

THEOLOGICAL QUARTERLY.

VOL. IX.

JULY, 1905.

No. 3.

GRACE.

For establishing whatever there is vital in personal Christianity, as well as for determining the exact doctrinal position of a teacher of Christianity, such Biblical concepts as "grace," "faith," and "righteousness" call for a careful inquiry and analysis. For these concepts are theological quantities of paramount value and importance that enter into the *articulus stantis atque cadentis ecclesiae*.¹⁾ Justification must remain a term of undefined extent as long as its coefficients are not exhibited in the full Scriptural value of their divinely intended meaning. According as a Christian understands, and a theologian explains, the meaning of these terms, he will hold as a net result of his efforts either a living spiritual reality, full of joy and solace, or a fantastic shadow that mocks his efforts at embrace. If the keynote of every genuine Christian hope for peace here and beyond has really been sounded, and the overshadowing issue of the Church's mission to fallen mankind has been fully stated in that momentous conclusion of the apostle: "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith

1) "Above other matters in the Holy Scriptures the term grace, in particular, requires an explanation, not only because it is so widely used, but also because it is used in setting forth a matter by far the most important, namely, the article of justification, and, lastly, because ignorance of (the import of) this term has, before this time, occasioned the most pernicious errors." (Flacius, *Glossa*, ed. ultima, Basel, 1617; sub voce *gratia*, p. 370 a.)

THE SUNDAY QUESTION.

The Sunday question is undoubtedly an important one at this time. The result of elections of state and city officials is often determined by the candidate's and the voter's position with regard to Sunday and the laws that deal with it.

The Sunday question may be treated from a purely political, economical, and humanitarian view-point. If this were always done, a theological quarterly need not give space to a discussion of it. But this is not always done. On the contrary, the Sunday question is originally the outcome of a religious movement, and even at the present time

it is generally agitated by the force of religious conviction, supported by the power of political aspirations. The chief agitators for a "Puritanic," Sabbath-like Sunday claim to be engaged in enforcing a permanent divine precept. As they see it, anything but total abstinence from work and pleasure on Sunday is a sin against God's holy Law, which is binding on all men. Sunday, they say, is substituted for the Jewish Sabbath as a day of rest, in which no burden shall be borne, in which works of piety and charity alone shall be done. And the Jewish Sabbath, according to them, was instituted for all time by God Himself when He ceased creating new things, and in the Decalogue its observance was again enjoined by Him on all men. The only change that has been made in the Sabbath law, they say, is the substitution of the first day of the week for the seventh.

Now all Christians will gladly obey their country's laws, and will joyfully hail a quiet, "closed" Sunday. But there are many that will not look upon Sunday as a day that must be kept as a day of rest by reason of God's commandment. They will not consider themselves bound to observe one day of seven as a day of rest because the Israelites were obliged to do so after they had been led out of Egypt. They will regard the commandment to keep a weekly Sabbath as given only to the Israelites, and as being in force only from the time of the exodus to Christ's resurrection.

These Christians are right. God did not institute the Sabbath as an ordinance *to be kept by man*, when He blessed (hallowed) the seventh day, Gen. 2. The first intimation we have of *man being directed to rest on the seventh day* is found in Ex. 16, 4. 5. 22—30. The believers of the time that intervened between Adam's creation and Israel's journey to Canaan did certainly meet to worship God; but the Bible is absolutely silent concerning the time of their meeting. We know not whether they met daily, or weekly, or monthly; neither do we know whether they set aside a whole day for rest and worship, or whether they contented themselves

with certain hours of the day, as many, if not most, of the early Gentile Christians were obliged to do.

In his *Antiquitates Apostolorum*: or, *The Lives . . . of the . . . Apostles*, etc. (London, 1675), Wm. Cave says (p. VII, § 9): "I know many with great zeal and eagerness contend, that the Sabbath or Seventh Day from the Creation was set apart and universally observed as the time of public worship, and that from the beginning of the world. But alas, the foundation upon which this opinion is built is very weak and sandy, having nothing to rely on but one place where it is said (Gen. 2, 3) that God, resting on the Seventh Day from all His works, blessed the Seventh Day and sanctified it. . . . For that it should be meant of a weekly Sabbath hath as little countenance from this text, as it hath from the practice of those times, there being no footsteps or shadow of any such Sabbath kept through all the Patriarchal periods of the Church, till the times of Moses, which, besides the evidence of the story, is universally owned by the ancient Jews, and very many of the Fathers do expressly assert it."

Gen. 2, 3 has been variously explained, and it is not within the scope of this article to find its real meaning. But one thing may be done—we may confidently call attention to the fact that the text in question contains not a single syllable that can be construed as establishing the Sabbath or any other day as a holy-day to be observed by man. Man is not mentioned at all, neither is a weekly seventh day mentioned, and not the remotest hint of man's obligation to keep the Sabbath is given. But if this text were a Sabbath-day precept, it would bind us to keep the Sabbath, Saturday, and not Sunday, the day on which God worked.

