



The Assistant Pastor

February, 1936

The Scriptural Doctrine of Conversion

III

SYNERGISM

This expression is derived from a Greek word meaning co-operation. It expresses the idea that man and God work together in conversion. But that idea stands condemned by the Bible passages which teach that natural man is spiritually blind and dead; that his will is hostile to God and resists Him until the Holy Ghost through the Gospel has kindled faith in his heart. Read again I and II in the December and January issues.

The author of synergism within the Lutheran Church was Melanchthon. Although originally in perfect agreement with Luther, later on he tried to explain the mystery why, for example, David and Peter were converted again after their fall, but not Saul and Judas.

Melanchthon knew from Scripture that God wills the salvation of all, therefore he had no difficulty in rejecting Calvin's teaching that God has decreed the salvation of some and the damnation of others. He knew also that God says: "Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost," Acts 7, 51. But why does God break the resistance in some and not in others? He could find no answer to this question in the Word of God for the very good reason that God has not seen fit to give an answer. Not being able to find an answer, Melanchthon proceeded to make one. He figured that the reason must lie in a different conduct of the different individuals over against the divine grace. And who will say that this is not a reasonable explanation? It certainly appeals to man's reason. Thus Melanchthon established the teaching that natural man works together with God in his conversion by *not resisting* the Holy Ghost. This is synergism.

This teaching looks, not only very reasonable, but also quite harmless. However, on second thought, does not this involve that man by nature still possesses enough spiritual power to meet the Holy Ghost part ways when He is operating through the Word in his heart? If Melanchthon and other synergists are right, then it is not true that natural man is at enmity with God, Rom. 8, 7; that he is spiritually blind, 1 Cor. 2, 14; that he is spiritually dead in sin, Eph. 2, 1; that he is unable to do anything spiritually good, John 15, 5. Then we must no longer say with St. Paul, "By grace are ye saved." "Grace alone" must be changed to "grace and my own good conduct or attitude — gode forhold —."

It was synergism Prof. F. A. Schmidt proclaimed and fought for in the eighties of last century and thereby caused the split in the Old Norwegian Synod.

The Assistant Pastor

Published and edited by the pastor of the Jerico and Saude Lutheran churches, affiliated with the Norwegian Synod of the Synodical Conference.

Church Directory

H. M. Tjernagel, Pastor

SAUDE CONGREGATION

Trustees: Chris Treider, John Borlaug, E. Firkningstad.
Treasurer: Oscar Natvig.
Secretary: Ole N. Anderson.
Cemetery Committee: Martin Borlaug, Chris Treider, Mrs. Andrina Munson, Mrs. C. O. Natvig, Miss J. Ellingson.
Ladies' Aid: Mrs. Nels Ellingson, president; Mrs. N. Hereid, secretary; Mrs. John Natvig, treasurer.

JERICO CONGREGATION

Trustees: Geo. N. Anderson, Ole J. Johnson, J. A. Knutson.
Secretary: A. N. Anderson.
Treasurer: J. A. Robinson.
Ladies' Aid: Mrs. C. O. Vigdal, president; Mrs. Tollef Knutson, secretary; Mrs. Carl G. Johnson, treasurer.

Standing Services

JERICO

First Sunday, Norwegian, October-April, 10:30 a. m.
Third Sunday, English, October-April, 10:30 a. m.
Saturday School every Saturday, 10 a. m.
Confirmation class, Fridays, 2 p. m.

SAUDE

Second Sunday, bilingual service, Oct.-April, 10:45 a. m.
Fourth Sunday, English, October-April, 10:45 a. m.
Saturday School, 2 p. m.
Confirmation class, Fridays, 9:30 a. m.
Fifth Sunday by special announcement.

To Synod Fund, received too late for acknowledgment in last issue: John Leifson .50; Mr. and Mrs. Oscar, Kenneth, and Ann Marie Natvig .40; A. G. Vaala family \$5.00; Carrie and Louie Natvig \$3.00. Omitted by mistake, Mr. and Mrs. Ole, and Lena Iverson \$4.00.

Due to weather and road conditions no services were held the 19th and 26th of January, nor on February 2nd. When good weather and open roads return, we hope to see the churches crowded for services.

