



An Historical Lecture on the occasion
of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the
Evangelical Lutheran Church
in South Australia

presented by J. Z.

during the afternoon celebrations
in the Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church
at Light Pass,
the 28th November 1888

This morning we festively commemorated the fiftieth anniversary of our Evangelical Lutheran Church, during which we could, by God's grace, thank him for the rich blessings and many benefactions which he has shown to our church from its beginning through to the present day. However, since it is also customary on such occasions to look to the past and recall God's guidance, I would now, as one who belongs to the older colonists, lay out the historical path of our Evangelical Lutheran Church, so that we may strengthen ourselves in our resolve, and also especially so that our youth will see, and maybe one day remember, how we, their fathers, through God's grace, held fast to our Evangelical Lutheran Mother-Church, and at such times as we saw cracks in Zion's walls, were active in bringing lime and small stones to help build-up, rather than to tear down.

In this month, the 21st November, it will be 50 years since the first German immigrants reached South Australia. The Church, or God's congregation, has and is the power of God, which every person carries in himself, and must bring with him to wherever he comes if he wants to live right and die holy. These immigrants, therefore, who were persecuted in Prussia and in Germany because of the Union, transplanted the Evangelical Lutheran Church, where the same, praise God, has full freedom. The town of Klemzig near Adelaide was established, and there the first church of Pastor Kavel and his congregation was built. As a result of further immigration the towns of Lobethal (where Pastor Fritzsche, also a victim of persecution as a result of the Union in Prussia, had his church and congregation), Hoffnungsthal, Rosenthal, Langmeil, Bethany, Light Pass, etc. were established.

We, from the Kingdom of Saxony, arrived here in Australia, 98 people strong, along with several from Silesia, etc, in 1851. The Brothers from Rosenthal met us and brought us to Rosenthal; some went to Light Pass and those from Silesia went to Hoffnungsthal, Lobethal, etc. We at once came forward for the celebration of the Holy Communion. At this the church elders advised us that we would have to be examined before we could receive the same. Pastor Meyer in Bethany, who also served the congregation in Rosenthal, was advised. The day of the examination was determined. When we, the elders of the congregation, as well as Pastor Meyer, had gathered in the church, Pastor Meyer explained to us why the examination was necessary; not only because of the Union, because he knew that in Saxony there had been no Union. Rather it was because a dispute about the teachings of the Last Things had broken out between the few Lutheran pastors in South Australia just a few years before, and there had even been a schism. And so we had to take a position on this teaching and be examined on it. Pastor Meyer first explained how they (Pastors Meyer and Fritzsche), with their congregations, stood over and against this

teaching, namely that they believed in the prophecies of the prophets of the Old Covenant that also relate to the Church of Christ in the New Covenant, and also in the Revelation to St. John. But everything that the prophets said about the future of the Church, has been fulfilled by Christ's manifestation in the flesh and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and through the sending out of the Apostles. As such we have nothing else to anticipate, only the Last Day with its judgement. The closer we come to the Last Day, increasing seduction and falling away from the Christian Church will come to light. This is alluded to in the Old and New Testaments. (Matthew: 21, etc.)

We now had to declare if this was also our belief. We explained that we also believe in the decline and seduction of the Christian Church as it is described in Matthew 24; also in the horrors of the devastation, not only of the destruction of Jerusalem, but also as pointed to through the prophet (Daniel, 11:36), and by Paul in 2 Thessalonians 2, namely "the man of sin... the son of perdition"; as well as the personal Antichrist, who, after the decline will reveal himself for the first time and will seat himself in the temple of God as a god and will pretend that he is God, etc, which the Lord will destroy with the "breath of his Mouth" (Revelation 19:11-21). This judgement over the Beast, the false prophet and his army and his accomplices, who took on the mark of the Beast and prayed to the image of the Beast (Revelation, 19:20,21) is, however, not yet the Last Judgement: Satan will not yet be judged at this time, but will be chained with a big chain and locked in the abyss (Revelation 20:1-3). Only after Satan has once again appeared out of the abyss, can the Final Judgement, or the Last Day, come (as in Revelation 10: 10-15).

