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Miscellanea

P. E. Kretzmann

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis

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Miscellanea.

Psalm 90, 10.

Aus dem Aufsatz von P. Althaus (Theologische Aufsätze, II, S. 150 ff.) über das Psalmwort „Wenn das Leben köstlich gewesen ist, so ist es Mühe und Arbeit gewesen“, sei folgendes mitgeteilt. Der hebräische Urtext sagt in wörtlicher Übersetzung: unseres Lebens „Gepränge“ (oder „Stolz“) „ist Mühsal und Nichtigkeit“ (oder „Enttäuschung“). Dazu schreibt Otto Scheel: „Was wird aus diesem trüben und müden Rückblick [des hebräischen Textes] unter der Feder des Übersetzers? . . . Luther machte aus der müden Lebensbetrachtung ein tapferes und frohes Bekenntnis zum Werte der Arbeit. Sie ist der köstliche Inhalt eines langen Lebens. Dies Bekenntnis schöpft aus der schaffensfrohen, tatendurstigen deutschen Seele und singt mit wenigen Worten ein hohes Lied der Arbeit.“ Thomas Leutkard schreibt in Hauers Zeitschrift „Deutscher Glaube“: „Es ist ergreifend, zu sehen, wie in Luther, der in diesem Falle doch sicher sinngemäßer Erklärer der Bibel sein wollte, seine nordisch-afrikanische Substanz durchdringt mit einer Wucht, daß er die Wahrheit des Textes opfert der metaphysischen Wahrheit seines Masseempfindens und seines nordischen Seelentums, das in diesem Falle anders spricht und denkt als dasjenige, wovon die Bibel der Niederschlag ist. Das Leben ist mehr als ein Nichts, und die Arbeit ist nicht nur Mühsal und Plage, sondern etwas Köstliches.“ So protestiert Luther an diesem Angelpunkt nordischer Lebensfrömmigkeit nicht nur gegen Rom, nein, in diesem Falle gegen das Christentum. . . . Dieses Bekenntnis Luthers zu Arbeit und Tageslast und Leistung ist echt nordische Lebensfrömmigkeit, die das Leben nicht heiligt durch Psalmenfingen und Kirchengehen, sondern vor allem durch werttätiges Schaffen.“

Singt Luther wirklich aus seiner deutschen Seele heraus ein hohes Lied der Arbeit? Davon kann keine Rede sein. Schon das lateinische Wort labor (Vulgata) bedeutet nicht nur „Arbeit“, sondern „Not“, „Drangsal“, „Mühseligkeit“, „Beschwerlichkeit“. Im letzteren Sinne hat Luther das lateinische und später das von ihm wiedergegebene hebräische Wort in seinen Univeritätsvorlesungen über die Psalmen ausgelegt. Das Wort „Arbeit“ hat den gleichen Doppelsinn wie die lateinische Entsprechung „labor“: es kann „Arbeit“ in unserm Sinne und „Mühsal“, „Not“ bezeichnen. Die Grundbedeutung des Wortes ist „Mühsal“, „mühseliges Werk“. Beide Bedeutungen kommen auch bei Luther in seiner Bibelübersetzung vor. So gibt Luther Jes. 53, 11 die hebräischen Worte, die, genau übersetzt, bedeuten: „Mühsal seiner Seele“, mit der herrlichen Wendung wieder: „darum daß seine Seele gearbeitet hat“. Hier ist ganz deutlich, daß nicht von Arbeit im engeren Sinne die Rede ist, sondern einfach vom Leiden der Seele, das freilich zugleich Tat, nämlich Tragen und Dulden, ist. Ebenso meint die Stelle Offenb. 14, 13: „Ja, der Geist spricht, daß sie ruhen von ihrer Arbeit“, nicht nur die Arbeit in unserm Sinne, sondern alle Mühsal des Lebens. Ganz außer Zweifel steht die Bedeutung „Mühsal“ vor allem an den Stellen, die „Mühe“ und „Arbeit“ im Parallelismus bieten, also bei Jes. 43, 24; ebenso in Ps. 55, 11 und Sir. 51, 35. In die Reihe dieser Stellen gehört unser Vers. Luther will sagen: Das Leben ist auch in seinem besten Gehalte „Mühe und Arbeit“, das heißt, Mühsal, Not.

