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A Cry of Distress and a Plea for Justice.

Too late for notice in our last issue there came to us from the German Evangelical Mission Aid Society of Berlin-Steglitz the English edition of an address which Dr. Theol. Karl Axenfeld, Director of Missions, delivered before the annual convention of the Mission Aid Society in 1919. Though three valuable months have elapsed since the receipt of this address, the readers, we doubt not, will agree with us that its intrinsic value, its defense of eternal and essential rights, is such that even at this somewhat belated date the message of the speaker should be reiterated here. It is a simple plea for fundamental justice, and is well founded, particularly if one studies Article 438 of the Peace Treaty. We hold no brief for the Mission Aid Society, whose confessional basis is not fully known to us, nor do we subscribe to every sentiment expressed in the address. What the speaker, however, is battling for is an inalienable right of the Church of Jesus Christ, common and dear to every member of the Church.

The title of Dr. Axenfeld's address is, "Germany's Battle for the Freedom of the Christian Missions." The author says:—

The imminent conclusions of peace will not only bring about a great transformation in the political and economic life of the nations, but intellectual values, as well as the spiritual and the *religious*, are at hazard. There is a great danger that these most precious possessions of mankind will not be sufficiently regarded in the battle for wealth and power.

The chief point at issue, however, cannot be confined to the acquisition of additional territory by certain nations, nor to the reinforcement of

“I Have the Man, the Lord!”

The prophecies of Christ were the substance and foundation of the faith of the children of God in the Old Testament. In them they heard of their salvation through the One whom God intended to send. On them they built their hope of salvation and without them they had no such hope. The scripture: “This is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent,” John 17, 3, has not become the truth since Christ came, but was the truth in that time when the faithful expected Christ to come; “for to Him give all the prophets witness, that through His name, whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins,” Acts 10, 43. To disavow the prophecies of Christ, or to eliminate Him from them, is equivalent to breaking up the foundation of the Old Testament belief. Without Christ the religious exercises, the ceremonies and customs, and especially the sacrifices of the ancient children of God become empty forms, which availed them nothing. Without Christ these sacred acts lose all essentials by which they differ from the religious exercises of the heathen nations of antiquity, even though they still seem

to retain a finer and nobler character, because they no longer serve to reveal nor to glorify Him who was to come. Without Christ the wonderful structure of the Old Testament belief falls to pieces.

Even for the Christian of the New Testament the Messianic prophecies have lost nothing of their glory and importance. For us they are witnesses of the highest order and bring indisputable proof for the correctness of our faith that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah of God. Though His miracles, His words, and His entire life manifest it abundantly, yet it pleases Jesus to establish the divine character of His person and mission also by the evidence laid down long ago in the writings of the holy men of God. To us New Testament Christians Jesus Himself recommends a diligent search of the Old Testament Scriptures; "for they," says He, "are they which testify of Me," John 5, 39. The picture which the prophets drew of Christ is an exact likeness of Him. If the reality differs from the prediction, then the reality is wrong, because "the Scripture cannot be broken," John 10, 35. If our Christ does not conform completely to all the detailed traits foretold, then He is not the true Christ. But our Christ is the Christ of the prophets.

The interpretation of these prophecies is therefore not a matter of our will or fancy. To interpret any prophecy according to a preconceived notion is a grave offense against that very prophecy. As Scripture must be interpreted by Scripture, we must look for the interpretation and fulfilment of the prophecy in the Scripture. There God, who gave the prophecy, Himself recorded its fulfilment. If God has not recorded it, we must exercise the utmost care to remain with the simple sense of the words of the prophecy before we attempt an "interpretation." We must first of all try to find the exact meaning of what God said, and must beware of putting a strange meaning into His words.

It is of peculiar interest to read that the very first prophecy

of Christ was misinterpreted and therefore misapplied on the occasion when its first application to an individual seemed possible. This was a grievous error and was thoroughly exposed by God. Yet this false interpretation did not proceed from an unbelieving heart, as it usually happens, but came from a heart yearning for the immediate fulfilment of God's promise. Let us meditate on this matter. We find it recorded Gen. 3, 15—4, 16.

