

# THEOLOGICAL QUARTERLY.

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## Doctrinal Theology.

### CHRISTOLOGY.

(Continued.)

In and for the work of redemption, and in the manner and measure requisite for such work, Christ the God-man humiliated himself. The verb, ταπεινώω, means *to lower, to humble*, the contrary being ὑψόω, *to raise, to elevate, to exalt.*<sup>1)</sup> With the reflex pronoun, ταπεινοῦν signifies *to humble one's self*, to forego honor or high stations or prerogatives which one might rightfully claim or enjoy. Thus Paul says that he had "abased himself,"<sup>2)</sup> when he had "preached the gospel of God freely," earning his livelihood with his own hands, and taking what other churches gave him, instead of taking and enjoying what he might have rightfully claimed at the hands of the Corinthians.<sup>3)</sup> And such was the self-humiliation of Christ, *that, though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor;*<sup>4)</sup> *that he, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men, and being in fashion as a man, he humbled*

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1) Matt. 23, 12. Luke 14, 11; 18, 14. Phil. 2, 8. 9.

2) ἑμαυτὸν ταπεινῶν, 2 Cor. 11, 7.

3) 2 Cor. 11, 5 ff.

4) 2 Cor. 8, 9.

## TWO SICK-CALLS.

## I.

Mr. B., a poor laborer and member of my congregation, called on me and asked me to visit a poor sick woman who was staying at his house and in her agony did not know what to do. Going with him, I learned a sad, sad story. The sick woman, suffering from that terrible disease, cancer, was the wife of a fellow laborer of Mr. B. The husband, who occasionally had visited our church, had needed all his earnings to provide food, fuel and medicine for his poor sick wife, who had been reared in the Roman Catholic church, but for years and years had not attended any church at all. He had no money left to pay his rent. The hard-hearted landlord without mercy had put out the poor man with his sick wife into the street. So Mr. B. and his wife had taken the poor sick woman into their house, and although they were poor themselves and had very little room, they and their children confined themselves to the kitchen and a very small room, giving the best and largest room and the most kind attention to the poor sick woman. This I was told in a very unpretentious, matter of fact, way. To me it was an exemplification of the words, Matt. 25, 35. 36: "I was a stranger, and ye took me in. . . . I was sick, and ye visited me."

When I entered the sick room I beheld an emaciated woman above middle age, bearing the stamp of disease, lying on a bed, her features distorted by pain and deeply furrowed from suffering. Just at that moment she was groaning deeply with pain, so that it was impossible for me to speak to her. Sitting at the bedside I held her hand in mine till she recovered and turned her face to me. I then said to her: "My dear friend, I am very, very sorry to find you so sick and suffering so terribly."

"Yes," she answered, "I am very sick and suffering beyond what words can say. Ah, these pains are very great indeed. But it will not last long any more, I think."

"You mean," I said, "it will not be long before death will come and take you away?"

"Yes," she answered, "I will not be here very long any more. I feel it."

Now is your opportunity, I thought, and I asked the woman, "Well, have you made your peace with God?" At these words her pain-distorted features were stamped with an expression of great agony of soul, and turning her sad eyes away from mine, she spoke in a hopeless tone: "No, no, I have not yet made my peace with God, and at present am too sick to do it. Oh! I am suffering such terrible pains, that I am utterly unable to think of it even for a little while. Oh, no, no, I have not yet made my peace with God!"

And then followed outbursts and abrupt exclamations betraying the false instruction she had received in her youth in the Roman church regarding our redemption and salvation—invocations of the Virgin Mary and the saints interrupted with expressions of utter despair on account of her many, many sins—so that my heart was greatly moved within me. When at last she was silent, with a sigh to God to open the heart of the poor benighted woman, in a friendly and mild way I said to her: "Good woman, I have a good message, glad tidings for you."

"A good message, glad tidings for me?" she retorted quickly. "For me there can not be any good message. What is it?"

"Why, the glad tidings that it is not necessary at all for you now to make your peace with God."

With a quick, eager, longing look she turned to me and said: "What do you say? What do you mean by telling me that it is not necessary for me to make peace with God?"

