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That Review of Pastor Goerss's Book in the "Lutheran"

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wrote me kindly. I did not dare to reply with equal kindness on account of the sycophants" — the papists.

Bishop Tunstall on June 5 or July 7, 1523, wrote Erasmus Luther had made God the author of all wickedness by denying free will and had abolished the Mass, the next step to abolishing Christ, and called on Erasmus by all that is holy to grapple with this Cerberus, this Proteus, nay, rather, this atheist.

Hesius to Blossius on October 26, 1523: "It would have been better for Christianity if Erasmus had never touched theology or written anything on these matters. Many people think he would have done less evil in openly siding with Luther than by walking on two feet and seeming to range himself now with one party, now with the other."

To Cardinal Campeggi on January 19, 1524: "I am become like Hercules. For, while I am fighting here with the Lutherans as with a many-headed hydra, a crab has inserted his teeth in my foot at Rome. Again Stunica . . . has made me out to be a follower of Luther, whether I will or not."

Pope Clement VII was the third Holy Father to beg Erasmus to do what he could against Luther and early in 1524 sent him 200 florins.

Erasmus reasoned: "If, as it appears from the wonderful success of Luther's cause, God wills all this and He has perhaps judged that such a drastic surgeon as Luther is necessary for the corruption of these times, then it is not my business to withstand Him."

WM. DALLMANN

That Review of Pastor Goerss's Book in the "Lutheran"

On page 18 of the *Lutheran* of March 16 we find a review of Pastor Daniel F. Goerss's book of sermons "In the Upper Room." The reviewer, Rev. Carroll J. Rockey, while bestowing some praise upon these sermons, takes issue with Rev. Goerss on a number of statements. A few of these he classifies as minor points. We shall not enter upon a discussion of them; they are comparatively insignificant.

But then he "takes decided issue" with a major tenet, as he calls it. He attacks the statement of Rev. Goerss concerning election. Rev. Goerss had written that believers in Christ are elected to be believers by God Himself, even as God reveals to us that He has predestinated us believers unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself according to the good pleasure of His will, and that He has chosen us believers in Christ before the foundation of the world. We are surprised that any one who

claims to base his acceptance of religious teaching upon the Word of Scripture should take exception to this teaching, for it is the very explicit doctrine of the Bible itself. Let us ask, Did the disciples choose to be disciples, or did God choose them and elect them to be disciples? Jesus expressly tells them: "Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you," John 15:16. Did Abraham choose to be the father of the faithful, or did God choose him and make him such? Did David choose to be the ancestor and type of the Messiah, or did God elect him to be such? Did Paul elect and choose to be the great apostle to the Gentiles, or was it God who separated him from his mother's womb and called him by His grace? Gal. 1:15. Does Paul say, By my own choice and power I am what I am? Does he not say: "By the grace of God I am what I am"? 1 Cor. 15:10. God asks every believer: "What hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now, if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?" 1 Cor. 4:7.

That is what Rev. Goerss teaches. That is what we teach upon the basis of the express words of God Himself. If any one on this account accuses us of teaching that a man is lost because God did not choose him, he simply betrays his ignorance. When we speak of Judas, Saul, and all others who are finally lost, we designate their own sin and unbelief as the cause of their perdition. That is exactly what the Bible does. When speaking of those who believe and are saved, the Bible everywhere bases their salvation upon the election of God in Christ Jesus. But when speaking of those who are lost and those who perish, their own sin and unbelief are always mentioned as the cause of their damnation. And just so we are to teach, and just so Rev. Goerss teaches.

Moreover, if that reviewer has at other times repeated what just about all English-speaking Christians say, he has said the same thing. Has he never sung: "Praise God, from whom all blessings flow"? "All" means one hundred per cent. That attributes the salvation of believers to God alone. God saved them. He chose the believer, gave Him faith, and preserved him in it. Their salvation is one hundred per cent. the work of almighty God. Therefore those who are saved praise God's grace, praise God's election, praise the love of Jesus and His perfect sacrifice and atonement, praise the work of the Holy Spirit, and attribute all, all, to God and His gracious work alone.

