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Ein Prediger muss nicht allein *weiden*, also dass er die Schafe unterweise, wie sie rechte Christen sollen sein, sondern auch daneben den Woelfen *wehren*, dass sie die Schafe nicht angreifen und mit falscher Lehre verfuehren und Irrtum einfuehren. — *Luther*.

Es ist kein Ding, das die Leute mehr bei der Kirche behaelt denn die gute Predigt. — *Apologis, Art. 24.*

If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?
1 Cor. 14, 8.

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ARCHIVES

“For students and ministers publish a series of volumes of sermons that will be stimulating and helpful in raising the standard. A few volumes of selected sermons of the best non-Missourians . . . would be valuable, also a few volumes of sermons by carefully selected Missourians, instructing them to furnish each one just a few of his best and most stimulating sermons containing some fresh thoughts and illustrations, even though they may not be divided into three or six parts. Select for this work an editor who knows what is needed and will go after it wherever he can find it.”

But even our *pastoral conferences* and the *synodical officials*, especially the Visitors, must interest themselves in the improvement of our preaching, we are told, if such an improvement is to be brought about. Hence the following suggestions:—

“Much could also be done if the visitation of our churches on the part of our official Visitors were carried out conscientiously. These Visitors are really the men that ought to know about the status of preaching in the Missouri Synod, and they also could do much toward maintaining our high standards. Even our conferences could do a great deal if more time were devoted to doctrinal discussions, while again and again emphasizing the great principles of sermonizing, perhaps in connection with the presentation of sermons, etc.”

“Suggest to District pastoral conferences or local conferences or both to concentrate next year on ‘How to Raise the Standard of Our Preaching.’ Offer to furnish suggestions, even a speaker if desired.”

With these suggestions our symposium has been completed. It remains for the reader to digest these materials and to form his own opinions.

E. J. FRIEDRICH.



Sermon Preached on Communion Sunday.

GEN. 32, 24—30.

Context.—The two armies of Jacob, v. 10; Esau’s opposing army; Jacob, the sentinel; the tension; the night. — There appears an unexpected opponent; a combat ensues. — Who will prevail? Who receives the spoils?

A Remarkable Combat.

1. *The two combatants.*

A. Text. 1) Jacob: a strong and mighty man, experienced, brave, yet only a human being, mortal, inexperienced in warfare, afraid. A wrestler is competent only relatively, if one measures his ability by the strength, experience, and condition of the opponent — a weak man will overpower the weaker, and the strong is weak in the grasp of the stronger. Jacob’s strength and his chances of victory must be measured by the ability of his opponent. Who was his opponent? — 2) Vv. 28—30. None other than God Himself, Hos. 12, 3, 4, the promised Messiah. What an uneven match — man against God and God against man! — 3) The combat itself is remarkable in its nature, for

it was both physical, v. 25, and spiritual, v. 26; in its purpose, for it was a trial of faith: Jesus wrestling to bestow a blessing, Jacob wrestling to receive a blessing.

B. The combat is remarkable, but not uncommon, Matt. 15, 21—28; Gen. 18, 20—33; Jer. 20, 7—9; 2 Cor. 12, 8—10. Luther's afflictions and trials. In speaking of similar remarkable combats, we do not mean the proud and spiteful opposition of the sinner against God nor troubles self-inflicted by sin. These call for repentance. But we mean personal trials of God's children, in which the Lord approaches His own with the purpose of blessing them while hiding His face and His presence of power and grace: present, but seemingly absent; gracious, but seemingly harsh and severe; loving, but seemingly hateful; blessing, but seemingly cursing; saving, but seemingly damning. Though we seek Him, we cannot find Him; though we cry to Him, we receive no answer; though we cling to Him, we feel no support. Heb. 12, 5. 6; Ps. 94, 12—1b; 119, 75. As did Jacob, so some Christians bear physical signs of the remarkable combat; some may display a physical imperfection; but all display brighter faces because they know the combat — and because they are conquerors.

