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## A Course in Lutheran Theology

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## A Course in Lutheran Theology

(Continued)

We have not exhausted the subject of *sola gratia* as treated by Luther in *De Servo Arbitrio*. There is the all-important matter of the sinner's justification before God. And the *sola gratia* is the heart of the doctrine of justification. That is the blessed truth which comforts the heart of the despairing sinner. That is the glorious truth which the minister of the Gospel needs to study and restudy, to study every day of his life.

And that truth was denied by Erasmus. He denied not only that conversion is altogether the work of God's grace. He denied just as vehemently that justification is the gift of God's pure grace. He could not but deny it in the interest of his cardinal teaching that man still possesses a free will. The two heresies go hand in hand. Indeed, they are at bottom one. They are both the protest of the same pride of the human heart against the same blessed truth of salvation by grace. You will notice that neither Luther nor Erasmus treats this matter as two separate subjects. They speak of both on the same page in the same paragraph and sentence. (Some repetition of the same quotations in this instalment of our series is therefore unavoidable. It will do no harm in any case.) One who attributes to man powers for good in the sphere of conversion will, consciously or unconsciously, let similar or the same powers operate in the sphere of justification. And one who believes that he can effect, wholly or in part, his justification will insist, of course, that he can effect, wholly or in part, his conversion. What, in fact, constitutes conversion, in the mind of Erasmus and the rest of the Catholic theologians? Is it the acceptance, by faith, of the gift of the forgiveness of sins offered in the Gospel? No, but the turning from sin to holiness and this sanctification is the essence of justification. Giving battle to the free-will advocates, Luther was defending the chief article of the Christian religion. "Herewith

I reject and condemn as nothing but error all dogmas which extol our free will, as they directly conflict with the help and grace of our Savior Jesus Christ. For since outside of Christ death and sin are our lords and the devil our god and prince, there can be no power or might, no wisdom or understanding, whereby we can qualify ourselves, or strive after, righteousness and life." (Luther, quoted by the *Formula of Concord. Triglot*, p. 897.) The denial of the *sola gratia* in conversion and the denial of the *sola gratia* in justification are conceived in the same womb,—the free-will heresy,—are blood-relatives and inseparable companions. "Daher von Anfang der Welt immer mit eingelaufen ist die Hauptketzerei, die man heisst der Pelagianer, vom freien Willen und Verdienst der Werke, welche sich hat allezeit neben eingeflochten und angeklebt wie der Kot am Rade." (Luther, VIII, 1001.)

Erasmus wrote his treatise *De Libero Arbitrio* for the purpose of upholding the papistical doctrine of justification by grace and works. "Although sin abound by the Law, and where sin has abounded, grace much more abound, yet it does not therefore follow that man, doing by God's help what is pleasing to Him, cannot by works morally good prepare himself for the favor of God." (P. 284.<sup>41</sup>) — XVIII, 1643.) "If there be no freedom of will, how can there be place for merit? And if there be no place for merit, how can there be place for reward? To whom will the reward be assigned if justification be without merit?" (P. 352. — XVII, 1937.) The papists loved to hear this and "loudly boasted that Erasmus's little book had saved the teaching of righteousness by works." (Justus Jonas, XVIII, 1669.) They were listening to the voice of Satan. Hear the voice of God, speaking in Scripture, brought to us by Luther: "The being justified through grace will not allow of respect unto the worthiness of any person, as the apostle saith: 'If by grace, then it is no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace,' Rom. 11:6. He saith the same also chap. 4:4: 'Now, to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace but of debt,' Rom. 4:4, thus most manifestly excluding all works in the matter of justification, to the intent that he might establish grace only and free justification." (P. 356.) "Here is no way by which 'free will,' with its devoted efforts and endeavors, can escape or get off; it must be numbered with 'him that worketh' or with 'him that worketh not.' If it be numbered with 'him that worketh,' you hear that righteousness is not imputed unto it; if it be numbered with 'him that worketh not but believeth' in God, righteousness is imputed to it." (P. 359.) Rom. 3:22-26: "Being justified freely by His grace." "Here Paul speaks forth very thunderbolts against 'free will.'" (P. 347.) Listen to the voice of Isaiah, hear the gra-

41) *Bondage of the Will*, Cole-Atherton translation.

