



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

I Timothy 4:15

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THE ELECT OF GOD (Part II)

The Lutheran Church has been so busy maintaining the formal purity of this doctrine that its general edifying use for the believer in every day life is often forgotten. This makes it appear that predestination is a doctrine maintained simply for the sake of maintaining a doctrine because it is in Scripture. The great bulk of writing on the subject is quite technical and polemical, dealing with the various errors that have arisen. Pastors and laymen alike hesitate to discuss it in depth. Here Lenski, although holding erroneous views himself on this matter, is undoubtedly correct, "Predestination, sadly misconceived, has caused much trouble in the Church. Because it was thought to involve many profundities, men have submerged themselves in self-made gulfs of darkness, losing or almost losing the clear and precious Gospel. The turmoil has made many preachers fight shy of the whole subject as being one quite beyond them. Avoid the turmoil, accept the subject in the simplicity which Paul presents it. . . Here is nothing to entangle us; here is a sermon that ought to be preached often."31 In making general congregational use of this truth, in preaching and teaching it, the controversial material connected with it should be ignored or kept to a minimum. Present, rather, the simple biblical statements pertaining to it, all of which are clear enough to be understood by a child of God. Then there is some hope that one will arrive at that very vital point which is so often overlooked, the salutary purpose for which God revealed this doctrine.

To get at this we consider the context of some of the passages where it is mentioned. In Romans Paul has been speaking of the "sufferings of this present time;" "the

whole creation groaneth;" "we ourselves groan within ourselves;" "the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities." In this context of affliction he brings in election, "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." Then follows the triumphant passage, "If God be for us, who can be against us? . . . Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? . . . Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus."³² In 2 Timothy Paul speaks of himself as a prisoner, "a partaker of the afflictions of the Gospel;" "I also suffer these things;" "I am now ready to be offered." Again, in this connotation of tribulation he speaks of election, "God hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." And again follows the triumphant note, "I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."³³ Peter brings in election in writing to those who are "in heaviness through manifold temptations," whose faith is being tried, reminding them that they are "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed at the last time, . . . wherein ye greatly rejoice."³⁴

From this it is evident that the doctrine of election is revealed to comfort and assure a believer during the trials, tribulations, and sufferings of this present life. Surely every child of God wants to speak in such a positive, confident manner as does Paul regarding his own salvation, "I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him." The assurance that our eternal welfare from beginning to end is safely in the hands of God does impart comfort and strength while we yet abide in the flesh. This the doctrine of elec-

tion can give. And so do our Confessions state, "Thus far is the mystery of predestination revealed to us in God's Word, and if we abide thereby and cleave thereto, it is a very useful, salutary and consolatory doctrine."³⁵

All this can be destroyed or undermined if we seek to gain this assurance and comfort by prying into the secret counsel of God. "It is foolish and dangerous, leading either to carnal security or despair."³⁶ It could drive us into grave doubts and fearful terror. Luther writes to a friend disturbed by God's predestination in this way, "Now to be sure, this is a sore tribulation, but to overcome it one must know that we are forbidden to understand this or speculate about it. For what God wants to conceal we should be glad not to know. This is the apple the eating of which brought death upon Adam and Eve and upon all their children, when they wanted to know what they were not to know. For as it is sin to commit murder, to steal, to curse, so it is also sin to busy oneself searching such things. As an antidote to this, God has given us His Son, Jesus Christ. Of Him we must daily think, in Him we must consider ourselves. Then predestination will appear lovely. For outside of Christ, everything is only danger, death and the devil. In Him, however, is nothing but peace and joy. For if one forever torments himself with predestination, all one gains is anguish of soul. Hence, flee and avoid such thoughts as the affliction of the serpent in Paradise, and instead, look upon Christ. God preserve you."³⁷

In this the proper approach to all doctrine is laid out. God the Father says, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear ye Him."³⁸ The Son says, "All things are delivered up to me of my Father; and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whosoever the Son will reveal him."³⁹ He also says, "I am the door; by me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved."⁴⁰ In Christ all Scripture must be understood. Philip was told just that when he asked, "Shew us the Father," "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."⁴¹

On this Luther has more to say. In speaking of the

letter to the Romans he writes, "But follow this epistle in its order, first concern yourself with Christ, and the Gospel to know your sin and His grace, afterwards to fight with sin, etc. After this, when you have come to the eighth chapter, under the cross and suffering, this will rightly teach you predestination, how comforting it is."⁴²

Again, "In the disputation concerning predestination it is profitable and best to begin at the bottom, Christ. Then we shall find and hear the Father; for all that began at the top have broken their neck." "He has laid a foundation for us on which we are to rely, Jesus Christ, and through Him we climb into heaven. He alone is the door and the way to the Father. However, we in the devil's name want to begin building on the roof, despising the foundation. Wherefore, we also fall."⁴³

On the same point J. Buenger says, "There is only one way to make our calling and election sure, and that way is Christ. He is the door to heaven, yes, the ladder placed on earth reaching into heaven on which we are to ascend. But we must begin at the bottom and proceed step by step, and then, in due time, we shall become sure of our election and finally reach our goal in heaven."⁴⁴

Our Confessions agree, "Therefore, if we wish to think and speak correctly and profitable concerning election, or the predestination and ordination of the children of God to eternal life, we should accustom ourselves not to speculate concerning the bare, secret, concealed, inscrutable foreknowledge of God, but how the counsel, purpose, and ordination of God in Christ Jesus, who is the true Book of Life, is revealed to us through the Word, namely, that the entire doctrine concerning the purpose, counsel, will and ordination of God pertaining to our redemption, call, justification and salvation, should be taken together."⁴⁵

Thus C. H. Little correctly says, "Predestination is never to be given the central place in the Christian system. It is to be treated as Paul shows in Romans, only after the exposition of the fundamental doctrines of sin and grace, and of calling, justification and sanctification. This order follows also from the fact that it pertains only to believers and is their appointment by God to eternal life."⁴⁶

J. P. Meyer in his lecture notes on dogmatics considers it under "Preservation." In our catechetical instruction it would come under the words, "kept me in the true faith," "keeps it (the Church) with Jesus Christ in the one true faith."⁴⁷

With this way of approach every Christian can become absolutely sure of this great fact in his salvation. He can say to himself, to quote Little, "God's Words and Promises are true. They have come to me; and I know that they are earnestly and seriously meant. If God had not desired my salvation, He would not have redeemed me; He would not have given me the Means of Grace, or called me by the Gospel; He would not have received me into His covenant or given me assurance of adoption as His child in Holy Baptism; He would not have bestowed faith upon me or regenerated me; He would not have sanctified me by His Holy Spirit through the Word; He would not now be continuing the good work which He has begun in me by keeping me in steadfast faith in Jesus Christ, my Lord; He would not have assured me of the forgiveness of all my sins in the Absolution and in the Holy Supper, which I have so often received to my soul's comfort; He would not now be sustaining me with hope of final salvation and glory that I now enjoy. All these things are evidences of His good and gracious will to me and give me positive assurance that I am among those who are 'the called according to his purpose.' Therefore I must consider myself among the number of His elect."⁴⁸

