

In the first place a life of faith is not an easy life. God has his program here upon this earth and this program can only be carried through by his people. As the Old Testament Preacher says: "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work nor desire nor wisdom in the grave whither thou goest." And so we say with Jesus: "I must work the works of him that sent me while it is day; for the night cometh when no man can work." From that we have the Christian hymn which sings along in these words: "Work for the night is coming, When man works no more."

To the church as a whole James wants each congregation to know that true Christian faith kills and annihilates any and all forms of class distinction. Paul emphasizes this same truth in Gal. 3:26-28: "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek,

there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." And because we are all one in Christ Jesus, true faith should make strife and contention in the church household an impossibility. As one Christian has aptly put it: "I am going to live with Christians in eternity and so I must learn to live with Christians while I am here on this earth." Where every Christian has that as one of his main endeavors, all bickerings within that church "will fold their tents like the Arabs and as silently steal away."

Coming back then to the heading of this article: Justification *OF* Faith. We do have Christian faith, faith that is centered in Jesus Christ as our personal Savior. Also, we do want our Christian faith to be genuine, and not just a mere lip-service faith. And so, during our day of grace here upon this earth, let us day by day and in every possible way do what James as God's servant tells us to do, yes, let us one and all prove our Christian faith by our Christian works.

Martin Luther and the Jews

By REV. ELIAS NEWMAN

A FEW days after the burning of Jewish synagogues all over Germany on Luther's birthday, November 10, 1938, a pamphlet was issued by the pro-Nazi Bishop Martin Sasse of Eisenach. In this pamphlet entitled, "Martin Luther on the Jews; Out with them!" the bishop expresses the opinion that with this conflagration the "God-blessed conflict of the Nazi Fuehrer definitely crowned the German people with complete freedom."

Martin Sasse says: "In this pamphlet Luther alone shall speak to us with his own words." But he has not done so. What is presented to the reader is a garbled conglomeration in which Luther is muzzled and suppressed. Words are torn out of their context and every sentence, phrase or word expressing pity or concern for the Jewish people and their salvation is deleted and deliberately omitted, making the sense and purpose of Luther's writings quite different to the one intended by the reformer and faithfully preserved in the authorized editions of his collected works.

The pamphlet in question is a gross misrepresentation and perversion of truth as well as a betrayal of Luther. The great reformer is portrayed as the greatest anti-Semite of his time which he definitely was not.

In his exposition of the 22nd Psalm written in 1519, Luther makes an impassioned defense of the Jews and a stirring appeal for their conversion.

In 1521 Luther wrote an exposition on the *Magnificat*, Mary's Song of Praise in Luke 1:45-55. In this he made a strong plea for kindness to the Jews and reminded his readers that the Jews alone and not the Gentiles possessed such remarkable promises concerning their conversion; and there would be Christians in every age belonging to Abraham's seed.

Also in 1521, Luther, in a sermon preached on St. Stephen's Day told his congregation that it was a certainty that the Jews will yet call out to Christ: "Blessed

be He that cometh in the name of the Lord." Proceeding further with his discourse, he brought a number of Old Testament prophecies as evidence and confirmation for his contention. He closes his sermon with a reference to Romans 11:25, 26. His discourse ends with the words: "Gott gebe dass die Zeit nahe bei sei, als wir hoffen. Amen." ("God give that the time may be very soon as we hope. Amen.")

In 1523 Luther wrote: "*Dass Jesus Christus eingeborener Jude sei.*" In it Luther said:

If the apostles, who were Jews, had acted toward us, the heathen, as we, the heathen, act toward the Jews, never a heathen would have become a Christian. Inasmuch, then, as they treated us heathen in so brotherly a manner, we ought to treat the Jews in a brotherly way, if so be that some be converted. And be it remembered, we are ourselves not all up to the mark, much less far advanced.

In 1524 Luther wrote his notable work: "*Vom Brauch Christlicher Freiheit.*" In this great work Luther continues to show kindly feelings toward the Jews. The same is true of his "Table Talk" which was not published till after his death.

In 1537, Luther wrote his letter to the Jew Jesel of Rosheim. In it he refers to his desire to be kind and useful to the Jews but also reminds his Jewish correspondent of the difficulty he finds himself in owing to his kindness having been misused, the true motives misunderstood, thus becoming a hindrance to their acceptance of the Gospel.

Luther began his attack upon the Jews indirectly in, "*Wider die Sabbather,*" in 1538. Many Christians had accepted Judaistic views with regard to circumcision and the observance of the Sabbath.

The reformer's attack upon the Jews became more direct in 1543, when he published his two polemics

against Judaism: "*Vom Schem Hamphoras und Geschlecht Christi*" and "*Von Juden und ihren Lügen.*"

In "*Vom Schem Hamphoras*"; an interpretation of Matt., chap. 1, and which was written against the attack made upon the virgin birth, etc., contained in *Toldoth Jeschu* (a work now generally repudiated and condemned by all Jewish authorities). He says:

"It is just as impossible to convert a Jew as to convert the devil. A Jewish heart is so stony and iron-like that it can in no way be touched. In short they are young devils, condemned to hell. This matter of the Jews is so thoroughly actuated with evil poison and the devil, that for 1,400 years these people have been to us a plague, a pestilence and a misfortune, and still are so. Yet if there is any humanity left in them, then such writing may be of use and for their good. With regard to the whole multitude, may he who will, hope, I have no hope. That some draw such a delusion from the Epistle to the Romans in the 11th chapter, as though all the Jews are to be converted at the end of the world is nothing: St. Paul meant something altogether different."