The attempt is often made to press Gen. 2, 3 into service as a proof of the divine institution at the beginning of the world, by referring to marriage. Marriage and the Sabbath, they say, were instituted at the same time in Paradise, and therefore both are established for all time and for

all men.—We reply that marriage was instituted by the creation of woman. Hence, they that assert an analogy between marriage and the Sabbath must point out the actual features that distinguish the Sabbath from other days, as woman is distinguished from man; they must show that the nature of the Sabbath differs from that of the other six days, just as the nature of woman differs from that of man. If this can be shown, then this seventh day, being in its nature as different from other days as woman is from man, must be kept as a holy-day, and not any other day.—Besides this, it must be remembered that all men are commanded by God to keep the Sabbath, and that they sin that keep it not. Now, if the analogy supposed to exist between marriage and the Sabbath holds good, then all men are commanded to marry, and they that fail to do so commit a sin. Need we say that He who said (Matt. 3, 15): "It becometh us to fulfill all righteousness," never married? Did He fail to fulfill all righteousness? No! With reference to the matter in hand, there is no analogy between marriage and the Sabbath; the simile not only limps, but has no feet at all to stand on.

There is an old law of evidence and interpretation, that he who would prove a proposition from a record must show that the words of the record not only *may* be understood in a certain sense, but that they *must* be so understood. Tried by this law, they that would prove the Sabbath precept binding on all men from Gen. 2 fail utterly. For Gen. 2 not only *must* not be understood as containing a permanent Sabbath precept, but cannot even be so understood. For, as has already been stated, it says nothing of a number of Sabbaths that come once a week, but speaks of that one seventh day that followed the six days of creation; it makes no mention of man in connection with that day or with rest; man is not referred to at all; finally, it contains no law, commandment, or precept of any kind.

It is claimed that the Sabbath precept, *i. e.*, the commandment to devote one day out of seven to sacred rest,

must be permanent and binding on all men, because it is contained in the Decalogue. This presupposes that whatever is contained in the Decalogue is equally applicable to all mankind. If that were really the case, all mankind must have been brought out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. See Ex. 20, 2 and Deut. 5, 6. The introduction of the Decalogue, contained in the two texts here referred to, plainly shows that it is first of all addressed to the Israelites. It invites us to examine into the nature of the Decalogue's commandments, and to apply to ourselves what is of permanently binding force, and to pass over what is transitory and intended only for those who were under the legal covenant of the time before Christ's advent. This examination will show that the commandment enjoining the observation of the seventh day of the week as a day of rest is transitory in its nature, and has passed away with the old legal covenant to which it belonged. We say "the seventh day of the week;" for one may search the Bible from cover to cover, but he will never find a word commanding the observation of any other of the seven week days as a day of rest. The day spoken of as the prescribed weekly holy-day is the seventh day, our Saturday, and no other.

Now to the examination. The Decalogue as published on Mount Sinai was the reiteration of old truths in a new garb, so to speak. With reference to portions of its statements it can be clearly proved from Scripture that the knowledge thereof existed among the generations before Moses and before the Flood. Considering the particular references of the Lawgiver on Sinai to the history of the people of Israel, one might be tempted to call the Decalogue an edition of the primeval law of the world for the use of the Jews. Its language was not applicable to all men at all times. Hence, St. Paul renders the Fourth Commandment in a different form from Moses. Both Christ and St. Paul have changed the order of the commandments in the Decalogue. By so doing they have not changed the

original Law of God to all men, but they did change the Jewish form of that Law. We must learn to distinguish between the Law and the Decalogue. While the Decalogue restates the Law, not every word in the Decalogue is part of the original Law of God to men. It behooves us, then, with Luther, to distinguish between the "Jewish ornament" of the Law, and the universally applicable portions thereof.

With regard to the Third Commandment this is made easy for us, because both in the Gospels and in the Epistles the question of what was binding in the Sabbath law of the Jews upon Christians, and what was not, is frequently the very subject matter of the Lord's discourse and the apostle's instruction. Neither the form nor the day of the Jewish Sabbath celebration was acknowledged as binding upon the followers of Christ. This fact is constantly lost sight of by those who regard the Christian Sunday as the continuation and the substitute in every respect of the Jewish Sabbath. We are reminded again and again that the moral law of God cannot be changed. *Ergo.* We are not ready by any means to grant the major, but we are prepared to utterly deny the minor. Setting aside the question whether the moral law can be changed or has ever been changed, mark you, by God, the sovereign Lawgiver Himself, we would simply point to the indisputable fact, that there is in the New Testament a clear and emphatic release both from the form and the day of the Jewish Sabbath. Of what avail can it be to speak of what God can do or ought to do, when there is a plain declaration before us of what God has done?

In defense of His alleged criminal conduct with regard to the observation of the Jewish Sabbath, the Lord states: "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." When God created man, His aim was not to get a church-goer, a performer of certain acts of devotion and piety upon a certain day, but He had created man centuries before there was a Sabbath law, and when the first Sabbath

law was published, the aim was thereby to benefit man, to afford him an opportunity for resting from his labor and for restoring his soul. The Sabbath was never instituted to be an end in itself, but only a means to an end. The believing Jew while observing the Sabbath law in all its rigor was superior to the Sabbath law.