Having such an assurance that we are included among elect, what abiding comfort and glorious hope is ours. It is well said in our Confessions, "Thus this doctrine affords also the excellent, glorious consolation that God was so greatly concerned about the conversion, righteousness, and salvation of every Christian, and so faithfully provided therefor, that before the foundation of the world was laid, He deliberated concerning it, and in His purpose ordained how He would bring me thereto and preserve me therein. Also, that He wished to secure my salvation so well and certainly, since through weakness and wickedness of our flesh it could easily be lost from our hands, or through

craft and might of the devil and the world, be snatched from us, He ordained it in His eternal purpose, which cannot fail or be overthrown, and placed it for preservation in the almighty hand of our Savior Jesus Christ, from which no one can pluck me. ". . . "Moreover, this doctrine affords glorious consolation under the cross and amid temptations, namely, that God in His counsel, before the time of the world, determined and decreed that He would assist us in all distresses, anxieties, and perplexities, grant patience under the cross, give consolation, excite, nourish, and encourage hope, and produce such an outcome as would contribute to our salvation. Also as Paul in a very consolatory way treats of this, Romans 8, that God in His purpose, had ordained before the time of the world by what crosses and sufferings He would conform every one of His elect to the image of His Son, and that to every one His cross shall and must work together for good. "49

In like manner J. Buenger writes, "This assurance, that his salvation does not lie in his own weak hands, where it might easily be lost, but in the strong hands of our God and Savior, out of which no one can snatch it, will strengthen the believer's faith, will fill him with confidence, with love, with gratitude toward God. The knowledge that God leads His children to eternal life in a certain order will be a powerful incentive to him to walk circumspectly, to avoid sin and everything which is opposed to the order of salvation. He will more faithfully use the means of salvation, Word and Sacrament, and be instant in prayer. In the dark hours of tribulation, of sorrow and distress, this doctrine gives to a Christian the sweet comfort that God has known and ordained from eternity all these things which now trouble him and that therefore nothing can happen to him which will not, according to God's eternal counsel, turn out for his own good. And this first confidence, this implicit trust in God's eternal faithfulness, will never deceive a Christian. For it is the confidence of faith, created in his heart by the Holy Spirit through the word of truth. "50

With all this to be found and gained in this great truth of Scripture we understand better and do well to heed the words of Peter, "Wherefore, brethren, give diligence to

make your calling and election sure: (sure to yourself; there is nothing doubtful about it as far as God is concerned, GS) for if ye do these things ye shall never fail: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. "51

The strengthening and comforting benefits of this truth extend beyond the individual to the entire Christian Church. Because the final salvation and glory of the individual believer is eternally assured, it follows that the final triumph in glory of all believers, the communion of saints, is also assured. So say our Confessions, "This article affords glorious testimony that the Church of God will exist and abide in opposition to all gates of hell, and likewise teaches which is the true Church of God, lest we be offended by the great authority and majestic appearance of the false church. "52

The New Testament offers ample testimony that the apostles used this doctrine in this connection also. "As many as were ordained to eternal life believed. "53 "And the Lord added to the church such as should be saved. "54 "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. "55 "Because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief in the truth. "56 It is worth considering how much they viewed themselves, their work and the congregations they founded as something resulting from God's eternal purpose and choosing. We would profit much by adopting a like concept in our church work today. By so doing we here too would provide ourselves with much needed steadiness and confidence.

Certainly there is much in the trend of things in our church today which brings discomfort to Christians, pastor and laymen alike. When we are told that in our work so much depends on the personality of the pastor and his manner "of winning friends and influencing people;" when all manner of organizations to attract and hold the people are deemed necessary to insure the success of a congrega-

tion; when it is considered mission work to make use of and join various worldly groups with the idea that this makes for a "dynamic" influence of the church on the community; when pastors and congregations willingly add the pious touch to secular functions of state and society for the purpose of influencing the community for better; when the titles and secular recognition are sought for building status and prestige before the world; when it is sought to make the voting power of the church a factor to be reckoned with in politics; when activism is considered a sign of spiritual life; when social and spiritual fellowship are hopelessly confused; when Christian love means nothing more than common courtesy; when objections raised against liberalism are brushed aside as reflecting a negative attitude; when pastors outdo each other in introducing innovations to prove that they "dare to accept the challenge of the new day;" when such things keep piling up before us, doubts, misgivings, apprehensions arise concerning ourselves and our church.

As we go about our work, quietly, in all simplicity as becometh the Gospel, trying to hide our personal selves behind the message we bring, seeking with all the might of our sin-weakened beings to build the Church with nothing other than the Gospel, desiring only to make our congregations a group of those who are gathered about the Means of Grace for the one and only reason that they love the Means of Grace; when so we labor, not caring whether the world admires us or not, neither provoking it nor desiring its acclaim, we are tempted to ask: Are we wrong? Have we misunderstood God's Word? Are we neglecting mission opportunities? Are we failing the Lord? The pressure is great. The appeal of human props are so enticing that we might be inclined to doubt ourselves and our way of doing things. Here it is certainly comforting to know that all is well, none of the chosen are being lost, the souls that are to be saved are being saved because of God's eternal choosing, and His will is being carried out according to the order of salvation which He himself has ordained, through the Gospel ministry which He has established and chosen to

use and in the manner He has prescribed for its use. This is not said to make us lazy and indolent in our work, ever thinking that we are profitable servants, or that it makes no difference how our work for Christ is done. We know what the Lord would have us do and that He requires faithfulness and zeal. This is said in order that a conscientious pastor and Christian might have some rest for a troubled soul, some measure of happiness here on earth. As one beholds the great bulk of humanity going steadily down to eternal perdition and knows that one has the means to save, but sees great efforts bring so little response, one is inclined to accuse himself, to question his usefulness as a messenger of the Gospel. And on the other hand, one is tempted to turn to those means of building an outward congregation which, from the human side, admittedly are much more successful and satisfying to the result-loving flesh. In the face of all this, there is consolation in knowing that according to the election of grace, the salvation of every individual member of the Kingdom of God is eternally assured and is being accomplished.

In a larger sphere, when we hear learned men, Lutherans at that, who insist that we must close our ranks and unite into larger groups, into stronger forces in order that we may fare better and present a stronger front to the organized menace of materialism, modernism, and atheism, we wonder whereby comes such a vast accumulation of ignorance in things spiritual. Do they not believe that our weapons are not carnal? Have they not heard that with might of ours can nought be done? Although we foster and enjoy a wider fellowship in synodical life, it is not the number of men or dollars we gather together which makes us strong and in which we put our trust; but rather that "for us fights the Valiant One whom God himself elected," the Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. That is the only front we seek, that is the only one in which we have confidence.

Make no mistake: those who live in the spirit know very well that the days are evil. For us to ignore this and underestimate the forces against whom we wrestle is sheer

stupidity. When we consider the array of enemies the devil has lined up against us, our hearts are inclined to fail us for fear. We are not thinking only of the common sinfulness of mankind and general unbelief, but of sin and unbelief in its organized form as found among us--the great worldly power of the Antichrist and his followers; the spreading influence of deism and natural religion as exercised not only in the lodges and other such organizations, but also by the state itself; the menace of open, vicious ungodliness whose law is brute force, as found in reactionary youth groups and in racial unrest; the rising spectre of state interference in religious matters, leading toward religious intolerance, instigated by well-meaning but spiritually blind advocates of the social gospel. These go beyond the constant conflict we must wage in upholding sound doctrine and are a threat to the freedom we now enjoy and portend actual physical attack and persecution. Truly there is much cause for uneasiness and apprehension. Surely we want and need real strength and encouragement.

