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## THE ARMINIAN ARGUMENT IN ROM. 7, 14—25.

“Of whom speaketh the apostle this? of himself, or of some other man?” That is the question which has perplexed the teachers of the Church from the earliest times. The real question, however, is not whether we have in this passage a strictly personal reminiscence of the apostle, a biographical note relating exclusively to his own inner life, with no reference to the experience of others, but whether the spiritual phenomena which the apostle recounts apply to him as an unregenerate or a regenerate person, hence, whether these phenomena are significant manifestations by which any person may determine his own spiritual condition.

The Greek fathers understood the entire passage to apply to the unregenerate. So did Augustine in his early days; however, he changed his opinion in the course of the Pelagian controversy and ever since that time defended most strenuously the view that it is the ego of the regenerate that is speaking in this passage. The view of Augustine became current in the Church of the Reformation, while the majority of the papists, Socinians, and Arminians followed the view of the Greek fathers. Luther cites the seventh chapter of Romans [in the Augustinian sense] about one hundred and ten times. . . . The Lutheran Confessions, too, appeal frequently to Rom. 7, 14—25 for proof that the old Adam still clings to believers in this life, and that this passage is a description of the Christian's daily contrition and repentance which “continues until death.” (Book of Concord, Jacobs' Ed., p. 596, 7. 8; 329, 40.) With this view the unanimous opinion of all the later Lutheran theologians coincides. In the controversy with Latermann the Leipzig Faculty handed down

## BOOK REVIEW.

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DIE SCHRIFTLEHRE VON DER GNADENWAHL. *Geo. J. Fritschel*, ev.-luth. Pastor. Wartburg Publishing House, Chicago, Ill. 1906. VIII and 191 pp.

The title and prospectus of this brochure promise much. After a brief introduction in which the author defines his method and sketches the history of the dogma, the Biblical terms which stand as exponents of the doctrine of election are discussed. pp. 11—55. Next follows an exegetical section (pp. 56—112) in which the predestinarian texts of Scripture (among them Mark 16, 16; John 3, 16; Ezek. 33, 11!) are explained. Their dogmatical yield is summarized in the next chapter, we dare say in this single sentence: "The contemplation of the saving will (Heilswillen) of God as realized in the individual believer, is what Scripture understands by election." p. 116. Or, still more briefly: It is "the universal teaching of the Gospel in reference (Beziehung) to the believing individual" (*ibid.*); or, briefest of all: "The doctrine of election — the Gospel." (*ibid.*) Also time-believers are elect while their faith endures. p. 142. Matt. 24 (v. 24) is said to refer to such as remain faithful to the end, p. 143; *εἰ διαρκῶν* in this passage expresses a

reasoning of the false prophets, and qualifies their hope of success; it must not be understood as a word of assurance on the part of the Lord. p. 43. *Ἐκλεκτός* is a "designation applied to Christians in so far as they have passed from death into life." p. 41. It denotes "a converted person in his state of grace." pp. 42. 44. "Everyone that is justified is an elect person; every elect person is a justified person." p. 43. *Κλητοί* in Matt. 22, 14 is = *κεκλημένοι*, and the sense of the contrast between the called and the chosen is: "Many are called, *i. e.*, many have been invited, urged to come; but few are elect (*wenige sind Auserwählte*), *i. e.*, unto fellowship in the kingdom of Christ, persons who are in the state of grace, converted persons." p. 42. As regards the phrase *ἐν Χριστῷ* in Eph. 1, 3, the author suspends his judgment, 1) whether the reading of some Mss. (*ἐν αὐτῷ*) should not be given the preference and the phrase should be referred to God the Father; 2) if the current reading must be accepted, whether *ἐν Χριστῷ* should not be understood as a qualifier of *ἡμᾶς* rather than of *ἐξελέξατο*. But he is also willing to adopt the latter construction, either in this sense: by the mediation of Christ; "God has executed the gracious act expressed by the verb through Christ, by sending Christ to us and bringing us to Christ" (!); or in this sense: "He has planted us in Christ (in Christum hineinversetzt), so that we are now in Christ." p. 50. As to the force of *γινώσκω* the author holds that "it always has reference to the act of perceiving something (*es ist stets etwas, das sich auf das Erkennen bezieht*), even when the state of the heart has been indicated at the same time. It always presupposes as a fact that the quality in question (*die Eigentümlichkeit*) already exists and is perceived as such. . . . It does not express the sense that God, by 'knowing' us, first *makes* us His own, but He recognizes us as persons who *have been made* His own. God does not effect a connection with us, but He acknowledges the connection already existing." "*Προγινώσκειν* is simply this concept dated back to eternity. It, too, signifies primarily not an act, but knowledge of something that occurs or exists in time." pp. 14. 15. In 1 Pet. 1, 2 the noun derived from this verb is paraphrased thus: "the foreknowledge of God as it refers to all His children who have become His children;" and *ἐκλεκτοὶ παρεπίδημοι* is rendered "believing (!) strangers." If any one denies that *πρόγνωσις* has the meaning "foreknowledge of believers as such" the author charges him with holding the aprioristic view of an absolute predestination of certain persons who are to be saved without fail. He holds that but for this view men would never have conceived the idea of stripping this word of its peculiar meaning, and of making out of an act of the intellect an act of the will, or even an

efficient act (ein Tun). Their aim, he says, was to remove from this doctrine every consideration of the fact that the persons in question are Christians (jeder Hinblick auf den Christen). p. 18 f. These excerpts will suffice to show the trend of the author's predestinarian thought: his teaching is revamped Huberian universalism.

