the manner in which fundamental truths have a way of emerging from all the froth and foam of blah-blah in the books. Somehow they have a way of coming from people who don't much count. A gloriously humorous example of this is found in Ecclesiastes 9:14-15. "There was a little city, and few men within it; and there came a great king against it, and besieged it, and built great bulwarks against it. Now there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city; yet no man remembered that same poor man." To have observed this, Solomon said, seemed great to him. Indeed, who *can* stand the rhetoric of educationists? Sane men finally flee from it screaming. Those great bulwarks are awful.

We often find the fundamentals of defense in the poor wise man who delivers his little city. We find it in the work of that noble breed of teachers who somehow have an instinct for the jugular of ignorance. We sometimes find it in an isolated educator who is greater than he knows, when he for a moment "comes off it" and speaks from the soul. An example is found in the words of one who spoke to the Canadian Education Association in 1966: "Our objective in the school should not be to stock the minds of our pupils but to strengthen them; we should be concerned not only with their intellectual development but with their attitudes, their values, their relationships one to another, their courage, their tolerance, their initiative, their imagination, above all their compassion." Consider it. How better could he have told us how also to "stock their minds" and to give them "intellectual development"? Even an "educator's" slip will show when he aims at something quite concrete as goal and aim. He forgets the big siege guns and the massive bulwarks, but he takes the town.

With impressive understatement a reporter said that "this was not exactly a new idea"! But it made a greater impression, he added, than any other in three address-filled days of conference on what should be the future course that Canadian education should follow. The country's leading economist had appealed — we would guess with accustomed unction — for expanded education in technology, no doubt to meet the felt needs of the expanding nation and modern times. When asked for comment on the former speech he beat a neat retreat: his point was only that the science-push should be a part of the character-curriculum that had been advocated. So the central truth had again surfaced almost accidentally among the men who were conferring how to do the job of building men to fit their time. Truth will not stay down. Somehow the fundamentals will be refound.

Who would expect them to re-emerge in such a column as that given to science in a sagacious journal appealing to top minds? But hold a minute! John Lear in *Saturday Review* has proved a fertile place to look. His sub-head has the word "humanity." He reviews, once, the world of men and moonships, shows the consequences of the spread of science, and spares no exposure of the end it may all come to. Especially its effect upon the family. The study is mainly in Russian departures, in science and society there, plus American reaction to Sputnik shock. He lets a certain Professor Bronfenbrenner of Cornell put it in a capsule: "During our ten-year preoccupation with the teaching of technical skill — accompanied, as it has been, with long-haired campus rebellions of sometimes riotous proportions — the Russians have been concentrating on the inculcation of character!"

What a place to find a return to fundamentals! The work of Russian "upbringers" is detailed as they begin with the children three months old, and up through the grades. We don't go for the character they build into the children, but it is character in the professional sense — character as David Riesman uses the term in *The Lonely Crowd*, of the type of persons that a particular culture needs and produces, even as the character built into American children today is precisely the kind that they need as children of a socialized and socialist state.

"What implications has the Soviet schooling experiment for our own democratic society?" asks the professor from Cornell. He shows that it was deliberately established, and the Soviet parents accepted it willingly; also that the American family meanwhile has been losing its traditional influence over the children by default. Then he writes in his introduction to the Americanized version of A. S. Makarenko's *The Collective Family* (Anchor paperback, translated by Robert Daghish, \$1.45): "The question therefore arises

whether we cannot profit by taking to heart Makarenko's injunctions regarding the constructive influence of imposing communal responsibility within both family and peer-groups." Note the word "imposing," and think about how. "This does not mean subscribing to his insistence on the primacy of the collective over the individual. It does mean giving the children, from early ages on, genuine responsibilities from which they learn the meaning of self-respect and respect for others. Such responsibilities can and must extend beyond the home to the neighborhood, the school, the community, and in due course the larger society. They should involve not only parents and friends but the full range of human beings who make up society, including those who most need and deserve the service of others — old people, young people, the handicapped, and the underprivileged. We, too, must teach morality, consistent with the welfare of all and the dignity of each."

So you never know where the fundamentals will reassert themselves. Some principles remain true, regardless of how they may be misused. Sounds of Plato and Quintilian, of da Feltre and Basedow, of Pestalozzi and Froebel, Henderson and Montessori. The voice of the reformer has always been reforming education. It is a process. Wisdom seems never to be found, in the sense of kept. It must always be refound. None has the point, it seems; he is always finding it. It is, indeed, a process. Every day a teacher feels that he is beginning, and this is good.

