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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.)

without the deeds of the Law," then—as long as there remains a soul to be saved on earth, and a human agent appointed to save that soul—it is necessary for both to rightly understand these terms, "grace," "faith," and "righteousness."¹⁾

Entering upon a consideration of the term grace, we find, that, not the term, but the use of the term in the New Testament represents a revelation within the Revelation. An old and well-known term of classical antiquity has been taken up and filled with a new meaning. It is true, the Greeks spoke of the *χάρις*, grace, of an eloquent speaker, a beautiful woman, a skillful artist, a witty saying. They also knew that internal *χάρις* which is concretely exhibited in deeds of benevolence, favors of great men, and also in the acts of gratitude elicited by such favors. But there is no instance on record where a Greek writer has predicated *χάρις* of God in His dealing with a sinner, no instance where *χάρις* represents the established conduct of God towards, and the appointed relation of God with, the sinner, no instance of the *χάρις σωτήριος*,²⁾ of which the apostle states that it "hath appeared," stepped forth like a new star out of the depth of the heavens into the reach of human vision, when Christ came, "the God of all grace."

The term *χάρις* had been used before Christ and the apostles in the sacred language of the Church, by the Septuagint translators of the Old Testament. But in their use of *χάρις* for rendering the Hebrew יְרַחֵם they did not advance

1) "I am often wont to wonder greatly, among other errors and abuses of popery, especially at this one, that in setting forth the doctrine of justification they have employed no care and diligence whatever to understand and expound what those terms of primary importance in the Holy Scriptures signify, viz., righteousness, justification, faith, grace, repentance, imputation, acceptance, salvation, sacrifice, Mediator, life, and similar terms; but have, in an arbitrary manner, as their fancy bade them, paraphrased them, giving them now this meaning, now that, without offering any proof to confirm their view." (Ibid., p. 374a.)

2) Tit. 2, 11.

beyond the use of this word by profane Greek writers; for $\chi\alpha\rho\iota\varsigma$ is rarely more than what the Greeks knew as $\chi\alpha\rho\iota\varsigma$, external grace or friendly favor, or grateful acknowledgment. The notion of a free and deliberate loving inclination of the Supreme Being towards a miscreant whom He had already cursed is not contained in $\chi\alpha\rho\iota\varsigma$, but rather in $\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\omicron\varsigma$, which the Septuagint have rendered by $\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\omicron\varsigma$; and $\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\omicron\varsigma$ is distinct from $\chi\alpha\rho\iota\varsigma$ in New Testament Greek, as is seen by a reference to Tit. 1, 4,¹⁾ where both attributes are predicated of God. It is, indeed, as Cremer has declared: the old term $\chi\alpha\rho\iota\varsigma$, like an old, worn coin, issues from the hands of Christ and Paul, as it were, newly minted, recast. It has become a different term, so that one is tempted to say, this word $\chi\alpha\rho\iota\varsigma$ has "had to wait for the advent of Christianity to find a valuation corresponding to its proper meaning and an adequate sphere of action."²⁾

Passing by such passages of the New Testament where $\chi\alpha\rho\iota\varsigma$ is predicated of men and evidently denotes some commendable quality or merit in persons,³⁾ it has been noted that in the $\chi\alpha\rho\iota\varsigma$ $\theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$, as used in the New Testament, three features stand out prominently. In the first place, it is germane to the notion of grace that it is *an act of free volition*, a self-prompting induced by love, not compelled by any foreign agent. In Eph. 2, 7 we find grace, $\chi\alpha\rho\iota\varsigma$, coupled with kindness, $\chi\alpha\rho\iota\varsigma$ $\chi\alpha\rho\iota\varsigma$: "That in the ages to

1) Also 2 John 3. 1 Tim. 1, 2. 2 Tim. 1, 2.

2) See *Woerterbuch*, 7. ed., sub voce, p. 939. 937.

3) *E. g.*, Luke 2, 52: "Jesus increased in wisdom, and stature, and in favor ($\chi\alpha\rho\iota\varsigma$) with God and man." (BENGEL: "According to the human nature and according to the wisdom of human nature, and that, in a real manner, however, far beyond the measure of common man. His mind increased in wisdom, His body grew with the increase of years. He attained a proper and comely stature. By such parts of the mind and body youths commend themselves to favor.") Acts 2, 47: the Christians at Jerusalem "had favor ($\chi\alpha\rho\iota\varsigma$) with all the people," *i. e.*, they were well liked. Luke 6, 32 ff.: "If ye love them which love you, what thank have ye?" $\pi\omicron\iota\alpha$ $\upsilon\mu\iota\upsilon\kappa$ $\chi\alpha\rho\iota\varsigma$ $\epsilon\sigma\tau\iota\upsilon\kappa$; *i. e.*, what merit would there be in such action? Comp. 1 Pet. 2, 19: "This is thankworthy," $\tau\omicron\upsilon\tau\omicron$ $\gamma\acute{\alpha}\rho$ $\chi\alpha\rho\iota\varsigma$, *i. e.*, this is commendable.

come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us." God, in or from His kindness, kindly, has manifested grace. Grace has welled up spontaneously out of His essence, which is all goodness, benevolence, love. The good will and good pleasure of God is the fountain from which His grace springs and is fed. God's kindness is an *attributum voluntatis*. The divine will, however, admits of no *causa formaliter causans*,¹⁾ no prompting motive other than itself. This feature of *χάρις* is strongly emphasized in Romans. Throughout the apostle's dissertation on justification "grace" and "merit" are placed in opposition. Because the righteousness of the believer is obtained by faith, *κατὰ χάριν*, "of grace," therefore it cannot be *κατὰ ὀφείλημα*, "of debt," ch. 4, 4. 16. Death is the well-earned "wages of sin," *ὀφώνια*, but eternal life is the *χάρισμα* of God. And throughout the epistle, and again in Galatians, *χάρις* in the inspired logic of the apostle is the contrary of *ἔργον*, *ὀφείλημα*.