cious words of our Lord, Is. 40:1, 2: "Comfort ye, comfort ye, My people, saith your God. . . . Her warfare is accomplished, her iniquity is pardoned, for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sin." "He comforted her with tender words. As though God had said, I am compelled to forgive them their sins if I would have My Law fulfilled by them; nay, I must take away My Law entirely when I forgive them; for I see they cannot but sin, and the more so, the more they fight. . . . And it is thus that the iniquity is pardoned: without any merit, nay, under all demerit. . . . They do not obtain it by their own powers or on account of their own merit, but they receive it from the Conqueror and Giver, Jesus Christ. . . . Could I therefore suffer this most beautiful passage to be thus bedaubed with Jewish filth cast upon it by Jerome and the *Diatribes*? God forbid! No! My Isaiah stands victor over 'free will' and clearly shows that grace is given, not to merits or to the endeavors of 'free will' but to sins and demerits." (P. 281 ff. — XVIII, 1880.) "Here God is to be honored and revered as being most merciful towards those whom He justifies and saves under all their unworthiness" (p. 385). Hear another gracious word of the Lord, Matt. 25:34. "How can they merit that which is theirs and prepared for them before they had existence? . . . The kingdom is not merited but before prepared, and the sons of the kingdom are before prepared for the kingdom but do not merit the kingdom for themselves" (p. 191). Be sure to read all the other grace-passages which Luther quotes and drives home.

And where in Scripture are *work*-passages to be found, passages which declare that man is able to perform works which merit justification? Erasmus points to hundreds of passages to prove that man can effect his own justification = sanctification. He keeps on asking: "To what purpose is this great multitude of commandments if it is absolutely beyond every man's power to keep the commandments?" (*Diatribes*, 18, 1623.) And Luther keeps on telling the self-righteous free-will men: "How can that endeavor toward good 'which is death,' which 'is enmity against God' and 'cannot' be subject to Him? Rom. 8:5 ff." (p. 364). "Evil altogether, and nothing but evil, is thought or imagined by man throughout his whole life. The nature of evil is described to be that which neither does nor can do anything but evil, as being evil itself, Gen. 8:21; Matt. 7:17 f." (p. 279). "Surely he that saith 'all' excepts no one in any place, at any time, in any work or endeavor, Rom. 3:23" (p. 350). "The design of the whole epistle [to the Romans] is to show that we can do nothing, even when we seem to do well" (p. 245). The doctrine of justification by works and grace stands and falls with the doctrine of the freedom and power of man's will. And "these words [Gen. 8:21; Rom. 3:20-26, etc. etc.]

bring that miserable thing 'free will' to nothing, nothing at all" (p. 347).

Why, the natural man does not even know what sin is. How can he strive to rid himself of sin? He does not know what righteousness is. How can he devise ways and means of acquiring it? "This is the voice of the Gospel, revealing Christ as the Deliverer from all these evils. Neither 'free will' nor reason can discover Him. And how should it discover Him when it is itself dark and devoid even of the light of the Law, which might discover to it its disease (Rom. 3:20), which disease, in its own light, it seeth not, but believes it to be sound health?" (P. 345 f.) "Now let us come to John, who is also a most copious and powerful subverter of 'free will.' He, at the very outset, attributes to 'free will' such blindness that it cannot even see the light of truth; so far is it from possibility that it should endeavor after it. He speaks thus: 'The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not,' John 1:5" (p. 367). The case of free will is hopeless. It cannot take a single step. And it does not even know its impotency. Consequently, it spurns the helping hand. Rom. 1:17, 18 passes the death-sentence on *De Libero Arbitrio*. "It is manifest that 'free will' even in the most exalted of men, not only has wrought, and can work, no righteousness, but does not even know what is righteous before God" (p. 327. — XVIII, 1917). These words bring those miserable things, free will and the teaching of *De Libero Arbitrio*, to nothing — nothing at all!

The plea that free will can produce good works of a sort is of no avail. Let the advocate of work-righteousness read Rom. 3:22-26. "Here Paul speaks forth very thunderbolts against 'free will.' . . . To grant that 'free will' can, by its endeavor, move itself in some direction, we will say, unto good works or unto the righteousness of the civil or Moral Law; yet it is not moved toward the righteousness of God, nor does God in any respect allow its devoted efforts to be worthy unto the attainment of righteousness; for He saith that His righteousness availeth without the works of the Law" (p. 347 f.). The miserable sinner is undone if he follows the advice of the free-will advocate. He has no righteousness of his own, and on the advice of his counselor he refuses to plead the righteousness of Jesus Christ. The case of him who brings *De Libero Arbitrio* into court as his authority is hopeless.

The doctrine of justification by grace and works has no standing in the court of God. It is thrown out for this reason, too, that it presents its case under a false title. Erasmus's chief argument is that, since good works are commanded and "God would not command impossibilities," it must "lie in the power of man to keep the commandments." Luther answers: "Here again it does not see

that by these carnal arguments it refutes itself more directly than it refutes us. For what do these conclusions prove but that *all merit is in the power of 'free will'*? And then, *where is any room for grace?* Moreover, supposing 'free will' to merit a certain little and grace the rest, why does 'free will' receive the whole award?" (P. 272 f.—XVIII, 1873.) Such practises would not be allowed in any earthly court. Erasmus is defending the case of justification by grace *and works*. His arguments, if valid, would prove justification by works alone.

