

“Progressive Revelation”

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In the current negotiations for union between the several American Lutheran churches, it has generally been assumed that there is agreement on the great fundamental doctrines of the Bible: that it is only in the field of non-fundamental doctrines, or even of minor, peripheral questions on which some latitude of opinion could be allowed, that disagreement reigns. Unfortunately the public facts in the case tell another story. There have thus repeatedly appeared statements on the fundamental doctrine of the Inspiration of the Bible that have been far from biblical and Lutheran, not only in the publications of the ULC, but also in those of the American Lutheran Conference. We shall confine ourselves in this discussion to certain articles published in *Lutheran Herald* of the ELC (the Norwegian Merger) in the course of the last year.

The editor of that church organ, in June 1949, discussed the stand of the ELC on inspiration, affirming that his church stood solidly on the old Lutheran doctrine that “Holy Scripture is the Word of God and therefore has absolute authority.” Yet he refers with approval to an article on “The Doctrine of the Word,” in the June 14 issue, which condemns the “Missourian position” as one that “errs to the right;” “leans toward Monophysitism;” and makes “the Monophysite error of transubstantiating the human scriptures into the divine Word of God.” Since it is a simple historical fact that “Missouri” never thought of “transubstantiating the scriptures into the divine Word of God (Jesus Christ)”, and since the “Missourian position” is nothing else than the Bible’s own teaching with regard to the authorship and authority of the Scriptures, we might pass this writer’s remarks by as but another example of the dense ignorance that prevails in certain Lutheran circles concerning what the much maligned “seventeenth century scholastic theologians,” as well as real “Missourians” today, teach. We must, however, question his claim that he can “rest—on the unshakable authority of the Biblical revelation without resorting to a specific theory of inspiration,” since he comes closer to “theorizing” about inspiration than any orthodox Lutheran ever did. He seems to want to compare the Inspiration of Scripture with the union of the two natures, human and divine, of Christ in one Person, and even with the “real presence” of the body and blood of Christ in the Lord’s Supper. We shall not try to examine the validity of his highly theoretical, not to say, too original, thesis here; but shall only recall that, according to the formula now popular in certain Lutheran circles, Inspiration is “a unique operation of the Holy Spirit, ...by which He supplied to the Holy Writers content and fitting word.” But if it is “a unique operation,” it can hardly be compared, without causing confusion, either to the union of the human and divine natures in Christ, or to the “real presence” of Christ in the bread and wine of the Sacrament. There would be a point of comparison with the “operation of the Holy Spirit” upon the hearts of men in conversion, where both the synergistic and the Calvinistic errors are to be avoided. The synergistic error in the doctrine of Conversion being rather popular in the E.L.C., it is to be expected that it would creep into the doctrine on Inspiration also.

The editor of the *Lutheran Herald* failed still more dismally in showing that his church stood solidly for the “authority of the Word of God,” when he published a series of four articles by Dr. Jakob Tanner on “The Inspiration of the Bible.” (Sept. 27 to Oct. 25, 1949.) These articles claim, indeed, to be a defense of the doctrine of Inspiration, and they do affirm that doctrine also with regard to the very words of the Bible. But they do so at serious cost to the divine character and moral authority of the inspired Word, which makes them in reality a more dangerous attack on the Bible than even outright denial of its inspiration would be.

Thus, these articles call attention to a whole series of alleged “Discrepancies and Difficulties” in the Bible, without offering any adequate explanation of them, such as conservative Bible scholars long since have presented. They refer to certain allegedly incorrect or arbitrarily applied quotations from the Old Testament in the New Testament, and leave the whole matter with the question: “By what right could the New Testament authors make such use of the Old Testament?” And they charge the Old Testament with an “inferior morality,” because it relates the “polygamous practices of such men as Abraham, Jacob and David;” because it reports the “ruthless war of extermination that the Israelites were commanded to wage against the inhabitants of Canaan

(Deut. 7:2-3; 20:16-17; 3:6)”; and because it contains “the so-called imprecatory psalms (which) offer prayers that no Christian could pray (e.g., Ps. 69:22-29; Ps. 109:6-16).”