On the other hand, there is not one single case in the Bible of one who could truthfully blame God for his sin or for any part of it. Indeed, where is the Christian that would not at once see the blasphemy in such a statement as this: "I will confess myself guilty of ninety-nine per cent. of my sin, but one per cent.

is to be charged to God Himself for not preserving me"? No, the truthful, repentant sinner assumes all the blame for his sin, and the believer attributes all the good, every whit of it, — faith, works, perseverance, patience, and final victory, — entirely and alone to God. Now some one will interject, "But how do you harmonize these two statements?" We answer: We do not attempt it. They cannot be harmonized by man, therefore we do not even attempt it.

And now, it dare never be forgotten that it is not only here in this doctrine of election that we are face to face with such a mystery, but it is in other doctrines as well. For instance, we say that there is only one God, absolutely only one divine Being, and then we say that in this one Being there are three persons, and that these three persons are not three Eternal Ones, but there is only one Eternal One, only one Almighty One. Can our reason fathom this or harmonize these truths? If I insist on the truth that there is only one God, not three, only one divine Being, not three, only one Almighty One, only One who is eternal, not three, only One who knows all things, am I thereby denying the doctrine of the Trinity? The Jews think so, but no Christian claims this. And when I teach that there are three divine persons, namely, that the Father is God, that the Son is God, that the Holy Spirit is God, am I denying that there is only one divine Being? No!

Again, if I teach that Jesus is a true man, that He lived and developed in the womb of His mother, that He was born as other children are born, that He drank the milk from His mother's breast, that He increased in stature, that He learned and thus increased in knowledge; if I teach that Jesus walked about, absented Himself from one place and visited another place, that He slept, that He died, do I then deny that He is the true God, beside whom there is no other God, that God who made heaven and earth? No orthodox teacher will accuse me of that.

Again, we are told expressly that Jesus was delivered "by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." He had to go through this suffering, it was God's decision, it was His own choice, as He says Himself: "I lay down My life that I might take it again. No man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again," John 10:17, 18. Why, then, are the Jews condemned and punished? Why is Pilate condemned for crucifying Christ? Who can harmonize this? —

A theologian has not gone far into theology if he has not thoroughly learned what Paul tells us in 1 Cor. 13: "We know in part, and we prophesy in part," and: "Now we see through a glass, darkly." There are many truths in Scripture which seem to contradict other truths. It is folly to seek to harmonize all of

these. Each truth is to be taught in its proper place for its proper purpose. God has never shown us how to fit all these truths into one whole, and we ought not to be so foolish as to attempt it. We should rather exclaim with Paul, Rom. 11:33, 34: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been His counselor?" And with Augustine: "*Iudicia Dei multa occulta, iniusta nulla.*" Is not this whole world the greatest miracle of all? There are so many problems of space, time, purpose, which we cannot solve; we leave them all to God.

We teach and believe that Abraham, Joseph, Moses, David, and many others were elected and chosen by God Himself for the very work that they were to do and by God taken up into glory. But whoever declares that Pharaoh, Saul, Caiaphas, Pilate, Judas, and Demas were lost because God did not elect them blasphemes God, profanes the name of God, and slanders God in the most shameful manner. These men were lost and condemned because of their own sin and unbelief.

Again, let us ask the reviewer, Does he not believe that God foreknows all things? Did Jesus not foreknow just how He was going to die and that He was going to be raised again on the third day? Is there anything in the future which God does not exactly foreknow? If that is true, why do we still pray when we know very well that everything must happen just according to God's foreknowledge? All who think that they can solve these mysteries belong to those who think themselves wise in the realm of religious knowledge, but in reality they are proud and know nothing, 1 Tim. 6:4. The Bible teaches that God foreknows all things, and that same Bible commands us to pray, and that same Bible promises that every right prayer in Jesus' name will be heard. The Bible, moreover, relates many cases of the hearing of prayer. How all these things can be true, how one agrees with the other, we do not know, we do not give it a moment's thought. We believe in each case what God's Word teaches, and we proclaim just that, and then we know that we are proclaiming "sound speech, which cannot be condemned." But those who criticize such sound speech and wish to teach other doctrines in its place are simply "deceiving by God's name," something so horrible that we hardly know of anything more detestable than that.

MARTIN S. SOMMER