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The Means of Grace.

Translated from Dr. E. Preuss's *Die Lehre von der Rechtfertigung*, Part IV.

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"Although the work of redemption was accomplished on the cross and forgiveness of sin acquired, yet it cannot come to us in any other way than through the Word. For what would we otherwise know about it that such a thing was accomplished or was to be given us if it were not presented by preaching, or the oral Word? . . . Or how can they apprehend and appropriate to themselves the forgiveness except they lay hold of, and believe, the Scriptures and the Gospel?" (Large Catechism. *Triglotta*, 759.) Therefore Paul calls the preached Word the means of salvation. 1 Cor. 15, 1. 2. But if it brings us salvation, it also brings us forgiveness; for salvation and forgiveness are the same thing. Yes, the Lord directly regards His Word as the bearer of His all-sufficient merits. For instead of saying: "Ye are clean through the obedience by which I made satisfaction to the Father," He says: "Ye are clean through the Word which I have spoken unto you." John 15, 3.

But where there is forgiveness through the merits of Christ, there is life. Titus 3, 7; Rom. 6, 20. [*Note.* — "For where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation." Small Catechism. *Triglotta*, 557.] Therefore the Lord also calls His Word the bearer of life. John 5, 24: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My Word and believeth on Him that sent Me hath everlasting life." And John 8, 51: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep My saying, he shall never see death." Yes, John 6, 63 He declares: "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." And John 12, 50: The Word of My Father "is life everlasting. Whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto Me, so I speak." [*Note.* — *Ἡ ἐντολή τοῦ πατρὸς ζωὴ αἰώνιος ἐστίν* does not mean: "He that keepeth the Law of the Father hath life everlasting," but according to

THE THEOLOGICAL OBSERVER.

“The Element of Human Freedom” in Conversion.—In its issue of April 28, 1928, the *Lutheran Standard* says: “But Paul, in Rom. 9, 18, says: ‘Therefore hath He mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth.’ If one takes these words just as they read and all by themselves, it is hard to make anything else out of them than that God has mercy on certain persons by granting them His grace, so that they can repent and believe and be saved, while He withholds His grace and mercy from others and hardens them, so that they cannot repent and believe and be saved.

“And we have not only this very plain general statement, but Scriptures also give us a concrete case to show just how God dealt with a certain person. The case is that of Pharaoh in the time of Moses, who refused to let Israel go into the wilderness to worship Jehovah. There it is repeatedly said of the Lord, ‘I will harden his heart that he shall not let Israel go.’ The Scriptures go even farther and make the Lord say, ‘In very deed, for this cause have I raised thee up for to show in thee My power, and that My name may be declared throughout all the earth.’ This raising up implied in some manner the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart. In what sense, then, did the Lord Himself harden Pharaoh?

“We are frank to say that there is something here which none of us can fully explain. It is practically the same question that faces us when we say that all men are alike sinful, that no one can convert himself, that it is God’s grace alone that converts us, and yet, when the Word of God is offered to all alike, some are converted and saved and others are not. If all are alike sinful and helpless, and if God alone can save, why are some saved and others not?”

The *Standard* would have done well in not attempting to give an answer to this question and in abiding by its original statement: “We are frank to say that there is something here which none of us can fully explain.” However, it offers a solution and continues: “We must reckon with the element of human freedom, with the power of choice. In some manner it is put up to each individual whether or not he wants to be saved. He must make choice of salvation. To the people of Jerusalem Jesus said, ‘Ye would not.’” One cannot help from getting the impression from this line of argument, as also applied in the closing paragraph, that the *Standard* argues that, since the people of Jerusalem were not converted because they “would not,” others were converted because they “would.”—Certainly God does not, from the outset, “withhold His grace and mercy” from any. Why, then, are some hardened and lost who are in no greater guilt than we were? The closing sentence of the article gives the fine, Scriptural answer: “On Judgment Day, God will be fully able to clear Himself that He had no part in the loss of any soul.” They have destroyed themselves. To the others God says, without any restrictions or modifications: “In Me is thine help.” E.