Now, in order to meet these objections to the Bible, the author resorts to the theory of a “progressive revelation of God.” He says: “God’s revelation was accomplished through a historical process of a progressive character. The Old Testament books reflect this progressive process with all the limitation inherent in the preparatory stage. The Author of Genesis could not write from the point of view of Paul. ...If we have grasped the historical character of God’s self-revelation, the inferior morality of God’s people in the Old Testament causes no difficulty. In fact, it becomes an evidence of the realism and veracity of the Bible.

“An incomplete revelation could not produce a complete morality. Limited Means of Grace could not generate the highest type of faith and life. In the redeeming process God had to deal with the people of Moses and David as they were then, not as they would be 1000 or 1500 years later. The inferior morality simply shows that the best of them were still immature children, spiritually as well as morally. It also shows God’s unlimited love, forbearance, and patience in the long and difficult task to create in Israel the spiritual and moral insight and practice that Christ needed as a basis for His work.

“Paul’s words in Romans 3:25-26 were occasioned by the limited revelation in the Old Testament and limited redemptive, power that was the result.”

Most of the Bible critics who condemn the Bible for its “discrepancies” and “inferior morality” do so in order to show that the Bible, or at least portions of it, could not possibly be the inspired word of God. But here we have a supposedly conservative Lutheran admitting the validity of Modernistic strictures upon the Old Testament, and yet defending its inspiration on the blasphemous assumption that the Holy Ghost Himself was responsible for the “inferior morality” and the other blemishes in the Old Testament. Modernists, in accordance with their evolutionistic principles, teach a “progressive revelation of God” as a matter of course. To them, early Man could know very little about God, having just emerged from the brute stage of his development. God Himself was in the meantime “evolving” also. Dr. Tanner’s statements, as quoted above, would be quite acceptable to them. He may, indeed, occupy a conservative position on other doctrines, but it cannot be denied that he follows the evolutionary theory in his statements on “progressive revelation.”

In his pamphlet “In the Interest of Lutheran Unity,” (1940) Dr. M. Reu of the ALC came with similar statements regarding “the gradual development” of the “revelation or self-disclosure” of God. We reviewed his attitude toward Scripture in a series of articles published in *Lutheran Sentinel*, 1941, and also in *Theologische Quartalschrift* (April and July, 1941), showing that he on this point followed Modernistic theories and principles. Dr. Reu did not go so far as Dr. Tanner does in condemning the Old Testament for its “inferior morality.” But what we wrote then in answer to Dr. Reu would apply also now to Dr. Tanner. We quoted at some length from Dr. C. M. Zorn’s booklet: “The Whole Christian Doctrine in Genesis 1-5,” to show what the true Lutheran position is. We shall quote here only this much: “Luther and all truly orthodox theologians recognize and testify that *the Old Testament reveals Christ*, that *the whole Christian doctrine is taught in it*. ...But just this is being denied by almost all theologians of our time, even by such as still call themselves Lutheran and Christian, in spite of this clear evidence of Scripture (Acts 26:22-23; Luke 24:44, etc.)...And just like the worldly-wise scientists of this world teach a gradual development or evolution of man from the brute state, or at least from a very low beginning, to the present high state of culture, just so these theologians teach that the Holy Scriptures offer a revelation and knowledge which similarly developed out of barely noticeable beginnings until it finally reached the maturity and perfection of the New Testament. ...But this is ignorance, science falsely so called, false doctrine, deceit, and all Christians must earnestly be warned against it. ...Aye, the Christian doctrine was clearly known by the faithful of the first 1500 years, known and proclaimed.” It is, in short, a direct contradiction of the whole Bible to affirm that there was at any time such an inadequate revelation of God and His will that men could not attain to a full knowledge both of His moral Law and of His saving Gospel.

Every Christian knows, of course, that there is such a thing as growth or development, and that God revealed Himself more clearly in the person of Jesus Christ than He did in the Old Testament prophecies concerning Him. But such growth is one thing; “evolutionary progress” is another. The great fallacy in the

evolution theory is that it ignores or denies the Biblical and scientific fact, that every form of life grows and develops always and only “after its kind”; that in no case does development result in a change from one *kind* of life to another. Thus we must also insist that God’s revelation of Himself was and is always “after its kind;” that both the Law and the Gospel which He proclaims to men were and are always the same; that He, therefore, could not possibly be conceived as giving men at any time such an “incomplete revelation” that it “could not produce a complete morality,” nor such “limited Means of Grace” that they “could not generate the highest type of faith and life.”

