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## Doctrinal Theology.

### THEOLOGY.

Theology in the narrower sense of the term is the doctrine of holy Scripture concerning the true God.

Theology in this sense must be distinguished from Natural Theology, which is a chapter in Philosophy, primarily inscribed in the book of Nature, "*the heavens declaring the glory of God, and the firmament showing his handiwork, day unto day uttering speech, and night unto night showing knowledge,*"<sup>1)</sup> so that "*the invisible things of God from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead.*"<sup>2)</sup> Thus it is that the fundamentals of natural theology swell the volumes of ancient philosophy, and the statement of modern ethnology that "there has not been a single tribe, no matter how rude, known in history or visited by travelers, which has been shown to be destitute of religion,"<sup>3)</sup> says nothing that is new to us who have it from higher authority that there is among all heathen some knowledge of God, since "*that which may be known*

1) Ps. 19, 1. 2.

2) Rom. 1, 20.

3) Brinton, Religions of primitive peoples, p. 30.

## Historical Theology.

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### A TYPICAL PERSECUTION.

*“Beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues. And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. . . . And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents and cause them to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake.<sup>1)</sup> If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you.<sup>2)</sup>*

With these and similar predictions Christ announced to his disciples that persecutions at the hands of both Jews and Gentiles awaited them; persecutions prompted by the hatred of the world; persecutions not so much for crimes imputed to them, as for the sake of the name they should bear; persecutions in and out of the courts; persecutions to the death.

It was on the birthday of the church of the New Testament, that the fulfillment of these predictions began. While some were amazed and in doubt concerning what they saw and heard on that day of Pentecost, *others mocking said, “These men are full of new wine.”<sup>3)</sup>* And not many days had passed before from words it had come to blows and imprisonment;<sup>4)</sup> and again not many days elapsed before the blood of Stephen, the protomartyr, had been shed,<sup>5)</sup> and

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1) Matt. 10, 17. 18. 21. 22.

2) John 15, 19. 20.

3) Acts 2, 13.

4) Acts 4, 3; 5, 18. 40.

5) Acts 6 and 7.

“there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem, and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria.<sup>1)</sup> Again but a little while, and the infidel joined hands with the zealots; Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church: and he killed James, the brother of John, with the sword; and because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also.<sup>2)</sup>”

How could it be otherwise? The popular party of the Jewish people at the beginning of the Christian era was that of the Pharisees, the national party of Jewish patriots who insisted upon the maintenance of the Jewish traditions and gloried in the past and what they anticipated as the future of their race. To these Pharisees, who in their bloated pride were as unwilling to render unto Cesar the things that were Cesar's, as they were to render unto God the things that were God's, a Messiah who enjoined both was offensive, and a gospel of universal grace was a stumbling-block, and a fast growing following of that Messiah and gospel was a menace to their prestige, their religious, social and political standing in the community.

Then there were also Sadducees, a set of materialistic bonvivants, who fattened on the barter carried on in and about the temple courts, turning the sanctuary of God into a house of merchandise, and bent upon the undisturbed enjoyment of the lust of the eyes and the lust of the flesh and the pride of life even under the yoke of gentile rulers, with whom they contrived to maintain a *modus vivendi* to suit their propensities. To them a Messiah whose kingdom was not of this world, and who had repeatedly driven their venders of oxen and sheep and doves and their money-changers out of the temple, was precisely where they would have him be when he was crucified, dead and buried, and to preach him risen from the dead, ascended into heaven, and sitting

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1) Acts 8, 1.

2) Acts 12, 1—3.

at the right hand of God, whence he should come to judge the quick and the dead, was an offense which claimed their attention and roused their indignation.<sup>1)</sup> A religion and church which had no longer any use for the levitical cult of types and shadows, nor for anything that was specifically Jewish and of a superseded dispensation, was in direct opposition to what the Pharisees and the Sadducees jointly or respectively considered their paramount interests.

In this respect, the first persecution of the primitive church was typical of all the later persecutions of Christianity. Wherever this religion gained a foothold, it clashed with the temporal interests of many who were themselves unwilling to embrace the faith of the Gospel, and who found it to their disadvantage when others came under the direct influence of this religion. Thus the masters of that damsel at Philippi,<sup>2)</sup> Demetrius and his fellow silversmiths at Ephesus,<sup>3)</sup> the heathen priests and cattle dealers and those concerned in the sale of fodder,<sup>4)</sup> and many others who depended on heathen worships and practices for all or a part of their income, would very naturally resort to persecution against those who infringed upon their material and other temporal interests. The saying of Erasmus is well known, who defined Luther's sin as having consisted in laying hold of the pope's crown and the bellies of the monks, and it is significant that the great conflict of the sixteenth century had its starting point, though not its hinging point, in the sale of indulgences.

