

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

I Timothy 4:15

Journal
of
Theology

Church of the Lutheran Confession

—ESSAYS AND ARTICLES—

THE PROBLEM OF CHOICE

Referring to our recent article on The Rising Tide of Translations (March, 1968), a subscriber who identifies himself as a layman, not of our CLC, writes about his personal problem in connection with this matter, and makes certain observations which deserve also our careful attention. He says: "I love the King James Version of the Bible. I was brought up in it. I am at home in paging through it. I feel that I understand its 'strange' English. ... For myself, I don't need a new 'currently worded' version of Scripture." But then he speaks of the problem of his children and, a little later, of adult converts, young or old, noting that at the very outset it calls for an extra effort if they are to use the KJV — a factor which the Devil uses skillfully and often successfully to thwart our mission work. Then he arrives at an important conclusion:

"It is high time that I put in time and effort to make the orderly transition from the KJV to another translation of Scripture which is written in more understandable English for the present generation. It seems to me that it would not be quite orderly enough to take up several versions, but, as I say, to study diligently to settle on the one best version."

This brings into clear focus a problem which concerns all of us, the problem of choice.

In bringing this to the attention of our readers, let me say at the outset that for my own person I also neither need nor want to discard the "Authorized" KJV. Let me repeat the warning of my previous article against handicapping our children and students in regard to their memorizing of Scripture. Yet this is precisely what would happen if we would prematurely promote one or the other of the variant versions without careful previous study. But let us not fail to note the realism with which the author of this letter recognizes the urgent need of planning for the future. This realism is the main reason for quoting him in introducing

this article. It must also be understood, however, that "to settle on the one best version" is not so simple as it may sound. For to say which of the newer versions is actually the best would involve not merely the sampling of quite a number of different translations, but would call for prolonged intensive work with the favored one, ending perhaps in frustration since after all not one of them is perfect. Nor is there any assurance that the final choice would meet with general acceptance, even within our own little group. That could at best come only with the test of time. These are the problems. They are formidable indeed. Yet they must be faced, with plan and purpose. It is the aim of this article to suggest ways and means that should be constructive, which remain within the limited resources at our disposal, but which promise to be spiritually profitable for all who take part in it. It is also my hope that this can be done on a basis which will include also such lay members as may wish to take part, even though they may not have the facilities for checking the various translations by the original Greek or Hebrew.

Even a superficial survey of the current versions will show that there are two different ways for translating a given text: literally and by paraphrase. The literal tries to stay as close as possible to the wording of the Greek or Hebrew original. The paraphrase is much freer in style. In his introduction to his Living Word translations (warmly recommended by the Rev. Billy Graham) Kenneth Taylor says: "A paraphrase does not attempt to translate word by word, but rather thought by thought. A good paraphrase is a careful restatement of the author's thoughts. It can communicate more vividly than a good translation." To which we can agree — as long as the paraphrase remains a "good" paraphrase. Its freedom of expression gives it an edge over even a good translation.

But both types also have their dangers. And there is good reason to believe that those of the paraphrase outweigh those of the literal. The "literal" can indeed adhere so closely and mechanically to the original that the resultant translation, though using English words, still remains "Greek" to the average reader. On the other hand, the very

freedom of the paraphrase constitutes a temptation by the very ease with which a translator can then read his own thoughts into the text. Taylor warns: "The principal danger of a paraphrase is that it may go beyond (or not as far as) the original author's intention. This is especially important when the words of Christ Himself are involved."

Both dangers should therefore be kept in mind. In actual practice, however, the two types are not so sharply divided. A good "literal" translation will not hesitate to paraphrase when this is necessary to make the thought of the original text clear to the reader. Luther was a master in this. And a good paraphrase will not hesitate to become literal when the subject matter of the text calls for accuracy. While stressing the value of a paraphrase for rapid reading and for accurately acquiring the sweeping movement of thought, Taylor's last paragraph carries a sound and practical suggestion: "For study purposes, a paraphrase should be checked against a rigid translation." Except for his use of the word "rigid" in referring to the various literal translations this seems a good suggestion. We intend to apply it to Taylor's own work in a later section of this article.

Another point should be noted, however, before we are able to proceed along the suggested lines. When men translate what others have translated before, there will be a strong temptation to demonstrate one's own versatility by saying the same thing indeed — the original text demands that — but saying it with different words. If the new word says it better than the old, well and good. But if it merely offers an equivalent synonym, nothing is gained. But something may have been lost: the memory value of the earlier term. And if the substitute is inferior, either in quality or meaning, the resultant version will become correspondingly so. Change simply for the sake of change is a poor way of trying for literary excellence. But since we are touching on the subject of literary quality — surely, a labored attempt at a highflown style of writing would be just as wrong as the opposite extreme, to imitate the cheap and shop-worn commonplaces of everyday life. The great thoughts of Scripture surely deserve to be rendered

with dignity and reverence. That this is not inconsistent with a natural simplicity is proved beyond possibility of doubt by the way the Evangelists tell the story of the Savior and Luke the acts (and words) of the Apostles.

This should be enough to give us at least the beginning of a set of standards by which to judge the various versions in comparing them with each other. Other requirements will suggest themselves as we go along. But the point is that we begin, now. Let everyone choose the version that shall be his own standard, one which he has learned to know both as to its strengths and weaknesses, one in which he has confidence. This may well be the "Authorized" King James. It may be the RSV or the American Standard (ASV). But it should be at least a recognized literal translation. Then let us choose one or another of the newer versions to check against the previously selected standard, always reserving final authority for the original Greek or Hebrew. It will be instructive to test the Taylor paraphrase (The Living Word series) in this way. It will also reveal the limitations, which Taylor himself concedes. As for the newer literal translations which might (and should) be tested in this same way, the most promising prospects would seem to be Beck (The NT in the Language of Today), the new American Bible Society translation (Good News for Modern Man: NT-TEV) and perhaps the New English Bible (NEB). Other versions may be substituted for those mentioned, for instance the New American Standard, which is itself a revision of the earlier American Standard. The point is to keep this stage of our study as flexible as possible, so that no one's preference may be overlooked in our search for the best of the modern versions.

Just as a starter and for the sake of illustration let me offer some observations based on notes taken while comparing a number of these modern efforts. The section chosen is that of the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5 to 7, certainly an area of particular interest and importance, beginning with the familiar Beatitudes.