The source of such strength is not to be found among things human, in ourselves or in anything we put together. What promise does the Lord ever give us because we are great in numbers of men and dollars? To bolster our confidence with self-stated comments on our own greatness is pure vanity and the height of folly. To seek to avoid the offense of the cross by compromising with the world is an insult to our Lord and endangers our faith. To wink at false doctrine sows the seeds of our own destruction.

Would we be strong and courageous in this'evil day, let us look away from ourselves to the words and promises of God. The man in Psalm 1 shows us the way; "his delight is in the law of the Lord and in that law does he meditate day and night." What does it say of Him? "He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season, his leaf also shall not wither and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." Who among us would not say: That's the kind of man I want to be?

When I consider myself I despair; when I consider my congregation, and my synod, I am not greatly encouraged;

when I consider the Lutheran church in our country and the cause of Christianity in the world, I have no glowing hopes. But when I consider the words and promises of God, when I keep before my spiritual vision a truth such as the doctrine of election, when I drink deeply at such a well of living water, bringing before my earthly eyes the broad scope of God's plans from eternity to eternity, then I am comforted, then my heart lifts up, then strength flows into the weak body of this flesh, then I become strong in the Lord and the power of his might, then I become bold and full of good cheer, then I laugh at those who set themselves against the Lord and His anointed and hold them in derision. Then without doubt, without hesitation, with utmost confidence I gladly go forth and sound the call to the battle of the Lord. How can any of us do otherwise when we know full well that we are not engaged in a lost cause or in a struggle in which the issue is in any way in doubt? The Kingdom of God is sweeping onward, steadily, surely, mightily, to its final consummation in glory. The victory is already ours, assured and sealed unto us. The church militant is ever the church triumphant because in all eternity God has chosen it to be so.

Footnotes:

31. Lenski, Romans, p. 565ff
32. Romans, chapter 8
33. 2 Timothy, chapter 1
34. 1 Peter, chapter 1
35. Triglotta, Formula of Concord, p. 1077
36. Quartalschrift, 1942, p. 293
37. Triglotta, Introduction, p. 223
38. Matthew 17, 5
39. Matthew 11, 27
40. John 10, 9
41. John 14, 8-9
42. Confessional Lutheran, Nov. 1943
43. Confessional Lutheran, Nov. 1943

44. Confessional Lutheran, Nov. 1943
45. Triglotta, Formula of Concord, p. 1067
46. C. H. Little, Disputed Doctrines, p. 14
47. Small Catechism, Third Article
48. C. H. Little, Disputed Doctrines, p. 13
49. Triglotta, Formula of Concord, p. 1079
50. Confessional Lutheran, Dec. 1943
51. 2 Peter 1, 10-11
52. Triglotta, Formula of Concord, p. 1079
53. Acts 13, 48
54. Acts 2, 47
55. 2 Timothy 2, 19
56. 2 Thessalonians 2, 13

G. Sydow

THE PROBLEM OF CHOICE (continued)

The final paragraph of our previous installment raised the question whether faith is perhaps a cause of our justification, whether the latter is therefore to be looked at as a result of our faith. This led to a study of the various translations of that key phrase in verse 17, EK PISTEOS EIS PISTIN, out of faith unto faith. Our conclusion was that since this righteousness was revealed, man's faith cannot have been its cause, but that our justification had already been made an accomplished fact. For the detail of the argument see the October issue, page 17. But as we prepare to review the different translations we realize that the difficulty does not lie in the original text. Scripture itself provides the key, as we have seen above. Let that be used, and the full glory of the Gospel is spread out before us.

Seen in this light, both AV and RSV are adequate, also ASV and Beck. But Phillips has let his imagination supply a measure of detail which crowds God into the background.

He sees in the Gospel "God's plan for imparting righteousness to men, a process begun and continued by their faith." That would indeed be rather a far cry from the sola gratia. NEB is not much better: "God's way of righting wrong, a way that starts from faith and ends in faith." According to ABS, however, "the Gospel reveals how God puts men right with Himself: It is through faith alone, from beginning to end." The last phrase is very good, but what comes before throws the entire picture out of focus. God has not merely supplied a diagram of his method, showing us how He does it, still leaving man in doubt as to whether he fits into the picture. His Gospel tells us that He has done it, done it all. God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them."

Here a bit of history in connection with Romans 3:30 may illustrate what can happen in the process of translation. But first let the context speak. The broad thesis came in v. 20: "by the deeds of the Law shall no flesh be justified in His sight." Yet there is a righteousness without Law (v. 21), granted freely by grace (v. 24), with all boasting excluded by the law (the principle) of faith. Hence the massive conclusion of v. 28: "justified by faith, without works of the Law." Then, lest there be any thought of preference (v. 29) the emphatic statement of our verse 30, that God is ONE, who justifies the circumcision out of faith and the uncircumcision through faith -- FAITH in either case! Here the double line of thought converges into a single sharply defined point. The two phrases that mark the approach are still there, each with its particular preposition, each with its special implication. But the primary emphasis certainly belongs to faith. It is important, therefore, that the translations preserve this unity of thought, that they do not let the use of two different prepositions change the fact that they actually say the same thing. For the Jews who sought their justification out of the Law, the Apostle says that it is out of faith, EK PISTEOS. Concerning the Gentiles who had no such revealed law he says DIA TES PISTEOS, through (or by) that same

faith. The prepositions differ, each being appropriate to its particular situation. But the way is the same in either case, FAITH. This parity dare not be disturbed.

The RSV translators saw this and carefully equated the two phrases in their first edition, 1946. But they fell into the error of treating faith as the basic cause of this righteousness of God. They said: "God is one; and he will justify the circumcised on the ground of their faith and the uncircumcised because of their faith." In either case that made faith the cause of justification. But critics soon pointed out an obvious error in the second case. For DIA means "because" only when it is construed with the accusative. But here stood a genitive, where DIA means "through" or "by." So later printings made the following correction: "God is one; and he will justify the circumcised on the ground of their faith and the uncircumcised through their faith." But what they failed to recognize is that thus the parallelism of the two phrases was destroyed. The error that has been removed from the second part has been retained in the first. Thus the Apostle is pictured as saying that God has two ways, one for Jews, the other for the Gentiles -- which is, of course, the very opposite of what he has just demonstrated so clearly.

It is perhaps well if in this connection another portion of Scripture be studied, one which deals with the closely related subject of the reconciliation of sinners to God. The passage is II Corinthians 5:17-21. It is given here in its entirety, for the sake of convenient reference, according to the Authorized Version:

17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold all things are become new.

18 And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;

19 To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

20 Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

21 For he hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

These are precious words, giving us blessed assurance of that priceless peace of which the angels sang to the shepherds at Bethlehem. Here particularly we want to scrutinize the translation with greatest care, lest any vital part of this wonderful passage be obscured or perhaps even obliterated. For the passage constitutes a closely knit unit. To weaken a single part of it is to risk the loss of the whole. With these thoughts in mind let us address ourselves to a quick review of the various versions.