Amid all the ravages and uproar in those dismal days of the Antichrist, the Lord will continue to protect and keep his Church; yes, in those days he will even fulfil his promise to Israel, as is written in Ezekiel 37, as well as all the many promises that point to the general conversion of Israel; and if you would believe in the general conversion of Israel you would also recognise the blessing that is linked to this, which also relates to the animals and plants and planetary systems in both a spiritual and physical way (Isaiah 30: 26; 60, etc), and that these blessings will comprise an epoch of themselves which the Scriptures also do not leave unmentioned (Revelation 20: 2,3,4,6,7, etc).

With this the discussion about the general conversion of Israel was now taken up and reasons for and against were cited.

After quite long debates, Pastor Meyer declared that he had no further objection to our confession and, since we had also not made any breach of the confessional writings by it, he was prepared to give us Holy Communion and to admit us to the congregation. He now asked the opponents their view. They declared, however, that even though it could not be disputed that all of this did appear in the Holy Scriptures, yet it was not Lutheran, and accordingly, we were no Lutherans. Now we explained that there had always been men in the Evangelical Lutheran Church who had believed in the general conversion of Israel and had confessed it (Dr. Lange, Dr. Spener, A. H. Francke, C. V. Bogassky) and if one were to cite all those who had believed and confessed it, then those who did not believe it would be in the minority and those people would have the same experience as the Jewish church (Isaiah 29: 10-14); and then it would not be to be wondered at that among them the Spirit would be dulled and prophecy doubted (1 Thessalonians 5: 19, 20). But not only had a great many theologians at all times believed this, but Dr. Martin Luther himself had believed it and had confessed it in the *Kirchenpostille* [1543 edition]. About the text, Luke 13, 35: “Look, your house is left to you desolate. I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.’”, etc, Luther speaks first of all in his sermon about how the Jews from then on did not see Jesus again, and how this therefore has not yet been fulfilled, and then goes on to the prophecies in the books of Moses, in the prophet Hosea 3, Romans 11:25,26, and closes his sermons with the words: God grant that this time will be closer than we believe.

Now we challenged the church elders to prove to us that Luther was not Lutheran; if so then we did not want to be Lutheran either. That was too difficult for them, however; they could not prove that Luther was not Lutheran. And so they finally agreed to the declaration of Pastor Meyer, and the path to our admission was cleared.

Now we, however, still had one stipulation and request: we declared that we were pleased that they did not admit people without first examining them and, when necessary, instructing them. We would wish, however, that we might also examine them from our side before we would become members, because we would have to convince ourselves of how this church was ordered according to its Church Ordinances and Synodical Ordinances: whether these hold to the Word of God and do not offend against the Confessions of our Evangelical Lutheran Church, and also if the congregation safeguards its biblical and apostolic rights in, for example, the election and calling of a pastor to the congregations, or whether such is given over to a committee or to the Synod. Further, since among you, both Lutherans, a schism has taken place, and hatred and enmity are still

in full bloom, it also lies on our hearts, inasmuch as we might be helpful in achieving this, that you would seek to reunite with one another on the basis of the Word of God and our Lutheran Confessions. To review and examine all of this would require more time than you needed to examine us. We must also convince ourselves about the stance of those who have separated from you, whether their stance is as it has been told to us, and been published in the small brochures and polemical pamphlets written by this side. As such we wish to only be admitted as guests with you.

This was agreed to by the amiability of Pastor Meyer and the church elders, and Pastor Meyer served us for as long as it took us to take up land and found the village of Ebenezer. After that we still had conferences in Bethany in regard to the schism between the two churches. At one conference a booklet was shown to us, which contained an explanation of the Revelation to John, in order to show us how they interpret and believe the Revelation to John. Unfortunately I no longer have the booklet. The gist of one paragraph regarding the Resurrection was as follows: when a man lives in sin without God he is spiritually dead; when, however, he comes to faith in Jesus Christ through confession and penitence, he is resurrected and is alive. That is the First Resurrection, to which the Revelation to John 20:4, 5 symbolically points.

Since we, however, could only reconcile this explanation with the Revelation to John 20:4 if it were true, as the enemies of Christ say, that the martyrs and apostles were killed of their own will, then they must still rise from sin. But since they were beheaded on account of their witness to Jesus, and it is they who did not pray to the Beast, and so on, since such a misguided exegesis only makes sense to the enemies of Christ, we took no notice of it.