Nine times in solemn repetition our Lord uses the same word (MAKARIOI) in describing those of whom He then makes His further statements. The "Blessed" of the

KJV is retained by RSV, New American Standard, even by Goodspeed and Moffat. NEB has "How blest." But then come the changes. Beck and NT-TEV use "happy" throughout. Twice Phillips says "How happy," then switches to "Happy." Taylor begins with fortunate (three times) then uses "Happy." — The differences may seem slight, yet "happy" is a term used so commonly that it can cover almost anything. One may even be happy over one's success in some very unworthy endeavors. "Blessed," however, is not only a very specific term, but one that lies on a high and noble plane. It is certainly the best word for suggesting joy over a gift or reward graciously conferred by some great person — which is exactly what Jesus is saying at this point. The changes can be proved by a superficial reference to the lexicon. But do they improve the translation? Or does NT-TEV improve matters when in v. 3 it speaks of those who "know" they are spiritually poor, when the Lord simply mentions "the poor in spirit"? — In v. 5 Beck seems to be the only one to say that the gentle are happy "because they will own the land," immediately raising the question "which land?" NT-TEV is even less specific, saying they will "receive what God has promised them," where Jesus said that they shall inherit the earth. Because of their importance let there be one more instance referring to these Beatitudes. In v. 10 NT-TEV refers to those who suffer persecution "because they do what God requires." Beck: "for doing right." Taylor: "because they are good." But the righteousness of which Jesus speaks (DIKAIOSYNE) is something in the nature of a cause, one for which His disciples will stand and for the sake of which they may suffer persecution.

A strange situation comes up in v. 32f, one that hardly fits into our pattern of testing the newer versions by comparing them with an older "literal" translation. For here even those fail us, and only the Greek original can decide. For the translations generally simply fail to note that Jesus here is speaking, not of a guilty divorcee, but rather of a woman who is the innocent victim of an unjustified separation perpetrated by her husband. Unfolding the full meaning of the commandment, "Thou shalt not commit adultery,"

Jesus shows that when a husband dismisses his wife, except for "the cause of fornication," it is he who causes her to suffer from the consequences of his own adulterous act of wrongfully breaking a valid marriage, involving not only her but also the man who may subsequently marry her in the stigma of divorce. The linguistic problem of translating this difficult passage has been thoroughly discussed by Lenski in his Commentary on Matthew. His suggested translation, "she is stigmatized as an adulteress," places the responsibility where it belongs, on the original husband. Another point gained by this explanation of Lenski is that thus the apparent contradiction with 1 Cor. 7:15 is resolved. Yet practically all the available versions miss the point, even though some of the newer lexicons should have helped them. Yet Taylor says: "causes her to commit adultery;" Beck: "makes her a partner in adultery;" while NT-TEV goes farther, injecting a thought which does not even appear in the original text: "he is guilty of making her commit adultery if she marries again." Only the NEB comes close: "he involves her in adultery," namely by making it seem as though she were the guilty party. — This entire passage deserves careful study on our part.

Turning now to the rest of this Sermon we find much more to commend in the translations and less to criticize. Yet there is something of each, nevertheless. In verses 2, 5 and 16 in chapter 6 and also in verse 5 of the next, Jesus uses a strong term in referring to the manner in which some men give alms, pray, fast, or judge (criticize) others. Most of the translations call such people "hypocrites," which is exactly the same as the word in the original Greek. We certainly can't go wrong with that. But Phillips adds a special touch when he calls them "play actors," for that is precisely what the original HYPOKRITAI were, actors in some of the old Greek dramas. Their role might be to picture a character who was good, noble, heroic, or it might be the opposite, to show a person who was base, mean, selfish, etc. Our Lord does not leave us in doubt as to which kind He has in mind. And NT-TEV puts it in a nutshell when it calls them "show-offs." Beck also adds a vivid touch: "Don't blow your horn" — which

is of course what the sounding of trumpets is. It was an ancient form of the modern art of advertising, making a great show of one's generosity (alms), piety (prayer), self-denial (fasting), and expert skill in critical "judging" (demonstrating one's ability to see even a speck in a brother's eye). It was all a pompous sham, and Jesus exposes it with startling clarity.

It is regrettable that in contrast to these fine variations which add to one's understanding of a passage we must say the opposite in regard to what has been done in the case of the Lord's Prayer. It is not that these new versions are not correct, but rather that the effort to furnish a new translation is only too obvious, with the result that these new variants in spite of their technical correctness only create a welter of confusion. It must be granted that there has been no complete agreement to begin with. Some denominations have preferred "debts" and "debtors" to our "trespasses" — and they have a point. But why change at all, when by changing there is so much to lose and so little to be gained? The one place where the prevailing usage could be improved is this same Fifth petition where "sins" would be both simpler and more specific than either "trespasses" or "debts." But even here no change is needed if only we keep the basic meaning of "trespass" in mind, remembering that it is God's holy will that is being sinned against when we overstep the bounds which He has defined for us. — But if we have granted that most of the translations are technically correct, the same can not be said of Taylor's paraphrase of the First petition, where he says, "We honor your holy name." This is certainly not a prayer but rather a boast! This is a classic demonstration of the dangers of paraphrasing where a literal translation makes the actual perfectly clear, and in addition is the only way one can do justice to the original text.

Let our final observation be on Matt. 7:13. If we consider that He who says "Enter ye in at the strait gate" (KJV) is the same who on other occasions described Himself as the Way and as the Door, Who prepared the way by going to the Father by the way of the Cross with all which that entailed, then we realize that what He is saying to His dis-

ciples is not a command but an invitation. The substitution of "narrow" for "strait" is almost universal among the newer translations, and certainly seems an improvement. But the evangelical note of invitation is lost when Phillips, Beck and NT-TEV say "Go in" or "Go through." One may argue that when Jesus spoke those words He was still in His state of humiliation here on earth. Or it may be said that "Go" need not be taken as a command. But why not then retain "Enter," the word that would lend itself equally well to both, the situation as it was then and as it has become at this present time when He who spoke those words is enthroned in majesty at the right hand of the Father? On the basis of the original text they could even have said "Come ye in." But Taylor eliminates the warmth of the invitation even more thoroughly by reducing it to a cold formal statement: "Heaven can be entered only through the narrow gate!" Yet let us consider that it is only because of grace, and grace alone, that there is a gate at all!

Let this end our study for the time being. Other installments may follow, if only for the sake of keeping the interest alive. It is my hope, however, that this will have served to demonstrate not only the need for such work, but also the gain with which by such study one is personally enriched. But the question as to the practical application still remains. And it is a real problem. For since even this little sample shows that none of the available versions is perfect, it is obvious that no single choice can be made that would not only somewhere, but probably at many places meet with some perfectly justifiable objections.

But here another suggestion has been offered, this time by a pastor of our CLC. He suggests that if this process of sampling several of the newer translations should create sufficient interest, ways and means might be found to publish in pamphlet form a handbook to just one of the better versions. This handbook could then list, by chapter and verse, a re-wording of those passages which would call for some substitutions, some correction, perhaps some brief explanation for the suggested change. These notations could then be transferred to each reader's per-

sonal copy of that same version, and might just possibly become the solution for the problem troubling our first correspondent. If so, we can all be happy, first because this should not be beyond our slender means; next because in this way we shall probably be doing better work than if we would undertake to re-translate the entire New Testament; finally because this can be achieved much sooner than would be the case if we should in spite of the difficulties undertake the larger project ourselves.