2. The two conquerors.

A. Text. 1) Jacob is conqueror, vv. 25 a. 26 a; Hos. 12, 3. 4, by his persevering faith, his crying and praying, v. 26 b. A man the conqueror of God, and God admits His defeat by a man! V. 28. Man supreme, God vanquished. This is remarkable.—2) God is Conqueror. He is not humbled. Jacob is wounded. God gained His purpose with Jacob. He wanted it so. He blessed. By exerting strength, He imparted strength. He bruised the body and healed the soul of His opponent, v. 30.—3) The combat therefore cannot be termed a "draw," a "no-decision" struggle, or a death-struggle. In such struggles neither is conqueror; both are losers. In this remarkable combat neither loses, both gain: Jacob gained a greater measure of faith and confidence in Jesus, and a new, most honorable name; the Lord gained His gracious purpose.

B. God overcomes the sinner when He converts him. He has conquered us also by His love in Christ Jesus. Conversion, however, is outside the scope of the text. By the text we are rather reminded of Heb. 12, 5—13; Luke 11, 5—13; 18, 1—8; Rom. 8, 26 f. God exercises and tries our faith in patience, endurance, boldness, prayer. Thus He conquered the Syrophenician woman, Job, Paul.—Can we conquer God? In God's strength, yes. 2 Kings 20, 1—11; Jas. 5, 16 b; Mal. 3, 10; Matt. 7, 7 f.; Ps. 116, 1—5. We conquer Him in His strength when we beseech His mercy to bless us, approaching Him according to the direction of His Word. Let none lose courage. Ps. 27, 14. Many have conquered the Lord by waiting in faith and confidence. Fanatical struggles, such as favored by many sectarian

churches and the ensuing relaxation mistaken for peace won from God is not victory over God, but a trick of the devil. Just take God by His word and remind Him of His Word, which He has given us to hold Him by. Say: "I will not let Thee go." That is victory. — Is not this remarkable combat a lesson also for the communicants of to-day? They came in the same state of mind and heart as Jacob, the traveler, the trembling dependent on God's mercy and help. Miraculously the Lord comforted and strengthened Jacob, and by means of a mystery, namely, by His Sacrament, He enlarges our faith in Him. Jacob offered a direct denial to the Most High, v. 26, conditioned on the blessing he yearned for. In His holy Law, God condemns us, and our hearts tremble; but His Gospel and His Table give us courage to lay hold on Him and not to let Him go except He bless us. Though He say nay, we humbly say yea; for He promises and seals the very blessing we seek: forgiveness and grace. G. H. SMUKAL.



Maundy Thursday.

MATT. 26, 20—31.

In spite of the raging of unbelief and of the negligence and weakness of many Christians in contending for, and keeping, the purity of His Word, the Lord throughout all ages fulfils His majestic promise: 1 Pet. 1, 24. 25. All the laboring and heavy laden who have found rest for their souls in the Gospel praise and glorify God for His faithfulness. — The visible Word, the Sacraments, is included in the promise. Past and present deformities referred to by many churches as the sacraments would argue to the contrary; but a comparison of our Sacraments with the Sacraments of Scripture will give us occasion to magnify the faithfulness of God toward us. — To-day we limit our study to the Sacrament of the Altar.

The First Communion — a Comparison.

1. *The Author and His doctrine.*

A. The Author of the Sacrament of the Altar is Christ, the God-man, who is true, wise, and almighty; and now, in the state of exaltation, He has repeated the account of, and has given further instruction in regard to, this Sacrament, binding "till He come," 1 Cor. 10, 16 f.; 11, 22 ff. As He is ever the same, Ps. 102, 25—27; Acts 15, 18; Heb. 9, 15—17 (the Author has sealed His testament by His death), so His Sacrament endures. — The gifts of the first Communion: the true body and the true blood of Jesus, under the visible means of bread and wine. To-day He offers the same gifts under the same external means. — The benefits graciously granted by the Author at the first Communion: forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. To-day

this Sacrament is still the same means of grace; for the word of the Lord "for many for the remission of sins" is not subject to change.