The conflict of the first century, too, between Judaism and Christianity, had other and deeper reasons beside those concomitant infringements upon the material interests of the impugnors of the faith and its adherents. Christianity is in its very nature uncompromising and aggressive. It is the only true religion, and with this claim it stepped before

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1) Acts 4, 1—3; 5, 17. 18.

3) Acts 19, 23 ff.

2) Acts 16, 16 ff.

4) Plinii Epp. X, 97.

the world and, first of all, before that people which prided itself as being God's own peculiar people. In his pentecostal sermon Peter exhorted his hearers to repent and be baptized, *every one of them*, in the name of Jesus, and thus to save themselves from this untoward generation.<sup>1)</sup> The words of Moses, saying, "*And it shall come to pass, that every soul which will not hear that prophet shall be destroyed from among the people,*"<sup>2)</sup> the apostles boldly applied to Jesus of Nazareth, and in the face of the Jewish senate they declared: "*Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.*"<sup>3)</sup> Against language like this every fibre of the Pharisee and of the Sadducee alike, and of every self-conceited Jew, the separatistic Essene, with his self-devised asceticism, not excepted, would naturally revolt. Such language had not been used even by the Roman conquerors. The Roman yoke, galling as it was, had been adjusted to the Jewish neck in a manner calculated to assuage the feelings of a vanquished nation and permitting the Jew to remain essentially a Jew. Being a Roman province of the second rank, Judaea, though not wholly exempt from Roman garrison, was not burdened down with legionaries; but a moderate force of inferior infantry and cavalry was stationed at Caesarea. Though a Roman military commander resided in the royal castle at Jerusalem, his garrison was small, and only during the concourse of the multitudes at the festival seasons additional troops were quartered near the temple. When the soldiers marched into the city, they came without their standards, which, being offensive to the Jews on account of the imperial effigies, were left at Caesarea. Gentiles were, under penalty of death, prohibited from entering the interior of the temple, and tablets warning the foreigner to keep out or take the consequences were placed conspic-

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1) Acts 2, 38. 40.

2) Acts 3, 23.

3) Acts 4, 12.

uously on the marble barrier which separated the outer galleries from the inner temple. The municipal government was largely in the hands of the Synedrium with the high priest at its head and the past high priests as prominent members, and while the death penalty could be executed only after confirmation by the imperial governor, the native council exercised a certain jurisdiction even in criminal cases. All these and similar concessions, though they were not sufficient to prevent the final conflict in the face of the exactions and oppressions perpetrated by the procurators and their subordinates, could not but operate as palliatives as far as they went. But Christianity knew of no such compromise with Judaism. Considerate as the Christians showed themselves in the use of their Christian liberty with regard to certain *adiaphora*, they allowed no high priest or synedrium to exercise any measure of authority or jurisdiction in the affairs of the church. Enjoined from preaching they preached, obeying God rather than men,<sup>1)</sup> although those men were the high priests and the council assembled as court in banc.<sup>2)</sup> They boldly identified themselves with the Nazarene whom the rulers of the people had slain and hanged on a tree,<sup>3)</sup> and laid the blame for a judicial murder at the door not chiefly of Pilate,<sup>4)</sup> but of the Jews and their leaders, whose ignorance they admitted as an extenuating circumstance.<sup>5)</sup> And this arraignment was all the more exasperating inasmuch as it carried conviction with it, and the unlearned and ignorant men of Galilee<sup>6)</sup> were magnified by the people of the capital,<sup>7)</sup> and their adherents multiplied from three thousand to five thousand,<sup>8)</sup> and believers were still added, multitudes both of men and women,<sup>9)</sup> and the movement not only spread to the cities round about,<sup>10)</sup> while

1) Acts 5, 29.

2) Ibid. v. 26. 28.

3) Acts 3, 12—17; 5, 30.

4) Acts 3, 13.

5) Acts 3, 13—17; cf. 4, 10. 11; 5, 30.

6) Acts 4, 13.

7) Acts 5, 13.

8) Acts 4, 4.

9) Acts 5, 14.