Verse 18 traces all this to God (the *sola gratia*), mentions His act of reconciliation and describes our ministry as one of reconciliation, and then goes on in verse 19 to define the nature of this act as a total change: once hopelessly guilty, now acquitted, righteous before God. The text indicates the universal scope of this procedure ("reconciling the world") as well as the manner in which this was done ("not imputing their trespasses unto them," -- sins forgiven). Above all, it pictures this great event as an accomplished fact: "God was in Christ, reconciling," thus adding depth and definition to the dying Savior's "It is finished." While most versions present a fair picture of this act of God (thus again attesting the strength of the underlying text), a few exceptions must be noted. It is regrettable that the Bible Society version (ABS) has chosen to transfer the objective relationship of sin-and-guilt-as-opposed-to-a-due-and-valid-acquittal into the subjective pattern of "enemies" and "friends", saying that God through Christ "changed us from enemies into his friends and gave us (!) the task of making others his friends also." But it is more regrettable that Beck has followed this lead. He says: "God has done it all, When we were His enemies, through Christ He made us His friends and gave us the work of making friends of enemies. In Christ God was

getting rid of the enmity between Himself and the people of the world by not counting their sins against them, and He has put into our hands the message how God and men are made friends again. Since God is pleading through us, we are ambassadors for Christ. We ask you for Christ, 'Come and be God's friends'. " This passage is quoted at such length in order to be fair to Beck, who actually wavers between the position taken by Franz Pieper in his *Christian Dogmatics* (*Christliche Dogmatik*, II, P. 411; Engl Ed. II, p. 348) and the attack launched against it by Lenski (e. g. *Romans*, p. 351f). In some parts of the above the Missouri position appears to prevail. But then come the passages that, at least in the opinion of this writer, seem to echo the very words of Lenski or at least lend strong support to his views.

Just a few lines on the paraphrases. Phillips is excellent on verses 18 and 19 ("All this is God's doing ..." etc). Taylor is much less textual and accordingly gives greater freedom to his flights of fancy. This is his version of these same two verses: "All these new things are from God who brought us back to Himself through what Christ Jesus did. And God has given us the privilege of urging everyone to come into His favor and be reconciled to Him. For God was in Christ, restoring the world to Himself, no longer counting men's sins against them but blotting them out. This is the wonderful message He has given us to tell others." Taylor's intentions are obviously good. But a careful check will reveal the additions (which are always dangerous) as well as the alterations (e. g. "restoring" -- the original has "changing").

What we have in the remaining verses is very specific. Verse 20 defines the role ("ambassadors") of everyone who stands in this ministry of reconciliation. It describes the manner ("we plead") and states the content of our message: "be ye reconciled (changed) unto God." Here particularly any arbitrary alterations are very much out of order, if not positively dangerous. The same is true of verse 21 which reveals the massively secure foundation on which this entire presentation rests, nothing less than the

marvelously perfect redemptive work of Christ, who knew no sin and yet was made sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. Here we are indeed standing on holy ground! While most translators show a reverence that is appropriate to the setting, some liberties are still being taken. Once more the ABS translator brings in the subjective element of which we spoke above ("from enemies to friends") and then goes on to say that God made Christ "share our sin in order that we, in union with him, might share the righteousness of God." -- After all, did Christ not take all our sin upon Himself, in order that we might be made (become, not "share") that perfection which the Apostle calls "the righteousness of God"? Phillips also lays himself open to criticism when he transfers the message of the ambassadors from the passive ("be ye reconciled" -- that is, accept in simple faith the glorious fact that you are reconciled) into the active ("Make your peace with God"). Coming after Phillip's beautiful version at the beginning of verse 18 ("All this is God's doing") are we now suddenly to conclude that man has after all somehow become a contributor to the bringing about of this reconciliation? And the same translator certainly does not improve the final verse when he ends it with our being "made good with the goodness of God." After all, the perfect righteousness of Christ is far more than what we usually mean when we speak of "goodness."

It is our intention, God willing, to continue this investigation in other sensitive areas of doctrine as time and space permit. Comment by our readers, including suggestions, will be welcome.

E. Reim



== PREACHING THE WORD ==

FOR NEW YEAR'S DAY.

The Text: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen." II Corinthians 13:14.

While the world's roisterers and carousers sleep their way into the new year on this morning, many sober people are busy sorting over a supply of New Year's resolutions, promises and wishes to find something worthwhile. The best of the lot are no doubt to be found among the wishes. Resolutions are no better than the people who make them; and if they need new resolutions, it is not likely that they will be very effective. Promises made to ourselves, or by others to us, do not have a very good record either. The trail behind us is littered with broken covenants and unkept assurances. But wishes well, at least when men wish us well, they are admitting that the fulfillment does not depend upon them, but upon a higher power. Wishes point our hopes to something greater than ourselves.

Yet even the wishes should be screened very carefully; and not only because some of them would burden us with things that we do not want to have. Well-meaning but misguided people are, perhaps, wishing things for us today that we would not accept at any price, such as a return to a false fellowship and to a sinful peace, or riches unjustly gotten, and the like. But we would screen New Year's wishes also because there are so few of them that offer us anything new. Most of the things desired for us we either already have or do not have because the Lord has taught us not to desire them. Yet there are things that we do need desperately for our life in this new year. We look for someone who will effectively wish us these gifts; and we

have found him. It is the Apostle Paul. The words in which he addresses us this morning are very familiar to us. They form the so-called Apostolic Benediction, the New Testament parallel to the blessing of Aaron. Though it is frequently pronounced upon us in our public worship, it yet offers us something new and very precious. Let us receive and examine

THE APOSTOLIC NEW YEAR'S WISH.

It offers:

- I. Not a doubtful hope of a new prospect
- II. But a wish for continued companionship with old treasures.

I.

Do we find it difficult to discover in this blessing anything new? We have already said that we would want to sort over all New Year's wishes because most of them merely speak of what we have long possessed, and we are looking for something new. But we surely will not understand the Apostle to be expressing one of those doubtful human wishes for a new prospect, as when we would say to someone: I hope that in the new year at last all that you have needed will be supplied; or: That your dreams will finally come true. No; Paul speaks of old friends.

The grace of Jesus, the love of the Heavenly Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost are the very first real riches which the Triune God confers upon men. Without them we would, in truth, not even have desired to awaken to the new year. The grace of the Lord Jesus is nothing other than that undeserved kindness which moved our Savior to descend to us and redeem our race from its sins. Why was He named "Jesus?" Why was He made like unto us, as the Gospel of Christmas again proclaimed? His gracious pity toward all mankind in its desperate need moved Him.

"Grace first contrived the way
 To save rebellious man,
 And all the steps that grace display,
 Which drew the wondrous plan."

To wish any human being the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ can only mean to hold out to him a gift already promised or possessed, or both. Likewise the love of God. For did not the Father in heaven so love the world that He gave His only-begotten Son? This is no more than the common, age-old truth of the Gospel and hardly to be offered as a new thing to be hoped for the new year. As for the communion, or fellowship, of the Holy Ghost as far and as widely as the Gospel is preached, the Spirit of God knocks at the door of hearts everywhere seeking admittance and permanent lodging with His peace and joy.

If we on our part were still in ignorance of these treasures - if we were heathen and dwellers in darkness, then of course Paul's wish would come to us as an offer of priceless possessions unknown and unappraised. For they are always new in that sense to those who do not as yet enjoy them. Yet we are God's children by faith in Christ Jesus. What then could Paul be wishing us? That the love of God be shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us? Ah, all this we have. Grace and love and fellowship have carried us through the old year. They were our strength and assurance in the evil day, our comfort in the night watches, the answer in our trials and temptations. How often did we not say to ourselves, while looking at people erring and straying: There, but for the grace of God, go we? And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit through Word and Sacrament has been the strong tie holding us to our God and to one another.