Consider the facts in the case: God revealed Himself to Adam and Eve and to early men, in general, in a direct manner which must have given them just as complete a knowledge of Him and His will for the salvation of the world as we have today. It would, in fact, be easy to show from the Bible that Adam and the other patriarchs to whom God revealed Himself had a better and more intimate knowledge of God than we can gain from our study of His Word. For “Enoch walked with God; and he was not; for God took him.” That is, “by faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God translated him; for before his translation he had this testimony that he pleased God. But without faith it is impossible to please him.” (Heb. 11:5–6). Noah “walked with God,” and was “a preacher of righteousness,” who “became heir of the righteousness which is by faith,” (Heb. 11:8; II Pet. 2:5). The Triune God appeared repeatedly to Abraham, even in human form, walking and talking with him. He appeared also to him and others as “the Angel of the Lord,” i.e., the Second Person in the Trinity, our Lord Jesus Himself. Jesus says of him: “Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it and was glad.” (John 8:56.) Therefore the New Testament writers, so far from regarding the Old Testament saints as “still immature children,” possessing only an “inferior morality,” and knowing only a Gospel with a “limited redemptive power,” present them as true heroes of the faith. Study, e.g., the references to them by our Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew 8, Luke 16, John 8, etc.; read Acts 7, Hebrews 11, etc. Also the Old Testament saints are held up as models of the faith, hope, and love we should possess and manifest. St. Paul makes the story of Abraham the very basis of his greatest theological treatises, Romans and Galatians, “Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning; that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.” (Rom. 15:4.) Evidently Paul did not know that Abraham had only an “inferior morality” and had not succeeded in “generating the highest type of faith and life!”

We know, indeed, that the Bible shows these Old Testament saints to be sinners, who sometimes fell into very grievous sins. But because they believed God and His promises, they could be called His holy children, in spite of their sins. The case is no different with us today. The humble Christian today will not imagine that he is any better, either morally or spiritually, than Abraham, Jacob, etc., were; he will leave that to the modern “scribes and Pharisees.” The fact that the Bible speaks so frankly about the sins of such God-fearing heroes of the faith as Noah, Abraham, Jacob, etc., does not prove that the standards of morality were lower then than now. Nor is it anything but absurd to expect the Bible to condemn *in so many words* every sin that it records. Did Jesus sponsor an “inferior morality” when he ate with publicans and sinners, or when he said to the woman taken in adultery: “*Neither do I condemn thee?*” He who has not learned from the stories of Abraham or of David that we are “justified by faith without the deeds of the law” (Rom. 3:28), and that God for Christ’s sake “justifies the ungodly” (Rom. 5:4), has in truth but an “immature faith,” and needs to learn again “the (first) principles of the doctrine of Christ” and to “lay again the foundation of repentance from dead works.” (Heb. 6:1.)

As for the polygamy of Abraham, Jacob, and David, it is clear that this was, as Dr. Tanner also states, a falling away from the type of marriage God instituted in the Garden.” Where, then, is the “inferior morality?” The Bible shows us clearly and dramatically that this sin punished itself in every case upon those who committed it. Consider all the misery that came to Abraham, as well all others guilty of it, as a result of their polygamy! It is only when people read the Bible in a very superficial manner that they can fail to notice this. Would anyone deduce from the story of Judah and Tamar in Genesis 38 that the Bible there condones adultery, just because it does not in so many words condemn Judah for his sin, but even goes on to show how his incestuous offspring became an ancestor of the royal house of Israel and of the promised Messiah Himself? Judah was ready to condemn Tamar to death by burning, for her whoredom (38:24), until he was convicted of

being equally guilty himself. Where was the “inferior morality?” Are we any stricter today with such sinners than Judah was? Yes, Tamar is singled out, along with the harlot Rahab, Ruth the Moabitess (the descendant of another incestuous union), and the adulteress Bathsheba,—as an ancestress of Christ, in Matth. 1. Does that, perhaps, show that Matthew, too, had lower moral ideals than our enlightened Christians have today? No, all these things prove only that which is the very heart of the Gospel, that Jesus “came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (Matth. 9:13); as He said to the priests and elders of the Jews: “Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God before you.” It is an instance of the great difficulty that the “priests and elders” of every age, including comparatively conservative theologians, have with assimilating the real meaning of the Gospel that they so often stumble at the record of the sins of God’s saints, instead of praising God for the wondrous salvation He has wrought for even the most sinful of men.