Auch die Gestalt des Satzes und der ganze Zusammenhang führen auf alles andere als auf ein „hohes Lied der Arbeit“. Der Psalm handelt von der Vergänglichkeit und Nichtigkeit des Lebens. So ist es unmöglich, daß die bittere Klage plötzlich in V. 10 durch ein „tapferes und frohes Bekenntnis zum Werte der Arbeit“ unterbrochen und freundlich temperiert sein sollte. Zudem: der Satz müßte dann ja genau umgekehrt gebaut sein: „Wenn das Leben Mühe und Arbeit gewesen ist, dann ist es köstlich gewesen.“ Bei der Revision der Psalmenübersetzung von 1531 drückte Melancthon den Sinn unsers Verses so aus: „Wenngleich Könige mächtig und gewaltig sind, dennoch ist eitel Mühsal (Glend).“ Luther lehnte dies Verständnis ab und gab seine uns bekannte Übersetzung. Scheel deutet das so, als habe Luther damit die „müde Lebensbetrachtung“ des Textes, die Melancthon wiedergab, für seine Übersetzung abgewiesen und an ihre Stelle das „tapfere und frohe Bekenntnis zum Werte der Arbeit“ gesetzt. Aber davon kann keine Rede sein. Der Unterschied zwischen Melancthons und Luthers Verständnis ist nur dieser: Melancthon will unter dem „Besten“, der Höhe des Lebens, die Herrlichkeit der Fürsten verstehen; Luther dagegen denkt an das, was in jedem Menschenleben „köstlich“ ist.

Luther verkündigt allerdings die „Arbeit um der Arbeit willen“. Gott hat die Arbeit geboten. Er will durch sie den Menschen seinen Segen geben. Luther las aber auch in seiner Bibel das Wort von dem Acker, der Dornen und Disteln trägt, und von der Arbeit im Schweiß des Angesichts, die dem vielfach unfruchtbaren Acker die notwendige Nahrung mühselig abringen muß; und er wußte mit dem alten Theologen von 1 Mos. 3, daß diese Mühsal und vielfache Ergebnislosigkeit der Arbeit göttlicher Fluch ist. (Cf. Genesissvorlesung, 1 Mos. 3, 17 ff.; 5, 29.) So ist für Luther die Arbeit, wie wir sie jetzt tun müssen, voll Segen und Fluch Gottes zugleich. Sie geschieht mit Freuden um des Segens willen, mit Seufzen um der von Gott uns Sündern auferlegten Mühsal willen. Nicht Luthers deutsche Seele adelt das, was andern „als Fluch galt“, zum Segen, sondern sein Christenglaube läßt ihn in dem, was Fluch ist und bleibt, zugleich Gottes Segnen erkennen und ergreifen.

Die Arbeit als solche ist nicht Fluch, sondern Gottes Ordnung schon im Paradiese, 1 Mos. 2, 15. Wenn es dann in dem Liede von der Schöpfung, Ps. 104, heißt: „Geht die Sonne auf . . ., da geht der Mensch an seine Arbeit, sein Ackerwerk bis zum Abend“, so ist das im Zusammenhange des Hymnus alles andere als resignierte Klage, sondern wie alles Vorzige ein Zug froher Betrachtung göttlicher Schöpferfülle und -ordnung, dem dann auch gleich der Preis Gottes folgt: „Wie viel sind deiner Werke, Gott! Sie alle hast du weise geschaffen.“ Ein Gegensatz besteht nicht zwischen der biblischen und der germanischen Schätzung der Arbeit, wohl aber zwischen der biblisch-christlichen, wie wir sie auch bei Luther finden, und der modern-idealistischen. Jene weiß von der Würde und von dem Fluche der Arbeit, diese will nur von der Würde und Freude der Arbeit wissen. Aber sie kann sich nicht halten mit ihren schönen Worten angesichts der Wirklichkeit. Im Zeitalter weit vorgeschrittener Arbeitsteilung wissen wir vollends davon. Das idealistische Menschentum muß sich diese Nachtansicht der menschlichen Kultur möglichst aus den Augen und aus den Gedanken schlagen, es möchte sonst das Hohelied der Kultur auf den Lippen ersterben. Im lutherischen Christentum wird die deutsche Art zu

ihrem eigentlichen (?) Wesen wiedergeboren. Was „deutsche Arbeitsgefinnung“ ist, suchen und finden wir im lutherischen Kirchenliede. Georg Niese schließt sein Morgenlied „Aus meines Herzens Grunde“ mit den Worten der Arbeitsfreudigkeit:

Und stred' nun aus mein' Hand,
Greif an das Werk mit Freuden,
Dazu mich Gott bescheiden
In mein'm Beruf und Stand.

Aber zugleich singt lutherisches Christentum mit Paul Gerhards Abendliede:

Das Haupt, die Fuß' und Hände
Sind froh, daß nun zum Ende
Die Arbeit kommen sei,

und im Seufzen unter der Mühsal und vielfachen Vergeblichkeit unsers Arbeitens blickt es aus nach Gottes Ewigkeit:

Dort in der ew'gen Ruh'
Ist Gottes Gnadengabe,
Die schleußt all' Arbeit zu.

