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## Miscellanea

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4, 7. — Und nun fügt der gnädige Herr noch ein weiteres Geschenk hinzu, vertraut uns noch viel herrlichere Güter an, belohnt uns über Denken und Erwarten. Welch eine schändliche, fluchwürdige Gesinnung ist doch die Untreue, die das ihr verliehene Pfund vergräbt, sich weigert, ihrem gnädigen Herrn zu dienen, es ihm unmöglich macht, ihr die Fülle seiner Gnade zu erweisen! Und Welch ein mächtiger Ansporn zu rechter, eifriger Treue im Dienst des Herrn ist die unaussprechliche Gnade unsers Heilandes, der uns zu solchem Dienst befähigt und ihn so herrlich belohnt! Herr, mache uns treu!      L. J. Kästch

### Miscellanea

#### Must We Relinquish Luther on John 5:39 and Gal. 4:4?

In a review on our recently published book *Faith of Our Fathers*, the *Lutheran Church Quarterly*, liberal scholastic journal of the U. L. C. A., criticizes the time-old exposition (made popular in Lutheran circles by the great Reformer) of the passages mentioned in the heading. The reviewer writes: "John 5:39 has received exegetical mishandling for centuries. The author does this when he quotes 'Search the Scriptures' as an imperative. [The popular presentation, of course, forbade all critical discussion.] The context forbids this. . . . It is to be regretted that a professor of exegetical theology allows his wish to cause him to miss the only sane exegesis of some passages of Scripture." With regard to Gal. 4:4 he says: "He finds a proof for the Virgin Birth in Gal. 4:4. We wonder whether he is disturbed by the fact that in all the epistles there is no reference to the Virgin Birth." (Italics our own.) Then he goes on to say that "this is quoting Scripture to one's purpose; in fact, it places it under a severe strain to meet a supposed need. [Sic!] A mischievous person might use this phrase to prove the opposite; then, how would our author meet him?"

There are chiefly two reasons that have induced us to reply to this criticism. In the first place, there is today a tendency in liberal circles to deny in a large number of passages all those definite proof values which our orthodox Lutheran dogmaticians and exegetes have found in them and thus gradually to undermine the very foundation on which our Christian doctrine is built. In the Old Testament, Moderns have practically done away with every Messianic prophecy, in all these cases "quoting Scripture to their purpose." In the present controversy about the verbal (plenary) inspiration and the sole authority of Scripture our present-day freethinking dogmatists in Lutheran circles and without scarcely allow a single passage to stand as qualified to support these two basic doctrines of Christianity. Shall we, then, not defend what may be defended? In the second place, Luther's interpretation of John 5:39 (the imperative reading) puts into the mouth of our Savior a definite proof force for verbal inspiration and the infallible authority of Scripture (cf. Hengstenberg on this point), which rationalistic theologians in the



U. L. C. A. thoroughly dislike. Not we, but *they*, "place Scripture under a severe strain to meet a supposed need" and "quote Scripture to one's purpose." The matter certainly is worth our closest study.

Meyer, in his *Commentary*, quotes for Luther's *imperative* reading of John 5:39 (which is also that of the Authorized Version and practically that of all conservative modern Bible translations) among many others the following exponents: Calvin, Calov, Tholuck, Hofmann, Luthardt, Ewald, and Hengstenberg, while in ancient times the indicative reading was defended by Cyril of Alexandria and later by Beza, Erasmus, Bengel, Olshausen, De Wette, Godet, etc. Meyer himself opposes the imperative reading as being in opposition to the context.

Those who take *eraunate* as an *indicative* (you do search) read the passage as follows: "You search the Scriptures because *you* (in contrast to Me, *erroneously*) believe in them to have eternal life (*viz.*, by studying them as you do, namely, without finding Me in them); and they are testifying concerning Me, and you do not want to come to Me that you may have life." At once the reader will perceive that this "only sane exegesis" leaves this passage without a proper point, though according to the context it forms a powerful climax to Christ's impassioned address, in which He cites three witnesses on behalf of His Messiahship: His works (v. 36), the Father (v. 37), and His Word (v. 38), that is to say, the Scriptures (v. 39). In other words, Christ's fervid plea ineffectively tallspins to the ground, His most earnest defense of His divine mission terminating in a weak anticlimax.

Luther's *imperative* version, on the contrary, is much more expressive and contextually more fitting. Christ declares: "I have three undeniable, infallible witnesses of My Saviorship: My divine works (v. 36), the personal testimony of My Father (v. 37; cf. Matt. 3:17; 17:5), and His Word, which you reject (v. 38)." Then He proceeds to plead with His listeners: "Just study the Scriptures; search them most carefully, for you (rightly) regard them as the Book of Life, which truly they are since they testify of Me; and (yet, despite their clear testimony concerning Me) you do not want to come to Me in order that you may have life."