Only one question remains — will something be done?

E. Reim

KEY TO THE ABBREVIATIONS AND REFERENCES

KJV	The "Authorized" King James Version
Taylor	The Living Word Series, Tyndale House
RSV	The Revised Standard Version, Thomas Nelson & Sons
ASV	The American Standard Version
Beck	The NT in the Language of Today
NT-TEV	Good News for Modern Man - The NT in Today's English Version
NEB	The New English Bible (Oxford-Cambridge Press)
Phillips	The NT in Modern English
Goodspeed	An American Translation
Moffat	The NT, a New Translation



REVOLUTION AND EVOLUTION

To address oneself to current events in a bi-monthly theological Journal during this year of kaleidoscopic change is to court the very real danger of being found irrelevant on the date of publication. Even weekly news magazines may find their editorial analyses of world and national events discredited by new developments before the printed issue reaches the newsstands. Nevertheless there are fixed patterns in the fabric of our times which Christian theologians must learn to read and record; for they concern, not simply the changing and fluid interests of the political scientist or sociologist, but the all-important responsibilities of Gospel heralds in this catastrophic decade.

As this is written, the Nation is trying to arrive at an assessment of its loss in the assassination of Senator Robert Kennedy and is engaged in an emotional appraisal of the causes of the disruption and violence which threaten the stability of our country. This latest brutal murder of a prominent national figure has triggered a wide-spread search for explanations. A stricken people is groping for answers and solutions, and its questions are valid. The answers being given, however, are for the most part invalid and inadequate.

The fact is indeed widely recognized that we are not dealing with isolated acts of violence, but with metastases of moral cancer that has invaded many parts of the body politic. A correct diagnosis of the ills of our generation must involve recognition of the fact that there is no essential difference between bloody rebellion against existing codes of law and law enforcement and the murder of a legislator. And a distinction between the wanton killing of an advocate of "passive resistance" which disrupts the very life processes of a nation, and the resistance itself, is a distinction in manner, not in kind. Both are brought under indictment by the same Scripture which says: "Whosoever therefore resisteth the power resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation." This divine verdict is not a ban upon the exercise of purposeful and orderly measures leading to change and

improvement. It condemns only those who desire to be a law unto themselves and seek to nullify existing law by deliberate disobedience, whether it be violent or pacific in character. This is understood in many quarters, even though it is not as bluntly stated by as many men in public life as the need requires. One senses an existing fear of the reaction of the very minorities that are responsible for the present terrors in our land. Yet, if nothing more were needed or desired than a general awareness of the inner relation of all lawless conduct, the point could readily be made by resolute leadership and proper enforcement.

But more profound questions are being asked. In the wake of the most recent display of savagery, exclamations of dismay were heard and given wide publicity. "What kind of people are we?" "Oh, not again! What is happening to our country?" These and other similar expressions of genuine consternation betray the deep sense of need for a probe that might uncover the well-springs of this flood of anarchy let loose upon a nation and its government. A Presidential commission is appointed to make such an investigation; and the dimensions of its assigned duties, so vast that even a staff of experts cannot hope to encompass them in the year of time allotted, envision it as a difficult quest.

Is the answer, then, really so complex or multiple in nature? And what contribution can we, as spokesmen of the Church and its Lord, make toward its uncovering? It is possible that among those who are ready and willing to search the Scriptures, from which all substantive moral answers must be derived, there may be a tendency toward oversimplification. It must and will be pointed out, by true ministers of the Word as well as by informed Christians everywhere, that concerned people might be spared much unfruitful effort and a great deal of needless soul-searching if they would only accept what the Word of God so plainly reveals concerning the natural depravity of man and the consequent evil inherent in his social structure. The root of a nation's distress is found in the reprobate mind of the unregenerate who perverts every-

thing that he touches, even the good gifts of the Creator, to its opposite use. The entire exhibit has been placed under glass for observation by St. Paul in Romans 1:18-32.

But we must understand as well that we cannot dispose of the issue at hand by a mere affirmation of Original Sin. This we have had with us since the Fall of our race. We need inquire further. Why does sin find it readily possible to attack successfully the very structure of government by law which is so widely acclaimed by rational, intelligent men and regarded, even by many of the revolutionary spirits, as the hope of the world? Why are thousands of underprivileged citizens turning city streets into internecine battlegrounds because, as they say, they want a full and equal share in the glorious rights and privileges available to those governed by constitutional law? Is there some logic, however sinful, in this madness?

The answer lies much nearer than most men would care to find it. If the device of civil disobedience did not begin in the colleges and universities of our country, if instead it was inaugurated here by primitively eloquent graduates of our educational system with political axes to grind or half-baked social philosophies to inflict upon less informed, less affluent members of our society, it is nevertheless to be feared that in the last analysis the underlying thought processes were spawned in the schools. For in these we find the seed-bed from which evolutionary theory has gone forth to root in the public mind and corrupt it.

The connection will become apparent if we learn to distinguish between evolutionary doctrine which exists as a scientific theory and the popular evolutionary fairy tale that has taken over modern elementary textbooks and is boldly fictionalized by magazines such as Time and Life. The two versions are by no means identical.

Scientific evolution is an hypothesis which its believers among intellectually honest biologists present as such. One of them, Prof. D.M.S. Watson, is quoted as saying that evolution "is accepted by zoologists not because it has been observed to occur or ... can be proven by logically coherent evidence to be true, but because the only alternative, special creation, is clearly incredible." Not all

scientists are so frank about it; some debase their cause by catering unscientifically to the popular version. Yet it remains true that evolution as a scientific concept simply accepts the given fact of the existence of organic life on earth and attempts to explain from natural evidences the mysteries of its processes, past and present. That the resultant hypothesis is utterly incompatible with the record of Holy Scripture and the Christian faith is, of course, understood among us. The real trouble-maker, however, is not the hypothesis, but its illegitimate offspring, the popular fable.