Many pious Lutherans, learned theologians and others, approve of the remark of Dr. Hengstenberg, the high-church Lutheran professor, that Luther in this respect is not to be followed.

"When Luther introduces into the Scriptures, whose end and aim is everywhere to strengthen our sinking courage, the despair of the conversion of the Jews felt by himself; when he sets aside the clear and evident testimony to the conversion of the Jews borne by the Scriptures, he is undoubtedly not to be commended."—*Die Juden und die Christliche Kirche*, Hengstenberg, 2nd edition, page 58.

In his work, "*Von den Juden und ihren Lügen,*" Luther makes the statement in the beginning:

"I am not concerned with the wish I held to convert the Jews. That is impossible."

In the above mentioned work Luther gives an awful picture of the Jews; highly exaggerated and his use of violent and intemperate language is profuse. He now admits, seemingly, what he once denied; nevertheless, interspersed among some of the most violent utterances of this period are statements that tend to show that Luther makes a distinction between the hope of the Jewish nation and their rights as individuals. In his book, "*About the Jews and Their Lies,*" he says:

"We must practice a penetrating compassion, with prayer and the fear of God toward them, to be able yet to rescue some from the flames and the heat. We must not attempt to avenge ourselves."

But Luther's harshness in his advice, which follows, appears to clash with the words just quoted from the same book. He offers seven very severe suggestions with regard to the Jews; and then adds, that in giving this advice he painfully regrets to have to use such strong language against them. "I do not like to think about it. I was unhappy and my heart ached when I wrote this book."

Luther closes this, his strongest book, against the Jews with the prayer: "Christ our beloved Lord in compassion convert them and keep us firm and immovable in Thy knowledge which is eternal life. Amen!"

Luther's early attitude toward the Jews seemed to have suffered an almost complete change toward the latter part of his life. There was always an inner struggle within the soul of Luther; between Luther the German and Luther the Christian; as the great Hebrew Christian, Isaac da Costa, poet laureate of the Netherlands once said: "The Christian in Luther is lost sight of in the German, always the adversary of the Jews."—*Israel and the Gentiles*, book LV, page 468.

The above statement of da Costa, we believe, is too sweeping. Among the many Germans who befriended the Jews we can mention: Reuchlin, Lessing, Humboldt, Francke, Spener, Zinzendorf, Weber, Franz Delitzsch, Strack and many others.

Luther at first expected to engage in a large organized effort in behalf of the conversion of the Jews as a nation. This plan he undoubtedly and definitely abandoned. But Luther never gave up, nor lent the least encouragement to anyone else, to neglect or give up missionary work among individual Jews, whose conversion he continued to urge upon the hearts and consciences of his people. There were many reasons for his change of attitude. Among the chief of these being the mistaken notion that the Jewish nation as a whole, was about to accept the teachings of Luther. When Luther discovered his error he made an even greater misjudgment in confusing Israel's hardness of heart with the sin against the Holy Spirit.

The Jews themselves were to blame to a great extent for Luther's antagonism to them. They attacked Luther's teaching when they discovered that Luther was not a possible candidate for Judaism; and that he stood for an evangelical and vigorous Christianity, more dangerous from the rabbinic standpoint in its appeals to the Jewish soul, than Romanism. The Jews tried to get Luther's followers to become adherents of the Jewish religion. Some actually joined the synagogue and others formed Judaistic sects.

Luther's position in this respect might well be compared to St. Paul's attitude to the Judaisers in the Epistle to the Galatians.

It is noteworthy to remember that at this time the great Pfefferkorn-Reuchlin controversy was raging; and Luther was among those who supported Reuchlin and Erasmus against the ex-Jewish Dominican monk who led the Romish onslaught against the Jews.

Luther was no anti-Semite. His violent language was always directed against the Jewish religion, which he considered false, and never against the Jewish race.

Luther lived in an age when it was customary to indulge in such intemperate modes of giving vent to one's feelings; of this fact due consideration is necessary in any just appraisal of Luther.

The righteous indignation of the great Reformer was aroused to its highest pitch by the blasphemous pamphlets which the Jews of his time were circulating against our Lord; and we can be sure that just as the Jews today have changed to a more respectful attitude to Christ, it is certain, that if Luther were now living, his antithesis to Judaism would reveal a corresponding change.

At no time did Luther entirely refuse to offer the Gospel to the Jews. He always recognized the spiritual

need of the Jew and never refused to receive a Hebrew Christian as his brother in Christ.

Nicholas de Lyra was a Jewish Christian Bible expositor whose learned commentaries Luther made use of, according to the opinion of D'Aubigné in his History of the Reformation, who quotes the satirical saying of Bishop Pflug: "Had not Lyra played the lyre, Luther had never danced."—"Si Lyra non lyrasset, Lutherus non saltasset."