THE EXPECTATION.

Adam and Eve had been expelled from the Garden of Eden. The days of sublime joy and happiness were gone. The serene peace of God no longer rested on the earth. Now the curse of God was at work. The ground brought forth thorns and thistles. For his living Adam began to till the ground whence he was taken. He ate the herb of the field, and in the sweat of his face he ate his bread. Life no more was free from care and worry, but was filled with toil. It was labor and sorrow in which he spent all the days of his life. In this misery Adam and Eve longed to return to the exquisite beauty of the Garden, but the angel guarded the way to it. They felt wretched in this misery. They saw the error of their way; they repented of it; they rebuked themselves for it. But all this did not bring them back to the first state of happiness. Yet there was one single hope. It was the "Seed of the Woman." He was coming to bring them back to the lost Paradise. Oh, how they wished for Him to come! O happy day when He would appear!

Adam and Eve tried to walk before God and to be perfect. In innocent singleness of heart they had done so in the Garden, but they could do so no more. Out of their hearts now proceeded evil thoughts. They no longer loved the Lord, their God, with all their heart, with all their soul, and with all their mind. Now they feared and tried to deceive Him. They daily sinned much, and indeed deserved nothing but punishment. When they thought over their deeds, their words, and their

thoughts of any one day, they realized indeed that they had great cause to say to God: Be merciful to us, poor sinful wretches! When they tried to do better the next time, they found that they did not succeed at all, and sighed: "Who can understand his errors? Cleanse Thou me from secret faults," Ps. 19, 12. "We are consumed by Thine anger, and by Thy wrath are we troubled. Thou hast set our iniquities before Thee, our secret sins in the light of Thy countenance. For all our days are passed away in Thy wrath: we spend our years as a tale that is told," Ps. 90, 7—9. They detested this awful unholliness, and longingly remembered how they had lived in perfect righteousness in Eden. To return to this life was their earnest desire. But how? There was only one way and one hope: "The Seed of the Woman." Oh, that He would come and restore them to righteousness!

When they still bore the image of God and were in Paradise, Adam and Eve had not resisted the wily approaches of Satan. Even then they had not kept the definite command of their kind God, with whom they communed as children do with their parents. Now they were under the baleful power of Satan, and the image of God had departed from them. How could they overcome Satan now, and how reconcile God? Satan they could not vanquish, and God they could not please. How, therefore, would they be able to redeem themselves? These circumstances, it would seem, made it perfectly clear to Adam and Eve that all their own efforts to rescue themselves were and needs must be futile. There simply was nothing which they could do to redeem themselves. But there was the hope of "the Seed of the Woman." And their helplessness and wretchedness certainly caused them to long for His coming.

For their hope of redemption, however, they had good ground because they had God's explicit promise for it. With their own ears they had heard the mouth of God declare that a state of enmity should exist between the Seed of the Woman and the seed of the serpent, until this enmity would culminate in a tremendous battle, in which the Redeemer was to vanquish

the evil Tempter completely. As God Himself established this enmity, it was certainly His intention to carry this warfare to a successful finish through His Redeemer. God Himself wanted to restore them to their first holiness and happiness, yea, even add to it. Eagerly therefore they waited for the appearance of God's Redeemer. They prayed that God would soon fulfil His promise; and with each new day they hoped that their unhappiness would end, and that glorious state begin in which they might again commune with God in perfect righteousness and innocence. More than any other mortal ever could, did they desire this condition, because they had once enjoyed the indescribable bliss of the just. It seems undeniable that the expectation of the coming Redeemer was ever uppermost in their hearts and wishes. Fervently they prayed, Come, O my Savior, come!

This expectation seemed to materialize when Adam's first child was born. No child ever was so welcome to its parents as was Cain. Here seemed to be the "Seed." In triumphant joy Eve exclaimed, "I have the Man, the Lord!" It was Christmas for them, and they celebrated the birth of their Savior. Prayers of thanksgiving rose to heaven. Though their redemption was not yet complete, God had at least sent Him who was to accomplish it. The promise of God seemed to be on the way to its fulfilment. For a time unbounded joy reigned in their hearts; but their joy was premature, and their expectations were doomed to sad disappointment.