We now took the opportunity to get to know Pastor Kavel, and spoke with Him about the schism and the stance of his congregations. He told us that in the Union in Germany, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Germany had its consistorial constitution; here in Australia, however, where the State was not bound to the church, he had not wanted to set up a priestly church regimen, but rather had sought to institute an apostolic church constitution with the institution of elders.

His explanations appealed to us very much. We also convinced ourselves that much of what we had read and heard had been manipulated and could only be seen as libel. However we still had to convince ourselves of one big failing: that this pastor and his congregations had not veered from the centre of our Lutheran Confessions, because they had raised protests against certain teachings of our Lutheran Confessions. This did not please us. We

petitioned him to explain to us how they were unable to extract the true meaning of these teachings, which lies in the symbolism, but we could not get through to him. So we finally compared their stance with an example: We told them that the symbols of our church, or the confessional documents, are a feature, or features, similar to the flag of a people at war, to which it swears allegiance, around which it gathers, under which it fights. If a small house should now wish to take up arms against this army and its flag, and even shoot, it would be impossible for it to be considered a friend of, and belonging to, that army and the flag to which it adheres. Your stance can be seen like this as long as you do not withdraw your weapons: that is, as long as you do not take back your protest. Despite this explanation we could not get through. Later the congregations of Pastor Kavel called a pastor to Light Pass, a Pastor Staudenmeyer from Württemberg (it will be 30 years ago this summer) and he finally was successful so that, at his suggestion, the protestations were countermanded in the congregations (whereas the complete countermanding only occurred in 1864). After that we joined ourselves to the congregation at Light Pass, so that the congregation in Light Pass was our mother congregation and our congregation in Ebenezer became a filial of Light Pass. We grew old during this time and our final pastor, Pastor Niquet, was much older still, so that he had to lay aside his office due to old age (which he still has not been totally successful in doing, since, because the number of teachers in our congregations is still inadequate, he must still help to pull at the nets of the Gospel a little.) It was therefore necessary for us to seek another, younger pastor for the parish of Light Pass. And so we Brothers met together, drafted our decided stance on the Lutheran Church, and sent for a pastor. The Lord also heard our prayers and sent us a young man in the person of our Pastor Spannagel from Basel. Soon after his arrival the church elders and brothers from the parish were called together and a *colloquium orthodoxiae* was held.

Before I go further I must go back and insert something here. Brothers! We had made a mistake when, a few years previously, a proposal was put to the Synod, to elect a business or administrative committee, even though concerns were immediately voiced that this could lead to governance by priests. Since, however, the limits of the duties of such a committee were settled (that it could only carry out the resolutions of general conferences and synods, and that the rights of the congregations according to scripture and apostolic usage would remain untouched) the vote for such a committee went ahead. But how soon it was that one could see for oneself that this committee grew, not in service, but in authority and rule. Because soon thereafter, when a candidate of theology arrived, the committee published the following in the church's newsletter: at such and such a time a colloquium would be held with this gentleman, and at such and such a

time the installation would take place. Since neither brothers nor elders of the congregation were represented at this colloquium, the committee was made aware of this and the following excuse was made: there was as yet no congregation there for him! Well, then one could not publish “installation”, but rather “sending forth” should have been published.

Later, when once again another colloquium was held, in the same way the committee gave as an excuse: that no one from the congregation had attended the colloquium. But how can the administration committee hold a colloquium where the actual factors, which according to Scripture and apostolic tradition, belong to it, are missing!

But that was not enough. When in one congregation a pastor was sick for quite a long time, and became even sicker, the brothers and church elders of his parish (even though the latter, according to our church regulations are to represent their pastor in everything, even despite this) gathered to deliberate and decided to call an assistant preacher for their pastor, so that he would be able to better preserve his energy. However, when the administrative committee received notification of this, it became very clear what it wanted: namely, that in the matter of tenancy of an office in the church, it wanted the power of a pope, who would rule over the church. (See the appendix to the Smalcald Articles, the repudiation of the pope by our reformers.) The congregations, which together with their pastor had called an assistant preacher, had, according to the administration committee, sinned against godly and human rights; and yet, according to Scripture and the Confessions, the opposite was true.