Luther and his reformation exerted a tremendous influence upon the Jews, and brought to them manifold blessings. In spite of Luther's discouragement a number of leading Jews were brought to an acknowledgment of Jesus as their Messiah. Among these might be mentioned: Paulo Riccio, Bernhard, Johannes Isaac Levita, Johann Herzuge, Matthäus Hadrianus, and many others.

Finally, Luther must be judged, not by his early works, but by his attitude just before his death. With this end in view we wish to make a few more quotations from his writings on the Jews.

"Any among them, who wish to be converted, to this end may God give His grace, that they (however few) may acknowledge and praise God with us, the Father our Creator together with Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit in eternity. Amen!"—*Vom Schem Hamphoras und von Geschlecht Christi*. Second part published in 1543, two years before Luther's death.

"At present we wish to deal with them in a Christian way and primarily offer to them the Christian faith that they may receive the Messiah who is their cousin, born of their flesh and blood and the legitimate seed of Abraham, concerning which they laud and magnify themselves."

"We should offer to them first the opportunity of conversion to the Messiah and permit them to be baptized. . . . We will willingly accept them as brothers whenever they become converted, depart from their usury, and earnestly accept Christ."

"Furthermore we desire to practice Christian love toward them, and pray for them, that they may be converted, and accept the Lord whom they shall reasonably honor before us."

"If the Jews are converted to us and flee from their blasphemies and what else they have done to us we will willingly forgive them; where they will not, however, do so neither will we tolerate or suffer them."—From Luther's last sermon under the title, *Luther's Vermahnung wider die Juden*, (Luther's admonition against the Jews) preached in Eisleben on the Sunday before his death, February 14, 1546. Luther was taken sick on the evening of February 17 and died early on the 18th.—*Luther's Werke, Altenburger Ausgabe*, Vol. viii, page 531; *Vermischte Schriften*, 1855, Erlangen edition, vol. 65, page 187-189.

(The above article by Pastor Elias Newman is an abridgement of a booklet being published by the Zion Society for Israel. In this booklet all quotations from Luther's works are given in the original German, as well as in English, with a complete citation of sources in the various editions from which he has drawn. Pastors will find this booklet of great value. Write to the Zion Society, 401 Cedar Avenue, Minneapolis, Minn., for a copy.)

A Special Appeal

IN 1926 we made an appeal to the friends of the Zion Society for funds to purchase an auto bus for the mission stations in the Twin Cities. There was a ready response, so that we soon were in position to buy the bus. It has done a most valuable and much needed service for all these years until it was worn out last summer season. The bus accommodated about fourteen grown people or twenty children. We have a summer camp for each of the mission stations, both from 10 to 15 miles from the stations. Every summer this auto bus has been indispensable in taking the children back and forth and carrying provisions to the camp several times in the week. Besides it did valuable service in street meetings. The Gospel auto had accommodations for the workers, a small street organ, song books and other equipments. In this way the Gospel group could move conveniently from place to place and gather the Jews for street preaching and singing.

Friends, you can readily understand how handicapped our workers would be without an auto bus, especially during the six to eight weeks of summer camp.

We urgently appeal to individuals and organizations to make an extra donation to such an auto fund, that we may be enabled to purchase one in time for the summer season. A sum of \$1,000 to \$1,200 will be needed. Is there not some individual friend of the Zion Society, or some Ladies' Aid or Young People's Society that would donate a larger part of this sum? However, dear reader, send whatever you can spare for this project. But let not this detract from your regular giving to the Jewish mission cause. Let this be something extra.

As we prayerfully lay this special appeal upon your hearts, dear friends, we feel assured that the Lord is going to prompt many of you to readily respond with your extra donation. We thank you in advance for your interest and assistance also in this special way.

Send your gifts to headquarters, the Zion Society for Israel, 401 Cedar Ave., Minneapolis, Minn.

Sincerely yours,

C. K. SOLBERG, Treas.

Pillars

How can you forsake your father's church?
Where in his youth he went in search
Of God—that he might bring you there.
His heritage to share.

Your little hands in reverence lay
When mother bowed her head to pray.
And oh!—they prayed as seekers search,
"God make our children pillars of Thy church."

—ANNE J. RAMBERG.

LUTHERAN HERALD



Rev. and Mrs. Gerhard Rasmussen resting on the lawn of their home in Northfield, Minnesota. Pastor Rasmussen celebrated his 82nd birthday January 26 this year. He was ordained in 1883 and has been in the service of the church fifty-six years and still preaches the vesper sermons on WCAL every Sunday at three o'clock p. m. Pastor Rasmussen was member of the Union Committee preparing the final agreement, known as the Madison Agreement (Opgjør), which resulted in the church union of 1917. Mr. and Mrs. Rasmussen celebrated their golden wedding anniversary six years ago. Mrs. Rasmussen is a daughter of Professor W. F. Lehmann, a professor of theology of the Ohio Synod and for several years the president of Capital University, Columbus, Ohio.