Thus these things are not new for us. And we can tell this, in fact, simply by noting the order in which the gifts are mentioned. If the Apostle were addressing those who have never learned to glory in the possession of the heart of God, he would not speak as he does. He would not begin with the grace of the Lord Jesus, but with the love of the Father. For that comes first in human experience.

Before men can truly know Christ, they must have seen in Him God's love; for "in this was manifested the love of God, that God sent His only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him." It is only to experienced hearts that Paul can speak of the grace of Christ first and without further detail, as to such who are familiar with the meaning and power of the Gospel.

Is the Apostle's wish, then, a mere repetition, a polite, appropriate phrase? Can it be properly called a New Year's wish at all? Truly it can. For what it holds out to us is new indeed. Let us carefully weigh the statement. Paul does not say: The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be unto you all; or: . . . be upon you all. He says: ". . . be WITH you all." This clearly implies an outpouring of old treasures for an association with us in a new venture.

II.

The new year is wholly new as far as we are concerned. It holds, locked within itself, the secrets of future pathways yet untrod, of a new set of mornings that will dawn, of new challenges, new dangers and new trials. And as it is written: "Thy mercies are new unto us every morning" so each day of the new year is to bring us a new experience in the companionship of the grace of the Lord Jesus, the love of our Father, and the communion of the Holy Ghost.

The grace of our Savior is an old, tried and true friend to us indeed. It has walked by our side and nestled in our hearts these many years; and we have been through many a desperate situation together. There were moments when sin made our pathways crooked and difficult because the good which we would we did not, but the evil, which we would not, we did. There were times when we would not have wished to face the sudden judgment, but thought of it with fear and trembling. But the grace of Jesus was our beacon and our salvation. It called us back and showed us the way. This old friend will look very new to us, how-

ever, and shine with a kind of virgin splendor when it meets us in the new situations that await us in this year. Just what these will be we cannot predict; but we do know that our sinful weakness and our guilt will make all other helpers fail and comforts flee. This will be especially true if, at last, we must come to the grimmest hour of our life: the walk into the valley of the shadow of death. If then we can look up and find the gracious Savior our companion, His grace will look as bright and shining and new as though we had never seen it before.

The love of God is as commonly spoken of among men today as some familiar household gadget. Nobody seems surprised to be told that God loves him. But all too often that which is meant is a counterfeit, yes, a caricature of the real thing. Only God's children really understand what the divine love is and what it means to them as a companion upon their way. But now this, too, is to be new every day, new in its power and in wisdom. When we must look forward to the events of this year in an age so torn with fears of the morrow, blessed is the man that can truthfully say:

"There's nought that me can sever
 From the great love of God.
 No want, no pain whatever,
 No famine, peril, flood.
 Though thousand foes surround me,
 For slaughter mark Thy sheep,
 They never shall confound me;
 The vict'ry I shall reap."

These two, grace and love, await us as our associates for the future through the communion of the Holy Ghost. Fellowship and friendship with them are established by Him. May we also well understand that companionship is a two-way street, like fellowship. It takes two to make a company. And if the apostolic wish is to find its full purpose in the days that remain to us, it will also seek to bring this about that we, on our part, live and walk as companions of the grace of our Lord and the love of our God; that we do not despise, forsake or downgrade them to

the status of a fellowship of convenience; that we honor them and do not respond to their embrace with love of the world; that we do not corrupt our communion with the Spirit by false fellowship with the works of darkness. May we, rather, be "followers of God as dear children, and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us." It will be a rewarding and fulfilling journey.

FOR A PASTORAL CONFERENCE
COMMUNION SERVICE.*

The Text: Exodus 3:1-10.

Pulpit Prayer

"Our tongues were fashioned for Thy Word,
Our hands, to do Thy will divine;
Our bodies are Thy temple, Lord,
The mind's immortal powers are Thine.

Give grace and mercy to the end -
For we are Thine and not our own;
So shall we to Thy courts ascend
And cast our crowns before Thy throne.

A flame of fire on the slopes of Mt. Horeb reached with its flickering fingers toward the sky, and an aged shepherd turned away from his flock to take a look. After that he never again looked at anything in the same way.

This shepherd was Moses. He was eighty years old and prepared to die; but after he saw the fire, he began really to live. Once he had been a prince in the royal

* Reproduced here by request of the Wisconsin Pastoral Conference, CLC.

household of Pharaoh and a general in the Egyptian army; and he thought he was somebody. But because he chose to follow a course of action not sanctioned by his God, his whole life fell apart when he was forty. After that he walked alone with his sheep, seemingly a forgotten man in the wilderness. In him we see the measure of man's life. Let not the apparent importance of some deceive you. Until a man has stood before the fire on Horeb as Moses did, nothing is so empty, so devoid of real significance, as his life. Almost all that we know about the man Moses happened after he faced the burning bush. He never did a more fruitful thing than to leave his sheep for a few minutes to go to a fire.

Let me invite you, my brethren, to re-live that experience. However busy we may be, tending our sheep and feeding our lambs, it is well worth the interruption if we cease our activity for a moment to examine the burning bush. A pastor should dismiss his flock, a farmer ought leave his harvest or a carpenter lay aside his saw to stand humbly and in awe before that flame,

THE ASTONISHING FIRE ON HOREB.

I.

When Moses examined the burning bush, he found that he stood in the presence of God. It must have been a terrifying moment; and when we are told that he hid his face because he was afraid to look upon God, we know that such simple words may not truly describe the sense of panic which must have gripped the aged shepherd's heart. A brush fire in the wilderness can be a fearsome thing to face; but not as fearsome as a single bush where heaven touched the earth and the feet of the Most High stood upon the ground. Nor did it help Moses to hear that God was no stranger, that He bore an old, familiar name: "The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob;" for Moses could hardly take comfort from that if he were aware of the fact that he had

proved himself to be no such man of faith as his forefathers had been. Great were Moses' sins of unbelief and unfaithfulness. And the Lord did not let him forget it. Out of the crackling flames came the order not to draw near, but to take off his shoes. Even where Moses stood the ground was holy; how much more, then, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob within the flame! We like to believe that in such a moment Moses was seized by the question which Isaiah later asked aloud: "Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" (33:14). For our God is as a consuming fire. Had He descended to the desert to turn an apostate Moses into ashes?

If that were the Lord's design, He might well have waited. For Moses was eighty, and the reaper of men could have been trusted to see to it that this man would soon stand before Holy God and be taken by the fire which awaits sinners and cannot be quenched. Many people will see God in the flame of His holy wrath in the hour of their judgment. With such a terror in prospect we would not propose that we investigate the burning bush with Moses, but rather urge all men to stay away as long as possible and to live while they may, however dull and uninviting life may be; for "it is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

But what was it that caused Moses to turn aside with such interest? He later explained: "... behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed." Behind the wall of flame an incredible thing was happening. The powder-dry thorns remained unseared by the fire. A consuming heat did not consume the most worthless weed which even the sheep refused to eat. There was something in the fire which kept the plant alive. It was thus that Moses learned to know his Lord. He was the God who could speak to sinners; a God who could keep Moses alive though he stood in the light of His Presence. And the glorious secret of it all came out in the words that God spoke of Israel. Moses knew Israel very well; for he was

of those people. He knew from experience of their carnal unworthiness, their heathen-mindedness. And he well understood that God knew it too, even as He knew Moses. How like the thornbush was the old shepherd himself - dry, leathery not of body only, but of soul, afflicted with spiritual sclerosis. Yet out of the flame came divine words which spoke nought but pity and love. Here was mercy, and it tempered the flame. Here was "the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin." (Ex. 34:6-7).