We must be reminded what we unconsciously have. Put together what God has said by Moses and Solomon, adding the teaching of Jesus, and we have what it takes. Toss in the thinking of modern giants like Luther and countless other Christian teachers and scholars and you will have the answers to many problems posed by men of the world who have an uncanny way of knowing how to ask the questions. Also the outreach of

science will be subsumed in all this learning process if Christians will remain intelligent about it all. When a Paul Goodman writes a gloomy book about *Growing Up Absurd*, his requested solutions have been anticipated by Luther, by Pestalozzi, and by the child-training processes built into the prescriptions of the Lord for Israel. The sharpness of the learning-laboratory insights serve to brush away our stupidity; and thanks for that help! We should have known better in the first place, yet some things are learned only by research, and sometimes we have not been so bright as we should. Even so, it is at times amusing to see the experts plumb the depths of the obvious, of something we knew all the time. Yet they do help often to give us eyes, and we are grateful. As when one doctor of medicine wrote a book to show how truly scientific were the health rules of Israel, although those people hadn't heard of the word. There is something about God's people: they are wiser than their teachers. We see this when people stand amazed at what Christian teachers can do in our Christian schools with the very children with whom the world has utterly failed. Intelligent worldlings sense it in the reappearing need for character, but it is more than that — it is Christianity. And somehow the truth will out.

Martin Galstad

== PREACHING THE WORD ==

SERMON STUDIES IN THE BOOK OF HABAKKUK

(A series based on the booklet *From Fear to Faith*, by Dr. D. Martin Lloyd-Jones)

V.

The text: Habakkuk 3:1-2

¹A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet upon Shigionoth. ²O Lord, I have heard thy speech, and was afraid: O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy.

As Israel wandered for forty years in the wilderness, they came in their travels to the well of Marah. The water was too bitter and ~~brackish~~ ^{unsavory} to drink without causing severe illness. The people came to Moses in complaint and Moses turned to the Lord in prayer: "And he cried unto the Lord; and the Lord shewed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet." (Exodus 15:25)

Gideon, having stirred up the hatred of the mighty Midianites by destroying their statue of Baal one night, in weakness asked the Lord in prayer for a sign that Israel would prevail: "And Gideon said unto God, If thou wilt save Israel by thine hand, as thou hast said, Behold, I will put a fleece of wool in the floor, and if the dew be on the fleece only, and it be dry upon all the earth beside, then shall I know that thou wilt save Israel by mine hand as thou hast said. And it was so: for he rose up early on the morrow, and thrust the fleece together, and wringed the dew out of the fleece, a bowl full of water. And Gideon said unto

God, Let not thine anger be hot against me, and I will speak but this once: let me prove, I pray thee, but this once with the fleece; let it now be dry only upon the fleece, and upon all the ground let there be dew. And God did so that night: for it was dry upon the fleece only, and there was dew on all the ground." (Judges 6:36-40)

Pious Hannah, childless for many years of her married life, prayed at Shiloh for a son which she would dedicate to the Lord's service. The next year she came again to the temple with the child Samuel, who became one of the best known judges of Israel, saying to the high priest, Eli: "For this child I prayed; and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of him." (I Samuel 1:27)

Elijah on Mount Carmel, after the day-long prayers of 400 priests to Baal for fire from heaven went unheard, offered this prayer to the true God in front of all Israel: "Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the Lord God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again. Then the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench." (I Kings 18:37-38)

After Peter and John were threatened not to preach Jesus any more in Jerusalem or face death, the first Christian congregation assembled together and prayed God that none of them would be intimidated. You remember, of course, what happened: "And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the Word of God with boldness." (Acts 4:31)

Has God changed since that day? Does He still answer like that? We have as many examples of God's dramatic answers to prayer right here among us as we have members and time to recount them. But we grow

forgetful; we become doubtful or impatient. We need some periodic memory-refreshers. In this ~~fifth~~ ~~sermon~~ study on Habakkuk, we receive some timely directives from the Lord Himself on the subject of

"HOW TO PRAY."

The final chapter of Habakkuk begins, "A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet upon Shigionoth." The strange word is a musical term, like our crescendo or forte, directing the prayer to be accompanied with music that is enthusiastic and expresses deep, strong emotion.