E.

Nudism and the Bible.

“According to the Bible the race began as nudists and did not become nudists by discarding their clothing. In Eden, temperatures did not demand protective clothing. Also there seems to be an inference that it was pleasing to the Creator, for no word of censure attaches to the original pair. Not until sin cast its shadow over their Eden home did the thought of clothing enter. But when disobedience to the divine command became an act in the eating of the forbidden tree, then immediately a realization of nakedness and shame swept over them. ‘And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig-leaves together, and made themselves aprons’ (or girdles).

“The nudists of to-day being right, here was a mistake, a twofold error. In the first place, they should not have been ashamed; and in the second place, they should not have shielded their bodies from the beneficent rays of the sun. Here also was an opportunity for an all-wise Deity to correct an error by teaching the two that nudity was the divine will and mode. Strange to say, He did nothing of the sort. Rather He stamped the clothing question with Heaven's approval by providing them with the skins of slain animals to replace the fig-leaf girdle. Was the all-wise God mistaken? Was this an error on His part so deep rooted that six thousand years have been required to rectify it?

“But this was not the only slip of the Deity in the matter, granting the truth of the nudist position. The only visible appearance of the Almighty, or ‘theophany,’ to speak theologically, where clothing is touched upon is in the Book of Daniel. There it is recorded that Daniel saw the Deity seated on a throne like the fiery flame, and ‘His garment white as snow.’ Why did not the King of the universe teach by example that nudism was according to the divine will? Can we escape the inference that clothing is the habit and example of the Infinite?

“David in a descriptive mood sings concerning Jehovah: ‘Thou art clothed with honor and majesty, who coverest Thyself with light as with a garment.’

"Also head and shoulders above the best that mankind has ever attained stands the solitary figure of the Man of Galilee. As to clothing, we should reasonably expect a word of disapproval from His lips in the matter of barring the violet ray from its essential action on the entire epidermis. But we search in vain for His slightest intimation that clothing is superfluous. It certainly seems that the Teacher made a serious omission in leaving out such an essential having to do with the health and happiness of mankind when one word from His tongue would have saved humanity so much.

"The Example of Christ.

"It may surprise our nudist friends to observe further that, when Jesus was transfigured before His disciples, 'His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light.' This transfiguration, Peter tells us, was a picture of His coming again, which, as we all know, is yet future. So with our eyes on the future appearing in glory of the Son of Man, we discover that He even then has not advanced, in what the nudists would have us believe is the truth, to the place where He has ceased to wear raiment.

"And not only in the transfiguration scene does He appear clothed, but some sixty years later John, the seer of Patmos, envisioned Him 'clothed with a garment down to the foot.' Once more John in prophetic vision sees Him, militant, on a white war horse, the armies of heaven at His back, as He faces the awesome battle-field of Armageddon. On His regal head are all the crowns of earth, and He was 'clothed in a vesture dipped in blood.'

"We gather, then, that Christ wore clothes on all occasions when walking the earth as a man, that in all His resurrection appearances He still was clothed, and that in His future revelation of Himself as King of kings and Lord of lords He yet deems clothing fitting for the divine person.

"The Example of the Angels.

"Furthermore, the Book speaks of appearances in human form of heavenly beings other than God the Father and Christ. The angels were clothed. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary stood without the sepulcher of Christ shortly after His resurrection. There had been a great earthquake. An angel of the Lord had rolled the stone from the door of the sepulcher and was sitting upon it. 'His countenance was like the lightning and his raiment white as snow.'

"The disciples walked with Jesus on the fortieth day following His resurrection until they were opposite Bethany. A last word with them and then, as their amazed eyes saw Him rise from the earth and disappear in a cloud, suddenly they became conscious of an addition to their company. Two angels 'stood by them in white apparel.'

"Cornelius, a Roman captain and a devout man, saw in a vision about the ninth hour (3 P. M.) an angel of God. Telling Peter of it afterwards, he said he was praying at the ninth hour, and 'behold, a man [an angel] stood before me in bright clothing.'

"John the apostle from the isle of Patmos, looking far into the future, saw 'a mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed in a cloud.' Again,

in the same Patmos revelations, he saw seven angels 'clothed in pure and white linen.'

"We are led again to the unavoidable conclusion that clothing is the rule of heaven; for we never hear of nude angels, and every reference describing their persons speaks of the wearing of raiment. And we must concede that the angelic beings of all the created living personalities have the least reason to clothe themselves, since they are sexless and from a frostless country, where the tree of life ever blooms.

"The Teaching of the Scriptures.