What pains the Lord has taken to let US see Him thus! We stand in the presence of the burning bush each day; but for this very reason it is imperative that we resolutely and purposefully remove the professional veil of our sacred office from before our eyes and, as the sinful creatures we are, LOOK at the view to which we guide other sojourners in this desert. For what is the image of the Holy God which is displayed to us? Is it not the same as that of the Angel of the Lord, that Redeemer-person who so often appeared in Old Testament history and has since been manifested as the beloved Son of God? A flaming torch He became as He was tormented by the divine wrath against our sins, which He bore in His own body on the Tree. Yet He, the pure and holy One, was not consumed. From death He came forth to live among us, a fire that does not consume us, but heals by His touch the wretched wounds and ugly miseries of our sinful lives. By His touch we have become bushes that do not shrivel. And we, His called saints and called servants in the ministry of reconciliation, touch Him; for we handle His Word in His Name. Professionally we stand in His presence daily as ministers most unworthy. Shall we, then, not turn aside and look upon Him in our own behalf?

We are truly worth nothing in this world unless we are cleansed in the flame of His love; yes, until we have observed with awe and wonder that WE are the thornbushes in the midst of a fire that should have blackened us long ago, yet does not, did not, and will not. Knowing our deep

affliction, the Savior extends to us His saving pity. He would deal with us in person also in this hour, on this holy ground where He is present to hear our confession, to offer us His absolution, and to satisfy us richly with the miraculous food of His body and blood at His table.

II.

Even in the glorious revelation of the words that displayed the mercy of God, Moses did not lose the sense of his sinfulness. He trembled still, and did not trifle with the wondrous flame. He soon learned that in a destiny charted by the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob he stood on the brink of a great adventure of living and of service; yet this multiplied in him the awareness of his unworthiness and inadequacy. At the same time, he began to undergo the effect of a profound change; and this not only as to his life. It did indeed turn a sharp corner, as he was led onto a new road and along a new path of vast labors for the Lord of Hosts. He became a fearless warrior as well as a magnificent leader. But there was a marked difference in other respects as well. For manifestly Moses came to share the merciful love of God. It burned brightly in his own heart and became the torch of beauty that lighted his career. For though by divine design he became the titular head of the ministry of the Law, his heart was a well-spring of the compassions of the Gospel by his faith in the Gospel promises with which he constantly appealed to God in behalf of sinning Israel, the people for whose sake he was assigned the burdens of the journey to the promised land.

Despite the fact that we stand so safely in the presence of the flame of Horeb, may God keep us from ever losing the sense of peril that our own sins and sinfulness make mandatory. Because we minister to a people of unclean lips and hearts, we shall not forget, pray God, that we are also of them. May we ever be preserved from walking roughshod in our clerical shoes over holy ground. May there be alive in us a profound desire never to sin in

the Presence. Shall we, of all people, hold the miracle of God's mercy cheap, we who are to proclaim it? Or shall we measure in pennies of devotion our commitment to it?

Rather, may we be made over by mercy as we have tasted it, and may it be the mark of our ministry as we pursue its onward course and confront new challenges in our life-giving service. As we, then, freely receive, so shall we freely give; for while we invite, we shall seek for ourselves, turning to the flaming bush in our own behalf so that we may enjoy and bring to others its wholesome fruits.

E. Schaller



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== PANORAMA ==

BOOK REVIEWS

1.

"A CITY SET ON A HILL"

No one really writes history. He only records it. However, there is a philosophy or a science involved in the carrying out of the task. It cannot be performed with complete objectivity because the very selection of material and the order in which it is presented introduces a subjective element which cannot be avoided. If the historian has strong prejudices and is biased in his judgment, this tends to color his view of events. It motivates him in the choice of back-ground material to be used and in the shade of emphasis on the details introduced to develop a theme. It is true that what one calls prejudice, another will call well-grounded conviction; and what this reader calls bias, that reader will call well-substantiated judgment. Be that as it may, it is a fact that a simple rehearsal of events, records, and dates makes for dry-as-dust reading, while the writing of one who evaluates, and lets some of his own personality show through, makes for interesting reading and challenges the reader to weigh and to judge as he moves along from one subject to the other. Perhaps this is what makes Will and Ariel Durant's "Story of Civilization" so eminently readable.

But the perceptive student knows that he had better keep his eyes open and the source material readily available for comparison. The historian who is worth his salt will welcome such activity and feel rewarded if he has served as a spark plug for such research. As true as this is of the recording of secular history (if one can speak of history that is purely secular), so true it is also of the

setting down of events of what is known to us as church history. And he who has the courage to commit the events of church history, ancient and modern, to the printed page knows that he is exposing himself to the appraisal of reviewers, both critical and friendly. He of course has the advantage, because the book will usually be read without the benefit of the critical appraisal of those who take exception. The reviews on the traditional dust-jacket are invariably the commendatory ones. The reviewer's position is then in many ways an unenviable one, since he is not only at a disadvantage but, when he becomes critical, he is inviting reviews of his review. These are the calculated risks one takes when he writes a book as well as when one takes in hand the task of writing a review. In either case one nourishes the hope, surely, that the truth will be served and that men will be moved to exercise an individual judgment that is not tied to the establishment. The present wave of disestablishmentarianism may do some good indeed if it results in the proper exercise of private judgment based on factual and reliable information. When we are dealing with doctrinal matters and such practices as are laid down in Scripture, we of course have but one assignment, and that is to repeat what Scripture has said and let it rest there. It is purely the work of the Holy Ghost to convince and convict, and no human argumentation or debate will bring about the desired results.

With this rather lengthy introduction we are ready to enter upon the review of a recently published book, "A City Set on a Hill", a history of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, authored by Pastor Theodore A. Aaberg. This book is set apart from previously published histories of this church body by the fact that it brings the history up to date and contains well over a hundred pages of history of the controversies which agitated the Synodical Conference and its individual synods and particularly the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS, formerly known as the Norwegian Synod) from the mid-30's into the 60's. While this bulk of material may seem to throw the 115 year history of the Norwegian Synod (including the 64 years of its existence in the

body which was founded in 1853) a bit out of balance, one can understand the desire of providing a documentary record of events which so recently resulted in a separation. Indeed the book is advertised as containing "the first detailed presentation of the controversies which culminated in the withdrawal of the ELS and the Wisconsin Synod from the Synodical Conference, long-time bulwark of conservative Lutheranism." With this emphasis it will perhaps not be out of place if the major part of this review centers upon this portion of the ELS history.

The book contains 56 pages of pictures, presenting men and women laboring in the ministry of the Word, as well as the churches and institutions at the time of writing. This, of course, is something that could only be done in the case of a church body the size of the ELS. While these pages will be of interest chiefly to the present members of the ELS for whom the book was primarily written, it might have been of more historical value if pictures of leading figures of the past, and of churches of another era, had been supplied. A register of all pastors, professors, and teachers who worked in the ELS from 1918-1968 is included in the appendix, as well as letters and documents pertaining to the controversy preceding the merger of 1917 and the controversy which culminated in the withdrawal of the ELS from the Synodical Conference in 1963. Aside from incidental references and quotations the volume of documentary evidence from the Wisconsin Synod side of the controversy is not included in the evaluation.