The pleading of the free-will advocates thus presents a sorry case. We have already heard how sharply Luther arraigns them for it. Whether they like it or not, they shall hear it again: "They [the Semi-Pelagians] are worse than the Pelagians themselves, and that on two accounts. First, the Pelagians plainly, candidly, and ingeniously assert the 'merit of worthiness,' thus calling a boat a boat and a fig a fig and teaching what they really think, whereas our 'free-will' friends, while they think and teach the same thing, yet mock us with lying words and false appearances, as though they dissented from the Pelagians; when the fact is quite the contrary. So that with respect to their hypocrisy they seem to be the Pelagians' strongest opposers but with respect to the reality of the matter and their heart-tenet they are twice-dipped Pelagians. And next, under this hypocrisy they estimate and purchase the grace of God at a much lower rate than the Pelagians themselves. For these assert that it is not a certain little something in us by which we attain unto grace, but whole, full, perfect, great, and many, devoted efforts and works, whereas our friends declare that it is a certain little something, almost a nothing, by which we deserve grace" (p. 355.—XVIII, 1938). And this, too, shall be quoted again and again: "Therefore it is either false that we receive our grace for the grace of another, or else it is evident that 'free will' is nothing at all; for both cannot consist—that the grace of God is both so cheap that it may be obtained in common and everywhere by the 'little endeavor' of any man and at the same time so dear that it is given unto us only in and through the grace of one Man, and He so great!" (P. 371.—XVIII, 1951.)

Luther proceeds: "And I would also that the advocates for 'free will' be admonished in this place that, when they assert 'free will,' they are deniers of Christ." Luther charges those who teach justification by works or who teach justification by grace and works with the crime of crimes, with the crime of denying Christ, of perverting the Gospel, of subverting Christianity. "What need now of Christ! What need of the Spirit! . . . What need was there for Christ to purchase for us, even with His own blood, the Spirit, as though necessary, in order that He might make the keeping of

the commandments easy unto us when we were already thus qualified by nature!" (P. 175.) "In the New Testament the Gospel is preached; which is nothing else than the word by which are offered unto us the Spirit, grace, and the remission of sins attained for us by Christ Crucified; and all entirely free, through the mere mercy of God the Father, thus favoring us unworthy creatures, who deserve damnation rather than anything else" (p. 187). No, say the free-will men, both of the extreme and of the most moderate type, no such Gospel for us! We want a gospel that leaves some merit to man!

Luther took up arms against the Erasmianites to save the dearest treasure of the Church. And the battle is still on. Do not say that the danger is past. The free-will heresy is as alive in 1938 as it was in 1525. It is rampant throughout the world, throughout the external Church. Prof. Ernst Bergmann, a German heathen, concludes an article on "Sittlichkeit" with the words: "*Mein Blut und meine Gerechtigkeit, Das ist mein Schmuck und Ehrenkleid*" (see *Ev.-Luth. Freikirche*, Sept. 19, 1937), and the rest of the pagans throughout the world and the liberal theologians throughout the Church — Pelagians all — say the same. The Semi-Pelagianism of the Catholic religion is as vigorous as of yore. Not one word of the Canons and Decrees of Trent, which anathematize the doctrine of justification by grace alone, is being suppressed. Karl Adam of the Catholic faculty in Tuebingen still subscribes to *De Libero Arbitrio*. He writes: "According to the Catholic doctrine of justification justifying grace works in and through the human being, through his moral will and conduct, effecting an inward renewal and transfiguration of character, and so fits him for the kingdom of heaven. The Catholic doctrine recognizes the free moral action of man as a constituent and organic moral factor in the process of justification" (*Germany's New Religion* [1937], pp. 156, 158). Rome has not changed. The old evil Foe still means deadly woe.

And he has found many confederates within the ranks of the Protestant theologians. There is the great host of the Arminians among the Reformed and of the synergists among the Lutherans. In 1872 Doellinger asserted that "the great majority of the Protestant theologians in Germany at the present day hold, while they may use different language, essentially the old doctrine of the Church" (the Catholic doctrine), and Dr. Walther "is afraid that Doellinger is right. A theology which makes faith man's own achievement and finds the reason why certain men are saved while others are lost in their free self-determination, in their conduct, in their cooperation, differs from the Catholic doctrine of justification only in the terminology used" (*Lehre u. Wehre*, 1872, p. 352). And in 1930 *Our Sunday Visitor* said that "Lutheranism is all but dead

in the land of its birth" (see *Lutheran Witness*, 1930, p. 364). You can find a similar statement in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, VIII, 576: The strict orthodoxy of the old Lutherans is confined to a few small groups. (See Pieper, *Chr. Dogm.*, II, 670.)