How — with what attitude — does our Lord want us to pray? The example of the prophet is before us in the second verse of this third and final chapter. But part of the attitude of the prophet (by this time) has been covered in four previous studies. Let us briefly review so that we have a clear picture and understanding of the attitude of Habakkuk as he began his prayer. First he learned, through God's completely unexpected solution to the wickedness of Israel, to trust in God's mysterious ways. Then he learned a method for solving his problems: stop to think — get away from the problem and back to solid and known truths about the God of Scripture and, if no solution be forthcoming, take the problem to the Lord and wait faithfully and patiently for His answer. Thirdly, the prophet learned to draw his comfort and strength from the light of God's prophecy, confident of the unknown future because he trusted, not in the ideas and conclusions of wise men, but in the facts and events which God revealed in advance in Holy Writ. Fourthly, we heard the Lord tell Habakkuk that the just — people who by faith trusted in Christ to substitute for them before God's throne — the just shall live by faith. The pure reason of unbelieving man has no place with God. Life before God is His gift which comes only by faith. In this spirit and with this background, the writer offered his prayer.

Because it was a prayer of the just living by faith, it is not the kind of prayer that a reasonable man could expect to offer or hear. Let us read again Habakkuk 3:2 and, first and foremost, hear *humility* speaking. The holy writer does not argue with the Lord and His decision to let the Chaldean army chasten the children of Israel. It is not a complaining, bitter "why-do-you-have-to-do-this-to-me-now" prayer. It is a prayer of faith, recognizing that whatever God *says* He will do is right and absolutely just.

How modern and up-to-date is the evil of man's pride before God. The world sees less and less of a reason or need for humility before God. How often does our nation or any other show humility before any god other than the god Reason or the god Science or the god Influence or the god Power? For politicians a god seems to be a handy person to be used in softening up the voters. For most churches the truth of God seems to be something that can be forced into a mold acceptable to the reason of man and then used to support civil rights or social reform or money-collecting gimmicks to keep the vast organizational church running in the black. Where does one find humility and the spirit of repentance anymore? It must, as in Habakkuk, be found in you and in me when we bow our heads in prayer to the holy and righteous God.

The second truth to consider under the theme of "How to Pray" is *adoration*.

"O Lord, I heard Thy speech and was afraid." Habakkuk was not in fear of the suffering to come. He was struck with a feeling of awe in the presence of his Creator, the one Person in complete charge and control of all events. And awe in the presence of God is still strangely lacking among us. There is in our churches, too, far too much easy familiarity with the most high God. "Oh, my God!" is an expression which falls from the lips of our adults and teenagers as if it really

means nothing at all. The ancient Hebrews, on the other hand, hesitated even to *read* the name for the Savior-God, Jehovah, as it appears in the Old Testament because they so trembled with awe and respect. The holiness and almightiness of God made them almost speechless. If we truly wish to stand before Him in the holy boldness that is ours in the blood of Christ, then humility, reverence, and adoration are always much in order.

The final part of Habakkuk's example showing us "How to Pray" is *petition*. And the writer's petition is unexpected. We would expect him to ask for deliverance from Chaldean domination and from the suffering and misery of war to come. Instead, the prophet asks, "O Lord, revive Thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known."

"In the midst of the years," says the writer. "While this prophecy is being fulfilled . . . revive Thy work . . . keep Thy church alive and don't let us be overwhelmed." So disaster strikes in our homes, in our jobs, in our churches, in our nation. What is our real concern when trials strike? Whose work then really counts, ours or God's? In other words, we are here reminded that God's eternal purposes are always being served on this earth and in our lives. God's work — not ours — is the only work of lasting importance. And God answered Habakkuk. When the Chaldeans did roll over Israel and press the people of God under Babylonian rule, God did not forsake them. It was in Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar that Shadrack, Meshach, and Abednego came out of the fiery furnace unscathed. It was in Babylon that Daniel was delivered from the den of lions.

Habakkuk's only plea and final appeal is also ours: "In wrath remember mercy."

In wrath — before Thy perfect righteousness and justice — we have no defense. We have nothing to ask

except that Thou should act like Thyself and for Thy Son's sake, our Substitute, have pity upon us. Next time we sing in the liturgy, "Lord . . . Christ . . . Lord, have mercy upon us," let us recall that these words are not offered in meaningless repetition and form, but that they are purposely placed before that part of the service in which we present our petition to the Holy God.