Conversio Reiterata. — The *Luth. Standard* of April 21, 1928, writing on "The Sin of Apostasy," says: "It is thus clear that a fully converted person is spoken of here [Heb. 6, 4—6]. He may not have attained at all to the fullest measure of grace, but he is truly a child of God, and that not only in respect to justification, that his sins are forgiven, but also in respect to sanctification, in that he has made some progress in sanctification or holiness of living. . . . The state, then, that is here described is that of a person who was fully converted, but has now turned back again to his old life of the flesh. He was living unto Christ and serving Him; now he has turned back to serve the flesh, the world, and the devil. From this state, now, the apostle says it is impossible to renew the person, to renew him again unto repentance. These words are terrific; but we shall have to let them stand just as they read. They are perfectly clear, they cannot be misunderstood. For any one to try to twist them from their clear meaning would simply be flying in the face of the Holy Spirit, whose words they are. We might point to persons who had backslidden and were again renewed. But there are always three questions in such cases. One is whether they had been sufficiently enlightened and converted; the second, whether their backsliding was really all that is here assumed; and the third, whether their renewal is an actual renewal in the sight of God. Whatever we do, let us not tamper with the words of the eternal Spirit." Does the writer mean to say that when a really converted person really apostatizes, he can in no case be really converted again? Such a statement could not stand. There is a *conversio reiterata*. Art. 12 of the Augsburg Confession says: "The Novatians also are condemned, who would not absolve such as had fallen after baptism though they returned to repentance." We are convinced that the *Standard* would not refuse to deal with an apostate. We are convinced of this because in the next issue it restricts the cases where a renewed conversion is impossible to those where final obduration has set in. The article of April 28 deals with "The Hardened Heart" and says: "In the preceding two issues we wrote somewhat on the sin against the Holy Ghost and the sin of apostasy. There is another sin that is very similar to these. . . . Thus apostasy is not so much a single sin which one may commit to-day or to-morrow, but a fixed spiritual state or condition into which one drifts by continuously opposing God's grace. It is not so much a sin, therefore, which one commits under the stress of a sudden temptation or in the fit of some violent passion, but a hardened state into which one who had been a child of God grows by either gradually or suddenly turning away from God and then wilfully and persistently resisting the work of the Holy Spirit in His endeavors to bring one back again to a state of grace. It will be seen, therefore, that the sin of apostasy is very much like the sin of hardening, which we wish to deal with here." So the statement of April 21 that it is impossible to renew the person who was fully converted, but has now turned back again to his old life of the flesh must be taken as referring only to those apostates who have finally fallen under the judgment of obduration.

Books about the Bible.—The *Watchman-Examiner* writes editorially: "In the past few years we have rejoiced in the almost numberless books that have been written about the Bible. These books have concerned themselves with the history of the Bible, the interpretation of the Bible, the characters of the Bible, and the inspiration that comes from reading the Bible. We sound a note of warning, however; good as these books are, it is quite impossible for them to take the place of the Bible itself. Let us beware of reading too much about the Bible and too little *the Bible*."

This warning is not new. It has been voiced time and again by godly men who viewed the increase of religious books and the corresponding neglect of the Bible itself with alarm. Among others, Luther was most emphatic in deprecating the multiplying of books. Of his own books he said: "I do not wish that my books, especially the earlier ones, should be published; indeed, I would rather destroy them all. For the whole Church is being filled with books, while the Bible is being neglected." (St. L. Ed., XXII, 1080.) Warnings like these are certainly in place in this busy age of book-making.

MUELLER.

No Indemnity to be Demanded from China.—After the Boxer Rebellion the Chinese government was compelled to pay an indemnity for the injury suffered by the property of Christian missions during this uprising. Concerning this matter the *Presbyterian* writes: "The fact that missions restored their properties and sometimes beautified them from this government reimbursement made by the Chinese people through the Chinese government has not been so wholesome a memory. It is even pointed out by the natives that the missionaries' claims for reparation revealed a greed not consistent with the teachings of Jesus about turning the other cheek. The *Christian Advocate* announces that Methodism in China will not pursue that former policy following the losses incurred by the recent riots." It adds: "The losses of Nanking this year have been considerable, but the missionary authorities wisely prefer to pocket them rather than to prefer claims which, if paid at all, would be paid under compulsion and would be assessed upon the innocent civilian populations, who are usually friendly to the missionaries and often risked their own lives and property in the effort to save their foreign friends." It seems to us that the *Presbyterian* is justified in endorsing the policy announced by the *Christian Advocate* for the Methodist Church in China.

Crisis in the Presbyterian Church.—The *Presbyterian* of March 15 endeavors to arouse its readers to a realization of the gravity of the situation in which the Presbyterian Church finds itself. A crisis is coming, says the editor. The first sign of it is, so he thinks, the denial of certain "constitutional" (*i. e.*, confessional) doctrines, such as the infallibility of the Bible, the creation of the world as described in Gen. 1, and the virgin birth of Christ. A second indication he finds in the inclusivism which is being advocated so widely. This term describes the tendency to keep people together in one organization whose doctrines and principles do not agree. The third proof for the approach of a crisis is found in union efforts of

a very radical kind, like the so-called "fellowship of faiths." The editor says: "An example of this was recently given in Philadelphia, when certain Presbyterian ministers and other professed evangelicals united in a 'fellowship of faiths' with Unitarians, Confucianists, Buddhists, Shintoists, Mohammedans, and adherents of other non-Christian cults." The writer says in conclusion: "A most serious crisis is approaching, perhaps one of the most serious in history, and it becomes every true Presbyterian — yes, every true evangelical — to stand firm with his brethren and resist these fearful forces which seek to destroy men and dishonor God, and by steadfast witness to revealed truth and to Jesus Christ overcome this satanic force to the honor of Christ and to the saving of men." And what does this mean to us? *Initiis obsta!*