THE DISILLUSIONMENT.

The Scriptures tell us nothing of the training which Cain received from his parents. We can only surmise that they brought him up with tender care. As the education of a prince needs careful attention, so the proper bringing up of the "Hope of Mankind" was no small matter. His parents surely told him of the glories of Paradise and of that dreadful day on which they listened to the wily voice of the Tempter and forgot the voice of God. They showed him the terrible results of

their sin, but also spoke of the promise that the "Seed of the Woman" should redeem them. Could they withhold from Cain their fond belief and hope that he was this Redeemer? It would rather seem that they did not. But could he be the Savior?

Possibly Adam and Eve used more leniency than wisdom in rearing their first-born, as old Eli also was weak with his sons; but we do not know. However, in his character Cain appears to have been wilful and conceited. He feels deeply humiliated when God accepts Abel's sacrifice and rejects his own. He evidently envies Abel. He seems to imagine that God ought to accept his sacrifice before he accepts that of Abel. Why? For what reason ought God to prefer his sacrifice? Is it because he thinks that he is the Man, the Lord? Perhaps. Even now God kindly warns Cain of the danger into which he is running, and tells him to rule over sin. But God's good counsel is thrown to the winds by Cain's pride. He nurses his envy of Abel. He cannot forget that Abel received that favor from God which he coveted. In his jealous mood he ignores God entirely and looks only on the object of his hatred. His wounded pride fans his hatred into an angry passion, and in a violent rage he rises against his brother and slays him. Thus the first son of Adam became a murderer. Could he be the Man, the Lord? No, for Cain "went out from the presence of the Lord."

Eve's expectations were shattered. Cain had brought the indisputable proof that he was not the Man, the Lord. Now there was no reason, apparent or real, for thinking that Cain might be the Redeemer. The Savior would not come to take life, but to bring it. Instead of increasing the existing misery, He was coming to reduce it and to bring joy and happiness. Cain, however, had added shame and disgrace to disappointment. He had inflicted a cruel wound on the hearts of his loving parents. He had caused their souls to writhe in agony and horror. And still his exposure was a necessity, as Eve's false interpretation of God's promise had to be, and thus was,

emphatically corrected. It constrained Cain's parents to seek and to find the true Man, the Lord.

Probably we have often wondered why the first event which the sacred history records of the happenings among the sons of Adam is a murder. It seems strange that we are told only what their occupations were, but nothing of their doings. The story of the murder, however, is related with complete detail. There evidently is a reason for this. It hardly can be only to show how rapidly sin grew worse in reality and appearance, although it does show this, or only to impress upon us the importance of resisting the first impulse to sin. It may be to show that from the beginning of history the wicked have persecuted the children of God, and that Abel is the first martyr. We know that our text is the divinely inspired chronicle of the events among fallen man and his relation to the revelation of Christ. It is God who selects these occurrences according to their relation to His promised Savior, and inspires His holy men to write them. It would seem therefore that this story is told because of its close connection with the words of Eve and the first promise. We know now that Cain never was God's Redeemer. But this fact had to be revealed and proved beyond dispute; and the murder was the means which did prove it. The murder completely shattered the false claims for Cain. He did it himself through his rash act, though expressly warned by God not to sin. The inscrutable wisdom of God used Cain's wickedness to correct the false interpretation which Eve had put on His prophecy, and God purposely records this correction with minute detail, both for our good and warning.