How, then, to pray? With humility, with awe, and with adoration, bringing our petitions before God in complete submission to His plan for each of us, pleading the one and only hold we have, the blood of our Savior, Jesus Christ. For His sake our prayers are heard, and for His sake we shall survive in all eternity according to God's own will.

VI.

The text: Habakkuk 3:3-19

Our heavenly Father knows all things. He knows more about what makes us tick than we do. He knows when we have had enough painful purifying, enough fiery testing, enough strengthening through tribulation to put us at the very end of our physical and spiritual rope. That is what the psalmist says: "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him. For He knoweth our frame, He remembereth that we are dust." (Psalms 103:13-14)

God is a Person who has no body, no flesh to limit His actions. We, on the other hand, can't even hold our arms straight out in front of us for 15 minutes without feeling as though they are going to fall off. The Lord knows we have physical limits, and they may be greater or less than we think. To His sleepy disciples, physically worn out after days of pressure without letup, Jesus said in Gethsemane, "The spirit is indeed willing, but the flesh is weak." (Matthew 26:41)

beware of

Just to ~~know~~ the simple fact, however, that the Lord knows our limitations and we do not, might only add to our depressions and problems. It takes something more than mere knowledge of the Lord's omniscience to solve our human problems. That "something more" the Lord gives us through the prophet. Habakkuk offers no bogus, Norman Vincent Peale-type of philosophy; he does not say, "Smile, and the world smiles with you."; he does not say, "Act happy and you will *be* happy." But he does suggest a course of action for us in the midst of depression, trouble, and anxiety that is guaranteed to work and never wear out, even throughout all eternity. That course of action stands before us in the text. The words surely do not *sound* like a very miraculous solution to tribulations; in fact, they sound a little ridiculous to our natural minds when we stand in the midst of trouble on every hand; but this is a tried and true solution — one that works. It is, in the words of the prophet, simply to be

"REJOICING IN THE LORD OF HISTORY."

To understand a little more fully Habakkuk's weakness of the flesh, let us take a fictional example. He was given a preview, before it happened, of the fact that the ruthless Chaldean military power would shortly destroy the countryside and carry God's people into captivity. Suppose that at this moment the Red Chinese had invaded New York, taken over most of the Eastern Seaboard states, and were within days of rolling through our own towns. In this age of nuclear warfare, unbelievable destruction would already be in evidence everywhere. Whole families and parts of families would be missing. And those who were left would be asked to resist to the end the approaching infantry. All would be panic and confusion. Organized society and law and order would fall apart so that we would not even be safe locked into our own basements, there to await the house-by-house takeover by a ruthless, proud, and bloodthirsty enemy. It makes us shudder physically at

the thought.*

But Habakkuk faced the same relative horror. No longer does it sound a little humorous to us when we hear the prophet say that his belly trembled in terror. He says: "When I heard, my belly trembled; my lips quivered at the voice; rottenness entered into my bones, and I trembled in myself, that I might rest in the day of trouble: when he cometh up unto the people, he will invade them with his troops."

Let us understand that his faith was not weak or faltering. The prophet's faith was strong! He proves its strength by taking God at His word when he is told that the Chaldeans will come. The only proof he had of the coming destruction was the fact that God said so, and he believed the word of the Lord. *Because* his faith was strong and *because* he took God's word for what was coming, he began physically and mentally to tremble and quiver in expectation of the day when the prophecy would soon be fulfilled and the enemy would be breaking into *his* house. His faith was strong; his flesh, however, was very, very weak. His was a fear out of control.

Now the really startling thing for us to note in comparison is that we are in the last days, the evening of the world's existence, according to prophecy just as real and just as certain as that given Habakkuk. Read again Matthew 24 and 25, which describe the virtually unbearable conditions of the world in the last times and a picture of the last judgment on the Great Day of the Lord. It is real. It is happening and it *shall* take place! Faith knows it! How will our flesh ever

* The aftermath of just such a war is dramatically portrayed by John Hersey in his latest novel, *White Lotus*. The novel is particularly interesting for his description of the degeneration of Christianity in the wake of widespread devastation.

stand it then? *Now* many of us think we have gone through and are going through rough, difficult, almost unbelievable physical pressures and mental strains. We know that according to Christ's prophecy yet to be fulfilled the worst of life's experiences we have been through are just so many proverbial Sunday-school picnics when compared to the last days of the world. What else can we conclude when Christ tells us, "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened"? (Matthew 24:21-22)