Luther writes on this passage: "Christ means to tell the Pharisees, in effect: Since you have so much light (which the Sadducees have not), search and study the Scriptures and continue as you have begun to seek in them eternal life. But I am going to give you a new gloss and explanation of the Holy Scriptures, which as yet you do not know, in order that you may read them rightly and not err: See to it that you wipe your eyes and open them rightly and so study the Scriptures that you may find Me, Me, therein. He who reads them thus that he finds Me therein is the true Master of the Scriptures; in his eyes there is no dust, and he will surely have life in them. But if you have not found Me therein, you have truly not studied and understood them rightly, and you do not have life; even if [then] you should read them a thousand times and scan the pages, nevertheless all that is good for nothing and useless. The word is (cf. Is. 34:16: 'Seek ye out of the book of the Lord and read,' to which Christ no doubt refers): 'Search the Scrip-



tures'; that you understand well, but that they bear witness of Me, this you do not understand." (St. L. Ed., 7, 2178.)

Dr. R. C. H. Lenski, in his excellent *Commentary on John's Gospel*, strongly defends this *imperative reading* of Luther. He writes (among other things): "The imperative fits the entire situation; the indicative requires modifications, which we have no right to make. The situation is that Jesus introduces the Father with the *Scriptures* as His all-decisive Witness (v. 37). Really this great Witness is a stranger to the Jews, and thus, of course, they have never known His testimony (v. 38), although it was given long ago (v. 37). Jesus tells the Jews: 'Here is My Witness—examine Him! This testimony He gave long ago—search it!' He simply could not say to these Jews: 'You are already searching it.' If Jesus should want to say that, He would have to add: 'You are indeed searching it, but in the wrong way.' And then He would have to indicate what is wrong and what the right way is. He does nothing of the kind. Yet this the pleaders for the indicative make Jesus say nevertheless: 'You Jews are searching only outwardly, only the bare letter of the Old Testament, only in your sterile, rabbinical fashion.' Not one word of this is in what Jesus says. And, of course, also not one word of what then Jesus certainly ought to add, namely, how these Jews should correct their false way of searching. . . . Thus only when *eramate* is the imperative, does it fit the situation; a mere indicative would muddle it completely. It is the same situation over again as between Isaiah and his opponents, Is. 8:20." The reader will do well to study the entire exegesis of this passage as given by Dr. Lenski, one of the greatest theologians the (former) Ohio Synod has ever produced, both in doctrinal and exegetical theology. (Cf. Lenski's exposition *sub v.*)

With regard to Gal. 4: 4: "made of a woman," *genomenon ek gunaikos*, we admit that the emphasis here rests primarily upon the incarnation of God's Son. Yet what believing theologian can read this peculiar phrase without feeling much as did Luther, who in his more extensive exegesis on Galatians writes: "He is not descended from a man and woman, but only from the woman (*vom weiblichen Geschlecht*). For this reason, since he [Paul] mentions only the woman, it is the same (when he says 'made of a woman') as if he had said, He was made of a *virgin*." (St. L. Ed., 9, 483 f.)

Also on this point Dr. Lenski follows Luther when he writes: "Now comes the vain struggle of so many to eliminate the Virgin Birth from this passage. These can be divided into two groups: those who determine *a priori* the absolute impossibility of such a birth and do not shrink from whatever this involves, cancelation of Matthew's and Luke's accounts, maltreatment of every expression that declares the deity of our Lord, etc.; secondly, those who are affected more or less by the argumentation of the former. Against all of them stands the Church of the ages with its faith in the statements of the Word. The one aim of the Church is to read what the Word says and then to believe that. 'The Son of God' is the Second Person of the Godhead; He 'became out of a woman' in executing His mission. This is the Incarnation, the miraculous conception, the Virgin Birth. God's Son became man, the God-man! The



expression with *ek* denotes more than the separation from the womb; it includes the entire human nature of the Son as derived from His human mother. For this thought *genomenon* is exactly the right word; even the tense is very accurate. The Son's going out from God on His great mission is seen in His becoming man. He did not cease to be the Son of God when He became man. He did not drop His deity—an impossible thought! He remained what He was and added what He had not been, namely, human nature, derived out of a woman, a human mother. He became the God-man. . . . It is true, *the Galatians knew that 'out of a woman' means the Virgin Mary and that Paul does not need to mention her name or her virginity in this connection. But these specifications are side-thoughts. . . . Does birth, or does it not, involve conception? Why these attempts to trim down what Paul says? 'His Son—out of a woman' pointedly omits mention of a human father. Why? Because this is God's Son, coeternal with the Father. He became man by way of 'a woman' alone. Incomprehensible? Absolutely so!*" (Cf. *sub v.*)

Dr. Lenski's argumentation also here is cogent and does not "place Scripture under a severe strain to meet a supposed need."