In one of his penetrating essays, C.L. Lewis has distilled into a brief paragraph the potent essence of this version of evolution, which he calls a "great myth." First he quotes the sobering words of J.B.S. Haldane (in "Darwinism Today"): "We are therefore inclined to regard progress as the rule in evolution. Actually it is the exception, and for every case of it there are ten cases of degeneration." Then Lewis goes on to say: "... But the Myth simply expurgates the ten cases of degeneration. In the popular mind the word 'Evolution' conjures up a picture of things moving 'onward and upwards', and of nothing else whatsoever. And it might have been predicted that it would do so. Already, before science had spoken, the mythical imagination knew the kind of 'Evolution' it wanted. It wanted the Keatian and Wagnerian kind: the gods superseding the Titans, and the young, joyous, careless, amorous Siegfried superseding the careworn, anxious, treaty-entangled Wotan. If science offers any instances to satisfy that demand, they will be eagerly accepted. If it offers any instances that frustrate it, they will simply be ignored."*

"Onward and upwards" has been the perverted dream of apostate mankind since before the tower of Babel. The scheme of scientific evolution merely provided it with a new and powerful impetus. Things must always get better. If man's innate powers of intellect will not accomplish this, evolution will. If evolution moves too slowly, revolution will help. Perseverance and "science" will cause

* Christian Reflections, Wm. Eerdmans, p. 85-86.

the human race to triumph, just as surely as man once evolved from the primeval slime. Even the tragic end of the classic fable is ignored and forgotten; Wagner's twilight of the gods and the fourth and fifth acts of Shakespearean tragedies are expunged from the record. The sorry end of Cinderella's pumpkin coach is superseded by the arrival of the prince.

There exists, indeed, a curious conflict of views among those who share the pseudo-scientific evolutionary hope. More responsible and, for the most part, more mature men are still prepared to accept retrogression when patriotism, courage and principle demand it. Although their eyes, too, are fixed upon the mirage of man's triumphant destiny on earth, they are not willing to buy it with the surrender of traditional manly virtues or civilized ethics. The spirit of Patrick Henry, John Paul Jones and the men of the Alamo is still alive in them. But the new breed of visionaries is thoroughly impatient with such costly ideals. They trample them underfoot while hastening toward the promised land.

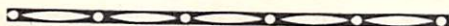
God is dethroned and placed on the sidelines as an interested observer while men head for Utopia. If Scripture says: "The rich and poor meet together: the Lord is the maker of them all" (Prov. 22:2), and if Jesus declares: "For ye have the poor always with you ..." (Matt. 26:11), such expressions are considered unworthy of note at this stage of evolutionary progress. The abolition of poverty is foreordained and has been promised. And does not the Constitution of our country affirm that all men are created (?) equal?

The fairy tale of inevitable progress has become an all-pervading premise of our society. But predictably men are growing weary of waiting and impatient with the snail's pace of the process. They want instant prosperity, instant peace regardless of cost, instant wisdom without learning the facts, instant freedom without responsibility, instant self-expression without restraining law, instant love without a framework of ethics or morality. And they are willing to kill, maim, loot or go to jail in order to cut corners to their Utopia. It was said in praise of this

year's graduating class at Stanford that they "embrace an authentic, courageous morality that sees obscenity where it really is — in all schemes that thwart the realization of full humanity anywhere, from the campus to Saigon, or to hell and back." (Time, June 7, 1968, p. 79).

So the harvest is now at hand, the harvest we have long anticipated and feared. It belongs to the tragic ironies of history that the story of the most advanced human civilization should culminate in the captivity of a great social order by a tyrannical myth, a demonic force that sorely afflicts it, tearing it and oftentimes casting it into the fire or the water (Matt. 17:15). Never has the judgment upon mankind become more manifest, that "professing themselves to be wise, they become fools" (Rom. 1:22). We can offer but one hope for deliverance from the present crisis; but this we ought to advance with all the strength of heart and voice that we can muster. It is as Jesus once said of another demon: "This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting." Neither of these disciplines can be exercised effectively save in a return to the faith that receives Christ and His cross and finds through them the freedom, peace and wealth that awaits in the Kingdom of God.

E. Schaller



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== PAIDEIA ==

TEACHERS ON STRIKE

Teachers on strike! Those words form a familiar headline of these past months. From available information it would appear that they will continue to make headlines for months to come.

With inflation very much a problem, every segment of American society is racing, in one way or another, to stay ahead of or to catch up to the buying power of the dollar. For years labor has found the strike a way of winning that race or at least a way of running it. The same method has now been adopted by the teachers. The unions and associations representing the teachers of our country have set as their goal a stepped-up salary schedule for the next few years, a goal that in many instances they are seeking to reach by means of the strike. As a result, during the closing months of the past school year, there were many empty classrooms — empty of teachers in order to apply pressure on school boards, on school districts, and on state officials to meet the teachers' demands.

We may well find some empty classrooms in our own parochial schools, too. Empty, not because our teachers are carrying placards demanding more money and less work, but empty because we don't have enough trained teachers to fill them. The number of our CLC schools grows, but the number of students preparing for a teaching career has not kept pace. The question comes to mind: Can there possibly be some connection between the many teacher strikes and our empty classrooms?

True it is, the placards are not visibly present in front of our schools. There are, however, many more ways of waving strike signs before the eyes of our youth and figuratively placing such signs in their hands. Do we discourage our sons and daughters from even considering a career as parochial school teachers because the monetary compensation may be very small? That is a placard we can so easily wave by consistently overemphasizing the value of a dol-

lar in one's life's work. It is a thought thrown at the high school and college student by his worldly contacts; and if he receives the same impression from home, can you blame him for "going on strike" against becoming a teacher in our schools?

Nor is it only the "more money" sign that can so easily be planted in the hands of our youth. At times it may be the "less work" placard that keeps young Christians from preparing for a teaching career. The thought of teaching three, four, or even eight grades may be made to appear as too great a demand. That life is too short to be constantly taken up in long hours of work is a notion expressed again and again. Where the student is fed such a thought we may expect to find him turning away from our school rooms with the "less work" sign in his hands.

Not only by a negative attitude can we direct the young away from using their talents in the teaching ministry. We may very well do the same thing by lack of positive encouragement. We may permit the undecided and uncertain to drift in another direction because we failed to give them the push they needed. Teaching does require certain natural abilities and talents. When we see possibilities in our youngsters or the young of our congregations, a word of encouragement to them to use their God-given talents in the Lord's service is called for. By silence on our part, or because of lack of interest on our part, the "on strike" placard may win by default.

But aren't we making too great a demand on our young people when we ask them to serve long hours in our schools for wages frequently far below the present scale in the public schools? Are we really being fair with them? There is a twofold answer to that question.

To the Christian congregation the Lord of the Church says: See to it that those who serve you in My Word share in the temporal blessings I have given you. He commands His people to provide for His servants in their earthly necessities. On the part of the Christian congregation that will require an on-going review of the economic situations and of the material goods granted by the Lord. Because of the sinful flesh which is so much a part of us it is right

here that we can so easily fall short. As members of a congregation we may fail to make it a point to be aware of the needs of those who serve us and we may fail to appreciate fully the material blessings God has given us and the use to which we are to put them. And so we remind again of the fact that the command of God making provision for the earthly necessities of His servants requires an ever on-going review of the economic situation and a faithful and considerate use of the material goods granted by the Lord. Where the Lord rules there will be concern for those who serve us in His name! In the above you should find one answer to the question: Are we really being fair with our youngsters in directing them into the teaching ministry? If we as a congregation will share God's material gifts with them — fine. If we hesitate, then don't discourage the youngsters but correct what needs correction.