"It has been noted in the reports of nudist aggregations that there are ministers of the Gospel in their ranks. This would raise the question of the teachings of the Church regarding the clothing question. Do the teachings of Christ and His apostles admit nudism or condone it among Christians?

"Paul, the most prolific writer of the teachings of the Church, rules 'that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel,' by which we learn that the Church taught not only that its members should be clothed, but modestly so. In the Book of Revelation one of the high rewards of the future life is declared to be to 'walk with Me [Christ] in white.' And again, 'He that overcometh shall be clothed in white raiment.'

"Once more, the prophet of Patmos, looking in vision upon a scene in heaven, sees twenty-four elders round about the throne of God 'clothed in white raiment.' After this the seer beheld a great multitude on the other shore of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues 'clothed with white robes.' Yet again, John is given a vision of a triumphant host of cavalry from heaven, riding white horses as they follow the victorious Christ coming as world-conqueror. And John notes that they were 'clothed in fine linen, white and clean.'

"Once more we are driven to the conclusion that the teachings of the Church, recorded in the New Testament, provide no excuse for the phenomenon of nudism.

"Shameful Illustrations.

"That the Bible treats nakedness as shameful cannot be questioned. Beginning with the first pair's sense of shame and first attempts to clothe themselves, down to the end of the Book, clothing is seen as essential, and to be unclothed disgraceful. Noah, who became intoxicated, perhaps innocently, not knowing the properties of fermented grape-juice, is an early case in point. He was 'uncovered' in his tent. His son Ham saw him and told his brethren, many think mockingly. So serious was this offense that it brought a curse upon the irreverent Ham and his line. His two brothers showed a proper spirit of reverence, and also illustrate the attitude of the time as regards nudity, by taking a garment on their shoulders, and, walking backward, covered their father.

"The New Testament position is perhaps nowhere better illustrated than in the case of the demoniac of Gadara. The extremity of his dementia is emphasized by the declaration that he 'wore no clothes.' Later, when the evil spirit had been cast out by Christ, those who had heard of the miracle and came to see found the man sitting at the feet of Jesus, 'clothed

and in his right mind.' The deduction seems inevitable — crazy, a nudist; sane, a wearer of clothing.

"When the Spirit of Christ would emphasize the depths to which the Church in Laodicea had sunk, He declared that she knew not that she was 'wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked,' and in the same paragraph He counsels her to 'buy of me gold tried in the fire that thou mayest be rich, and white raiment that thou mayest be clothed and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear.'

"It will not be necessary to go further to demonstrate the Bible attitude as to nudism. Naked is classed with such adjectives as 'wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind'; and as though the sacred writer were reaching for a climax in his word picture of spiritual sorrowfulness, he adds: 'and naked.' Then he admonishes that she purchase white raiment 'that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear.' The 'shame of thy nakedness'!

"Nudism in History.

"History has its own story to tell in the matter of nudism. Only the most abjectly degraded of peoples have shed their clothing. Where civilization and intelligence have ranked high, clothing has been the order. Does this present movement justify the presumption that humanity has begun to trek back to the jungle? that the race is sliding crazily into the slough of utter grossness which is the final goal of the followers of the flesh? True, its promoters now present a moral front; but when the pressure of outraged decency is relaxed, when the audacious newness has worn off — then what?

"Let us hope that this thing is but a foolish fad of what has been discerningly called 'the lunatic fringe' of society, the crackpot corps, and that these queer mental twists will soon tire of their childish attempt to shock the sane, realizing that, instead of achieving notoriety, they have only reaped disgust." REV. WILLIAM C. FAUCETTE, in *Moody Monthly*.

Corban.

This word, found Mark 7, 11 (cp. Matt. 15, 5), is an Aramaic term signifying a special gift or offering devoted to God. Originally, Ex. 28, 38, it designated a holy gift, some special offering presented to the Lord for a specific reason and purpose. There seems to be a reference to such a gift also in Matt. 23, 18. The peace-offerings of the Old Testament evidently included offerings of thanksgiving and votive offerings, Lev. 3 and 7. They were free-will offerings, not included in the stated sacrifices of the people. Their purpose was, among other things, to establish closer fellowship between the donor and Jehovah. It is in this sense that Matt. 5, 23, 24 speaks of a gift brought to the altar. Such a gift was to be brought in a spirit of true consecration, without reservations conflicting with other stated duties. It was because the Pharisees at the time of Christ had added an anti-Scriptural interpretation that Jesus found it necessary to take them to task. For according to their teaching a person consecrating a gift to God might thereby be relieved from using it for his parents, thereby setting aside the Fourth Commandment. No professed service of God can be acceptable if it conflicts with any duty prescribed by His commandment.

P. E. K.