B. While we celebrate Communion at a later period of time and at a different place and use as ingredients of the visible means products of a different soil, the Sacrament is still the same. It must remain the same. Christ has not altered it, and not even an angel of light has the right to alter it. It is also beyond the power of man or of the Church to alter the true Sacrament. Any departure in the celebration from the essentials of the Sacrament destroys the Sacrament. Christ has not promised to convey His grace by means of a rite invented by the fanaticism or the doubt of man. As a Church and as individuals we have reason to be thankful to the Lord; for the comparison shows that the same Sacrament is our comfort.

2. The communicants.

A. Who they are. 1) Then. a) Judas Iscariot? If so, he insulted the Lord by his obstinacy and ate and drank damnation unto himself, 1 Cor. 11, 29. b) The Eleven most certainly were communicants. They differed in character, in personality, etc. But all were sinners, and all loved the Lord Jesus and one another, and all were loved by the Lord. They were penitent, believing, and therefore worthy guests. They received also the benefit of such eating and drinking. — 2) Now. a) There are unworthy guests at the Lord's Table also in the Church of to-day, though we are not slow in applying the warning: 1 Cor. 10, 21; 11, 27—29. b) As then, so now the worthy guests differ in character, etc. But they are all sinners, and each upon proper self-examination, includes himself in this humiliating statement. All worthy communicants, however, love Christ and one another, and they huddle together like patient sheep when they hear the Shepherd's voice; and they rejoice in the love of Jesus to them and come to leave as saints. By faith in His words "for you" they receive the benefit of such eating and drinking.

B. Their subsequent life. 1) Then. The first communicants concluded by singing a hymn. Thereupon: vv. 30 b. 31. They were offended and denied the Lord; they were scattered, v. 31. By the grace of Christ, however, they were reassembled, v. 32. In their service of, and zeal for, Jesus we recognize marvelous improvement, loyalty, faithfulness to Him even unto death. Now they are enjoying the promise of v. 29. They were kept by the means of grace, the Word and the Sacraments, which they believed, preached, and applied. — 2) Alas! some who have communed with us at this altar in former days were offended because of Jesus and are scattered abroad. Let us urge them to return that they may be reinstated. The first communicants are to be an example to us, not in their weakness, but in their repentance, faith, and service. "I promise by the assistance of the Holy Ghost to amend my sinful life." Rom. 12, 1; Heb. 12, 1—4. Com-

munion, being a means of grace, has strengthening and preserving power.

Conclusion.—Encouragement to hold fast the true doctrine of the Eucharist and to be frequent guests at the Lord's Table, which in our Church is the same as that which Jesus instituted.

G. H. SMUKAL.

Outlines for Confessional Sermons.

1.

Is. 48, 10.

Before you can confess your sins, you must be convinced that you are a sinner. "By the Law is the knowledge of sin." God also uses affliction to remind us of our transgressions. See Heb. 12, 11.

The Blessed Fire of Affliction.

1. *It is a moderate fire.*
2. *It is a cleansing fire.*
3. *It is a saving fire.*

1.

A. "Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver," in the manner of silver. In order to obtain pure silver, the ore as it comes from the mine is ground, put into the smelter. This process is repeated until the silver is refined.

B. If the Lord would refine us until the smallest remnant of dross (sin) were removed, we should perish in the fire of affliction; "for we daily sin much and indeed deserve nothing but punishment." Ps. 18, 13; Rom. 7, 18; Gen. 8, 21. The wages of all sins is death. Since the Lord knows our frame and remembers that we are dust, He does not refine us as we do silver, but His affliction is moderate, 1 Cor. 10, 13.

2.

A. Through intense and fierce heat the silver is separated from the dross.

B. Ps. 66, 10. Christians are cleansed from all sins in holy Baptism and daily by faith in Christ Jesus. However, the Old Adam remains with a Christian until death, Rom. 7, 24. In every Christian the Old Adam is to be drowned by daily contrition and repentance, Gal. 5, 24; Col. 3, 5. In this battle against the flesh a Christian at times becomes indifferent and careless. In order to awaken him and make him alert, God sends affliction, at times great affliction. The Christian will naturally ask, "Why such affliction?" God's answer is given Jer. 2, 19; Lam. 1, 14. By reminding a Christian through affliction of the true cause of all temporal tribulation, He incites him to battle against sin. Thus the fire of affliction is in the hand of God a fire of purification.

