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ERASMUS AND THE BEGINNING OF THE REFORMATION.

The universality of the famous Humanist still compels our admiration. Nowhere is it more distinctly revealed than in his correspondence. It is this (now most available in the huge folios of the Leyden edition, 1703) which presents the generation of 1517 as it speaks to us nowhere else. With scholars, statesmen, churchmen (such as cardinals, archbishops, bishops), with authors, his relations were fairly all-extending. Among his correspondents were the archbishops of Canterbury and of York, Wolsey, Thomas More, John Colet, dean of St. Paul's, Budaeus (Budé) of Paris, the foremost classicist of France, with whom he sometimes even exchanged Greek epistles, Wilibald Pirckheimer of Nuremberg, Henry VIII of England, Spalatin and Frederick the Wise of Saxony, Melancthon, Justus Jonas, Cardinal Campeggio, the bishops of Basle, Breslau, and Olmuetz, and many others,—mainly the great ones of the world. Many of the letters are really essays and disquisitions, and the purity and elegance of their Latinity still makes the classicist marvel.

But in this year of 1917 and in this epoch we must rigidly limit ourselves to the concerns of our great anniversary. And so I shall make certain selections from the original text of certain of his missives, avoiding, in the main, influences and generalizations which the readers of these documentary data can very easily make for themselves.

THE PROOF TEXTS OF THE CATECHISM WITH A PRACTICAL COMMENTARY.

THE THIRD ARTICLE.

(Concluded.)

OF ETERNAL LIFE.

Rom. 8, 28—30: *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose. For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the First-born among many brethren. Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called; and whom He called, them He also justified; and whom He justified, them He also glorified.*

The purpose of St. Paul in the second half of chapter 8 is to comfort the Christians under the cross, and to assure them of their future glory. In this environment we find vv. 28—30.

In v. 28 a the comforting assurance is made: "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God"; 28 b adduces the reason for the certainty of this statement: they that love God "are the called according to purpose." In v. 29 the phrase "called according to purpose" is resumed and explained, and v. 30 describes the realization of this eternal purpose: it is carried out in time, and again reaches into eternity. In one mighty sweep past eternity is linked with future eternity. The entire paragraph carries out the topic: "All things must work together for good to them that love God."

"We know," *οἴδαμεν*. No guesswork this, no loose conjecture, but knowledge, absolute knowledge, of a comforting truth. "We know"—I, Paul, know and the Christians know or should know, and believe, "*that all things,*" also "the sufferings of this present time," v. 18, *all* trials and sorrows, which seem so hard to bear, "*work together,*" cooperate, mutually contribute, "*for good*"; they are no hurt, no harm, but a blessing; they do not and cannot hinder the attainment of salvation, but rather are *viae regni*. They work for good "to

them that love God," i. e., to the true Christians, for of these text and context speak. (Of. Eph. 6, 24; 1 Cor. 2, 9.) Truly, this is rich consolation under the cross. We Christians love God; He is our Father by faith in Christ Jesus; we are His true children. All that befalls us, cross, affliction, etc., comes from the hand of a loving Father; all is under His guidance and control, and must work together for good.

Is this consoling assurance well founded? Indeed, yes. The apostle asserts this by way of an appositive clause: "*to them who are the called according to purpose.*" "They that love God" are "*the called.*" God called them "from darkness to His marvelous light." (1 Pet. 2, 9.) It is an effectual call Paul speaks of, as the whole tenor of the paragraph manifests. And this call has for its goal—eternal glory. "God hath called us into His *eternal glory* by Christ Jesus." (1 Pet. 5, 9.) Of this glory our text, too, speaks, as the sequel will show. (Of. 2 Thess. 2, 14.) God's call will not fail. When God called us, He said: Eternal glory is yours. Now cross, sorrows, etc.,—this is the thought expressed by the apostle,—cannot hinder, but "must work for good" to attain the end. Paul's consolation has a firm foundation: God's call. But still firmer, as it were, his declaration is made by saying: We are "*the called according to purpose,*" κατὰ πρόθεσιν. God's πρόθεσις, purpose, is simply what the English word says. God *purposed* to do something. What He purposed to do becomes evident from the text. Here He speaks of "*the called according to purpose.*" He *purposed to call* them. So the call was not due to any merits on their part, but to God's *purpose*. In 2 Tim. 1, 9 the term *purpose* is linked with the word *grace*: "God called us according to *His own purpose and grace.*" "They who love God" are "*the called.*" The call was owing to God's *purpose*, and this was *grace*; it was a gracious purpose.