We may ask here why Eve had deceived herself in Cain. We must answer that it was positively her own fault, and not the fault of God at all. God had said nothing which might lead her to believe that Cain could be the Savior. He had spoken of the "Seed of the Woman." He had not spoken of an ordinary human child, but of one which was to come into this world by parthenogenesis, a method which Adam and Eve

knew was contrary to the order of nature which God had established in Paradise. He had promised a son who should have a human mother, but no human father. A virgin was to be the mother of the Savior. Eve was no virgin when she became the mother of Cain. This fact she overlooked. Furthermore, God had not revealed the time nor the place of the birth of the Virgin's son. He had told of His coming and the sure result of His mission, but no more. So much was enough for this time. More God would reveal when convenient. So Eve caused her own disappointment by disregarding or forgetting the plain meaning of the word of God and putting her own interpretation on it.

Again, we might ask why she misunderstood the simple meaning of the word of God. Without doubt she was too eager in her desire to see the prophecy of God fulfilled. She could hardly await the coming of the Savior. She imagined God must fulfil His promise at once. Apparently it never occurred to her that God might let a long time pass before He would actually send His Savior. In her impatient desire to be returned to Paradise she remembered the promise of God, not in the sense in which God had given it, but in the meaning which she put into it. Thus she deceived herself.

THE HOPE.

There was only one way which could lead out of this gloom into joyous hope. This was to return to the simple meaning of that very promise which Adam and Eve had misused. A new promise was not needed. The words of the first promise were clear and sure even without an addition or explanation. By receiving these words in simple, trusting faith they were assured that their Savior was certainly coming, and that the real Man, the Lord, would surely accomplish their redemption. Though risking His life, He would crush the serpent's head. Of this there could be no doubt. The first prophecy said so. Here lay their hope.

From personal experience Adam and Eve knew that God keeps His word. Their present condition was sad evidence of this fact. Wherever they looked they saw the effects of the penalty of their disobedience. Because they had eaten of the fruit of the forbidden tree, God daily set before their eyes the truth of His threat: Thou shalt surely die. Now, if God kept His word and inflicted punishment when He threatened, why should He not keep His word and bring salvation when He promised it? To be sure, God would keep His promise, because He simply could not break His word. If, however, God must keep His promise, then their salvation was assured, and then there was no more room for doubt in their dejected hearts. Thus hope could again return to their sorrowing hearts, from which it had been driven by error and misconception, and in truth they could sing: I have the Man, the Lord!

Luther's version of Eve's Magnificat was used intentionally in this treatise. It is the simplest translation which the Hebrew words permit and is linguistically correct, since it violates no rule of Hebrew grammar, as all grammarians and lexicographers admit. If it is grammatically correct, however, then there is no valid reason for not translating as Luther did. The supposed *cruz* of our text is the word *et*, which is the common *nota accusativi* and also a preposition meaning "by" or "with." But even if this twofold usage of *et* is correct, there is no need of creating a linguistic difficulty in our text. Good hermeneutics, namely, requires a translator or expositor to use a word in its first and simplest meaning, and not to depart from this until he sees that the simple meaning is impossible. Now the word *et* is used repeatedly in Gen. 4, 1. 2 in its commonest usage, *viz.*, that of the *nota accusativi*, when Moses tells us that "Adam knew (*et*) Eve, his wife," and "she bare (*et*) Cain," and "she bare (*et*) his brother, (*et*) Abel." In the midst of this manner of construction, though, Moses relates that Eve said: "I have the

Man, (*et*) Jehovah." In the first three instances the word *et* indicates the object, and can only designate it, because a different use of the *et* is impossible. Using the word *et* as the *nota accusativi* right before Eve's words and again immediately after them, it is natural to assume that Moses intended the *et* to have the same meaning in Eve's words that it had before and after them. If Moses intended to use the *et* differently, even in the secondary meaning, in Eve's words, he in no wise indicates it. If he intended to tell us that Eve thought, that she had received her son by the help of, with, (*et*) Jehovah, it was easy for him to impart this meaning clear and plain words. He had other words beside the *et*, which could exactly, and without arousing any doubt, express this meaning. For the sake of clarity and in order to avoid a possible misconception of his words, he certainly would have used a preposition which would express this idea precisely, and not a word which usually indicates the object. But he does not do that. So when he uses the common designation for the objective in the way he does here, his intention, without any doubt, is to say that the word which follows the *et* is an object. Luther thus understood Moses, and we think he was right. Simple grammar and hermeneutics are on his side.