How much of this is true? This much: many, very many, of those who pass for Lutherans are synergists. Many of them speak right out. Prof. R. Jelke: "Der Suender eignet sich dieses von Christo Geleistete an, so dass sich in ihm das von Christo Geleistete potenziell, ethisch wiederholt. . . Nur der Suender, der mit Christo gemeinsame Sache macht, der gewillt ist, in die Nachfolge des heiligen Gehorsams, den Christus bewiesen hat, einzutreten, kann Anteil empfangen an diesem Versoehnungsopfer." And this teaching is imputed to Luther! (*Die Grunddogmen des Christentums*, p. 64.) O. Kirn, professor of dogmatics at Leipzig, taught: "Reconciliation is accomplished historically in so far as the work of Christ is, for all times, the ethical basis and guaranty for pardoning the sinners, but it is at the same time a progressive process in so far as the work of Christ, procuring salvation, has the power to transform the life of humanity and conform it to God's will. In God's judgment this result forms a part of the work of reconciliation; this power inherent in Christ's work is a factor (*ist mitbegründend*) in the work of reconciliation." (*Grundriss der Ev. Dogm.*, p. 118.) Dr. Pieper comments: "That is virtually nothing else than the Catholic *fides caritate sive operibus formata*. . . It transforms the Christian doctrine into Romish-pagan work-doctrine." (*Chr. Dogm.*, II, 430, 472.) Can you possibly find the Lutheran, the Biblical, doctrine of justification by faith, without works, expressed in the following presentation? "Wir wissen nur, dass wir unrecht sind vor Gott, nicht so wie wir sein sollten; Jesus Christ aber verkündet uns, dass wir *dennoch* so, wie wir sind, *Gott recht* sind, seine Kinder, und zwar 'im Glauben,' dann, wenn wir uns durch Jesus Christ staerken lassen zu der vertrauensvollen Hingabe an Gott, unsern Vater; wenn wir ihm unser Herz oeffnen und schenken, dass sein Wille darin bestimmend wird. Dann, wenn uns solches Zutrauen geschenkt ist durch Christus, dann *haben wir Glauben*, dann sind wir *Gott recht* oder gerecht vor ihm." (Italics in original.) This appeared in a sermon outline published in *Pastoralblaetter*, Feb., 1934. (Editor, Dr. E. Stange.) Did Prof. R. Seeberg teach the Lutheran or the Catholic doctrine of justification? He says: "The justification which God accomplishes in the sinner is His continuous influence on the soul, through which it gradually becomes righteous; this influence continues till perfection is reached in eternity." (See E. Schott, *Fleisch und Geist nach Luthers Lehre*, p. 84.) Seeberg's justification is the *actus physicus* of the Catholic system. Schott calls attention to the fact that Prof.



K. Holl's teaching, according to his own declaration, is similar to that of Seeberg. Holl is calling for a Luther renaissance. But the gist of his treatise *Zur Verstaendigung ueber Luthers Rechtfertigungslehre* is: "When God justifies a man, He considers that the man *declared* righteous *actually* becomes righteous. God, in anticipation of the results of his own work and influence, pronounces the judgment of justification on man's heart. One may express justification in the formula 'God declares the *sinner* righteous,' but also in the formula 'God declares the *righteous* man righteous.'" (Quoted substantially in the words of Holl in Althaus, *Theol. Aufsaezte*, II, 32. See also O. Gerss, *Vergebung der Suenden*, p. 18.) This may suffice. The situation today is what it was forty-five years ago, when Adolf Zahn wrote: "The Lutheran doctrine of justification is no longer to be found in Germany. [The reader will understand the hyperbole.] And no one seems to be frightened by this fact. Rome may rejoice—the faculties are doing their best to kill the Reformation. Scripture is being profaned, the doctrine of justification neglected, our youth poisoned." (Quoted by Th. Graebner in *Dr. Francis Pieper, A Biographical Sketch*, page 7 f.)

Not all synergists go these lengths. Many of them, perhaps the great majority, adhere to the article of justification by faith, without works. And they believe it with all their heart. But every word they speak in favor of their synergistic delusion they speak against the chief article of the Christian religion. *In principle* they subvert the article of justification by faith, without works. At the colloquy of Herzberg (1578), when the synergists of Anhalt tried to sidetrack the discussion of Article III of the Formula of Concord, A. Musculus declared: "Ich sage nein! Denn wer im Artikel vom freien Willen nicht richtig ist, der kann auch im Artikel von der Rechtfertigung nicht richtig sein." He can, by the grace of God; but not if he knows what he is saying when he speaks for synergism. The fundamental thesis of synergism denies the essence of the doctrine of justification without works. Erasmus was a clear thinker and so assailed both the monergism of Luther and Luther's doctrine of justification by faith alone. Luther was a clear thinker, too, and, as Dr. Pieper points out after quoting the remark of Musculus (*Lehre u. Wehre*, 29, p. 33 f.), he brought to bear "the thunderbolts" of Paul's teaching on justification against the Semi-Pelagian-synergistic heresy. What is the connection, the blood-relationship, between synergism and work-righteousness? When the synergists teach that faith is in part the product of man's own endeavor and power or define faith as an ethical achievement of man, they teach in effect that the sinner's justification depends on some sort of work and quality in man. Dr. Bente puts it this way: "The syner-