"Crypto-Romanism in the Church of England. — The *Bulletin des Missions de Saint-André* (a Belgian confraternity) publishes a detailed account of the expansion of Roman Catholic ideas and practises in the Church of England. Guilds and confraternities for the extension of Catholic practises are, it declares, widely prevalent; as, for example, the Confraternity of the Holy Sacrament, the Guild for the Dead, and various Brotherhoods of Our Lady. The influence of the group actually working for reunion with Rome is described as 'enormous' and 'penetrating everywhere.' This supports itself on organizations such as the Society of St. Thomas of Canterbury and the Catholic League. One must accept the *credo* of Pope Pius IV to enter the League, which is a federation of many societies, such as the Apostolate of Prayer, the Living Rosary, and the Sodalitas Pretiosissimi Sanguinis D. N. J. C. This last, the Sodality of the Most Precious Blood, is made up of celibate priests, who engage themselves to use the Roman breviary and to make an annual retreat. Then there is the Living Rosary of Our Lady and of St. Dominic and the Society of Catholic Propaganda. The Catholic League organized in 1926 a pilgrimage to Rome for priests, which included a visit to the Pope. Among the 'intentions' of the pilgrimage were intercessions for the reunion of England with the Holy See and penitence for the schism of the sixteenth century. The pilgrimage took place under the patronage of Our Lady of the Victories.

"In the foreign mission field the dioceses of Korea, Kobe, Nassau, and Colombo are very much under the influence of this Catholicizing party. The late Bishop Weston of Zanzibar, brought up in an evangelical home, became a Catholic extremist. The Swahili breviary and missal used in his diocese were chiefly based on those of Rome."

Sunday-School Times, Jan. 14, 1928.

A Unitarian Hymnal for the American Youth. — The *Sunday-school Times*, in a recent issue, points out how Unitarianism is being inoculated into the American young people through Unitarian hymns. It says: "The hymnal authorized by the International Council of Religious Education is H. Augustine Smith's *Hymnal for American Youth*. The Century Company describes this as the 'national hymnal for young people.' One should note what is being introduced into

our Sunday-schools. At the end of the book is a section devoted to orders of worship. In these orders the Unitarians have a place certainly out of proportion, to say the least."

After showing how thoroughly Unitarian the hymns and "devotional readings" are, the editorial continues: "One would like to know what the Century Company and the Council of Religious Education purpose in offering this material to the Sunday-schools of America. And in general we would commend to publishers of hymn-books who are filling their hymnals with Unitarian hymns the judgment of the Unitarian Dr. Martineau on Unitarian religious verse. 'In the poetry of the Church,' he says, 'it is the Latin or the German hymns or the lines of Charles Wesley or of Keble that fasten on my memory and heart and make all else seem poor and cold.'" MUELLER.

How Some Brilliant Radicals Teach. — In the *Presbyterian* of March 1 a graduate of Princeton Seminary describes briefly his experiences at the University of Berlin, Germany. It is interesting to read what he has to say about the methods of instruction adopted by the great leaders of modernistic thought. He writes: "It was my lot to spend a year in Berlin University doing postgraduate work in the Theological Department of the University of Berlin, in the heart of the heart of the world's so-called scholarship. For it is ever the spirit of Princeton to send its graduates into the territory of the enemies of the faith, where their faith shall be challenged at every step. My teachers were men of renown — Harnack, Deissmann, Seeberg, Kaftan. What was my amazement, upon coming there from Princeton, to find here none of that boasted scholarship. I found here no attempt to study a subject from its very beginnings; no attempt to give a complete bird's-eye view of the state of controversy; no attempt to justify a departure from the traditional theology. Each lecturer had no other end in view than to impart his own findings. No one would have guessed from Harnack that such an institution as Princeton, ready to defend the entire trustworthiness of Scripture as a revelation from God, was in existence. What Harnack believed the class could know; but whether he had a right to believe it, or whether he himself had gone astray, he gave them no means of determining. There had been no filing of the complaint on the part of the plaintiff, no hearing of the defense, no summoning and cross-questioning of witnesses, no analysis of the evidence on both sides, no charge to the jury by the judge, — nothing but a biased presentation by the pleader, whose business it seems to be to gloss over his weak spots and to magnify the points which make for his client. I understood then, as I could not understand before, how in a few decades the land of Luther became the nursery of Modernism. No means were given the students by which to measure the trustworthiness of their own teachers."

This all corroborates what we have often asserted, namely, that the worshipers at the shrine of science are often very unscientific.