What is God preparing us for? Christ says that for the elect's sake — for the sake of all who trust and rejoice in the Lord alone — the last days will be shortened because our flesh is too weak and would not be able otherwise to take the pressure. *Who* will shorten the last days of the world? *Who* is in complete control of all history, just as we have learned repeatedly in this Old Testament book of prophecy? *Who* alone can and will preserve all who trust in Him? *Our merciful God and Father, for Jesus's sake!*

Do we need and want a solution for every fear, every anxiety, every human weakness? We have it: rejoice in the Lord of all history, because nothing else really works or helps. "The government will protect and help," man says; but Habakkuk shows us that governments come and go by God's permission and direction. Go through the whole list of earthly aid and realize that nothing created can insure our final safety. Only the Creator can be our Stay and Savior.

Edward Hyde
~~The hymnist~~ wrote:

His oath, His covenant, and blood
 Support me in the whelming flood;
 When ev'ry earthly prop gives way,
 He then is all my Hope and Stay.

On Christ, the Solid Rock I stand;
 All other ground is sinking sand."

(Hymn 370, Stanza 3)

Habakkuk puts it this way: "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls, Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds' feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places." (Habakkuk 3:17-19)

What is the only solution for tribulation? We can't find it in ourselves. But we already have it in the Lord. We see by faith how He has been in control of all the world since its creation; we see that when the time comes for the world to collapse, only Almighty God, our Father merciful for Jesus's sake, can uphold and sustain us just as He has upheld countless others before us. Let us not retreat, in the face of trouble, into a false calm or a make-believe escapism or a "whistling-in-the-dark" bravado. So we have no strength left? Christ has become our Substitute on the cross, and faith makes His unfailing strength now ours. We are to use the knowledge we already have! We are to be rejoicing in the God of all history. Let us leave our particular and individual problem just for a while and remember who this God is — the Triune God revealed to us in Holy Scripture. It makes no difference how great are the hardships we must bear nor how ^{profound} are the pressures we are called upon to withstand. Think of who this is who promises to bring us through! He made everything and everyone we can see, the space we occupy at this moment, and everything beyond. Of what are we afraid? We think of Noah, Abraham, Moses, the Israelites, the judges, the prophets, of Christ, the evangelists, the apostles, of Luther, of our faithful

Christian friends: the Lord brought them through everything. He who commands the nations, the forces of nature, and every turn of history, *all* in the interest of those who love Him and await His coming, *That* is our God. He who in mercy, and in His own time and way, sent His Son to help us because our flesh simply was not able to do it or stand it, *That* is our God. In the middle of a mixed-up life that becomes almost ~~ne~~^{irreparable} ~~to withstand~~, let us remember who this God *is* and what He has done. If we do that faithfully, we will end up rejoicing in the Lord. We may have nothing else, but what more do we need — what more than our God and Savior is really necessary for us to have, either in this world or the next?

We read in the Psalms how, one after another, the writers begin by stating their particular afflictions and troubles. Before they are swallowed up by their problems, what do they do? They go back to the God of all history and begin recounting His marvelous deeds in others' and their own lives. In every case the psalm ends with words of praise and rejoicing. We are made of the same flesh and blood as the psalmists. We are to learn by the example of the prophets and the psalmists. Be rejoicing in the Lord. The hymnist wrote about what can also happen to us:

When I tread the verge of Jordan,
 Bid my anxious fears subside;
 Death of death and hell's destruction
 Land me safe on Canaan's side,
 Songs of praise I will ever sing to Thee.

(Hymn 54, Stanza 3)

===== PANORAMA =====

CHANGE AND DECAY

The sensitive and critical subject of Change in Theology, specifically of change in the theology of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, is treated by Dr. Martin Franzmann in the January issue of *Concordia Theological Monthly*, p. 5. The article is exceptional for its candor and disarming frankness. Written with the recognized skill of the author it is remarkably plausible and persuasive. Yet it leads to conclusions that can be of grave consequence, not only for the Missouri Synod as a whole, but for anyone who follows the trend of these conclusions.

The writer recognizes "the ominous sound that the word 'change' tends to have for many in the church who have long sung: 'Change and decay in all around I see. /O Thou, who changest not, abide with me.'"