gists asserted: Man, too, must do his bit and cooperate with the Holy Spirit if he desires to be saved. Conversion and salvation therefore would depend, at least in part, on man's conduct toward converting grace, and he would be justified and saved not by grace alone, but by a faith which to a certain extent is a work of his own." (*Trigl.*, Hist. Introd., p. 125.) Read up on this in Pieper, *Chr. Dogm.*, II: 543, 612, 634, 671. Or put it this way: If the subtle synergists are right, if there is in some men, before their conversion, a good disposition, a favorable inclination, towards the Spirit's work, Rom. 4:5 no longer holds good. God would not be justifying "the ungodly," but him who had already achieved the beginning of godliness. Both classes of synergists impugn the chief doctrine of Christianity, the consistent synergists directly, the inconsistent synergists in principle.

The Church is beset today by many foes. We are told to take up arms against the forces of Communism and atheism assaulting the city of God. We must do that. But there is a graver menace. There are foes within the walls—a great multitude. It seems inconceivable that, when Paul so often uses those universally applying words "all," "There is none that doeth good," we are justified by faith "without" the Law, words and sentences, contrary and contradictory to these universally applying words, have gained so much ground even within the Lutheran Church, words like these: There is something in man which is good and which endeavors after good. (See p. 361 f. — XVIII, 1944.) But so it is—the *sola gratia* needs to be guarded against many foes within the borders of the Church. The battle of 1525 must be refought in 1938.

We have not yet exhausted the subject of *sola gratia* as treated in *De Servo Arbitrio*. Luther discussed a number of other doctrines in this great book,<sup>42</sup> and his thesis called for that. All doctrines of Scripture are either subsidiary or complementary to the doctrine of saving grace. Let us study several of the more important ones as Luther presents them.

There is the doctrine of original sin. Luther had been using strong language in describing the ravages and the curse of original sin. That aroused the indignation of Erasmus. The *Diatribes* complains that Luther "makes of original sin an evil immeasurably great," teaching that "natural man cannot know God and can only hate Him," and that "even the regenerate sin in everything they do." (XVIII:1663 f.) The indignation of Erasmus did not subside when he got Luther's answer in *De Servo Arbitrio*. What does Luther, what does Gen. 8:21 teach on this subject? "Moses does not say that man is intent or prone to evil, but that evil

42) Quite a number. "*De Servo Arbitrio* is an outstanding model and compendium of true Bible theology." (Introduction to Vol. XVIII:66.)

altogether and nothing but evil is thought or imagined by man throughout his whole life. The nature of his evil is described to be that which neither does nor can do anything but evil, as being evil itself" (p. 279). "Another passage, Gen. 6:5: 'Every imagination of man's heart is only evil continually.' Does God, I pray you, here speak of 'most men' and not rather of all men?" (P. 279.) And this total depravity, which inheres in all natural men, is not an "infirmity" (p. 278) but of such a vile, odious, damnable nature that it merits God's wrath and eternal damnation. "All merit wrath and punishment, Rom. 1:18; they do nothing but that which merits wrath" (p. 325). "What men, then, will you pretend to say, are not under the wrath of God?" (P. 326.) And *everything in man* merits wrath and punishment. "He who describes them all as being 'under sin' (Rom. 3:9), that is, the servants of sin, leaves them no degree of good whatever" (p. 332). Luther continues: "Nor can you evade this by saying: Although they are under sin, the best part of them, reason and will, is able to strive after the good. For if there remains in them such a striving, it would be false to say that they are 'under sin.' . . . The wrath of God revealed from heaven against them will, unless they are justified through the Spirit, damn them altogether (*totos*), which would not be the case if they were not totally given over to sin." (Weimar Ed., XVIII:760. Cp. St. L. Ed., XVIII:1921. Missing in Cole-Atherton.) Do you realize the full extent of the desperate condition Adam's sin brought upon us? "Nor should we sin or be damned by that one sin of Adam if the sin were not our own; for who could be damned for the sin of another, especially in the sight of God? Nor is the sin ours by imitation or by working; for this would not be the one sin of Adam, because then it would not be the sin which he committed but which we committed ourselves — it becomes our sin by generation. Rom. 5:12." (p. 361. — XVIII:1934.) "Original sin" means that Adam's guilt is imputed to us! And then we imitate and repeat it! It is a desperate condition. Even the Christian labors under the thralldom of original sin. "The nature of man is so evil, even in those who are born again of the Spirit, that it does not only not endeavor after good but is even averse to, and militates against, good. . . . The flesh with these affections wars against the Spirit in the saints" (p. 383 f.; cp. p. 390). What is the conclusion? "Original sin itself therefore will not allow of any other power in 'free will' but that of sinning and going on unto damnation" (p. 361).