Mrs. Jeff. A. Knutson entertained the Jerico Aid January 8th. Two weeks later Mrs. Albert Haugen was prepared to entertain, but nobody came but a real old time nor'wester that unmercifully lashed everything and everybody with an icy arctic wind and also carried piles of snow into the roads. The pastor, meanwhile, was in attendance at a conference in Bethany College.

On Thursday the 30th, the Saude Aid was scheduled to gather at the Mrs. Johanna Hoffland home. On account of snow-blocked roads, only very few were able to meet. The pastor set out to go to the Aid and by three o'clock got half ways over to the church. With able assistance his car was back in the garage before supper time.

Mrs. Peter Overbo died in the early morning of January 29th. With the passing of Gjertrud Maria Overbo, nee Munson, or "Aunt Jane" as she was familiarly called by many, another of the real Norwegian-American pioneers is gone.

Born in Norway March 16, 1844, a child of Melchior

Schelderup Munson and wife Martha Wamberg, she emigrated to Wisconsin with her parents in the late fifties. In 1861 she was confirmed by President H. A. Preus of the Norwegian Synod. To that synod and its teachings she remained true.

Not long after her confirmation, a prairie schooner carried the family to South Dakota. Jane found employment as maid in the family of an army officer. However, it was but a few years when the Munson family, together with many others, hastily left their homesteads in South Dakota for fear of Indians. This brought the Munsons to the Saude community. For many years now Jane was the indispensable help in a prominent family in Lansing, when that place was a thrifty, bustling river town on the Iowa side of the "Father of Waters."

In 1883 Peter Overbo caused a change in the course of her life. They were married and settled on the New Hampton prairie as farmers. They did well. In 1909 they retired from the farm with ample means for their needs and established a home in New Hampton.

Our Jerico congregation had no better and no more faithful members than they were. Mrs. Overbo was a charter member of the Ladies' Aid, which has since grown large. She loved to tell about the small beginnings and rejoiced over the present activity of the society.

We laid her away in the Jerico cemetery February 1st with the blessed hope of her resurrection to life through Jesus Christ whom she confessed and served during her pilgrimage on earth. May the bereaved, aged husband fill his lonely hours with thoughts of and prayers for a happy reunion before the throne of grace.

WEATHER

A pathetic war is raging; a war-cloud is hanging over Europe; in Washington a congress is in session which has to deal with exceedingly important matters; an unusual presidential campaign is in the offing, yet, to us the weather holds first place among our interest. Everyone talks of the weather these days, it is only natural, therefore, that the Assistant Pastor does likewise.

Weather means: The state of the atmosphere as to cold, heat, dryness, rain, snow, winds, storms, etc. It is not strange that the weather is of daily, absorbing interest to us and, in fact, eclipses all other temporal interests. Weather closes our churches, schools, our highways at will. It fills, or it leaves empty, our barns and bins. The seed we sow grows or does not grow, we harvest or we do not harvest, as Weather decrees. Whether our pastures are green and our cattle, sleek and content, chew their cud, or, mooring and lowing pathetically range uneasily back and forth over parched and dusty pasture ground, depends upon the weather. One day our homes in their setting of green trees, velvety lawns, blossoming shrubs and flowers may look like an earthly paradise, the next day the buildings may be wreckage and the trees lie as broken and shattered skeletons. Weather produces the first scene and may also cause the second. Weather enters into every nook and corner of our rural life and plays an important role.

Weather proceeds from the hand of God and He uses it as He sees fit just as He uses all other forces of nature, all of which are of His making and directing. Man stands helpless to stay the piercing cold

north wind or the sweltering hot south wind; he cannot break a drought nor bid a cloud-burst cease. However, the "prayer of a righteous man availeth much" in all things. Every believer in Jesus is, before God, a righteous man and as such he is a real power on earth through prayer in faith.

A SAINT FROM JAPAN

A recent letter from Torald Teigen, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, contains this: "The 'Metropolitan Church Federation of St. Louis' sponsored the Japanese Social Worker, Preacher, etc., Kagawa, whom the American Press call 'The First Christian,' and who is touring the U. S. upon the call of 'American Churches' to come and 'reinterpret' Jesus Christ to the 'Mother Churches' of America. It was a thin soup."