On the other hand, to the servant of the Word — the teacher in this instance, or to the one contemplating teaching — the promise of God stands all-sufficient. Men frequently fall short of their promises, of their obligations, of their responsibilities; but the Lord never does. And so, although the Lord may make use of men as a means through which He provides — yet He never directs us to build our hopes on them but solely on Himself. To His servants the Lord makes the promise that He will provide. This is not a promise of so many dollars and cents — of so much monthly income — of a variety of fringe benefits, etc.; it is in reality the promise of much more. True, it contains the assurance of daily bread which the Lord usually gives us through the Christians being served; and we use the term daily bread also in Luther's sense in the Fourth Petition. But God is promising more in the words that He will provide. Here He is assuring His servants of strength and aid in meeting their responsibilities (think of a Moses on Mt. Sinai or during the 40 years of wandering in the wilderness. What strength was required! What strength supplied!); of His comfort in difficult hours (Job); of ears open to prayer; of His peace in midst of earthly turmoil; of joy in a work that endures beyond time; of confidence in His Word, etc.

In serving the Lord in His schools you serve the Lord of all. You serve Him who declares: "The cattle upon a thousand hills are mine" — "the silver and gold are mine" — "the earth and its fulness are mine." This One who owns all has also said, "Ask and it shall be given you, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you." And again, "Whatsoever ye ask in my name, He will give it you."

The Christian teacher on strike? Against whom? For what? No strike is necessary. What is required is prayer, a prayer to have our eyes opened to see what great temporal and spiritual blessings are ours as servants, yea, as sons and daughters, of the Lord. As pastors, parents, members of congregations these are the things we should be waving on placards before the eyes of our sons and daughters, so that they see what awaits them as servants of the Lord in the public ministry. When that occurs, they will begin to understand that, even with all that teachers in secular education gain in the way of salary increases, fringe benefits, etc., they still fall far short of the benefits afforded those who "teach the lambs of Christ."

R. Gurgel



"The vocation of teachers will always be a lowly one in the eyes of men, and that might tend to discourage teachers. However, Jesus has by His example exalted teaching and given it an inexpressible dignity and glory. Dedicated men and women will fulfill their ministry of teaching cheerfully, knowing that it is held in the highest esteem in heaven and assured that many fellow Christians will love and appreciate them for their faithful service to the Lord."

From "The Ministry of the
Lutheran Teacher," A. C. Mueller.

==PREACHING THE WORD==

IN THE TRINITY SEASON

The Text: Romans 8:33-39.

"And in those times there was no peace to him that went out, nor to him that came in, but great vexations were upon all the inhabitants of the countries." 2 Chron. 15:5.

If it were not indicated that these words are found in Second Chronicles and speak of conditions as they were three thousand years ago, one might perhaps have thought that they come from somewhere in this morning's edition of the Sunday paper; for a better expression of the perplexity of men in our time could hardly be devised.

No peace, but great vexations in human hearts; for nobody seems sure of anything these days. People find that everything in life has a question-mark behind it. And yet, not quite everything. For there is peace in the words of our text, a peace that seems strange in a world of uncertain hearts. The Apostle Paul uses words of such proud assurance that they grate harshly on the ears of many. He is sure, he is positive about the very matters concerning which there is so little conviction in many minds.

The world wants company in its misery and desires that everyone be unsure. Therefore it does not like our text. It seeks to rob us of the peace which filled Paul by putting question marks behind his Gospel. This Gospel wants to make everything sure for us, everything in life and in death. There is to be no "if" about it, nor any "perhaps." Has the Gospel done this for you? Has it made you aware that you are eternally safe with God? Or do you find a question-mark, however small, behind these things? We must erase it, then. And let us do it in an orderly, systematic way by asking:

WHO PUT THE WORD "IF" INTO THE GOSPEL?

We shall answer this question in a threefold manner.

I. Not God, with His election and love.

Who put the word IF into the Gospel? Perhaps it was God himself. There are those who would have you think so. They claim that God's Gospel says: You will be saved IF you have been elected unto salvation. And they point to our text which says: "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth." See, we are told, this states that certain people are God's elect, chosen people. Does this not raise the question: Am I one of the elect? The Word tells me that, if I am elect of God, all is well. What about this?

Certainly the Bible does teach the doctrine of election; and it is a very positive doctrine. It states that God, before the foundation of the world was laid, out of pure grace chose for His own a definite number of individuals out of the fallen, corrupt human race and determined to bring them to faith and salvation. This act of God is affirmed in many Scripture passages and is called election, or predestination. It is of those who have been thus chosen from eternity that Paul speaks, saying: "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?"

But then, someone will say, there is indeed an IF in the good news of salvation. We shall be saved if we are elected. Then we may also be sure and certain of it and say with the Apostle: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." (v. 28). But we can never be certain, our objector claims, that we were elected. We cannot look into the hidden record of God and see our names there. If we were not elected, nothing can help us and no promise of the Gospel can apply to us. This is the big IF which God put into the Gospel.

But those who speak thus are doing what the wickedness of Satan and the human heart always likes to do. They are misquoting God. They are passing over a vitally important part of the Gospel. Why not pay attention to the whole statement of the Apostle Paul? "... It is God that justifieth," he writes. How dare anyone overlook this? God does not ask us to try to look into the hidden record, into

the mystery of His eternal planning. He tells us to look at what we can see, at what He did and does in the open, before our very eyes, fully witnessed. God justifieth! There is no IF in that for anyone, anywhere. Look at the revealed record: Did not God justify YOU? "(God) spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all..." (v. 32). "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them" (2 Cor. 5:19). "(Christ) was delivered for our offenses and raised again for our justification." (Rom. 4:25). This is what the Gospel says, and there is no IF in it at all. God did punish all sins in Christ. God did lay our iniquity on Him. By His stripes we are healed. This means that we are now just, righteous in God's sight. God did this for you, for me, for everyone. There is no exception whatever. And that is the Gospel! Do you not want to be justified? Do you not want to be covered with the righteousness of Christ in the sight of God? If you do not want it, why are we talking about it? Why do we waste time discussing it? But whether a sinner believes the Gospel or not, there is no IF about his justification. Heaven is open; Jesus opened it, and there is a place in it for each single mortal.

Are you one of the elect? How will you find the answer? It is before the eyes of each of us. We are justified. And God has called us by the Gospel to our place in His Kingdom. He gave us His Word in our Baptism; in that sacred flood of salvation He cleansed us and entered our names into His family book. Is there any question about that in the Gospel promise? Any IF? Not one. God gave us His Holy Spirit, and He brought us to look upon Jesus Christ as our Redeemer and Lord. And why did He do all this? Because He chose us as His own from eternity: "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified." (vv. 29-30). Certainly you are one of the elect. Your hunger and thirst for righteousness, your desire for the Savior — all this is the work of the Holy Ghost who calls,

enlightens, sanctifies and keeps you because you are elect of God. Nowhere in all this is there any IF, but only the most glorious assurance and peace.