The author's exegesis has suffered by the order and sequence of matter which has been adopted for his treatise. Placing an array of definitions of terms ahead of the exposition of Scripture passages fairly invites the opinion that the passages are introduced *illustrandi causa*. It is like putting the cart before the horse. The successful exegete endeavors to approach his task wholly unencumbered with preconceived notions. We are surprised at the author's lack of judgment all the more because he knows, and insists on, the difference between exegesis and "eisegesis." pp. 30. 72. His remarks on Acts 13, 48 may serve as a sample of his mode of interpretation.

*καὶ ἐπίστευσαν*, i. e., and there arrived at faith (sind zum Glauben kommen) as many as were persons ordained (Verordnete) unto eternal life. — It is necessary here correctly to interpret and understand the pluperfect. "When an act has occurred without leaving an effect that endures in the remoter past, the aorist must be used, because the pluperfect is equal to the aorist plus the imperfect." (Blass, p. 207.) The term *τάσσω* has a different meaning in different passages. It means to choose, to issue order, to offer oneself for some purpose (where?); also, to designate. Hence, its meaning in this passage MAY be "those who were designated, or chosen." However, it MUST not carry this meaning. By the usage of language it may be the middle voice as well as the passive: in that case it denotes directing something in one's mind — it corresponds to the Hebrew *sum*, to posit, to place, with the further meaning (Nebenbegriff) to direct one's heart, countenance, eye toward something. This meaning certainly fits into the context just as well as any one of the other meanings. The heathen in this instance had been prepared for salvation by the preparatory work of the Jews; their hearts yearned for the life everlasting which was preached to them. Now these persons who, owing to the preparatory grace of God, heard in order to learn — whose mind was directed toward salvation, these became believers. The passage does not state expressly that also their longing for salvation was an effect of preparatory divine grace; but that it was such is self-evident. — The expression "they were ordained" may be the middle voice; but the passage yields a better meaning when we take it to be the passive voice. This is what had happened to them (an ihnen geschehen). God had done this to them (an ihnen); God had placed them in the ranks of those who were going forward to eternal life. And they were standing in these ranks at that time (pluperfect). The rest, however, who did not and would not hear the Word, were not saved. — God has appointed this order to be in force at that time and now. Every Jew or Gentile who stands within this order like them, with his face turned heavenward, experiences that God has appointed also for him the hour when he shall advance a step, from hearing to believing. That is the meaning which we are able to obtain from this text, but not an election to salvation of some persons in preference to others. p. 93 f.

This interpretation is remarkable for its lack of clearness. It is an exegetical straddle: it leaves the reader guessing whether *τεταγμένοι*

expresses an act of God, *and nothing else*, or whether it is to be understood as an overture on the part of God inviting an act of the persons in question; again, whether *τάσσω*, if it refers to an act of God, has for its object the *ordo salutis* or the persons here mentioned; again, whether *τεταγμένοι* precedes or follows *ἐπίστευσαν*, in point of time. If *ἐπίστευσαν* is pluperfect, what is the tense of *τεταγμένοι*? Moreover, the Gentiles' longing for eternal life is declared to be an act of *gratia praeparatorum*, and is found in the Gentiles because they are hearers of the Word; from hearing they advance to believing. Now, is hearing the Word of God with longing desire the action of an unbeliever? The author's views on predestination, it appears, are grounded upon a peculiar view of conversion, like most *ex praevisa fide* teaching.

A word as to the formal side of the treatise, and first, as to the diction. Particles of reference, or the pronoun when employed as the substitute of the noun require great care. In this sentence: "In diesem ratschlagenden Wollen Gottes sind alle Moeglichkeiten wohl beachtet worden und auf Grund davon hat Gott einen festen Ratschluss gefasst" (p. 29) it is not clear whether "auf Grund davon" refers to "Moeglichkeiten" or "ratschlagenden Wollen." We do not point to this in a spirit of cavil, but because we have felt the diction of the author throughout the treatise as a strain. Much of the thought presented has evidently been ill-digested; this accounts for the existing crudities of speech, the lack of perspicuity in the construction of clauses, etc. A worse fault is the author's passion. There are few pages in this book that are free from polemics, and polemics conducted in a vindictive spirit. He will break into a calm excursus with a reminder that there are certain mean people who upset his philology and his logic, and dogmatics and exegesis. He cannot rid himself at all of their vision. This is to be regretted. We have not a word to say against polemics, but polemics must not descend to the low plain of ceaseless harangue, or the indulgence of gossip such as on p. 119, or such spectacular performances as those on pp. 187—189. And this, too, is not said in a spirit of cavil, but because we honestly believe that the author has harmed his own cause by his lack of self-discipline. If you must have an opponent, you would certainly like to have one whom you respect for his orderliness and decorum. In view of these defects the air of independence from all helps except grammar, lexicon, and concordance, which the author displays at the outset, his dogmatizing conclusions, sometimes reached with little or no effort (*e. g.*, p. 53), and his convenient wholesale references to the work of others where a strong personal effort of his own was required (*e. g.*, p. 7, footnote; 26: Cremer; 53: Blass, Schirlitz, Winer) —

all this must have the very opposite effect from the one intended. Upon the whole, we doubt whether the author is the ablest exponent of the doctrinal position occupied by his church-body.

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