In our text all stress is placed on the word *purpose*, on the fact that the Christians are—to imitate the original diction somewhat—"according to purpose the called." This purpose is a πρόθεσις τῶν αἰώνων, an *eternal purpose* (Eph. 3, 11);

a *πρόθεσις* . . . *πρὸ χρόνων αἰώνιων*, a purpose before the world began (2 Tim. 1, 9). So God's purpose dates back into eternity (Eph. 1, 9); the call is executed in time. When God called them in time, this was no child's play, but a realization of what He had purposed to do in eternity. The call was a result, an effect, of this eternal purpose. And this truth, that we are called according to His purpose, is a powerful reason why "all things work together for good" to the Christians.

"They that love God," "the called according to the purpose" — these clauses are now explained. "For whom He did foreknow He also did predestinate." To understand "foreknow" in its primary sense, "to know beforehand," is too trivial to require an extended refutation. God is omniscient; He knows all mankind beforehand; hence, according to this sense of the word, all men would be predestinated to eternal life, which, of course, is not true. What, then, does the clause "whom He did foreknow" mean? Does it mean: whom God did foreknow would believe? Impossible! Plainly that would be an addition to the words of Scripture, an interpolation, an alteration of the text. Instead of reading: "whom He did foreknow," the text would be made to say: "whose belief, faith, He did foreknow." The object of the verb foreknow would be changed from "whom" to "faith," a word not in the text. Instead of foreknowing certain people, οὓς = "whom," as the text plainly says, this interpolation would make the text speak of foreknowing the faith of these people. Such procedure does not explain the text, but imports a foreign thought into it; it is not exegesis, but a plain case of eisegesis. Besides, this interpolation, that God foreknew those who "would believe," destroys the whole tenor of the text, which is consolation for the suffering Christians, and it moreover militates against the very words preceding this clause, viz., "who are the called according to His purpose." So this cannot be the sense. What, then, do the words "for whom He did foreknow" say? It is an irrefutable fact that the verb "foreknow," προγνωσκειν, according to the *usus loquendi* of Scripture, when used of God, is a syno-

nym for *foreordain*, *preordain*, *elect*. It is not within the sphere of this commentary to enter into a disquisition of all the pertinent passages to establish this Biblical usage. That has been done time and again in our various periodicals during the last thirty years. For our purpose it may suffice to adduce just one passage, the cogency of which will be immediately seen also by readers of the English version of the Bible only. Peter says: "Christ verily *was foreordained* before the foundation of the world, but *was manifest* in these last times for you" (1, 20). Now, if we consult the Greek text, we shall find that the word translated "*foreordained*" is *προϋνώσκειν*, the very same word that is employed in our passage (Rom. 8, 29), and is translated here and elsewhere by *foreknow*. Why, then, we ask, did not the translators of our English Bible so render the verb in 1 Pet. 1, 20? Why does the passage not read: "Christ verily *was foreknown* before the foundation of the world, but *was manifest* in these last times for you"? Because such rendition would not do justice to this powerful and plain text. Two acts of God are described, one taking place "before the foundation of the world,"—that act was to "*foreknow*," *i. e.*, to "*foreordain*," Christ as the Redeemer of the world; the other act, the execution of this eternal decree, taking place "in these last times," was to *manifest* Christ as the Redeemer. This is the thought the sharp antithesis of the two Greek verbs—*προεγνωσμένον* = was foreordained; *φανερωθέντος* = was manifest—loudly demands. To read the text: "Christ verily was *foreknown* before the foundation of the world" and to understand "foreknow" in its primary sense: God "*knew beforehand*, before the foundation of the world," that Christ would be the Redeemer of the world, and therefore manifested Him as such, says next to nothing. Only foreordination, predestination, and manifestation, not a mere mental knowing beforehand and manifestation, does justice to the two verbs that are so strongly set over against each other. So the translators of our English version, knowing the *usus loquendi* of *προϋνώσχω*, to *foreordain*, *preordain*, *elect*, observing