Deny the Scripture teaching on original sin, wholly or in part, and you deny the doctrine of salvation by grace alone. "Was eine Kirche bei der Lehre von der Suende und Erbsuende saet, das erntet sie bei der Lehre von der Gnade." (A. Koeberle, *Wort*,

*Sakrament und Kirche im Luthertum*, p.10.) Sow the seed of Pelagianism or synergism, and you will harvest the doctrine of self-salvation. The philosophical and theological systems, Koeberle goes on to say, that give everything to man take everything from God, and those systems that leave some power to man do not give everything to God. "But where nothing of self-sufficiency and self-glory remains to man, it remains for God to do everything, and the *solī Deo gloria* remains intact." And what do those systems and churches that sow the seed of "self-salvation" harvest? Saved souls? No man can be saved, no man will cast himself upon saving grace, if the seed of Pelagianism and synergism takes root in his heart.

And how widely and copiously this evil seed is being sown today! The philosophers have no conception of the dreadfulness of original sin, as little as the philosopher Erasmus had. "German idealism takes the question about the expiation of guilt more lightly than does Buddhism. Kant: I have transgressed against the Moral Law within me; then I can fulfil it again in the same freedom. It is thus that ethical idealism resolves the problem of guilt. Fichte takes the same path. "The religious man knows no remorse over the past. . . . In so far as he was in God, what he has done is right and good.'" (K. Heim, *The Church of Christ*, etc., p. 78.) Are the theologians — the general run of them — making the sinner see his vile and desperate condition? "The prevalent conception of sin is fundamentally either Pelagian or Semi-Pelagian. Moxon judges that the statement that 'we are all Semi-Pelagians today' is not very far from the truth, 'since it is in close harmony with the tendencies of modern thought.' (*The Doctrine of Sin*, p. 13.) As a matter of fact, however, some have gone way beyond Semi-Pelagianism and outstripped even Pelagius himself in their volatilization of the concept of sin." (L. Berkhof, *Vicarious Atonement through Christ*, p. 35.) And have the Lutheran synergists retained the teaching of *De Servo Arbitrio*? Will they admit that man is totally corrupt, absolutely impotent in the spiritual sphere? Read the article in *Lehre und Wehre*, 1882, p. 144 ff., "Welche Haupt- und Grundlehren der Heiligen Schrift werden durch den Synergismus wesentlich verderbt und gefaelscht?" "Durch den Synergismus in jeglicher Gestalt wird wesentlich geschaedigt und verderbt zum ersten die Lehre von der Erbsuende." "Zum dritten faelscht und verderbt der Synergismus wesentlich die allertroestlichste Lehre der Heiligen Schrift, naemlich die Lehre von der Rechtfertigung des armen Suenders vor Gott" (p. 408). What a Church sows with respect to the doctrine of original sin it reaps with respect to the doctrine of grace.

**It is a terrible thing for a Lutheran to deny the total corruption**

of human nature, whether he does it in the gross manner of Pelagianism or in the subtle manner of synergism. Such a man betrays Luther. He is faithless to the trust God committed to him by the hand of Luther.<sup>43)</sup> But worse, he thereby commits treason against the Gospel of saving grace. "Es ist auch nicht zufaellig, dass der Gegensatz Luthers gegen Rom gerade in dem dogmatischen Lehrstueck von der Erbsuende seine schaarfste Auspraegung erfahren hat. Wer etwa wiederum Luthers Ausfuehrungen ueber die Erbsuende aus den Schmalkaldischen Artikeln vergleicht [Trigl., p. 478], kann unmoeglich Luthers scharfes Urteil als eine beilaeufige Aeusserung verharmlosen, wenn er von der Leugnung der Erbsuende sagt, das sei eine 'recht heidnische Lehre, die wir nicht leiden koennen; denn wo diese Lehre recht sollt' sein, so ist Christus vergeblich gestorben, weil kein Schaden noch Suende im Menschen ist, dafuer er sterben muesste.' Noch umfassender und schaarfer hat Luther diese Lehre in seiner vielleicht groessten reformatorischen Schrift, in 'De Servo Arbitrio,' vertreten. In diesem gewaltigen geistigen Gespraech mit dem groessten humanistischen Geist seiner Epoche, Erasmus, hat Luther deshalb an der Lehre von der Erbsuende festgehalten, weil seine gesamte Glaubenserfahrung auf der Erkenntnis beruhte, 'dass ich nicht aus eigener Vernunft noch Kraft an Jesum Christum, meinen Herrn, glauben oder zu ihm kommen kann.'" (Dr. H. Lilje, in *Allg. Ev.-Luth. Kz.*, Dec. 10, 1937.) Ruthlessly we shall strip natural man of all his dignity and of all his powers; then he will be ready for the *sola gratia* in conversion and justification.