"I mean to say that God already has made peace with you through and by a certain person, and that I came here for the very purpose of telling you so." "Now, listen," I proceeded, speaking to the eager and intently listening

woman, "you are quite right if you say that you are too sick to make your peace with God. Even if you were quite well you would not be able to do it. But God Himself has done it, He has made peace for you, and He has done this through His only begotten Son Jesus Christ, whom He sent into the world to be the propitiation for our sins." And now I began to tell her in the simplest possible language about the merciful counsel of God regarding our salvation; how God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son; how Jesus, the Son of God, came into this world and took upon Himself our nature without sin; how God had made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we may be made the righteousness of God in Him, and how God cast *all our* sins upon Him; how Christ Jesus was wounded for our transgressions, and was bruised for our iniquities, that the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed. And again, how Christ His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree; how He, the Just One, died for the unjust, in order to bring us to God; that the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, cleanseth us from all sin, and that the Lamb of God taketh away the sin of the world. Then, taking out my New Testament and pointing out Col. 1, 20, I read to her that Christ had made peace for us through the blood of His cross by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; also Eph. 2, 14—17, pointing to the words, "for He is our peace," "and came and preached peace to you which were afar off," in the Gospel,—and that therefore we were not to work out and merit our peace with God by our own works, contrition, atonement, prayers, or feelings, as Christ long ago had made peace for us through His cross, and that now unconditionally He proclaims and gives that very peace to us, John 14, 27.

"Don't you see, my good woman," I said in conclusion, "what God already has done for you in Christ Jesus? Don't you hear and understand how He tells you: You need not make peace with me, try to reconcile me, but only *believe*,

*believe* what I have done for you already, and put your trust in that? Believe, oh, believe me, your God assures you, that He has made peace with you through Jesus Christ, that He is reconciled to you already, that sin, death, hell, Satan, have no power over you, but that you are God's own dear child, dearly bought by the blood of His Son."

While I was speaking and reading the Gospel to her, she had been listening with minutest attention and rapt gaze. So greatly was she interested that in spite of her pain she had half raised herself, leaning upon her elbow, resting her face in her hand, apparently snatching every word from my lips. When I had finished speaking, she eagerly said: "Oh, good man, will you please read that to me once more,—those words about the peace?"

Most willingly those passages were read to her again, and again it was explained to her how Jesus already had adjusted her cause, and how utterly worthless everything was in this direction which we would try to undertake. During my last words tears streamed down the deep furrows of her emaciated face. A sweet, calm smile passed over her lips, and, lying down, she time and again repeated the words, "Oh, is not this precious, is it not precious indeed! Oh, what a precious message that the Son of God came into the world and died and made peace for me! Is not this precious, is it not glorious!"

Silently I arose, and left her alone for a while with her Savior, who had won her, and the peace in whom she just now had found.—Having had occasion and the great pleasure to strengthen her faith in her Savior under her trials, I after a few weeks assisted in laying her body into the grave to rise again on the last day to everlasting glory. But very often when gloomy thoughts oppress my heart and soul I repeat the words of that poor and yet so blessed sick woman: "Oh, is it not precious, oh, how precious is this, that the Son of God came into the world and died to make peace for me!"

## II.

In quite a different spiritual condition I found a woman to whose sick-bed I was called by Elder D. She had been instructed and confirmed in the Lutheran church by the venerable Pastor B., but, like so many, a few years after her confirmation had quit the church entirely. Afterwards she married a Roman Catholic, had her children baptized in the Catholic church, and lived in constant disharmony, or rather, enmity with her husband, a drunkard and spend-thrift. Thirty-three years since her confirmation had passed by; she had been living for years in the house of Elder D., who had been witness to the ungodly, wicked life of the family, but never had the woman shown a disposition to go to church, although Mr. D. had reminded her of her confirmation vow. Now she had been attacked by a horrible disease and had been suffering for weeks. These facts I learned from Mr. D., who had prevailed on the woman to allow him to call his pastor to her sick-bed. On entering the sick-room I perceived at once that there was hardly any chance for Mrs. P. to recover, although she might live a few weeks more. After having expressed to her my sympathy, she herself admitted that she was beyond hope. Now I asked her if she was well prepared to face death and go into eternity, if she knew that her days were numbered; whereupon she said, "Certainly, and I have nothing to fear." Astonished at these words, I asked her why she thought herself well prepared? "Well," she answered, "I don't see that I have done any wrong, I am not bad like a good many hypocrites and church-goers; why, then, should I be afraid to die?" Shuddering at the terrible spiritual blindness of the woman, I told her that death and eternity were not things to be made light of, that the Almighty Lord, knowing even the thoughts of our hearts and all our words and actions, would pass severe and just judgment upon every one. She answered, she need not fear that judgment, she had done no wrong. Now I told