Who, then, put the word IF into the Gospel? We have not found the answer to our question in God. Perhaps it is Satan. Perhaps, no matter how much the Lord wants to save us and has saved us, the powers of evil intervene to make it doubtful. Is it that?

II. Not Satan — he cannot make the IF stick.

"Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."

There is mention made here of condemning, of condemnation. That is the opposite of salvation; and of course that is what causes all fear and vexation of heart. If we are condemned in the sight of God we have nothing to hope for and nothing good to expect. The Bible speaks of condemnation many times, of hell, of punishment. Despite all the babble of modern pseudo-theologians to the contrary, most certainly there is such a thing. And who is to fear it? The sinner; the one who has broken God's laws and failed to walk in His ways.

Here is the stamping ground of the old Evil Foe. Satan, the father of sin and of lies, lives there and wants to make life miserable for us. Thus he sets out to put an IF into the Gospel, and he does it with the black smudge of our sins. The fact is, as we learn from the story of Job, that Satan appears against us before the Throne of God, accusing us of all crimes, including that of unbelief, and trying to persuade God with diabolical rhetoric that we cannot, must not be taken to heaven or called God's children. He brings up everything that he can find against us; and there is plenty. We sometimes worry about what other people say of us; but that at its worst is nothing when compared with what Satan does and can say about us. He has the smallest, tiniest sin, even many sins that we know not of, tabulated against us. And in appearing as prosecutor before the bar of God's justice he stirs up our consciences until they be-

gin to whimper like that of the Publican in the temple. But he would wish to do more; he would make us hear a great, resounding IF in the Gospel.

Yes, if indeed the devil could insert that IF and make it stay put ... but he cannot, ever. For there is that obstacle: The death and resurrection of God's Son. Satan will never forget what that did to his big IF. He came to the Savior in the desert and said to Him: "If thou be the Son of God ..." They settled that together on the Cross, and in the garden of Joseph. The IF was lost, according to the Scriptures, when Jesus was shown to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of Holiness, by the resurrection from the dead (Rom. 1:4).

Our Lord took over. He took over from the hands of the crushed enemy of our souls the reins of rulership. Sitting at the right hand of God He speaks for us day and night, praying that none shall be lost whom the Father hath given Him. He is determined to have us, and no man shall pluck us out of His hands. What will Satan say? And where is the big IF? Do you pray in Jesus' name? Do you come to the Father by and through Him? Who will interdict the power of that bond with the fragile force of a question-mark? Not Satan, surely.

Who then? Ah, you may say, I know now. I know who puts the IF in the Gospel. Just look at the world in which we must live. What terrible things do happen to people, and can happen to me; and who knows to what extent adversities and trials may render the promises of the Gospel doubtful or tentative for us? Fate and circumstances play strange strange and merciless tricks on human beings; and Christians are not exempt from their influence. Is there not a note of warning in the words of Jesus: "... but he that endureth to the end shall be saved?" (Matt. 10:22). And again: "... be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

The Apostle, however, makes short work of such misgivings. Who puts an IF into the Gospel?

III. Not the trials of life — we are conquerors.

There are fearsome things for Christians to face in life, as we know. Daniel had his lions' den; the three men had their fiery furnace; Job sat in the ashes of agony. And Paul experienced some difficulties here and there that threatened to overwhelm him. As he lists a few of them in the 11th chapter of Second Corinthians, they do not make encouraging reading. He also speaks of them in the last five verses of our text.

The ills that afflict men on earth have, for Christians, a voice and a language quite unknown to the unbeliever. It is true that the thoughts they awaken in us are sometimes very dark thoughts. Crosses and afflictions say to the believer: Why are you suffering these things? Why has this befallen you? Are you not God's child, as you say? Then how can God your heavenly Father allow such miseries to come upon you? You ought to be immune from the evils in this world, which are, after all, present only because of sin. If your sins are forgiven, as you claim and as the Gospel declares, why do you suffer? In this we hear the IF very clearly. How shall we respond to it?

St. Paul does not in this text explain why the Lord permits His elect to be afflicted; but it is elsewhere extensively and lovingly explained in His Word. We need but think of the consoling words in Hebrews 12:7: "If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?" And in the chapter of our text Paul simply declares: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (v. 28). But this good is not always easy for us to recognize. Therefore our sorrows appear as a great IF in the promise. But the Apostle simply takes our hearts back to the love of Christ and of God our Creator. All else beside Him is only creature; and how shall creatures prevail over Him, impose their will on Him, or alter the divine oath and promise? It is written: "For all the promises of God in him (Christ) are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us" (2 Cor. 1:20). And He has declared

without reservation that "all things are yours ... the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's" (1 Cor. 3:21-23).

So it is apparent that Paul has been given the right word when he says: "We are more than conquerors." Human conquerors possess only that which they themselves have won by their strength and prowess. But we have triumphed over all foes and adversities, not through our might and courage but by the great deeds and purposes of our God. We have overcome in Him; and there remains no IF, but only divine love which works good.

What then is left to be said? Who put the word IF into the Gospel? If there is one there, YOU have put it there. Now take it out, rejoicing!

The Text: Luke 13:23-30.

Doubtless there are some citizens who are hopeful of a better tomorrow for the nation as a result of the outcome of the impending general elections. They may foresee an improvement in conditions, and base their hopes upon the virtues of their favorite candidates and on certain campaign promises.

It is worth noting that in such human affairs the interests of people are always centered on the future, just as the promises of politicians always point to a future date. Today is never good; but tomorrow will be better. We cannot do much about today; but we hope to be able to do something next year.

We do not know whether the elections will bring brighter conditions or not. God rules the nations, not politicians. But I am concerned about a future called eternity, as I hope my hearers are. And if eternity is to be good, things need to get better with us today.

It is a dangerous thing when Christians apply the rules of politics to the question of their salvation. They hope to enter heaven; but they speak and act sometimes as though

entering heaven and being saved is a matter of the future. When a certain man asked Jesus: "Lord, are there few that be saved?" he was concerned about how it will be in the end, how matters will stand then, how many will on the Day of Judgment be invited to inherit the Kingdom. The Savior's answer to that man was: "Strive to enter!" This calls to our attention a fact that we must earnestly consider. It points to the truth that

OUR FUTURE IS TODAY.

The man who approached Jesus on the subject of what the population of heaven will be raised a question which has perhaps often been in our minds also. Will heaven be full or empty? How many will in the end attain to it? Nor need we suppose that this comes merely of idle curiosity about a matter that is none of our business. Many a Christian may in this connection think of himself above all, and of his own salvation. If there are few that be saved, will I be among them or shall I have fallen by the wayside?