At this point the administration committee had to be informed that, according to Holy Scripture and apostolic tradition, it would only be entitled to choose a pastor and call him, if it were so strong and comprised so many members, that it would represent the whole congregation that wanted a pastor. Then it would have the right to call such a one. But, to take away the right of other congregations should be afforded just as little to the administration committee as to the pope. That right, which the congregation has from the Lord, cannot be given to another and is renounced by it. Matthew 7: 15 – “Beware of false prophets, etc “ the admonishment goes in the first instance to the congregation. No false prophet will give warnings about himself, therefore it is written: “ ...do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God” 1 John 4:9 [sic]. Yes, like Paul, who twice called on the Galatians not only to not accept the false teachers but to curse them (Galatians 1: 8,9). The churches or congregations of our Confession are also pointed towards this practice in the Smalcald Articles, where it is stated: “Because as soon as the right

judgement and understanding is taken from the Church (congregations), or the right understanding is lost to the congregation through its own fault, it is not possible that one could steer false teaching or misused worship service.” Further it says: “Therefore the churches (congregations) must keep the power to call church servants, choose and ordain them, and this power is a gift which is actually given to the churches (congregations) by God and cannot be taken from the churches by human power (neither by the administration committee, nor by the Pope, nor by the synod), etc.” Since administration committee could see how the congregations protected their biblical and reformational right to this point, it found another way to implement its cause. The members decided secretly, among themselves, to lay the choosing and calling of a pastor for the congregations completely in their own hands, and had agreed in a document that they would take away the right of choosing and calling a pastor from the congregations, and had written to the pastors that they should, without knowledge of the congregations, sign this document. They could all have done this and remained honest if they had followed our church law, which right at the beginning points out in 1 Corinthians 14:40: “But all things must be done properly and in an orderly manner.” In our synod everything that in general works destructively could be shut off, and everything that in general could work for the richer blessing of the congregations, could be taken up, because each year the congregations are encouraged by the pastors, that should there be any point that in general hurts the church, or that could be of use, then it should be taken up for discussion in the synodical programme. In this sense a congregation watches over the whole, and the whole over every single congregation. The administration committee could also have taken up these matters as points for discussion through the congregations it administers. Then these points would be looked at during Synod and would be judged according to the Scriptures and the Confessions and taken up or thrown out. But to take away the apostolic rights of the congregations in this crooked way could not succeed. The congregations that now belong to the Immanuel Synod a.a.G, protested decidedly against it. And so we retained our apostolic tradition and the right to call pastors, and I can return to my report about the examination of our new pastor.

The same was examined before the whole congregation, in regards to his position regarding the Holy Scripture, the Old as well as New Testament, and on the teachings and confessions of our reformers, which are written in the Confessions of our Evangelical Lutheran Church: the teaching regarding Baptism, Holy Communion, etc. The person of Christ, his divine and human natures, was also exhaustively examined, since the president of the Colloquium, who represented the Synod at the Colloquium, advised that a few years previously a department of a Lutheran Church had put out a

catechism that was introduced into several schools, which on this point was more reformed than united, even though it went by the name of Luther.

I would now like to address a question from the same. The 328th question is: “Which nature is included in his two natures (namely the human nature and the divine nature)?” And the question was answered in this way: “Only the human nature, because the divine nature cannot be glorified or humbled.” Now if this were Lutheran truth, then we would have to delete our Passion hymns in the Breslau Hymnal, 452, 454, 489, 501, 530, 541 and added to that also the places in the Holy Scriptures: 2 Corinthians 5:9; 1 Timothy 3:16; Acts 20:28, etc. But Dr Luther says: “Because if I believe that only the human nature suffered for me, then Christ is a poor Saviour for me; in fact he would require a Saviour himself.” (Book of Concord, Article 8) If such errors had not already been taken up through the schools, then there might be less fear of them.