Another most important Bible truth stressed by Luther is the article of *gratia universalis*. The curse of original sin is universal; thank God, the grace of God is universal, too, and extends over all men. And we thank Luther for proclaiming this blessed truth so loudly, so eagerly. "It is the Gospel voice and the sweetest consolation to miserable sinners where Ezekiel saith, 'I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked but that the wicked turn from his way and live,' 33:11. And it is in all respects like unto that of Ps. 30:5. and that of Ps. 36:7 and that of Christ, Matt. 11:28: 'Come unto Me, all ye that labor'; and also that of Ex. 20:6. And

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43) "Fuer jeden, der Luther etwas kennt, ist es kein Zweifel, dass er mit der Tatsache einer Erbsuende furchtbar Ernst macht. Er erlaeutert das in dem Lied fuer seine Kirche 'Dem Teufel ich gefangen lag, Im Tod war ich verloren, Mein' Suend' mich quaelte Nacht und Tag, Darin ich war geboren.' . . . Wieder ist es die Aufklaerung gewesen, die mit ihrem leichtbeschwingten Optimismus diese Lehre abbaute. . . . Aber war das dann nicht alles Abfall von Luther oder, wenn man es ethisch nimmt, 'Verrat' an ihm? . . . Mit dieser Renaissance erlebte Luther seinen schaarfsten Zusammenstoss: Erasmus! Da rissen Tiefen auf." (Prof. H. Preuss, in *Allg. Ev.-Luth. Kz.*, Oct. 29, 1937.)

what is more than half of the Holy Scripture but mere promises of grace, by which mercy, life, peace, and salvation are extended from God unto men?" (P. 167. — XVIII, 1791.) "Luther fairly revels in such texts." (*Trigl.*, *Hist. Introd.*, p. 210.)

The rumor has gone out that Luther, at least when he wrote *De Servo Arbitrio*, was under the spell of determinism. The gossips tell each other that this book has a Calvinistic slant. Have they read the book? Why, Luther fairly revels in such texts as praise the universality of grace. "God determines that His Gospel, which is necessary unto all, should be confined to no place, no time, but that it should be preached unto all, at all times, and in all places" (p. 62). "This word 'I desire not the death of a sinner' does nothing else than preach and offer divine mercy to the world" (p. 170). "God deplores that death which He finds in His people and which He desires to remove from them" (p. 172). And you dare not interpret that Calvinistically, for on the next page Luther says: "He desires that all men should be saved, seeing that He comes unto all by the Word of Salvation." "The God Incarnate, I say, was sent for this purpose, that He might desire, speak, do, suffer, and offer unto all, all things that are necessary unto salvation" (p. 181). "The meaning of John [John 1:12] is this — that by the coming of Christ into the world, by His Gospel, by which grace was offered but not works required, a full opportunity was given to all men of becoming the sons of God if they would believe. . . . John therefore is preaching, not the power of 'free will' but the riches of the kingdom of God offered to the world by the Gospel" (p. 198 f.).

The only reason why men are lost is because they reject the grace of God. *God would have all men to be saved!* "God desires that all men should be saved, . . . and it is the fault of the will, which does not receive Him, as He saith Matt. 23:37: 'And ye would not'" (p. 173). "The God Incarnate, then, here speaks thus: 'I would, and thou wouldest not'" (p. 181). "John is preaching the riches of the kingdom of God offered to the world by the Gospel and signifying at the same time how few there are who receive it, that is, from the enmity of the 'free will' against it, the power of which is nothing else than this: Satan reigning over it and causing it to reject grace" (p. 199). No, no, Luther does not slur the article of universal grace. He made much of the *sola gratia* — on that our assurance of salvation rests. And he made much of the *gratia universalis* — on that our assurance of salvation rests.