10) Acts 5, 16.

the number of disciples still multiplied among the common people at Jerusalem, but gained a foothold even among the aristocracy, and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.<sup>1)</sup> This uncompromising and aggressive character of Christianity asserted itself everywhere and persistently, and that in a syncretistic age, when Pilate's skeptical query, "*What is truth?*" pervaded not only the philosophy and theology of the Gentiles, but also the progressive Jewish scholasticism imported from Alexandria into some of the Synagogues of Jerusalem.<sup>2)</sup> Such boldness and presumption on the part of "unlearned and ignorant men"<sup>3)</sup> of Galilee could not be tolerated, and since these men were not open to argument, but demanded unqualified faith and, what was worse, also found it, not only among the common people, but even among the priests,<sup>4)</sup> sterner measures must be resorted to, threats, imprisonment, the scourge, deadly boulders, and the executioner's sword.—As a parallel, we quote the words of Pliny to Traian on the persecution in Bithynia. He says: "Those who confessed I have interrogated a second and a third time, threatening punishment; if they persevered, I commanded them to be led out to death. For I doubted not that, whatever it was that they confessed, such stubbornness and inflexible obstinacy must certainly be punished."<sup>5)</sup> That a class of men should sacrifice comfort and property and honor and liberty and life for a *doctrine* which differed from every other doctrine past or present, and claimed that on the acceptance of this doctrine their own and all other people's temporal and eternal welfare depended, and held the propagation of this doctrine to be their sublime and solemn duty in the face of all

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1) Acts 6, 7.

2) Acts 6, 9.

3) Acts 4, 13.

4) Acts 6, 7.

5) *Confitentes iterum ac tertio interrogavi, supplicium minatus; perseverantes duci jussi. Neque enim dubitabam, quaecumque esset quod faterentur, pertinaciam certe et inflexibilem obstinatiam debere puniri. Plinii epp. X, 97.*

obstacles, was to the heathen mind sufficient to stamp those men a dangerous element of society, a set of fanatics and cranks, who fanaticized or duped the simple-minded and disturbed the peace of individuals, families, and society at large. Hence Tacitus terms Christianity a "baneful superstition" which, "having been once subdued, broke out anew;"<sup>1)</sup> and Suetonius mentions the suppression of "the Christians, a class of men affected with a new and malicious superstition,"<sup>2)</sup> among the restrictive and coercive procedures instituted by Nero against a number of social evils in the capital of the empire,<sup>3)</sup> such as the saloons and the vagabonding charioteers. This policy continued throughout the age of persecution under the pagan empire, and it was their uncompromising maintenance of the Nicene doctrine which brought upon Athanasius and others the exiles and various acts of violence they were made to suffer under so-called Christian emperors who deemed themselves the bishops of external affairs.—But this brings us near another parallelism between the first and later persecutions.

The Jewish government under which the church at Jerusalem lived and suffered held civil and ecclesiastical authority not only coupled, but united. The Romans had granted to the Jews as to other conquered nations the privilege of retaining their natural religion with its priesthood and worship, public and private. The Synedrion at Jerusalem, which had under the Seleucids exercised the supreme management of the religious affairs of all the Jews, and, largely, the administration of the secular government of the city, was allowed to continue its functions under the Roman rule. "To this Synedrion and its high priest, who

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1) *Repressaque in praesens exitiabilis superstitio rursus erumpebat. Taciti Ann. XV, 45.*

2) *Christiani, genus hominum superstitionis novae ac maleficae. Suetonii Nero, 16.*

3) *Multa sub eo et animadversa severe et coercita, cet. Ibid.*



was now nominated by the procurator as representative of the imperial suzerain, the Roman government left or committed that jurisdiction which in the Hellenic subject communities belonged to the urban authorities and the common councils. With indifferent short-sightedness it allowed to the transcendental Messianism of the Pharisees free course, and to the by no means transcendental land-consistory—acting until the Messiah should arrive—tolerably free sway in affairs of faith, of manners, and of law, where Roman interests were not directly affected thereby. This applied in particular to the administration of justice. It is true that, as far as Roman burgesses were concerned in the matter, justice in civil as in criminal affairs must have been reserved for the Roman tribunals even already before the annexation of the land. But civil justice over the Jews remained even after the annexation chiefly with the local authority.”<sup>1)</sup> This blending of spiritual and secular authority and jurisdiction naturally resulted in persecution when such as were subject to authorities thus constituted exposed themselves to spiritual censure backed up by police power and its various organs. Thus it was that the very first collision of the apostles with the “priests” also brought them into contact with the captain of the temple,<sup>2)</sup> and that “being grieved that they taught the people and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead,”<sup>3)</sup> which was certainly not a secular offense, “they laid hands on them and put them in hold,”<sup>4)</sup> which was certainly not a spiritual measure. Again, when the high priest and they that were with him were filled with indignation at the failure of the apostles to heed the prohibition of preaching in Jesus’ name,<sup>5)</sup> and at their healing the sick,<sup>6)</sup> this signified to the

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1) Mommsen, the Provinces of the Roman Empire, transl. by W. P. Dickson; Vol. II, p. 204.