As for the so-called “imprecatory psalms,” those that are named, Psalms 69 and 109, are both “Messianic Psalms,” quoted as such repeatedly in the New Testament. Dr. Tanner says that “no Christian could pray” the words in 69:22–29 and 109:6–15. But our Lord Jesus quotes Psalm 69:4 in John 15:25 and applies the Psalm directly to Himself. Psalm 69:9a is applied to Him in John 2:17. Paul quotes Ps 69:9b with reference to Christ in Rom. 15:3. The fulfillment of Ps. 69:21 is quoted in Matth. 27:34. Psalm 69:23 expresses no other “imprecation” than that which Christ expressed directly, as in Matth. 13:13ff. Our Lord uses the language of Ps 69:25 in Matthew 23:38 concerning Jerusalem. Psalm 69:26, in the midst of the alleged “imprecatory” part of the Psalm echoes the language of Is. 53, which is such a striking description of the suffering Redeemer. St. Peter, in Acts 1:20, quotes both 69:25 and 109:8 as being fulfilled in Judas Iscariot who betrayed Jesus. In the same connection he quotes Psalm 41, which he calls “Scripture—which the Holy Ghost, by the mouth of David, spake before concerning Judas.” But if these are the words of the Holy Spirit, as Dr. Tanner also admits they are, then every Christian *needs to learn to pray them*. What blasphemy to judge the Holy Ghost as teaching us any unworthy prayer!

The contradiction between such “imprecatory prayers” and the spirit of forgiveness, which Christ expressed when He was crucified, is seeming, not real. For the fact is that God’s love and mercy toward sinners never annuls His righteous wrath against sin and against those who in rebellious unbelief resist the Holy Ghost. Actually, there is no difference between the “imprecations” of these Psalms over the enemies of God and Christ’s own “woes” over the Pharisees and over Jerusalem. Read Matth. 23:16ff. It is our merciful Savior, He Who is Love incarnate, who has also spoken in the most explicit and fearful manner about the eternal punishment of hell, “where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched” (Mark 9:44). He who would bar the “imprecatory psalms” from the Christian’s prayer book should also, if he were logical, omit every reference to hell fire in his theology.

One of the great Lutheran theologians and Hebrew scholars, E. W. Hengstenberg, says in his commentary on Psalm 69: “In the New Testament there is no Psalm, with the exception of the Ps. 22, which is so frequently quoted and applied to Christ, as the One before us, ...not only by the Apostles, but also by Christ Himself...That in reference to this paragraph (Ps. 69:22–28), we cannot entertain the idea of ‘a zeal which belongs to the Old Testament but not to the religion which commands us to love our enemies,’ and that the Psalmist does not stand in need of the generosity of those who would frame an excuse for his ‘too sensitive heart,’ is obvious, apart from general considerations, from the fact that the Savior in His last moments emphatically referred to the Psalm, the peculiar character of which is unquestionably taken from this paragraph; that, in Matth. 23: 38) he quoted Ps. 69:25 as descriptive of the destruction which was to come upon Judah; that the same verse, in Acts 1:20, is quoted by Peter as fulfilled in Judas, Judah’s type; and that Paul, in Rom. 9:10 finds in Ps. 69:22 and 23 a prophecy of the fate of the Jews. The *wish* for divine judgment on ungodly wickedness can be considered as objectionable only if we are prepared to deny this judgment itself, in manifest contradiction to the New, no less than to the Old Testament: comp. for example, Matth. 21:41; 22:7; 24:51. Assuredly, it becomes us to approach passages of Scripture such as these in this Psalm with fear and trembling: and assuredly, in ungodly lips, they may be used in a very ungodly manner. Luther: ‘Became first a Peter, Paul, James, David and Elisha, and assuredly thou mayest curse in the name of God, and thereby perform an acceptable service to God.’”