Unfortunately the answer that seems to satisfy some people is this: We will just have to wait and see. The outcome lies in the future. There is nothing that we can do about it today. If that has ever been your feeling, then hear the words of the Lord: "Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. When once the master of the house is risen up, and has shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are: Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity."

Jesus gives us a frightening look at that hour of the future to which so many look hopefully as He pictures the Kingdom of Heaven in the form of a great house. Darkness has fallen, and it is time to lock up for the night. The family is in. The master of the house gets up from his

resting chair and bolts the door. When this time has arrived in heaven there will be a terrible scene enacted outside as a great multitude comes to pound on the door, only to be told that they are strangers who don't belong there. And yet they certainly counted on being in heaven. They expected the day to arrive when they would enter. They knew where it was and how to get there. Why will they fail? They forgot, or were not willing to see, that their future is today; as it is written: "Now is the accepted time: now is the day of salvation."

The Savior's warning is: "Strive to enter in at the strait gate." This exhortation is for the present, not for the future. Those who hope to share the eternal kingdom and rule of the Son of God are to strive, to struggle with might and main, today, now. For entering through that gate is not done without effort. Our Lord said at another time: "The Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence and the violent take it by force." (Matt. 11:12). The Apostle Paul cries: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." (Phil. 2:12).

But someone will probably ask: How does that agree with the Gospel message that we preach? What are we coming to when our hope of heaven depends upon our own efforts? Is not the gate of heaven open? Did not the heavenly Father swing wide the doors of paradise when His Son reconciled the world unto Him through His death? We firmly believe that eternal life and salvation are ours, and that we accept them in faith. For it is written: "By grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:8-9). Is that no longer true? Did the Apostle Paul err when he declared: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house" (Acts 16:31).

To such an earnest inquiry we must offer an unqualified assurance. Of course the gate is open! Salvation is ready and free. It is ours indeed, whoever we may be, simply through the merits of Christ the Lamb of God who bore our sins and purged them away. But the gate is open today; and the gate is narrow. We are to measure our-

selves for this opening today, not on Judgment Day. As it is true that Jesus Christ delivered us from the guilt and punishment which our sins deserved, it is just as true that He broke the power of sin and of Satan for us, so that we need no longer serve sin, so that we can drown and put off the Old Adam, the flesh with its sins and evil lusts and live before God in righteousness and holiness. In Christ alone is our hope; for it was His sacrifice that made it possible for us to walk in His way. But the Apostle also says: "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." (1 John 3:3).

The gate of heaven is narrow, not because the love of God is restricted, nor because our redemption is not complete, nor because our justification is limited, but because we are fat. We are forgiven, wholly and completely. But we are still burdened by the sin-corrupted flesh which enlarges our heart with wicked lusts and thoughts; and this evil fat must be slimmed down through the power that lies in Christ's victory and by the Holy Ghost who has been given us and who dwells in our hearts. We are to "lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us" ... (Heb. 12:1). Indeed, "they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Gal. 5:24).

And thus, dear Christian people, things must get better with us today. The Spirit of Sanctification gives to the believer the ability for this. But what of those who are not using it as they should? Possibly they take this comfortable and dangerous attitude: There is no hurry about entering heaven, and there is no problem. Jesus has died for me, and the door is open. We are justified before God, and there is no condemnation in us. We are associated with the Lord; we belong to church, we go to church, we are baptized in His name. But in all this, as reassuring as it should be to a child of God, they forget that "not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 7:21).

Picture to yourself a man who calls himself a Christian and goes about day after day with cursing and blasphemy on his lips. Does he ever think of the shame he is bringing

upon the blessed Name of his God? Does he fight this sin and gradually win over it? Does he curse less this year than last? No; day after day he fouls his mouth and denies his faith. How long can faith live in such a heart? Consider the man who spends hours in taverns drinking and repeatedly comes out drunken. Does he fight this weakness by abstaining from strong drink, avoiding temptation and praying himself to strength in the power of the Holy Spirit? No, he goes right on in his debauchery. Salvation is in the future, you see, and the door is always open. His sin is forgiven, therefore he need not fight it. Think of the person who lives in hatred, or in bad-tempered anger, or in immoral practices. He says he is waiting to enter the joys of his Lord, but meanwhile he makes no serious move to change to clean and holy living. Think of the man who professes to have a free mansion waiting for him in heaven, but is so mean, so stingy, so miserly, so greedy that he refuses time after time to learn how to be a true steward of his Master's goods and has no willingness to give, to communicate, to sacrifice, to spend money or time in the Lord's work. When the hour comes, how will he fit in the gate?

Our future is today. If it is not today, it will not be tomorrow.

"There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when he shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out. And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God. And behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last."

There are many that will be saved. A great multitude, which no man could number (Rev. 7:9), will fill that heavenly house. God's Son did not open the door in vain. There will be people there of whom we did not dream when we thought of heaven. Those who seemed to be last, that is, far out and distant from the intimate contact with the Savior-God which we enjoyed, will by His grace arrive safely home. From every direction of the compass they

will come and join the believing fathers in paradise.

But that future will be a sorrow to many as well because they would not see that it started today. Think of them as they strive then to get in. They will try every means known to them to squeeze in, and everything else will be forgotten in that desperate hour. All their strength and cunning will be summoned and used to attempt what they ought to be doing now. If only they had used as much energy when it was called Today!

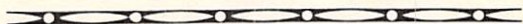
Do not we, too, now eat and drink here in Jesus' gracious presence? Does He not preach in our streets? Does not the Gospel resound with a clear call in all these our years of grace? Indeed; but are all of us listening to all of it as Christians would and should? To accept what is free and refuse what requires labor and diligence, to welcome forgiveness in order to be able to sin in peace — this may well delay entrance at the gate until after it has been closed. The most dreadful suffering of those who are lost will be the sight of heaven filled with the blest.

God's promises are sure and certain altogether; our promises are quite worthless unless we strive to keep them today. We have promised, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to amend our sinful lives. That means at home, abroad, in public and in private, in our relations with our family and our friends and our church and in our business. God has assured to us the grace to shrink in true repentance to the size of the gate of heaven. Moreover we have been given the tactics of victory over sin: "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (James 4:7). Our Savior in the wilderness spoke only the words: "Get thee hence, Satan" (Matt. 4:10); and immediately the devil departed and the angels came and ministered unto Jesus. He it is, then, who also presents each one of us with the pledge: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne" (Rev. 3:21). So the time is now:

Strive, man, to win that glory;
Toil, man, to gain that light;
Send hope before to grasp it
Till hope be lost in sight.

Exult, O dust and ashes,
The Lord shall be thy part;
His only, His forever
Thou shalt be and thou art.

E. Schaller



QUOTE

"A pastor is a faithful pastor," said Dr. Pfotenhauer, "only if he can make a correct diagnosis."