3.

A. The silver is not put into the smelter to be consumed, but is separated from the dross, so that it can be used in commerce and put to other useful purposes.

B. Visiting His people with affliction, God's purpose always is to save His people from temporal and eternal punishment. "I have *chosen* thee in the furnace of affliction." Whomever God chooses He saves, v. 11. Do what? See v. 9. Again and again God declares by the prophets that the purpose of all affliction which came upon Israel was to save His people.

The days are evil. God's hand is heavy upon us. The afflictions by which the world at large is visited are a consequence of sin, also *your sin*. Were you thankful and grateful when the Lord opened His hand and blessed you with prosperity? Did you use the blessings of the Lord to the glory of God and your neighbor's welfare. If these questions remind you of *your sins* and shortcomings, repent, confess with David: "I have sinned against the Lord." But despair not. The Lord is merciful and gracious. Come to the Lord's Table and receive the body and blood of your Savior for the remission of your sins. Amen.

C. P. SCHULZ.

2.

Luf. 11, 4a.

Dies ist ein Beichttext aus dem heiligen Vaterunser. Gegen das Vaterunser wird viel gesündigt. Es wird viel mißhandelt. Wenn wir darüber nachdenken, werden wir das bald erkennen. Also uns diesmal fragen und prüfen mit Bezug auf unser Vaterunserbeten.

Unsere Beichte mit Bezug auf das Gebet des Herrn.

1.

„Siehe deinen Stand an nach den Zehn Geboten.“ Wir sollen auch Beter sein, auch das Vaterunser beten. Das tun wir auch. Aber prüfen wir uns, wie wir es oft beten. Wir haben oft unsere Gedanken nicht recht dabei. Wir würden sonst oft daran erinnert werden, wieviel wir sündigen. Wir bitten da um die rechte Lehre und um ein heiliges Leben. Da gibt es viel zu bekennen. Wir bitten in der zweiten Bitte um die Ausbreitung des Gnadenreiches. Wie nachlässig sind wir da! Wie wenig Eifer zeigen wir da! Wir bitten, daß Gottes Wille geschehe, und merken, daß der Wille unsers Fleisches dem zuwider ist. Unser täglich Brot. Sind wir genügsam? Vertrauen wir Gott? Trachten wir am ersten nach dem Reiche Gottes? Die Stellung der vierten Bitte macht uns darauf aufmerksam. Die fünfte Bitte erinnert uns daran, daß wir täglich viel sündigen usw. Lieblosigkeit

gegen unsere Beleidiger. Meiden wir so viel wie möglich alle Versuchungen? Freuen wir uns auf die endliche Erlösung?

Ja, solches Nachdenken enthüllt uns unsere schreckliche Sündhaftigkeit. Wohl Ursache zu beten: „Vergib uns unsere Schuld!“

2.

Aber der Herr will, daß wir so beten. Es ist also Vergebung vorhanden, und Gott will sie uns geben. Jesus weiß das. Hat sie selbst bereitet usw. Gott will sie uns zueignen durch Wort und Sacrament. Absolution. Das ist die feierliche Erhörnung unserer Bitte. Abendmahl Besiegelung. Darum im Vertrauen auf Christi Kreuzesleiden getrost herzutreten und Gott bitten: „Vergib uns unsere Schuld!“ Gott wird es tun. Das ist gewißlich wahr. G. J. Bouman.

3.

1 JOHN 3, 4. 5.

Every sermon, especially every confessional address, must call our attention to sin and grace. We easily become indifferent to sin, its nature, danger, curse. Such indifference is followed by coldness toward the wonderful mercy of God. Therefore the necessity, etc.

What Every Worthy Communicant must Remember.

1. *That sin is the transgression of the Law;*
2. *That Jesus has taken away our sin.*

1.