And on Psalm 109, Dr. Hengstenberg says: “The assertion of Grotius, ‘that there is nothing like this in the Gospels or in the Acts of the Apostles,’ overlooks the circumstance that, alongside of the prayer, ‘Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do,’ which does not stand in the least in contradiction to our Psalm (for it is with consummated wickedness that the Psalmist has to do,) there stands, in the preceding context, the oft-repeated woe which the Lord denounced against the Pharisees, and also the threatening of the dreadful judgments upon Judas and Judah, which contain in them a *wish* as assuredly as the will of Christ is in accordance with the will of God; it overlooks also the expressions of Paul, ‘The Lord smite thee, thou whited wall,’ Acts 23:3; and ‘Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil, the Lord reward him according to his deeds,’ II Tim. 4:14. The Psalm is either edifying or it is injurious in its tendency; it is either holy or abominable. We hold decidedly by the former alternative, after the example of the Apostle who found in this Psalm a prophecy of Christ, Acts 1:20. The man who considers the view which lies at the basis of our Psalm as objectionable, robs suffering righteousness of one of the chief fountains of consolation, and takes away from wickedness the bit and the bridle: the use of our Psalm even in this point of view is usually overlooked that an unholy use be made of that which has a holy meaning cannot be brought as a ground of charge against it. Then he quotes Calvin: “Now as David did not speak except by the impulse of the Spirit, these imprecations are to be considered as if they were spoken by the voice of God from heaven. Thus, on the one hand, in denouncing vengeance, he wounds and restrains all our wicked desires of injuring others, and on the other hand, moderates our grief by administering that consolation which will enable us to bear injuries.”

Dr. J. T. Mueller of St. Louis, writing in *Concordia Theol. Monthly*, June 1941, (p. 470ff.) under the heading “The Imprecatory Psalms” comes with similar statements in answer to those who condemn these Psalms as unchristian in spirit. And Dr. Th. Engelder, in his thorough series of articles on “Verbal Inspiration” in *C.T.M.*, 1941 and 1942, devotes a long section (over 20 pages) to showing the blasphemous character of such criticisms of the “morals of the Old Testament” and the “imprecatory Psalms” in particular as we have reviewed above. “Evangelisk Luthersk Kirketidende” of the old Norwegian Synod also defended these Psalms in an editorial commenting on Bishop Heuch’s book, “Mod Strømmen, (“Against the Current”), (1902, p.1182f.)

As for the brutal wars of the Israelites against the Canaanites, the Bible shows clearly that God wanted to destroy these people root and branch for the same reason that He, by direct action from heaven, destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. To criticize the Israelites for their “atrocities” is to criticize God for punishing the wicked and unbelieving. Whether God uses the forces of nature (a Deluge, fire from heaven, destructive storms, earthquakes, etc.) or He uses other nations or peoples to carry out His judgments on the impenitent, it is He who, in the final analysis, is responsible for their fate. That is the teaching also of the New Testament: “If we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” (Heb. 10, 26ff.)

In Dr. J. T. Mueller’s article referred to above, he reviews an article in *The Lutheran Church Quarterly* of the U.L.C. which takes much the same position on the points discussed above as Dr. Tanner does. “Let us not look for Christian ethical concepts in the primitive morality of ancient tribes—which is reading history backwards,” says this ULC organ. In answer Dr. Mueller says: “Anything more false and misleading could not have been written on this point. It is so altogether against the testimony of Christ and the apostles that one wonders how a Lutheran could have been penned it. Christ’s witness on this point is indeed clear and decisive. The Old Testament Scriptures testify *of Him*, John 5:39. They set forth *God’s Word*, Matth. 15:3, not any ‘primitive morality of ancient tribes.’ He Himself extols and inculcates the morality of the Old Testament as perfect and binding all men at all times, Matth. 22:36–40. Christ recognizes no ‘evolution of morality and religion’ in the Holy Bible, for He quotes even Genesis as divine truth, Matth. 19:5. And so does St. Peter, II Pet. 1:21; and St. Paul, II Tim. 3:16. Essentially there is no difference in content between the Old Testament and the New, even though there is greater clarity in the latter; both contain Law and Gospel, the divine message of wrath and of grace. Let all who write in the spirit of the article just quoted beware lest they themselves come under the condemnation of the righteous God, whose warning reads: ‘Be not deceived; God is not mocked.’ Gal. 6:7.”