"And what," asks the Northwestern Lutheran, "has this modern saint from Japan to offer America, or more strictly to the American sectarian churches? Cooperatives. The people are to get together to buy and sell the necessities of life in cooperative stores, founded and owned by the people. That will cure all our economic ills, cut out the rich trader and enrich the poor buyer. Kagawa started this movement in Japan, making the goods cooperatively and selling them the same way. Their goods wear the imprint 'Kingdom of God,' even down to 'Kingdom of God' soap. In this he believes as in a religion. 'The cooperative movement which will bring in the Kingdom of God must be world-wide in its scope. This international cooperative movement must be Christianized.'"

"We cannot blame this social worker for his thinly put on coat or veneer of sectarian Christianity. He is a product of these sectarian schools. But how poor indeed must an American church be that needs such a prophet!"

Indifferentism to doctrine, unionism, and the holler for "Deeds not Creeds" has evidently done its work well in the sectarian churches. Let the same forces be allowed to work in the Lutheran church and we too will soon be looking for new saints and prophets. The following principles unanimously adopted by our pastoral conference, January 23, 1936, will, we trust, be helpful in averting such a disgraceful calamity.

1. The spiritual unity of the Holy Christian Church, which is the body of Christ, is not dependent upon any such externals as a common organization or language, but alone upon the possession of the saving faith in Jesus Christ. True Christians will, however, "endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," Eph. 4, 3, and will therefore also seek to establish and maintain church fellowship with all who are one with them in confessing the true faith.

2. We acknowledge one, and only one, truly unifying influence and power in matters both of doctrine and of practice, namely the Word of God; and only one God-pleasing procedure in striving for unity: that "the Word of God is taught in its truth and purity and we as the children of God lead holy lives according to it."

3. Through such teaching of the Word, unity and — when deemed desirable — union have been attained in the past. Examples: The early New Testament Church, the Lutheran Reformation, and the Synodical Conference.

4. We hold that inter-synodical committees are use-

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ful in promoting Christian fellowship only: a) when the various groups or synods have, through their public ministry of the Word, given each other evidence of an existing unity in spirit, and it remains merely to establish the fact of such unity and to arrange for some public recognition and confession of that fact; b) or when it is clear that those in error sincerely desire to be taught "the way of God more perfectly," Acts 18, 26.

5. Where such evidence of unity is lacking, or where it is clear that those in error do not sincerely desire to be "taught the way of God more perfectly," but such committees nevertheless are elected to confer with them with the view to church fellowship, there is grave danger the work of these committees will result in indifferentism and in compromise of Scriptural doctrine and practice. (For example of this, consider the mergers and unions of recent years among Lutherans.) The duty of testifying to the truth of God's Word and thus promoting unity, rests at all times upon all Christians. Cf. I Peter 3, 15.

6. Scripture warns us clearly and emphatically against entanglements with errorists (Romans 16, 17; Titus 3, 10; I Tim. 6, 3-5). Any reluctance to heed these warnings and commands of Scripture is unionism already conceived in the heart, which, if allowed to develop, will result in full-fledged unionism, as history also attests.

GLOOMY ANTICIPATIONS

Mark Twain once said, "Through a long life I have encountered many serious troubles, most of which never happened." While showing the characteristic touch of the great humorist, this remark also reveals an understanding of human nature. It brings into open view one of our great follies, namely to anticipate and borrow trouble, to grieve and worry about things which have not yet happened and probably never will happen. From that species of self-inflicted misery even we Christians are not free. Too many Christians make life miserable for themselves by the attitude which has been aptly described as hoping for the best and expecting the worst.

The Lord took a great deal of trouble to cure us of that disease, which is the result of a morbid imagination and, in the final analysis, a lack of faith and trust in God. Our Savior calls our attention to the fowls of the air. He reminds us that not even a sparrow can fall from the roof without the will and consent of God, and then asks us, "Are ye not much better than they?" He trains our eyes upon the beautiful lilies of the field, with whose dress King Solomon in all his glory could not compete, and then puts to us the searching question, "If God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?"

The cares and worries with which we so often torment our hearts have to do with possible future things, with things which have not yet happened. It is understandable that the Gentiles or unbelievers are bothered about such things, for they know not the Almighty Father in heaven. But we know Him and have the promise that He knoweth that we have need of all those things. Every worry and anxiety with which we torment our hearts is an expression of doubt on our part that God can and will do what He promises.—I. P. F. in Northwestern Lutheran.

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