furthermore the strong contrast between the two Greek verbs: *προεγνωσμένου* and *φανερωθέντος*, the one, as afore said, describing a decree of God in eternity, the other telling of the realization of that decree in time, rendered the passage admirably thus: "Christ, who verily *was foreordained* before the foundation of the world, but *was manifest* in these last times for you." Christ was *foreordained*, *preordained* as the Redeemer from all eternity; in time this decree was carried out: He was *manifested* as such. Thus it is evident that the meaning of *foreknew*, *προγνώσχω*, in this passage, is *foreordain*, *preordain*, *choose beforehand* unto Himself. The same holds true of other passages in which this verb *προγνώσκειν* is used of God. (Cf. Acts 2, 23; Rom. 11, 2; 1 Pet. 1, 2.* So also of our passage. The apostle had spoken of those "who love God" as being "the called according to His purpose." The latter phrase he now resumes and explains. "For whom He did *foreknew*," *foreordain*, *choose unto Himself*,—and these are "the called according to purpose,"—"He also did predestinate." So God from eternity foreordained, chose, certain persons unto Himself to be His own. The text does not give the *reason* why God did this; it simply states the mere *fact that He did so*.

We proceed with the text. These persons whom God *foreknew*, preordained unto Himself, chose for His possession, "He also did *predestinate*." Both expressions: *προέγνω*, foreordain, and *προώρισε*, predestinate, describe one and the same eternal counsel of God, but from different view-points. The former has reference to the individuals that God foreordained, chose unto Himself; the latter looks to the end, the goal, for which they have been elected.

Now, what is the purpose for which God predestinated those whom He chose? "*To be conformed to the image of His Son*." That says: In eternity, when God elected those persons of whom the text speaks, He at the same time decreed that once, in spite of the power of Satan and his hellish cohorts, they should bear the image of His Son in everlasting righteous-

* For full exposition see Stoeckhardt, *Roemerbrief* and *Petribrief*.

ness, innocence, and blessedness. Heavenly glory should be theirs (1 Cor. 15, 49). Their "vile body," the body of humiliation, "shall be changed, transformed, that it may be conformed to the body of His glory" (Phil. 3, 21). That this is the meaning of the text the context proves, for the apostle proceeds: "*that He might be the First-born among many brethren.*" In yonder life, in the *status gloriæ*, there will be "many brethren," a great family of children of God, and among these Christ, our Brother, will hold the rank of the First-born, the Leader, the Captain of our salvation, who brings many sons to glory (Heb. 2, 10). That high-priestly prayer (John 17, 24) will be answered: "Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me *be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory* which Thou hast given Me." From eternity God has foreknown, *i. e.*, chosen us unto Himself to be His own, and predestinated us to eternal glory. This His firm purpose cannot fail. How great is the comfort for suffering Christians contained in this text! The attainment of the goal, eternal glory, is certain. They may rest assured that the sufferings of this present time, indeed, "that *all things must work together for good.*"

Thus far the apostle had spoken of God's eternal decree of election. What God has purposed to do in eternity He unfailingly carries out in time. Of this Paul now speaks. "*But whom He did predestinate, them He also called.*" God has not only set the goal, eternal glory, He has also provided ways and means for us to reach it. The way to eternal glory leads through the Kingdom of Grace. He sends His messengers into the highways and byways with the glorious Gospel of our salvation. This Gospel, the glad tidings of the free grace of God by faith in Christ Jesus, is "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." God *calls* us through the Gospel, brings us to Christ, to faith in Him, and *justifies* us, declares us righteous in His sight. And He that has begun the good work in us will also perform it (Phil. 1, 6). Of this the apostle is so certain that he speaks of the glorification to

come in yonder life as being completed now already, saying: "*and whom He justified, them He also glorified.*" And now let hell and Satan rage against us, let afflictions, sorrows, pile themselves up mountain high, let the waves of adversity threaten to overwhelm us, all can harm us none, for "we know that all things work together for our good"; we are Christ's, and no one, yea, nothing, shall pluck us out of His hands.

Springfield, Ill.

LOUIS WESSEL.

(To be continued.)