Most discouragements in the ministry are traceable to a failure to diagnose men. It is easier, I believe, to practice law or medicine. In the ministry there is often a long apprenticeship in which we struggle to know the many-branched ways of our people, how to talk with them, and how to come into full rapport with them.

To know men and to influence them we have to live and share and suffer with them. Father Damiens on a Sunday morning changed his greeting in the leper colony to which he gave his life from "My brethren" to "We lepers." After that his preaching took on a new power. When we can say,

The deaths ye have died I have watched beside,
And the lives ye have lived are mine,

then our voice will comfort, and even the words of our pen will strike home.

- W. F. Beck.

"The Lutheran Scholar,"
October 1945

===== PANORAMA =====

THE DOCUMENTS OF VATICAN II — AN EXAMINATION (Continued.)

6. Decree on Priestly Formation. (*Optatum totius.*)

In the parlance of our Church the section under consideration would commonly be termed "Synodical Resolutions on Seminary Training." One recognizes the fact that this is a legitimate area for inquiry and decision on the part of a church body. On the one hand it is important that a certain freedom of movement be assured those who have the call to administer and supervise ministerial training. On the other hand it is essential that the parent body never forfeits its right and duty to watch over the orthodoxy and the adequacy of the training given to the seminarians. When a proper balance is here maintained and all carry out their God-given responsibilities with faithfulness and consecration, then the Church is assured of a ministerial training that will redound to the glory of God and the welfare of souls. When a relaxation of principles takes place a false tolerance will ensue, deterioration follows and it is not long before a church body suffers corruption as liberalism takes over. A *modus operandi* is found with sanctuary provided for differing views. Resistance to error becomes minimal and syncretism runs rampant. The truth of all this is attested by church history, both ancient and modern.

In our Church, Scripture and Scripture alone is the standard and by it we are guided and ruled. Modernism with all its symbolical and evolutionary colorations is rejected and current philosophical ruminations with all the gobbledygook that accompanies them are set aside. So-called canon law and conciliar decrees do not pose problems among us since there is no claim of infallibility. In the Roman Church the situation is quite different. In the Decree on Priestly Formation we see the marks of struggle

and ferment within the Catholic fold where differing views and opinions have long been crying for expression. Theologians who have been affected by modernism and the new hermeneutics, and have long been desiring a forum for the expression of their views, came to the Vatican Council II with the hope that the urge for renewal might give them the opening they had been looking for. On the other hand the old guard, the curia at its head, was just as adamant as ever in its resolve to maintain the provisions of canon law and old established traditions. Between the two extremes were found those who wished to guard every expression and phrase so that no obstacle to dialogue with "separated brethren" would be raised. Out of this conflict a consensus emerged which is reflected in the constitutions, decrees and declarations. This is also seen in the Decree on Priestly Formation.

On the one hand the Decree upholds such a long-standing rule as that of celibacy for the clergy while on the other hand a desire is expressed for a flexibility which will allow for change and for conformity to the customs and ways of the various countries in which pastoral work is to be carried on. While studies in the Holy Scriptures in the original languages are encouraged, the knowledge of Latin and the liturgical service is given prime consideration as may be seen from the following: "Before seminarians take up those sacred studies which are properly ecclesiastical, they should be equipped with the humanistic and scientific training which in their own countries enables young people to undertake higher studies. In addition, they should acquire a command of Latin which will enable them to understand and use the source material of so many sciences and documents of the Church as well. The study of the liturgical language proper to each rite is to be regarded as necessary, while a suitable knowledge of the languages of sacred Scripture and of the sources of tradition should be strongly encouraged." Par. 13.

It is true that the study of sacred Scripture is called the soul of all theology; but this is diluted by such a statement as this: "Then by way of making the mysteries of salvation known as thoroughly as they can be, students

should learn to penetrate them more deeply with the help of speculative reason exercised under the tutelage of St. Thomas." Par. 16. One is never left in doubt that the Church and its hierarchy is the official interpreter of the Bible. The study of philosophy is given a position which it does not deserve. One cannot help remembering that the difference between Melanchthon and Luther came to view in this very area. Luther was a slave to the Scriptures while Melanchthon finally permitted philosophy to color and change his thinking. Luther, who had little time for philosophy, showed, however, that he was no babe in the woods when he answered the erudite Erasmus as he did in "The Bondage of the Will." He who is a student of the Word is also a student of his times and will, without a formal training in philosophy, be lucid as well as relevant in ministering to the needs of mankind in this technological age. Too much importance is attached to the study of philosophy in the Decree and he who follows this guidance will find that there will be retrogression rather than progression in the study of Holy Scripture. One can only wish that seminarians in the Roman schools of theology will devote themselves to exegesis as the queen of theological science and draw their knowledge from the fountain from which the living water flows. Then there will be hope for some worthwhile change which, however, will mean a break with that authority which sets itself in the place of God. Along this line the Decree calls for a training which will instill love and honor for the Virgin Mary and that will bind the seminarians "to Christ's Vicar with humble and filial love." One looks in vain for a statement setting forth the chief content of theological education namely, the doctrine of the justification of the sinner before God without the merit and works of man. When the study of other religions is proposed it is made abundantly clear that only the Catholic Church is capable of giving the full light of the truth.

Certainly the Decree does contain statements and proposals that are worth passing along and which may even serve to stimulate us in our studies on seminary training. For instance, the need for encouraging young men to prepare for the ministry is expressed in these words: "Teach-

ers and all others, especially Catholic Associations, who in any capacity provide for the training of boys and young men should strive so to develop those entrusted to them that these young people will be able to recognize a divine calling and willingly answer it. To the greatest possible extent every priest should manifest the zeal of an apostle in fostering vocations. Let him attract the hearts of young people to the priesthood by his own humble and energetic life, joyfully pursued, and by love for his fellow priests and brotherly collaboration with them." Par. 2. Regarding the teachers in the seminary we have this statement: "Since the training of seminarians hinges, to a very large extent, on wise regulations and on suitable teachers, seminary directors and professors should be chosen from among the best and be painstakingly prepared by solid doctrine, appropriate pastoral experience, and special spiritual and pedagogical training." Par. 5. Concerning seminarians: "Depending on the age of each seminarian and his state of progress, careful inquiry should be made concerning the rightness of his intention and the freedom of his choice, his spiritual, moral, and intellectual fitness, the suitability of his bodily and mental health, and any tendencies he might have inherited from his family. His ability to bear priestly burdens and exercise pastoral duties must also be weighed. In all selection and testing of seminarians, necessary standards must always be firmly maintained, even when there exists a regrettable shortage of priests. For God will not allow His Church to lack ministers if worthy candidates are admitted while unsuited ones are speedily and paternally directed towards the assuming of other tasks and are encouraged to take up the lay apostolate readily, in a consciousness of their Christian vocation." Par. 6.

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