2) Acts 4, 1.

3) Acts 4, 2.

4) Acts 4, 3.

5) Acts 5, 17. 28.

6) Acts 5, 16. 17.

offenders incarceration in the common prison<sup>1)</sup> and the laying on of hands by the captain and the officers,<sup>2)</sup> and an ignominious beating.<sup>3)</sup> And in the progress of the persecution, authority and commission from the high priest and the estate of the elders sufficed to bring imprisonment and death, not upon thieves and murderers, but upon "the saints," men and women of "this way" preached by the apostles in the name of Jesus.<sup>4)</sup> Here we have another point in which this persecution foreshadowed future persecutions. Throughout the Roman empire religion was looked upon as an affair of the state; the gods of Rome were state gods, their priests were state officials; the Emperor himself was Pontifex Maximus, the high priest of the empire; and a religious offense was not a sin, but a crime. Behold the consequence. Pliny, a civil magistrate, inflicts the death penalty upon the Christians of his province, who had "bound themselves by a sacrament, not for any criminal purpose, but that they would not commit theft, robbery, adultery, or a breach of faith or the denial of a trust,"<sup>5)</sup> but whom nothing could compel to invoke the gods or to offer frankincense and wine to the image of the Emperor, or to curse Christ.<sup>6)</sup> Another Roman official consigned Polycarp, the bishop of Smyrna, to the flames, because he refused to offer sacrifice or to curse Christ.<sup>7)</sup> On similar charges hundreds and thousands of Christians were tried, condemned, sentenced and executed from the days of Tiberius to those of Diocletian and Galerius. Nor was this all. When, after a brief period of religious liberty under the first edicts of Constantine the Christian religion was by the same emperor made a state affair, the time was at hand when adherence

1) Acts 5, 18.

2) Acts 5, 26.

3) Acts 5, 40.

4) Acts 9, 1. 2; 22, 4. 5; 26, 9—12.

5) Plinii epp. X, 97: Seque sacramento non in scelus aliquod obstringere, sed ne furta, ne latrocinia, ne adulteria committerent, ne fidem fallerent, ne depositum appellati abnegarent.

6) Ibid.

7) Martyrium Polycarpi, cap. 8. 9.

to the Nicene creed and doctrine was punished by exile and death, and Athanasius was banished not only by Julian, the Apostate, but by Constantine and Constantius and Valens, who were by themselves and others considered Christian emperors. And through all subsequent ages to the present day, when Lutheran ministers are persecuted and exiled in "Christian" Russia by a "Christian" Czar, the confusion of spiritual and secular authority has been a prolific source of religious persecution.

In the first persecution of Christianity the foremost effort of the persecutors was to silence the preaching of the Gospel whereby the church was planted and extended. Through the word of the apostles men were led to believe on Christ.<sup>1)</sup> Knowing this, the young congregation continued steadfast in the apostles' doctrine,<sup>2)</sup> and the apostles themselves improved every opportunity to preach Christ crucified and risen from the dead, the stone which was set at nought of the builders, which was become the head of the corner, in whom alone there was salvation, there being none other name under heaven given among men, whereby they must be saved.<sup>3)</sup> Nor were Diocletian and his colleagues the first to surmise where the strength of Christianity lay. The very first manifestation of enmity against the pentecostal church was an utterance calculated to blunt the edge of the first pentecostal sermons by setting them down as the rantings of inebriates.<sup>4)</sup> The first grievance of the authorities against the apostles was "that they taught the people and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead."<sup>5)</sup> The first resolution passed by the city council and its assessors with a view of cutting short the progress of this Nazarene movement was: "Let us straitly threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this

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1) John 17, 20. Matt. 28, 19. 20. Acts 2, 37. 41; 4, 4.

2) Acts 2, 42.

3) Acts 4, 11. 12.

4) Acts 2, 13.