In the entire exam, to all questions, the candidate answered with such certainty and gladness that we all rejoiced with him. A few weeks previously he had also taken the first children he had instructed for their confirmation exam; there, too, we had to rejoice at how sure the children were in answering the six central teachings: from the Creation, the Fall, Salvation, Confession, to the sacraments of Holy Baptism and Holy Communion. Yes, how they answered questions about the distinctive teachings of the Greek, Catholic and Reformed Churches; how and at which points these churches diverge from the Word of God. The false Union was brought up, which today appears in so many and varied guises, but all gather together at one point which is, as the children responded: in indifference or neutrality towards the Confession of the Evangelical Lutheran Church.

Now I wish to say no more, except to direct an admonition to us all: 1). That we should with thanks to God keep in mind that which the Lord has done for us, and how he has kept us. That we should also not make the office of our pastors more difficult, so that they will not be brought to sighing about us, because that will not be good for us. Secondly, that we also should not think that, since we have the pure teaching and Sacraments and have faithful pastors, we are already good Christians. That would be a great mistake. This morning we heard about all that goes with that, namely, the name of God should be kept holy by us and in us; and how this happens, namely: where the Word of God is taught often and purely, and as children of God we must live according to it in a holy way. As also the highly enlightened Dr Arndt says: Two parts belong to true Christendom: pure teaching and holy living. Even if in theory all are in agreement that these two things are not to be separated, still one often sees two different courses taken in

practice. In the one course very little weight is laid on the teachings of the reformers and their confessions, and more on the spiritual life. This often does the damage of bringing enmity between the children, or members, and the mother, the Reformation and its teachings. On the other hand, the other course is that they attach less weight to the spiritual life and more to the pure teachings and outward confession. They comfort their members too much, that they are in the right church, and have pure teaching and Sacraments, and oftentimes one or a few stones are thrown at other congregations. All of this pleases the confident in their outer confession and confirms them in the flesh, so that the head is full of Lutheranism and the heart empty of the fear of God. In this direction I often think of the court preacher Schubert, who carried his congregation in his heart, and how he warned the dead members that they only came to the Lord's Table through outward confession and then returned to put the yoke back on themselves and the unbelievers. Since this man knew that the Lord had bound all the souls in his congregation to his soul (Hezekiah 3: 17-21), he not only taught and admonished them faithfully; but also in his study, at the window where he prayed for them, the frames are not only mildewed but rotten, so many tears did this man of God shed there, and especially on Friday, the day before the confessional, when he thought of the faithless who would come, but then surely go out and sin further. On these days he wept great streams of tears, as his serving maid confirmed.

If only the eyes of these men would be opened more to the second course in the congregations to which the Lord has called them, how much opportunity they would have for kneeling and weeping! Then they would not preach at others with such self-importance in a hostile and argumentative manner where they have no call.

Dear Sisters and Brothers, I tell you all of this to this end, that we should turn our gaze on our inner selves. Pure teaching, the Means of Grace, etc, are only there so that we should stand in the true fear of God, or so that we will learn to fear, love and trust God above all things; then we will find things in ourselves, that lie so deep in our rotten nature, and that always want to go against exactly this first commandment of God. Dr Luther himself says: he had for twenty years preached against good works that lead to meritoriousness and destroy Christ, and even so the false, pharisaic monk wanted to take him prisoner again and again. And if he had one florin in his pocket, then it made him feel as though he had more faith. Then he called: Florin, go there where you belong, you are not my God!

Self-justification and helping oneself, they are the two most beloved children of human nature, which it loves more than life itself. Out of this develops spiritual anaemia, where a person loses all strength and colour, so that one no longer knows whether he belongs in the realm of the dead or among the living; every little breeze can sweep him away, as one without blood and strength. For this reason Solomon in Proverbs 30:15 also says of the leech who has two daughters: “Give! Give!”. Our spiritual eyes must be directed towards this and all Means of Grace used so that God would be held holy in our hearts, and everything hindering this must be hated. Only then will we stand firmly on our feet, as Israel once was to stand ready to leave (Exodus 12:11). Then, if we should still be able to taste something of our spiritual pharaoh and his army, then such must all redound to our blessing, because in 1 Corinthians 3: 22,23 it is written: “whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all are yours, and you are of Christ, and Christ is of God.” Amen.

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