Men say you cannot hold both, *sola gratia* and *gratia universalis*. The Calvinist is willing to teach the *sola gratia* on the authority of Scripture, but he cannot rid himself of the idea that the historical fact that many are not saved renders the teaching of

universal grace impossible; Scripture cannot be trusted at this point. The synergist has the *idée fixe* that, since grace is universal, the reason why only some are saved while others are lost must be that the former excel the latter in some way; what Scripture says on the *SOLA gratia* must be modified in some way. Moved by rationalistic considerations, the Calvinist and the synergist declare that you cannot teach both, salvation by grace and universal grace. Luther could teach both. He had a full share of the human *ratio* and saw the difficulty that here arises as well as the Calvinist and the synergist. But he also had a full share of Christian sense and was willing to defer the solution of this difficulty to the *lumen gloriae*. (See final instalment of this series.) Meanwhile, to meet the exigencies of the present sinful world, he taught the article of saving grace in its fulness. The terrified sinner needs to be told that grace does *everything*. And he needs to be told that grace extends over *all*.<sup>44)</sup>

Let us take the time to review one more article as treated in *De Servo Arbitrio*. It is the fundamental doctrine of the means of grace. Where can I find the saving grace? That is a question of life or death to the terrified sinner. Let Luther answer it. Dr. Pieper says: "I know of no writing of Luther in which he so often and so forcefully, and that *ex professo*, inculcates the truth that every sinner should and can, with all confidence, lay hold of, and rely on, the *revealed* God, that is, on the *means of grace*, as his writing against Erasmus. 'The God Incarnate' [that is, God in Christ and in the means of grace], then, here speaks thus: 'I would, and thou wouldst not!' The God Incarnate, I say, was sent for this purpose, that He might desire, speak, do, suffer, and *offer unto all, all things* that are necessary unto salvation.'" (*Chr. Dogm.*, II, p. 181; quotation on p. 181, *Bondage*, etc. — XVIII:1802.) Luther teaches that the grace of God can be found in no other way, at no other place, than in the means of grace. "Why does God not do what He does without the Word when He can do all things without the Word? I answer: Thus it pleaseth God — not to give the Spirit without the Word, but through the Word" (p. 193). Luther instructs the sinner to go to the Gospel for the forgiveness of sins, the grace of God. The Gospel bestows it (*vis dativa*): "The Gospel is nothing else than the Word, by which are offered unto us the Spirit, grace, and the remission of sins obtained for us by Christ Crucified; and all entirely free." (P. 187. — XVIII:1806.) "John is preaching, not the power of 'free will' but the riches of the kingdom of God offered to the world by the Gospel" (p. 199). And this same Gospel creates and strengthens faith (*vis effectiva*):

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<sup>44)</sup> More on this section in *Lehre und Wehre*, 1871, p. 166 ff.; Pieper, *Chr. Dogm.*, II, 595 f.

"By the Gospel, as the Word of offered grace, the bruised and afflicted are called unto consolation" (p. 162). "God says, 'I desire not the death of a sinner.' If there were not these divine promises standing, by which consciences afflicted with a sense of sin and terrified at the fear of death and judgment might be raised up, what place would there be for pardon or for hope? . . . With these words God is raising up, and comforting, the sinner lying under this affliction and desperation that He might not 'break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax' but raise him to the hope of pardon and salvation in order that he might be further converted, that is, by the conversion unto salvation from the fear of death, and that he might live, that is, might be in peace and rejoice in a good conscience" (p. 168 f.). The grace of God, which supplies every need of the sinner, is stored up in the means of grace, and this storehouse, filled to overflowing, is open to every sinner. "God determines that His Gospel, which is necessary unto all, should be confined to no place, no time, but that it should be preached unto all, at all times, and in all places" (p. 62).

Luther was a fit preacher of the grace of God in Christ. Let every minister of the Gospel of grace continue to study under Luther.

(To be concluded)

TH. ENGELDER

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## Kleine Danielstudien

### 4. Zwei merkwürdige Gesichte Daniels unter Belsazer

Die vier Weltreiche und das Reich des Menschensohns, Kap. 7

Mit dem 7. Kapitel beginnen die Gesichte Daniels, nachdem die ersten sechs Kapitel die an göttlichen Wundern so reiche Geschichte dieses Gottesmannes geschildert haben. Daniel schaute diese wunderbaren Gesichte, die besonders dem Buche seinen apokalyptischen Charakter geben, unter den verschiedenen in den früheren Artikeln geschilderten morgenländischen Herrschern, unter Belsazer, Kap. 7, 1; 8, 1; Darius, 9, 1; Cyrus, 10, 1. Vgl. das im Aprilheft, S. 275, und im Maiheft, S. 340, Gesagte und über die sogenannte Apokalypsil, S. 337. Auch in der folgenden Darstellung, namentlich in den historischen Ausführungen, benutzen wir wieder die S. 340 genannten Werke, besonders Stofman.

Die erste Vision, die Daniel sieht, ist ein Traumbild von den vier Weltreichen und dem Reich des Menschensohns. Genau wird die Zeit angegeben, in der sie ihm zuteil wurde, im ersten Jahr des Königs Belsazer, Kap. 7, 1. Die Erzählung greift also in der Zeit zurück, da Kap. 5 schon der Untergang Belsazers und Kap. 6 die Regierung des Darius geschildert war. Es ist eine große Vision, die Daniel hier hat,