In general it may be said that the history is interesting and brings a great deal of valuable information. Those who are looking for information regarding the historical rock from which the Norwegian Synod was hewn will be well rewarded. Our former brethren of the Missouri Synod who are contemplating the establishment of fellowship with the American Lutheran Church would be well advised to study this part of ELS history. By so doing they would be made aware of the issues which in 1917 drove a wedge between the corporate body of the 64 year old Norwegian Synod and the Synodical Conference. It cannot be

ignored that a large part of the American Lutheran Church traces its lineage to the merger of 1917 and is committed to the errors which were contained in the merger document (Opj r) in the doctrines of conversion and election. While the author regards it as an act of charity that the Norwegian Synod was ready in 1884 to acknowledge with reservations the second form (the 'intuitu fidei' expression) in the doctrine of election (pp. 46 and 49) provided that the false implications be removed, this reviewer believes that under the circumstances it would have been better if such a concession had not been made. It could well be that this very concession of 1884 served to weaken many when faced in 1917 with a situation where the second form was to be acknowledged without reservations. The use that certain fathers had made of the 'intuitu fidei' expression played too prominent a role in plastering over the real doctrinal differences that existed between the Norwegian Synod and the United Church. The names of Pontoppidan and John Gerhardts came up again and again, and since the expression had been used by them, men were loath to attack it as it appeared in the merger document, even though it appeared there in a different context.

As the history rolls on to more recent times one is moved to stop at various junctures. Thus in connection with a very illuminating presentation of the history of Bethany Lutheran College we find these two sentences: "The Synodical Conference controversy and internal dissension in the ELS after 1956 not only brought about a decided drop in enrollment, resulting in added financial problems, but made the work at Bethany more difficult also in other respects. Largely through the discretion of President Teigen the school avoided the extremism advocated by some within conservative circles, while at the same time it gave no countenance to the unionism and the new theology brought into the Synodical Conference by the Missouri Synod." p. 108. Later this statement is made: "When the Immanuel Congregation in Mankato later withdrew from the Wisconsin Synod and, with former pastors and congregations of the Wisconsin Synod and the ELS, organized the Church of the Luther-

an Confession, the school was buffeted from that side also, eventually losing a significant number of students, especially in the high school and seminary." p. 116. This is the only reference to the CLC we found in the whole history, even though ten of the CLC clergy listed in our register of 1968 were at one time or another affiliated with the ELS.

One can only be filled with a feeling of distress upon reading that due to the raising of educational requirements for teachers and the enrolling of fewer students taking up Christian Day School teaching, and "less interest in the ELS for Christian Day Schools, Bethany has more or less phased out its Educational Department. It now offers prospective Christian Day School teachers the first two years of College, with the remaining two years to be taken at Mankato State College." p. 116.

The extensive section dealing with events leading up to the separations taking place within the synods of the Synodical Conference, and from the Synodical Conference itself, gives one opportunity to review the past struggles occasioned originally by the Missouri Synod's approaches to other unaffiliated Lutheran bodies. It carries one through the agonies of some trying years as memories of the pulling down of precious landmarks press in upon the mind. Certainly Pastor Aaberg has rendered a service in bringing together some of the documents that call for study in a review of this past history. At the risk of being considered only negative, we shall be registering our dissent from some of the author's evaluations. Thus, for instance, we cannot agree that certain instructions given to the Missouri Synod's Committee on Lutheran Union in the 1938 St. Louis Resolutions can be regarded as a redeeming factor: "The only redeeming feature was, that having made concessions in doctrine to the ALC, Missouri took back many of them, at least in a practical way, by the instructions it gave to its committee in the 1938 St. Louis resolutions." p. 143. Once the Missouri Synod had agreed that certain differences in non-fundamental doctrines need not be divisive of church fellowship, it could not redeem itself by

saying that the committee should nevertheless seek to gain agreement in them. And how does one in a "practical way" take back concessions in doctrine which one has made?

The years roll by and finally the ELS resolves on the basis of Rom. 16:17 to suspend relations with the Missouri Synod "and to attend to whatever problems may arise in connection with the work in the Synodical Conference. We realize that in the case of the cooperative schools, Bethesda Home and other institutions of similar nature it will take time to bring about a God-pleasing solution of their problems." p. 286. This resolution was passed at the ELS's peak of strength after its long and wearying years of meeting with the Missouri Synod in an attempt to correct the errors which had found a place in that once stalwart church body. Looking at the resolution from the perspective of hindsight we would now say that much of what followed might have been avoided if the relations with the Synodical Conference had been spelled out. Instead of working toward a Scriptural resolution of the problems involved in the cooperative missions and other church activities which had been carried on with the Missouri Synod, other meetings were scheduled with Missouri, mission work was continued within the framework of the Synodical Conference, worship services at Synodical Conference meetings were participated in, and finally prayer fellowship was engaged in at committee meetings. This was defended as proper so long as it occurred within the framework of the Synodical Conference. One wonders how this squares with what happened later, as recorded on page 237: "The Synodical Conference met in convention November 13-15, 1962, at St. James Lutheran Church, Chicago. The ELS and Wisconsin Synod delegates held their own opening service with holy communion at the ELS St. Paul's Church, 2215 W. North Ave., Chicago. This was in keeping with the 1961 ELS resolution that the Synod's official representatives should not meet in a fellowship framework in Synodical Conference meetings where the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod took part." p. 237. One is moved to ask: "What Scripture moved them to this resolution which did

not apply in 1955 and in the years following when Rom. 16:17 had already been applied?" In a footnote on page 242 it is stated that the Wisconsin Synod memorialized the Synodical Conference in 1962 asking that the Synodical Conference, in keeping with the then present status, should arrange for a period of silent devotions at the beginning and close of each session.

Finally when the ELS had before it in 1959 a minority report which faced the issue with regard to its contradictory position of having suspended fellowship relations with the Missouri Synod and of still practising a fellowship within the framework of the Synodical Conference, this report after a lengthy discussion was tabled, and the majority report which called for a continuation of committee meetings was adopted by a majority of the votes cast. Also a resolution was passed to continue support of the Nigerian mission. As a result a number of pastors at this and a succeeding convention withdrew. That the Synod did not recognize the error of its position was shown at the Jerico convention in 1960 where the following resolution was passed:-- "That we reject any interpretation of our suspension resolutions of 1955 which implies a) that we are at present in church fellowship with the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod; b) that our continued membership in the Synodical Conference under present circumstances is in violation of Romans 16, 17 (Report... ELS Rec. Conv. 1960. p. 33)." p. 218. Pastor Aaberg reports on a Pastoral Conference which was held "in an effort to settle the Synod's internal strife over the question of its continued membership in the Synodical Conference" p. 216-217. Especially significant was one paper entitled "Have We Sinned by Remaining as Members of the Synodical Conference?" Among other things this paper stated: "Granted that there are problems a plenty as the result of our incomplete 'suspension of relations' with Mo. and of the Wisconsin Synod's continuance of fellowship relations while protesting loudly and frankly against various aberrations in the Mo. Synod., those problems are very minor compared with the problems we would face if we were to stand entirely alone, with fra-

ternal relations broken with all other churches. I for my part do not want to put our Synod into the same class as the separatistic 'Lutheran Brethren' or the Pharisaical 'Eiel-sen Synod,' and see it dwindle into a negative sect, with the light of the Gospel only barely visible through the legalistic emphasis on 'separation' as the only way to testify to the truth." p. 218. This looks like a very pragmatic approach to the problem, but certainly does not convince. We do not find that Scripture is brought to bear on the problem in the record given of this Conference by the present history.