Referring then to his own church body, the LCMS, he says that it "has taken an astonishing number and variety of changes in its stride. Linguistic, cultural, liturgical, architectural, administrative, homiletical, evangelistic, journalistic changes have been accepted and approved with a virile aplomb remarkable in so traditional-conservative a body as ours." Then he makes a careful distinction: "It is specifically *theological* change that is causing anxiety and with good reason. . . . Here the hazard of change is greatest and most obvious." We will certainly not object to that statement. The lines of defense begin to emerge, however, when the claim is made that "the changes are taking place within well defined limits," and those limits are then described as "defined by a common commitment to the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confession." A line of inquiry as to the validity of this claim is then set

up, consisting of a number of "knowledgeable and perceptive" observations concerning significant "shifts since the early Fifties," made by someone who is described only as being "not a member of a theological faculty." The listing even in the article is not complete, but is used because "it will serve to illustrate the major concerns." We shall confine ourselves to three in particular: (1) a shift from an accent on systematics to an accent on exegesis; (2) a shift in accent from that on the divine side of Scripture to that on its human side; and (3) a shift from asserting the Scripture as absolute truth to an accent on the "conditioned" character of truth as communicated in history through human language.

In answer to these points and the "possible dangers" attendant upon them the article then goes on to say: "Whether one agrees with this observer's analysis in detail or not, one must admit that it does reflect adequately the concerns of many of those in our church who are apprehensive about the changes that are taking place. In general it would seem to be true that our theology is today more directly and explicitly "exegetical" than formerly; there is today a larger sense of the historical qualification in both exegesis and dogma; our asseverations are more frequently qualified and our polemics less sweeping than they tended to be in the past; a greater ecumenical openness is so obvious that it hardly needs mentioning. Whether this 'change' amounts to 'change *and decay*," that is the question that needs to be raised and answered."

The question raised in the last sentence is indeed a good one. One may differ as to the wisdom of some of the changes that have occurred. But *if*, as the article has claimed, they remain in the well defined limits of a common commitment to the Scriptures (we omit "and the Lutheran Confessions" because we have, after all, only one *norma normans*) — *if* they do actually remain within that limit, then we have no right to declare them wrong. But that is the very question that must be

answered first of all. Here the issue is fairly and squarely joined. But this is the very point where we hold that the article can be quoted as a witness against its own case. Advocating a "genetic analysis" of the shift that is under discussion, the author goes on to say: "Our historians might well concern themselves with this aspect of the question. Even one who is not a professional historian will note that this theological change is part of a larger change in our church and in our seminaries and must be evaluated in this larger setting: the Americanization of our church, our increasing ecumenical contacts through theological conversations, the military chaplaincy, interchurch cooperation, campus ministries, and so on."

These are certainly significant admissions of fact, a striking example of the engaging frankness of the author. But they are a sad demonstration of how much has been lost of the common ground we shared in earlier, happier days. What should be obvious in the light of the Word of God, namely that most of these items simply do not fit into those "well defined limits" of Scripture, is no longer clear. Something has happened over the years. In its eagerness to participate in the larger events of Lutheranism Missouri has become part of a wider stream. Consoling itself with the fact that subtle shades of difference can still be observed, it has failed to note that it has lost its individual direction and is being swept along by the power of the larger current. And the end is not yet! But the article continues: "For all its solid worth and inalienable values, our 17th-Century-oriented dogmatic theology was not at every point big enough or flexible enough to meet all the new demands put upon it. Many of us found this needed extra greatness and *pliancy* in the Lutheran Confessions and thus in the Scriptures themselves." (emphasis added)

We have singled out the word "pliancy" for special attention. For to mention this as a quality of Scrip-

ture is to suggest something that Scripture does not attribute to itself. By its own terms it emphasizes its unchanging quality. Though it was said at the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus was speaking of His *entire* word when He said, "Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a *rock!*" (Matthew 7:24) The warning of Moses concerning what God had revealed through him still stands: "Thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it." (Deuteronomy 4:2 and 12:32) And the manner in which this theme is repeated at the end of the Book of Revelation surely reminds us that this implication of the Deuteronomy passage is not to be restricted to the laws and statutes of the Old Testament but is to be applied to all the Scripture, Old Testament as well as New.

