

THEOLOGICAL QUARTERLY.

VOL. IX.

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No. 4.

GRACE.

(Concluded.)

We have, as it were, taken a distant view and a general survey of the holy mountains, where lie our foundations,¹⁾ and whence comes our help.²⁾ We have picked out, for our bearings, the most prominent peaks of the range. We shall now penetrate the range and study at close quarters its heights and depths. It cannot but enhance the value of saving grace to us, if we follow the pointed finger of the Holy Spirit from page to page of the Scriptures, and note how He speaks of grace, of whom He predicates grace, what He ascribes to grace; and if we study, in particular, the operations of grace, as they are revealed.

Grace is presented to our view in a great many and varying aspects. There is a "manifold grace,"³⁾ due, not indeed to differences in its quality, or to a variable attitude of the divine will, but to the various acts which the divine favor considered necessary for man's salvation, and to its application to the many needs of the human race and to individuals. The manner in which the term "grace" is predicated may cause *us* to understand it in a wide or narrow sense, and to assume for it a general or a special meaning. In itself, however, and as to its essence, grace must always be understood to be the free inclination and spontaneous

1) Ps. 87, 1.

2) Ps. 121, 1.

3) 1 Pet. 4, 10: ποικίλης χάριτος θεοῦ.

The discussion of the divorce-remarriage question, which continues to claim a large portion of the public attention both in the secular and the ecclesiastical press of the day, has matured a result that might have been foreseen. In the July number of the *North American Review* Elizabeth Carpenter comes forward with the "lay point of view" of this much mooted question. Her presentation of this view turns out to be a bold charge that the spokesmen of the Church on the divorce-remarriage question have proven their inability to settle the question, and a claim that the solution of the problem will ultimately be reached by the moral nature of the race, "the certain uplift of the human spirit, the growing dream of ultimate purity," and the gradual development of its ideals, unaided by "rigid ecclesiastics" and untrammelled by "complex dogmas and confusing prohibitions." We are satisfied that, as far as she has cited contemporaneous evidence, the author has proven her case against both the Protestant Episcopal and the Roman Catholic Church. In the pending discussion the spokesmen from these two church bodies have merely succeeded in undoing one another, but not in proclaiming and vindicating Scripture truth on the subject of marriage and divorce. We hold, however, that the Church is not in need of the service of these two church bodies for enlightenment on the divorce-remarriage question, and that the greater part of what has been spoken and written from those quarters on the subject is irrelevant. Bible pastors have for ages known, and still know, and will ever know their bounden duty and their certain course of action with regard to the remarriage of divorced persons. No secular law will ever change their attitude for or against such persons. Elizabeth Carpenter simply has not heard the teaching of Christ and the apostles on marriage and divorce.—We also believe that the author's prediction as regards the future will be realized, with this difference, however, that what she regards as the solution will prove

the dissolution of all moral restraint as regards the estate of matrimony. Not to do the author injustice, as if she championed an abolition of marriage, we quote her own words:

"None disputes—neither Catholic nor Protestant, and least of all 'the lay brother'—none disputes the nobility, the *propriety* of monogamous marriage. Polygamy and polyandry have proven their innate weakness, even an innate viciousness, by invariably deteriorating results in human moral fiber. One man and one woman together at one time, each complementing the other's personal life, is the highest reach of sexual living, and the experience of the world has justified the insistence, in both Church and State (in all Christian communities), upon this fundamentally moral and spiritually helpful relation. But why not rest there, and trust something, at least, to the proven tendency of man to continually elevate and refine his physical, mental, moral, and spiritual condition?"

Rest where? Why, upon this rule: "One man and one woman together at one time," the question of how often and how long to be left out of the consideration. It is the "indissoluble marriage" that the author opposes. And she also commits the damning sin of the age when she declaims:

"What is the actual truth about our world of to-day? No student of history may doubt for one moment that the story of human experience has been one long, unceasing, untiring progression towards higher ethical expression, towards deeper spiritual truths. With all our faults and foibles admitted, it still remains true that the present generation is the most honest, the most upright, the most earnest, and the most chaste aggregation of people that this planet has yet evolved. We are more kind, more generous, more temperate, more true, and more fundamentally refined than any of our ancestors; and it is quite possible that it might be proven that we are also more religious."

No doubt, from such premises it is easy to prognosticate a paradisaical future. But is it true? This supercilious, pharisaical, haughty contempt of our ancestors, their laws, their stringent conventionalities, their formidable social restraints and all that—what does it mean? It means that we are moving, moving towards the midnight hour of this world's existence. Matt. 24, 38.

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