J. THEODORE MUELLER

### Do We Need a Reliable Bible?

On this question the Rev. Philip S. Landes of Princeton contributes an article to the *Presbyterian* which is helpful. There are some things in it which are wrong, for instance, when in the section which will be submitted the authority of Christ is placed above the authority of the Scriptures. Let the reader compare the recent articles by Dr. Engelder in this journal in which the antithesis Christ or the Scriptures is proved false. That, however, the degrading of the Bible to the status of a fallible book leads, and has led, to disastrous results, results which are not in keeping with what God has told us about the effects of His Word, is correctly emphasized by the writer.

"The new theologians affirm quite earnestly that Jesus Christ, the living Word of God, is our supreme authority in matters of faith and practise and that we must go to Him to settle disputed points. They point out that the living Word of God is above the written Word, and they are quite right about this but are not clear as to how we are to discover what is the will and teaching of Christ. The conservative theologian will appeal to the Scriptures, but the new theologian will presumably appeal directly to the living Word of God, whom he knows by personal encounter. We are confident that the living Word would give him no other answer, in a specific case like that of Paul versus James, than that which He has already given in His written Word: 'Ye search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they testify of Me.' Thus we are driven back to the written Word to know the mind of the living Word of God. The new theologians would hardly be so bold as to say that they can consult the living Word directly, in some specific case, and have Him hand down a decision to them personally. They,



too, must refer to the written Word as the foundation of their theology; but, as we have seen, it is a mutilated and uncertain written Word to which they must refer. They must needs lean upon a reed which they themselves have broken.

"Should the new theologians insist upon their personal encounter with Jesus Christ as the Source and Foundation of their theology, we have but to point out that church history proves beyond any doubt that, whenever men have abandoned the authority of the written Word for a personal illumination, originating in their experience of conversion or in their communion with God, indispensable and valuable as it is, they cannot give us a right system of belief unless it is submitted to the corrective guidance of the written Word of God.

"As far as the Old Testament is concerned, archeology has administered the most crushing defeats to the 'assured results' of the destructive critics. Many of the alleged anachronisms and discrepancies of the Old Testament have disappeared in the clear light of archeological discoveries. In the case of the New Testament the alleged contradictions and errors have been dissipated, time and again, by sound scholarship.

"The new theologians are convinced that they are rendering a great service by showing how they can hold to a supernatural Christianity and at the same time harbor their doubts about the reliability of the Bible. It is possible that this approach of the Theology of Crisis may be helpful to some whose faith has been wrecked; but if they are logical, they will perceive that, if the Bible fails us, we have no other reliable source from which to derive trustworthy knowledge in regard to our divine Lord, the living Word of God. If they are logical, they will see that the only sure foundation for a consistent system of theology is the unbroken written Word of God.

"And now the new theologians are asking us to retreat from the position we have successfully defended against the assaults of Modernism, to shelter ourselves with them behind the recently erected fortifications of the Crisis Theology. But before we decide to beat a hasty retreat to this new shelter, we would do well to examine carefully the new defenses.

"We are deeply indebted to the New Theology for its emphasis on the great saving truths of the Gospel, and we trust that ere long the new theologians will come forward to join our ranks in the defense of the Bible as our only infallible rule of faith and practise."

A.

### A Business Man Looks to Calvary

Under this caption *Moody Monthly* prints a message delivered by Mr. Philip A. Benson at a Good Friday service in the Olympia, Detroit, before an attendance estimated at 10,000. Mr. Benson is president of the Dime Savings Bank, Brooklyn, and president of the American Bankers' Association. He is also a member of the Board of Trustees of the Moody Bible Institute. In his address Mr. Benson made the following noble confession:

"The object of this meeting has to do, however, with a subject of much greater importance and significance to every human being than any other could be — the theme of Calvary. You may be sure that I approach this subject with a feeling of inadequacy, realizing how unworthy I am to speak on it. Let me say, however, that I remember clearly the first time Calvary meant something real to me. I was a boy then but troubled about sin and salvation. A faithful servant of Christ pointed me to the cross and to the One who died there for me. I accepted Christ as my Savior then and there. What He did on Calvary became my hope and my confidence and the basis of my peace with God. This was life's most important experience to me.

"However, I do not want to stress experience too much. That is not what counts. It is Calvary, it is the Christ of Calvary, it is the great atoning sacrifice made on the cross that matters. I am looking today, as you are if you are a believer, not at self or at any experience or feeling, but at the One who said, 'I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me,' John 12:32. . . .

"You business and professional men are used to looking facts in the face. Let's remove mere sentiment and face the facts about Calvary and the One known to men as Jesus of Nazareth, who died there. If this One is not God, as He claimed to be, then Calvary has no significance. It was just another murder — a miscarriage of justice! If He is not God, then there is no salvation, no light beyond the grave, no hope of a home in heaven with those we love, no knowledge of God at all. If He is not God, life is a hopeless struggle, a disappointment, a tragic nightmare!

"But He is God! He died for our sins, and thus He brought us to God. He opened heaven's gates and gave us eternal life and peace and joy. Life, because of Christ, means everything. It means opportunity for service and preparation for the fuller life to come." T. L.