her that the word of God tells us that there is no difference, that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God; that we are dead in trespasses and sins by nature; that the imaginations of our heart are evil from our youth; that we are sinners, born of sinners, and conceived in sin. But it was all in vain. She was not that kind of person she said. I tried to point out to her the wrong she had done by anger and hatred—she never had been angry, never had hated anyone—; by being disobedient to her parents—; she never had been so even in her thoughts, she asserted; by speaking evil of her neighbors—; she never had done anything of that sort; by cursing and using bad language—; she never had done the like; by despising preaching and the word of God—; she never had despised it; circumstances that were a valid excuse had prevented her from going to church, she said, but she nevertheless had read it, certainly kept it in her heart all the while. To be brief, wherever I tried to convince her that she had not kept this or that commandment, and therefore sinned,—she emphatically denied it. She asserted that she perfectly loved God and her neighbor, and had done so as long as she could remember.

Now terror seized me, and I almost despaired of dispelling the fiendish darkness of self-righteousness. Sighing to the Lord to grant His Spirit and power, all at once a thought flashed through my mind. I arose, and standing before the bed and having my eyes sharply fixed upon the patient, I spoke to her: “Woman, during my lifetime and the fulfilling of my office as a minister for many years, I have come across a good many wicked and pertinacious persons; but I must say that I hardly ever have met one who is your equal. You are very wicked indeed. You have, during the last forty minutes been telling me a great number of base, outrageous lies, and you know it. You have been leading a dissipated life, have been quarreling, fighting with your husband, have acted not like a mother but a heartless creature against your children, have abused your neighbors in

the meanest manner, etc., etc., and you still have the brazen face to tell me that you never did any wrong. You know you did, and you lie. But mark, the wrath of the holy and righteous God is upon such wicked people, is upon you, and if you die in this manner your lot will and must be eternal, mark, *eternal* punishment, damnation and torment. He whom you have served and still serve, will give you your wages, the devil, through all eternity; for God says that accursed will be every one who only transgresses one jot of the law. But what curse and wrath will be upon you, having numberless sins upon your conscience! You are a wicked, wicked woman. You do not fear God in the least. Beware of God's wrath." Now, I thought, a decision will come, either she will grow terribly angry at me, and then I can convince her right there that she is a poor sinner, doing sin with her anger, or she will break down and admit and confess. The latter came to pass. After I had been speaking to her in the manner above described for about fifteen minutes, she began to shake and shiver, even so that the bed began to shake, deathly pallor covering her face. After I had finished speaking she lay there for a few minutes pale, motionless, almost breathless, and lisped while torrents of tears streamed down her pallid cheeks, "Yes, pastor, such a horrid, wicked woman I am; and I knew it, my conscience told me, but I did not want to acknowledge it. Oh, mercy, mercy! Is there any help for such a horribly wicked creature as I am? I know I told you lies, lies all the time before, — oh, I am lost, eternally lost!"

But the Spirit of God in the word of the gospel proved stronger than all the power of the arch-enemy to thrust this formerly benighted and self-conceited soul into utter despair. The words, "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him, should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved;" and, "This is a

faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief," at last brought rest, peace and consolation into the heart awakened from the death of sin. By the grace of the Holy Spirit the poor woman began to pray for mercy; and it was given to her that she could believe. During the next ten days—the last of her earthly life—I had to visit her twice or three times every day. She was eagerly longing every time to hear more, more gospel truth, to be reassured again and again of her salvation through Christ Jesus. Satan tried his very best to pluck faith and trust in Jesus from out of her heart, and bring her to despair, but in vain. Very seldom have I met a person listening so attentively and eagerly to every word read from the Scriptures under such pains as this woman, and very few, if any, have I seen expecting death so serenely, even joyfully as she did when this messenger came to call her hence into the eternal home, though I have stood at the death-beds of many hundreds.

C. L. J.

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