As this treatise shows, Luther's translation fits into the context beautifully and perfectly, and for that reason also must be right. This can hardly be said of the other translations, *viz.*, *dia tou Theou, per Deum*, from the Lord, *mit dem Herrn*. The Septuagint, the Vulgate, the King James Version, and the modern German Revised Luther Bible reduce Eve's Magnificat to the commonplace of a prayer for the churching of women. Their meaning is that Eve thanked God for His gracious assistance in her hour of travail, and that she praised the wisdom of God, by whose omnipotence she was fruitful and had multiplied. It must be admitted that a prayer of thanksgiving and praise was in place. But was it such a prayer? Does the context suggest such a prayer? If we assume that it does, we naturally may ask why Adam

did not join in this prayer of praise. As his part in the propagation of Cain is expressly noted, it seems strange that his part in the service of thanksgiving is not even mentioned. He, too, had great cause to thank his God. But in her song of praise Eve ignores Adam altogether, just as though he was not in the least concerned in this joyful event. She says: "I have," when we would rightfully expect her to say: "We have," if it is a prayer of thanksgiving for the birth of a son. While such a prayer would exhibit the pious state of mind in which Eve was at the time of Cain's birth, it would cast, however unjustly, a sad reflection on the state of Adam's piety. However, as a prayer of this kind Eve's words have no bearing on the story and give no indication "of the hope that was in her," 1 Pet. 3, 15. The words of Eve, therefore, hardly have this meaning.

When read independently of the words of the promise, Eve's words lose even their precise meaning. They are evidently dark and unintelligible to those expositors who ignore this relation; as their varying translations and interpretations show. They simply do not know what to make of Eve's words. However, by observing this connection all difficulties vanish, and Eve's words appear in their simple and grand meaning. Just because she was thinking of the great promise to the woman, Eve could say that she, the woman, had the Man, the Lord; and in fact she could say nothing else. But by not heeding this connection, we empty Eve's words of their significance, destroy the unity of the narrative of our text, and break it up into independent stories which do not concern each other. One story would tell of a promise that God made, another, that Eve received a son as a gift of God, and a third would tell of a revolting murder. Now it seems unreasonable to assume that Moses, who was not only trained in all the knowledge and science and marvelous literary art of ancient Egypt, but also wrote under the direct guidance of the Holy Ghost, here presents to us a random collection of tales. By accepting Luther's version, however, the context is preserved,

and the narrative, as we saw above, appears as one complete story, which is most intelligently and masterfully told.

Since grammar and the context favor Luther's version, the reason for not accepting it cannot be in the text. The whole difficulty which some expositors have with our text is not found in the text, but is carried into it by their dogmatic or theological views, which do not agree with the simple meaning of Eve's words as they stand. Those who differ with Luther proceed from the assumption that Eve could not know that the Redeemer was to be the God-man. They say it was impossible for her to have that knowledge. And because it was impossible for her to know it, therefore she did not believe it. And as she could not expect the God-man to come, she could not say: "I have the Man, the Lord!" when Cain was born. For this reason they prefer to translate: I have a man from the Lord. But we properly ask, Where do these men get this information? The text certainly says nothing of Eve's supposed and dreadful ignorance. Simply to assert that Eve lacked this knowledge does not yet make sure the fact that she really did not have it. But beyond making this bold assertion the opponents of Luther's version bring no proof to show that their opinion is right. And since they fail to establish their contentions by indisputable evidence, we must dismiss their assumptions as vague suppositions. Ungodly opposition to the divinely revealed truth that Jesus Christ is the God-man and the only Savior whom the world has, and whom alone Eve could expect, causes them to reject the words of Eve as exhibited in their true meaning in Luther's version. But this cannot move us to give up our belief that Eve really meant to say: "I have the Man, the Lord!" when Cain was born, though she was mistaken in the person to whom she applied these words.

Thus individually and collectively grammar, hermeneutics, the context, and real theology support Luther, and insist on the impossibility and absurdity of the other translations.

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