While the grace of God is not conditioned by anything good in man as measured by the standard of the Law, it is not, on the other hand, repelled, or retarded by the evil in man. On the contrary, grace goes out to the sinner, seeks him out assiduously; his very worthlessness appears to attract it, so to speak, inviting it to fill the aching voids of despair in the heart, as air rushes in to fill a vacuum. Yea, it is peremptorily stated that grace and the divine Bearer of grace have to do exclusively with the confessed sinner, the acknowledged transgressor, Matt. 9, 12. 13; 18, 11, and that, "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound," Rom. 5, 20. It was for those "without strength," "for the ungodly," that Christ died, Rom. 5, 6, and "in that," in this remarkable act, "God commendeth His love toward us," *συνίστησι δὲ τὴν ἑαυτοῦ ἀγάπην εἰς ἡμᾶς*, v. 8. BENGEL: "*συνίστησι*, an elegant expression. As a rule, those are commended to us

1) Baier, ed Walther, P. I. c. 1, § 18, p. 33.

who formerly were unknown or strangers to us." (*Gnomon*, ad locum.) The "God of grace" was "the unknown God" of this sinner world, as Paul proceeded to explain to the Athenians, Acts 17, 23. 30. 31. No honest man, acknowledging his guilt, will find it within the scope of his own reason to look for grace in Him in whom the conscience pictures to him only righteous indignation and avenging wrath. God had to convince the sinner of His grace, He had to commend Himself by a mighty act, the sacrifice of His own Son, to the sinner whom He sought. *There is a divine unreasonableness in grace.* Itself among the most lovable of God's attributes, it chooses for its correlative what is most unlovable in man. This is what St. Paul has termed "the foolishness of God" and "the weakness of God." God has chosen for His own "the foolish things," and "the weak things," and "the base things," and "the things which are despised," and "the things which are not," *i. e.*, the worthless portions of mankind, the scum and dross of humanity. This feature of divine grace proves the overthrow of all human standards of wisdom and righteousness. The world is "confounded," shocked, and bewildered, when it rises to a clear perception of all that divine grace implies, and stumbles at the proclamation of this grace as did the Jews, or laughs it to scorn, as did the Greeks.¹⁾ But with this feature of divine grace the Christian layman or teacher must thoroughly familiarize himself, and regard the term *χάρις θεοῦ* as one of the terms that have connoting power, as a term which has its proper Scriptural meaning only when considered in conjunction with another idea; or as one of the class of correlative terms, like father, monarch, shepherd. The concept "father" is necessarily joined in thought with the concept "child," that of "monarch" with the concept "subject," that of "shepherd" with the concept "flock." In a similar manner, the grace of which we are now speaking, *χάρις θεοῦ σωτήριος*, must be

1) 1 Cor. 1, 18—29.

viewed as a correlative term, compelling the speaker or listener *always to join with it in thought the idea of human sin and guilt*. If this is not done, the real force of the term *χάρις* is decreased, its value depreciated, and the term becomes, as it were, a debased coin, sterling portions of which have been removed to make room for alloy.

In Rom. 5, 21 the apostle states: "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord." Sin did not enter this world as an idle thing; "by sin," as a natural effect of sin, came death. And death "passed upon all men," v. 12. "Death reigned," v. 14. 17; it held sway, it exercised the rights of a sovereign. Over and against sin, we have seen, stands grace. Grace also has entered the world as an operative force. Grace has come to reign. *Grace brings with it power to break the thralldom of sin and guilt; it removes sin, and puts in its place righteousness. It breaks the fetters of the old master, and brings freedom.* Thus, the saving grace of God appears as an efficient agent; it is not a mere notion, a beautiful idea, but an engine of God for great ends. It bears to the beggar a heavenly fortune, which the apostle describes Eph. 1, 7: "According to the riches of His grace" we have "redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sin." Ἀπολύτρωσις and ἄφεσις here appear as gifts of *χάρις*. Add to these negative blessings the positive boon mentioned in Rom. 5, 21: righteousness and life, and you have the complete contents of *χάρις* as a *positive gift*.

In this specific meaning, embracing as its chief qualities: a free, loving self-inclination on the part of God, the correlate of sin, and a definite blessing bestowed upon the sinner, *χάρις θεοῦ* throughout the New Testament appears as the principle of salvation. The meaning of the noun *χάρις* has passed into its derivative *χαρίζομαι*, cf. Col. 2, 13; 3, 13.

(To be continued.)

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