It reveals, then, a complete misunderstanding of the teachings of the Bible to imagine that there is in it any development from lower to higher forms of morality and spirituality. The God of Love who revealed His surpassing grace in the face of Jesus Christ revealed Himself as such also to the people of the Old Testament. The jealous God of unbending justice who revealed His terrible wrath against every form of sin to the people of the Old Covenant makes no lesser demands on the people of the New Covenant. To them also He proclaims that “there shall in no wise enter into it (His heavenly Jerusalem) anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination or maketh a lie; for without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.” (Rev. 21:27 and 22:15). It is a vain thing to try to reconcile the modern “science falsely so-called,” named “Evolution,” with the Bible teachings in any respect, or to fit it into one’s theological system, and yet remain a true Bible teacher.

We shall not try to call attention to all the weaknesses in Dr. Tanner’s articles nor to the good points in them, which, unfortunately, are vitiated by the errors noted above. What we have written should be sufficient to show that there is still a deep gulf separating true Lutherans who “tremble at His word,” and who, with Martin Luther, find that “one word of God makes the world too small for them,” from those Lutherans who pervert not only the words and teachings of Luther, but also the very Word of God. The editor of *Lutheran Herald* referred in an editorial in the Jan. 10, 1950, issue to an article in the December 1949 *Concordia Theol. Monthly* as proof that “Dr. Tanner is a sound theologian” and that one of our Norwegian Synod members was mistaken when he wrote to the editor protesting that “Dr. Tanner’s first article is so unscriptural and un-Lutheran that ‘it will take years of study and opposite testimony to undo the damage of that one article.’” “If this brief discussion of the points at issue is not sufficient to convince the reader that “progressive revelation,” as presented by Dr. Tanner, is entirely “unscriptural and un-Lutheran,” we would urge him to procure Dr. Th. Engelder’s book and study the pertinent sections. (The series of articles first printed in *C.T.M.*, 1941 and 1942, have been published in book form under the title, “Scripture cannot be Broken.”) We shall close this with just a few brief quotations from it:

“When Professor Grau declared that ‘the morality of the Old Testament is imperfect’ Dr. Stoeckhardt wrote: *Das ist ein ‘blasphemous Urteil ueber die Sittlichkeit des Alten Testaments.’* (That is a blasphemous judgment on the morality of the Old Testament.)” (*C.T.M.* 1942, p. 169)—“The extermination of the Canaanites was an act of the outraged holiness of God. God’s holiness could tolerate them no longer. Their extermination had an ethical reason. And those who charge the executors of God’s judgment with inhumanity (charging God, in effect, with ungodliness) have no sound ethical sense.” (p. 172 “The moral sense of the Christian is not shocked when God manifests His hatred of sin and pours out His consuming wrath upon the rebellious sinner, inflicting upon him woe temporal and eternal. The mind of the Christian is formed on the mind of God and reflects the divine hatred of sin. For that reason he looks upon these psalms (69, 109, etc.) as holy psalms. He does not denounce them. *He prays them.* (p. 174)—Marcus Dods explains and excuses the alleged moral blemishes in the Old Testament with the theory of the ‘progressive revelation.’ He says: ‘The best men among the Jews *misunderstood God.*’ Fosdick has the same explanation. On their theory God permitted David to think that he was speaking the mind of God (‘The Spirit of the Lord spake by me,’ 2 Sam. 23:2) when he wrote his imprecatory psalms; God took no steps to keep the writers of the Bible from attributing to Him their own semibarbarous conceptions; it was according to God’s plan (‘progressive revelation’) that men had in the initial stages false ideas of God; David thought that God was a semi-barbarous Being because God planned it that way.” (p. 179–180.) Dr. Engelder quotes also McClintock and Strong’s *Cyclopedia*, VIII, p. 755: “The truth is that only a morbid benevolence, a mistaken philanthropy, takes offense at these psalms; for in reality they are not opposed to the spirit of the Gospel nor to that love of enemies which Christ enjoyed. Resentment against evil-doers is so far from sinful that we find it exemplified in the meek and spotless Redeemer Himself, Mark 3:5.”

This has always been the teaching of “Missouri.” If through a policy of calling attention only to what is good in other Lutheran bodies, suppressing criticism of what is wrong, the organization called the “Missouri Synod” should change its position, this would still not change the immutable truths of God’s Word. “To the Law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.” (Is. 8:20.)