5) Acts 4, 1. 2.

name;”<sup>1)</sup> and the first injunction issued in execution of this decree was a command “not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus.”<sup>2)</sup> To preach or not to preach was the first issue between Christianity and its first persecutors. Against the prohibition of preaching the Apostles and their company,<sup>3)</sup> the primitive church, set their prayer: “Lord, behold their threatenings, and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word.”<sup>4)</sup> When for their refusal to heed the injunction the preachers were imprisoned,<sup>5)</sup> the angel of the Lord set them free and charged them at once to “go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life.”<sup>6)</sup> And again we find them arraigned before “the council and all the senate of the children of Israel” and reprimanded by the high priest, saying: “Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? And, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine.”<sup>7)</sup> Before the adjournment of that meeting the motion was made and discussed to slay them,<sup>8)</sup> and though for the time more moderate counsel prevailed, the prohibition of preaching was officially repeated and sharpened by administering the scourge,<sup>9)</sup> with what effect, St. Luke records: “And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ. . . . And the word of God increased, and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly.”<sup>10)</sup> In this, the very first efforts to subdue the church of Christ were typical of all the later persecutions of Christianity by Jews and Gentiles, and of the orthodox church by its adversaries. The procedures against bishops and presbyters by imprisonment, exile, and death, the destruction of churches and Bibles, the banishments of Athanasius and other defenders of the

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1) Acts 4, 17.

3) Acts 4, 23.

5) Acts 5, 17. 18; cf. v. 28.

7) Acts 5, 21—28.

9) Acts 5, 40.

2) Acts 4, 18.

4) Acts 4, 29.

6) Acts 5, 20.

8) Acts 5, 33.

10) Acts 5, 42; 6, 7.

Nicene doctrine, the burning of Hus, the measures resorted to against Luther and other confessors of his and later days, were prompted by the same motive of silencing the testimony of the Apostles and Prophets and thereby staying the progress and subduing the power and the very life of the church of Christ.

Another typical feature of the first persecution of Christianity is this, that it occasioned the banding together of various mutually heterogeneous and even antagonistic parties for united efforts against the church. The Sadducees; Annas, Caiaphas, John, Alexander, and all the kindred of the high priest, the council and all the senate, the captain of the temple and the officers, Saul, a zealot among the Pharisees, the various coteries of the synagogues, of Libertines and Cyrenians and Alexandrians and those of Cilicia and Asia, false witnesses, scribes, and even the dissolute infidel Herod—all pooled their interests together to stamp out the hated Nazarenes.<sup>1)</sup> Thus to this day the enemies of the Gospel set aside their discords and camp together when it comes to make war upon the “sect which is everywhere spoken against.”<sup>2)</sup> Thus, to mention but a few examples, the Jews gathered fuel when the gentiles burned Polycarp; Meletians and Arians and Jews and heathen philosophers united in hunting down the defenders of the Nicene faith. Humanism and papism and political interests, crowned and mitered licentiousness and the quest of filthy lucre were leagued together against Lutheranism.

Again, history only repeated itself when in later conflicts the enemies of the church endeavored to lend color to their antagonism by heaping upon the Christians or the exponents of the orthodox church all manner of accusations manifestly false, but persistently repeated. In the first persecution charges which had been slanderously laid against

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1) Acts 4, 1, 2; 5, 17, 18, 21, 24, 26; 6, 9 ff.; 8, 1 ff.; 9, 1 ff.; 12, 1 ff.

2) Acts 28, 22.

Jesus of Nazareth in the high priest's house were by the same methods repeated against Stephen, accusations of revolutionary and seditious machinations, of heresy and blasphemy, calculated to rouse the antipathies of the rabble and to bias the judgment of the council and court.<sup>1)</sup> In like manner the Christians under the emperors were accused of Oedipodean and Thyestean abominations, Athanasius was indicted for murder and rape and sorcery and sedition and various acts of violence; Luther was charged with incontinence, drunkenness, complicity with the seditious peasants, and suicide—accusations, all of which were known to be false by those who first raised them and suborned false witnesses to substantiate them.

Finally, the first persecution of Christianity was a failure, and so were all the rest. What the Pharisees and the Sadducees and their abettors endeavored, they did not achieve. The Gospel was not silenced; the church, though oppressed, was not suppressed. On the contrary, when at the height of the persecution the disciples followed the advice of the Master and fled,<sup>2)</sup> they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word;<sup>3)</sup> Christ "divided the spoil with the strong;"<sup>4)</sup> the fiercest persecutor became the most untiring and successful missionary of the church and carried the Gospel of Christ through Asia and Europe; and wherever and whenever then and thereafter persecution arose to subdue the church of Christ, the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church.

A. G.

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1) Acts 6, 11—14; cf. Matt. 26, 61 ff.

2) Matt. 10, 23. Acts 8, 1.

3) Acts 8, 4.

4) Is. 53, 12.

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