This reviewer is baffled by such statements as these: "The sheer weight of numbers alone, therefore, will force the ELS to reexamine its position on church fellowship to see if it is really necessary for so few to walk apart from so many." p. 253. And later: "The fact that the Synod had held to this charge of false doctrine (Ed. the statement in the Declaration: "To this end He also purposes to justify those who have come to faith--") against the Missouri Synod for over two decades did not prevent the ELS Doctrinal Committee in a 1960 review of the '1955 Suspension Resolutions' from seriously questioning, first, whether the ELS had even been correct in declaring the statement to be false doctrine, and second, whether it had been right in repeating the charge in 1955 in view of the ELS resolutions in 1948 in which the Synod had indicated that it was satisfied as to Missouri's confessional position because it had reaffirmed the 'Brief Statement' at its 1947 Convention. The ELS subsequently resolved that its Doctrinal Committee should review all factors in regard to the '1955 Suspension Resolutions' and bring a recommendation to the Synod as to whether these should be 'lifted, retained, or changed.'" p. 259. Does the ELS today question whether it had even been correct in declaring the statement "To this end He purposes to justify those who have come to faith" to be false doctrine? The question is left hanging as far as the record is concerned.

One is moved to ask about the author's source of information when he says: "Several of the pastors who re-

signed from the ELS, charging it with unionism, did not subsequently ask their congregations to make a decision on their synodical membership, nor did they arrange for any program of instruction leading up to a definite decision, but instead continued to serve them as before." p. 257. From our certain knowledge of those men who withdrew from the ELS and joined the CLC it may be said that they did instruct their congregations and were often charged with discussing the controversies too much rather than too little.

We are convinced that the author wants to be fair and impartial and has endeavored to be so. He is frank to admit that the ELS has erred; but this reviewer regrets to say that this confession has been misplaced. Certainly this is true when he confesses ELS guilt in refusing to open the meetings with the National Evangelical Lutheran Church (Finnish) with prayer. p. 256-257. His position is that the NELC was not heterodox, and he tries to prove this mainly by arguing that they had been in fellowship with the Missouri Synod. This, however, was no test of its orthodoxy and certainly not in those years. (The meeting had been held in 1952.) A known difference was that on the doctrine of the woman's position in the Church. We would have been thankful if under the heading "Capable of Erring" the author had rather admitted that the joint prayers with Missouri after the suspension of 1955 were wrong. But this, far from being admitted, rather is defended. Certainly this history has not given any reason to believe that the ELS has had a change of heart with regard to its unscriptural fellowshiping with Missouri after its application of Rom. 16:17 to that body. This is a thing earnestly to be hoped for and prayed for, since our concern for the ELS is still very much alive.

To those who wish to check for themselves whether or not our evaluation is just, we recommend that they order the book and read it. The price is \$5.95, and a copy may be ordered from the publisher: "Lutheran Synod Book Co., BLC, Mankato, Minn. 56001."

C. M. Gullerud

2.

Exposition of Galatians, by William Hendriksen, Baker Book House, 260 pages, including extensive bibliography; \$6.95.

This book is part of a larger project, a new commentary on the entire New Testament. In addition to this volume on Galatians some others have already appeared: on the Gospel of John, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians-Philemon, I-II Thessalonians, and I-II Timothy - Titus. The author, now an emeritus, served from 1942 - 1952 as Professor of New Testament Literature at the Theological Seminary of Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

One is impressed with the exceptional readability of the work, something the author achieves in spite of the obvious thoroughness of his scholarly knowledge of New Testament Greek. The introduction to this Epistle is perhaps a bit overdone, particularly the contriving of an imaginary debate complete with presentation and rebuttal on the proposition "That Galatians is addressed to the churches of North Galatia." After almost seven pages of argument the author invites the reader to join him on the panel of judges, giving his own vote in favor of the negative, to the defender of the South Galatian theory (a verdict in which your reviewer, as part of the panel, heartily concurs).

The strength of the author's Biblical scholarship, however, lies in his extensive use of context, particularly when drawing on passages from some other part of the Bible. This is particularly true about the way in which he presents that key passage from the Old Testament, Habakkuk 2:4 ("the just shall live by his faith"), or the reference in Genesis 15 to the faith by which Abraham was justified. In this same area, commenting on chapter 3:8 of our Epistle (page 129f), there comes a statement which, particularly in these days in which the inerrancy and divine inspiration of Scripture are so widely challenged, is certainly worth quoting: "In the words 'Scripture foreseeing... preached the Gospel beforehand' we have a very emphatic

identification of God and His Word: what Scripture promises God promises, for He is the Speaker. Since the Holy Spirit is Scripture's Primary Author, the conclusion is inevitable that God and His Word are most closely connected." Nor can we forgo referring to his beautiful definition of the function of faith in justification. It comes just a few lines later, page 124: Quote: 'By faith' means 'by trustfully receiving' God's gift out of His hand. It is thus, and thus only, that the nations of the world were to receive pardon, right standing in the sight of God and His holy law, and adoption as sons: in a word, justification. Unquote.

But let there be no mistake. The author is not a Lutheran. His Calvinism is neither veiled nor modified, although the main test for the latter term would come in connection with the doctrine of election, as this is treated in his companion commentary on Ephesians -- a volume which we do not have at hand. But when the author speaks of Baptism, it is with the classic phrase of Calvinism, "The sign and seal in conjunction with that which is signed and sealed" (p. 149). The concept of universal grace (John 3: 16) seems to be limited: "Nothing can ever remove God's love for all who belong to Christ" (p. 152, our emphasis). In connection with chapter 3:24 (the Law "a schoolmaster unto Christ") the entire exposition of this verse and its context does full justice to the repeated references to time (v. 23: "before faith came;" and v. 25: "after that faith is come"). Yet his translation of verse 24 reads: "So the law became our custodian (to conduct us) to Christ, that by faith we might be justified." What is more, his interpretation makes much of the function rendered by the Law in bringing the sinner to Christ (so A. V.), thus allowing for, and perhaps even supporting, the erroneous view that the Law is at least in some degree a means of grace.

Our conclusion? That the author is a good Calvinist. Remembering this, we may well use his book with profit.

E. Reim

3.

Israel And The Bible, by William Hendriksen;
Baker Book House; Paperback, 63 pages; \$1.50.

"Who killed Jesus?" This is the title of the brief first chapter of this little book, wherein the author firmly and Scripturally rejects the various recent reconstructions of history by which the Jews have been exonerated, in whole or in part, from their guilt in the Crucifixion. Referring to pronouncements on the subject such as the fatuous resolution of the Third Assembly of the World Council of Churches, New Delhi 1961, as well as to the more elaborate distortions of Hugh Schonfield in "The Passover Plot", the author demonstrates the vital difference between unchristian bigotry and the demand that we uphold in faith the indictment which Scripture itself brings against those who "killed the Prince of life."

In the major sections of the book the author discusses more substantial questions, such as the widespread belief that Biblical "Restoration Prophecies" are finding their fulfillment in the modern State of Israel, as well as the durable fiction of a future general conversion of the Jews. In rejecting this chiliastic notion the author offers a thought-provoking treatment of the subject, centering his attention on Rom. 11:25-26a. His conclusions conform to our own position in the matter, although certain weaknesses remain in the exegetical discussion.

The book can be heartily recommended as a helpful study in its field.

E. Schaller



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