V. 4. In His Law the Lord of the world has revealed to man His rules of right living. There He regulates man's relation of man to Him and that of man to man. (Show this by pointing to the commandments.) And with divine authority He demands perfect obedience. He threatens dire retribution. He is able and zealous to do what He threatens. (Give examples. Point to afflictions, diseases, death.)

The fact that we are subject to these selfsame afflictions proves that we are sinners, that we are guilty of transgressions of the Law of the Lord. Convicted and condemned. So deeply involved that most of us do not feel it, do not worry. This reveals how thoroughly sin has taken possession of us. The corruption goes to the very heart of man. There is no good whatever in man, Rom. 7, 18. This we must realize and penitently deplore. But do not stop there.

2.

V. 5. Christ was sent by God to take away sin. As soon as man became a transgressor, the Savior was revealed in prophecy.

In the fulness of time He was revealed in the flesh. His purpose

was to take away sin. Not by a simple declaration that sin was no more, but by His substitutionary suffering and death.

Now there is forgiveness of sin for every one. And this salvation is distributed, offered, appropriated, by means of Word and Sacrament. Gospel-preaching; absolution; the Sacraments contain it and freely offer it. It is to be accepted by faith. The wonderful love of God! Can it leave us indifferent? No. It kindles love in us. Away with transgressions!

This is what the worthy communicant must remember.

H. J. BOUMAN.

4.

Ps. 32, 1—5.

Your purpose in coming here to-day is to receive the comfort of the pardon of God, of being assured of His full forgiveness. You realize that you need forgiveness of your sins; for your sins lie heavily upon your conscience, Deut. 27, 26; Rom. 6, 23a. You cannot be happy until you have received remission of your sins. The questions uppermost in your heart are:—

Does God Forgive Me My Sins, and How May I Obtain Forgiveness?

1.

A. God assuredly forgives sins, vv. 1. 2. He forgives our transgressions, *i. e.*, our going beyond the limits which God has fixed for us in His holy Law. He takes them away, hides them from His own condemning sight. He cancels the debt of the sinner, delivers him from his guilt; in other words, He justifies the sinner, declares him just and righteous. Do you ask, How can such forgiveness be made compatible with divine justice? Observe the text: The Lord does not impute iniquity; and why does He not impute iniquity? Because He has already punished all our transgressions in Christ, 2 Cor. 5, 21; Is. 53, 4. 5; Rom. 4, 25. This righteousness Christ has won for all men, John 1, 29; 1 John 2, 2. Thus, without injury to His divine justice, God does not impute iniquity unto the sinner, does not charge the sins to the sinner's account, but to Christ's account, and Christ's all-sufficient, saving merit He charges to the sinner's account.

B. O blessed truth! Vv. 1. 2. This blessedness is meant for all; cf. John 3, 16 and other texts. No matter how great or numerous your sins may be, no matter how heavy your guilt, God assuredly forgives you all your sins, covering them with Christ's atonement. Christ has borne your iniquities; therefore God does not impute them to you. But you ask, How may I obtain this forgiveness? Let me answer this.

2.

A. V. 2. No guile. He does not mean to say that a man's sin is forgiven because he is without guile. He explains his meaning in the following verses by describing his own sad experience. When he had committed adultery and murder and for a whole year *kept silence*, when he would not acknowledge, not confess, his sins, his bones waxed old, his heart was full of anguish and despair. The Lord's hand was heavy upon him, because he refused to repent of his sins. All joy of life fled from him. He was conscious that, though outwardly he observed all the ceremonies of the Law, still he was playing the hypocrite; he stood condemned in God's sight. But finally realizing the guilt and damnableness of his crimes, conscious that he had grievously sinned, he made known, he confessed, his transgressions unto the Lord, v. 5; 2 Sam. 12, 13; and as soon as he openly acknowledged his guilt, the Lord forgave the iniquity of his sin. And now he sings a song of praise to God for the forgiveness which he has received.