We make this last criticism with extreme reluctance, since we like to think that the author's use of this dubious word "pliancy" was a slip rather than by deliberate intent or as a concession to the prevailing modern trend. But whatever the situation may be, the term will be seized upon eagerly by those who would be willing to accept the Savior's dictum that the Scriptures cannot be broken — if only they can just bend them a little to conform to modern ideas and conditions. That simply is the trend of our day. That is what was meant by our previous references to "grave consequences."

Here you have the reason why we have given our heading the form of an unfinished quotation. The full line in Lyte's hymn reads, "Change and decay in all around *I see.*" We simply dare not close our eyes to what is going on in the world; yes, even in the area of Lutheranism in our day. We shall find that things have not changed for the better since the poet's day. But if we do see, we also have the responsibility to speak. Then only will the prayer of the next line, addressed

to the Lord who Himself is the Incarnate Word, be truly in place: "O Thou, who changest not, abide with me."

E. Reim

WILLIAM BECK —
IN MEMORIAM AND
A TRIBUTE

Dr. William F. Beck died October 24 of last year after an extended illness in St. Louis, Missouri. He has become widely known, also in our circles, through his translation of *The New Testament in the Language of Today*. Our review appeared in the March 1965 issue of the *Journal*, p. 34. It mentions not only the scholarship of the translator, particularly with reference to the original text of the words of institution as Luke reports them in his account of the Last Supper — a passage that has been mutilated at the hands of a number of other modern versions. Particular mention is made of the gift of the author for simplifying some of the long and involved sentences which may puzzle the readers as they find them in the Authorized Version. According to *Lutheran News* Dr. Beck had also completed his translation of the Old Testament prior to his death. We look forward to the publication of this work with keen anticipation, since we have come to appreciate this special gift for clarity and simplicity even more since the days when our review was published.

As for some unfavorable comment in our review, our objection was mainly to two points. The first mentioned the way in which the familiar and accepted word "grace" (translating the word "χάρις") has almost entirely disappeared from Dr. Beck's version, being rendered either by some synonym or paraphrased in some other way, so that "grace" appears only in the single instance of II Corinthians 13:13. Our second point dealt with the footnote to Romans 3:20, which reads: "'Righteous' is a court term. God, who gives us the righteousness of Christ (3:23-24; 4:5; Philistines 3:9) as a judge declares us righteous and by His creative verdict *makes us righteous*." Our objection was that

the words we have italicized involve a "grave confusing of justification and sanctification, of the imputed righteousness of Christ and the personal righteousness of the believer." Subsequent correspondence between the author and myself showed that we were talking past each other. While Dr. Beck was using the second phrase, "makes us righteous," as a synonym for the preceding "declares us righteous," and therefore simultaneous with the first, I had read them as separate actions, the one following upon the other, each one thus being distinct from the other. This failure to catch the meaning of the author is a matter of keen regret to me, and I am happy to make this correction. It is my hope that this may come to the attention of the publishers and that the footnote may be revised in such a way that the author's meaning may be secured against possible future misunderstanding. For the sentence not only *can* but probably *will* be read and thus misread in the way I did in my review.

I regret that I can offer no solution for the other matter, concerning the word "grace." Our correspondence never reached that point, due probably to illness on both sides. It is a pleasure, however, to add this note to what I have written before, as a tribute now to the memory of an outstanding scholar.

E. Reim

PUBLICATION NOTICES

The Social Gospel: A Threat to the Principle of the Separation of Church and State, by Pastor Paul Nolting, 710 South Grove St., Sleepy Eye, Minnesota, 56085. Heavy paper binding, 44 pages, \$1.25.

This brochure represents the fruit of an independent study project undertaken in connection with a course in "Problems in Political Science," and is an appraisal of the "adverse relationship between the social gospel and the survival of the separation of church and state in our country." We recommend it as a

well written, Scripturally oriented, and challenging treatment of a timely issue.

E. S.

Hath God Said?, by Uuras Saarnivaara, ThD, PhD. Osterhus Publishing House, 4500 West Broadway St., Minneapolis, Minnesota, 55422. Paperback, 293 pages, \$3.50.

The book bears the subtitle, "Who is Right — God or the Liberals?" This indicates the thrust of the work and suggests its conservative character. It offers in compact form a large mass of information, much of which the reader would otherwise have to search out from many sources. While it may not be possible to accept every conclusion expressed by the author (for example, the age of the earth and mankind) and to subscribe to his every interpretation of prophecy or difficult passages of Scripture as adequate, the book offers much that is instructive and helpful to the Bible-believing Christian.

E. S.

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