Speaking of days of rest and worship, St. Paul tells the Romans (14, 5. 6): "One man esteemeth one day above another; another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it." How could St. Paul have written this if God had commanded all men of all times to set apart the seventh day, or any one of the seven days of the week, as a day of rest and worship, and so to esteem one day above another? If God had already determined in His mind that one day should be esteemed above another, could the apostle consider matters satisfactorily settled, if a person were only fully persuaded in his own mind, although he did not regard the day? This would certainly amount to inciting those to sin who esteemed all days alike. It would contradict the apostle's repeated exhortations to grow in the knowledge of God's will. For of what use could such knowledge be, if, while God would have one day esteemed above another, a person who esteemed every day alike was exonerated, provided he was fully persuaded in his own mind? The apostle says: "He that regardeth not the day, to the Lord regardeth he not the day," whether it be Saturday, or Sunday, or any other day. In the Lord's name, then, and to the glory of God, one may not regard the day. But if God has commanded us to regard the day, to set Saturday aside as a day of rest, or Sunday, as some Christians say, or, at least, one day out of the seven, as other Christians say, can one really "regard *not* the day" "*to the Lord*"? No. It follows, therefore, that whatever others may think, the in-

spired apostle certainly considered all laws that enjoin observance of certain days not only as transitory, but as already abrogated. With this one text he sweeps away the theory that one day of the week must be kept holy, and that, after Christ's resurrection, *God* substituted the Lord's day for the Jewish Sabbath. He will have all days esteemed alike, and will have the Christian who regards *not* the day received as one who thereby gives glory to God.

In Col. 2, 16. 17 St. Paul sets forth the chief purpose of the Sabbath, and, at the same time, shows that it is now abolished. He says: "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy-day, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days; which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ." All the Jewish feast days without exception, among them the Sabbath, are placed on a level with various kinds of meat and drink. In our time of the new covenant a man should no more let another judge him with regard to the observance or non-observance of a day of sacred rest than he should with regard to the food he eats or does not eat. He may eat any kind of flesh-food, or none at all; and he may observe a certain day, or days, of rest, or none at all: there is no divine law in his heart or in the Bible by which he could be judged in this. All laws concerning holy-days of any kind that are contained in the Bible are revoked and abrogated by the Lawgiver Himself, just as the laws concerning meat and drink are canceled. The purpose for which they were given has been attained. They served as "shadows of things to come; but the body is of Christ." The shadow is of no use when the body is present and the things have come. And now the things that were foreshadowed by the Sabbath law, and laws of its kind, have come. Christ being present with all His grace and gifts, why should we cling to the shadow? Let the shadow pass unheeded, the law that would compel us to observe Saturday, or Sunday, or any other day, as a sacred day of rest instituted by God,

and let us retain the body, which is of Christ. One may keep a day as a day of rest and worship, as we do Sunday; but he must not believe that he is keeping that old commandment that compelled the Israelites to esteem one day above another. If he does, he is in danger of losing Christ and retaining nothing but the shadow. This is what the apostle tells the Colossians. And he repeats it in his epistle to the Galatians.

Gal. 4, 10, 11 we read: "Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain." The days etc. spoken of in this text are the days of sacred rest, observed by the Israelites, the Sabbath included. The Galatians were beginning to observe days, etc., and among them the Sabbath, as if God had commanded them to do so, and as if it were a sin not to do so. But instead of praising them for being so conscientious the apostle rebukes them. He tells them that they are not growing in Christian life, but that their observance of the Sabbath as a divine institution still in force causes him to fear lest all the labor he had spent on them as a preacher of the crucified Christ had been spent in vain, and they had lost Christ and His salvation. "All Judaical feasts, the Sabbath included, were obliterated by the sponge which Jesus tasted on the cross; the Sabbath was within the manuscript of ordinances, and there it was canceled." (Jer. Taylor.) The Sabbath was but a shadow. If they continued embracing that, Christ, the true body, would slip from their hands, and they would be left with their sins and their guilt. This is the sense of the apostle's words.

Would a servant of the Lord have told the believers of the old dispensation that they were in danger of losing righteousness and salvation if they kept the Sabbath as a day God had commanded them to keep? No; rather would he have urged them to keep it; for the Sabbath precept was a law binding upon all Israelites. And St. Paul would have urged the Galatians to observe the Sabbath as a sacred day, if that law had still been in force. But it was no longer in

force. It is abolished, obliterated, canceled by the coming of Christ. All days are now alike, and they that are known of God must not turn again to the weak and beggarly elements to be in bondage to them, Gal. 4, 9, of which they were delivered by Jesus.

We heed the warning of the Lord's chosen vessel. We gladly gather in the sanctuary on Sunday, in order to be fed with the bread of life; but we do so willingly, knowing that for us neither Saturday nor Sunday is appointed of the Lord as a day to be esteemed above other days. A. B.