B. The way to obtain forgiveness of sins is upright repentance, repentance of the heart. So long as any one still feels guilty in his heart, lives in any wilful or conscious sin, still adheres to his sin, stifles his convictions, and therefore keeps silent, refuses to confess his sins, but endeavors to minimize them, to pass them off as mere trifles, he is an unhumbled, impenitent sinner and cannot hope to receive forgiveness. In his heart there is still guile, deception, fraud.

To obtain forgiveness, we must acknowledge our sins, even our pet sins, in sincere sorrow, with upright contrition of heart, as David did. But a sorrowful confession in itself is not sufficient to obtain forgiveness. David, receiving by the mouth of the prophet Nathan the assurance that the Lord had put away his sin, believed and accepted this forgiveness and therefore could joyfully cry out: "And Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." So we obtain forgiveness of sins from God by true repentance and faith, faith which accepts the pardon of God offered us by grace, for Christ's sake, in His Gospel.

What tongue can tell the happiness of that hour when the soul, oppressed by sin, freely pours forth its sorrows before God and takes hold of His full pardon in Christ Jesus? — Application.

F. H. EGGERS.

5.

3 f. 119, 25.

Zu ernstem, wichtigem Tun sind wir versammelt. Wir wollen dem Tische des Herrn uns nahen. Wie nötig, daß wir uns prüfen! 1 Kor. 11, 28, 29. Unwürdige Gäste sind diejenigen, welche ohne recht-

schaffene Buße, ohne lebendigen Glauben und ohne den aufrichtigen Vorsatz, ihr Leben zu bessern, sich zu der Gnadentafel des Herrn einfinden.

Unser Bekenntnis und unsere Bitte bei unserm Abendmahlsgang.

1. Wir bekennen dem Herrn mit demütigem Herzen unsere Sünden.
2. Wir bitten ihn mit gläubiger Zuberstcht um Gnade und Vergebung.

1.

A. W. 25 a. Die Seele des Psalmisten ist danieder gebeugt, traurig, betrübt. Sie vermag sich nicht zu Gott zu erheben. Was drückt ihn, den Mann nach dem Herzen Gottes, danieder? Die Menge seiner Sünden, die er als eine schwere Last fühlt, Ps. 38, 3—5. Das demütigt ihn, sooft er daran denkt. Mit Reue und in großer Traurigkeit ruft er aus: „Meine Seele liegt im Staube.“

B. Drückt nicht die Last unserer Sünden auch uns danieder? Wir müssen bekennen, 1 Mos. 8, 21; Röm. 7, 18, daß wir ohne Unterlaß sündigen in Gedanken, Worten und Werken. Alle Gebote Gottes stehen da als Ankläger wider uns; sie sprechen uns schuldig. Untersuchen wir nur unser Leben nach denselben, was gilt's? Wir alle müssen zerschlagenen, demütigen Herzens Gott unsere Sünden bekennen, dem Gott, der Herzen und Nieren prüft, vor dem unser ganzes Inneres darliegt wie ein aufgeschlagenes Buch. So sei unser Bekenntnis: Herr, mein Gott, meine Seele liegt im Staube. Meine Sünden drücken mich danieder. Ich weiß, daß ich dich unzählige Male beleidigt habe, daß ich von Rechts wegen ein Kind der Hölle sein sollte.

2.

A. W. 25 b. Er will sagen: Lieber Gott, ich kann mir selber nicht helfen. Ich bin arm und elend und darf es nicht wagen, mit meinem Tun zu dir zu kommen. Andere Menschen können mir auch nicht helfen. Du allein kannst mir Hilfe leisten. Darum bitte ich dich: Erquicke du mich, richte meine danieder gebeugte Seele auf aus dem Staube! Ps. 51, 14. Und tu das nach deinem Wort, nach deiner Verheißung; denn du hast mir zugesagt, daß du alle meine Sünden von mir wegnehmen, sie mir nicht zurechnen wollest.

B. Wie kann David, der soeben noch bekant hat, daß er Gottes Zorn und Fluch verdient habe, es wagen, so zu Gott zu reden? Wir sehen hier die Herrlichkeit des wahren Glaubens. David freut sich im Geist des ihm verheißenen Heilandes, 2 Sam. 7, 12, und im Vertrauen auf des Messias Verdienst bittet er um Gnade und Vergebung.

C. Auch wir wollen uns von unsern Sünden zu Gottes Gnade und Jesu Verdienst hinwenden und von ganzem Herzen Gott bitten: „Erquicke mich nach deinem Wort!“ Wir dürfen, ja wir sollen so bitten.

Wir wissen: Matth. 11, 28; Joh. 6, 37; Ps. 22, 27; Jes. 42, 3. Wir halten dem Heilande diese seine tröstlichen Worte vor und sprechen nun: „Erquicke mich nach deinem Wort“, nach dieser deiner Zusage. Gib meiner Seele Ruhe und Frieden! Ps. 51, 9—11.

D. Jesus erhört unsere Bitte durch die tröstliche Versicherung, daß er alle unsere Schulden völlig bezahlt und alle unsere Strafen gebüßt habe. Um uns seiner Gnade und Vergebung gewiß zu machen, ladet er uns heute zu seinem Gnadenmahl ein, damit wir aufs neue in dem Glauben gestärkt werden, daß wir teilhaben an seiner vollkommenen Erlösung. So laßt uns alle einstimmen in das Bekenntnis und in die Bitte unsers Textes: „Meine Seele“ usw. F. S. Eggers.

Miscellanea.

Das Luthersche Trauformular und seine Bedeutung in unserer Zeit.

Bekannt ist, daß Luthers reformatorische Arbeit auf dem Gebiet der Liturgik und des kirchlichen Gottesdienstes streng konservativ war. Aber bei der Betonung dieser Tatsache vergessen manche Forscher etwas, was für Luthers Arbeit auf diesem Gebiet ausschlaggebend war, nämlich daß der große Reformator immer darauf bedacht war, bei seinen Bemühungen um die historische Kontinuität auch die einschlägigen Schriftlehren zur Geltung zu bringen. Dies tritt besonders deutlich hervor in seinen klassischen Ausführungen in seiner Formula Missae von 1523 und in seiner „Deutschen Messe“ von 1525/6. Die Grundsätze, die Luther in diesen und andern Schriften ausgesprochen hat, müssen unbedingt von jedem Liturgiologen studiert werden, der vorgibt, in Luthers Fußstapfen einhergehen zu wollen.

Dies gilt aber auch besonders von dem Lutherschen Trauformular vom April 1529. (St. Louiser Ausg. X, 720—725.) Da führt Luther in seiner Einleitung aus, daß, wie der Ehestand selbst, so auch die Hochzeitsgebräuche „ein weltlich Geschäft“ sind, worinnen er „einer jeden Stadt und Land“ ihren Brauch und Gewohnheit lassen wolle. Es lag ihm aber daran, eine einträchtige Weise zu schaffen für solche, die ihren Ehestand von der Kirche eingesegnet haben wollten, die es beehrten, vor der Kirche oder in der Kirche gesegnet zu werden, besonders wenn sie die ganze Trauung von der Kirche durch den berufenen Diener am Wort vollzogen haben wollten.

Luther hat sich bei der Ausarbeitung seines Trauformulars an die herkömmliche Liturgie gehalten, und zwar mit gutem Bedacht. Denn die Praxis der alten Kirche hinsichtlich der Trauungen hielt sich streng an den biblischen Begriff von der Verlobung und von der Ehe. Man unterschied die *Eheschließung*, die *conciatio* der Ehe, von der *obsignatio*, der *confirmatio*, der *Einssegnung* derselben. Jene vollzog sich durch die Erklärung der Verlobten vor dem Bischof; diese aber geschah dadurch, daß die vom Bischof Zusammengegebenen als Eheleute im öffentlichen Gemeindegottesdienst priesterlich fungierten und das Sakrament empfangen. (Vgl. Miesoth, Liturgische Abhandlungen I, 79; Höfling, Die Lehre der ältesten Kirche vom Opfer, 217.) Trotz der späteren Ausartung des Rituals blieb