

*Dr. Ed. Schenck  
1898*

# THEOLOGICAL QUARTERLY.

1898#

VOL. III.

JANUARY 1899.

No. 1.

## Doctrinal Theology.

### COSMOLOGY.

Cosmology, as a chapter of Christian theology, is the doctrine of Holy Scripture concerning the genesis, nature, and states, of created things. The source whence every doctrinal statement under this head must be derived is the same from which we draw our theological information concerning the unfathomable mysteries of Theology proper, the doctrine of God, of the Trinity in Unity, of the divine attributes and eternal decrees. It is true, the Bible is not a scientific text book of Cosmic Philosophy, of Natural History or Geology or Astronomy, claiming for itself the authority due to the results of scientific research, of human observation and investigation and speculation. Its claims, also in reference to Cosmology, are infinitely higher. The authority of human scientists is never more than human; the authority of the Scriptures, also where it speaks of mundane things, is simply and unrestrictedly divine. Scientists may err, God can not; scientists have often erred, God never. Where the statements of great scientists and those of the Scriptures are at variance, those of the Scriptures must prevail, not although, but because, the Bible is not a scientific text book, because it is more, it is the word of

## LENTEN SERVICES.

The observation of Lent dates back to a very early period of Christianity. It is not, however, our intention to enlarge upon the history of oriental and occidental customs and traditions connected with the ante-paschal fasts from the first beginnings of what we know concerning these observances to the close of the middle ages. And also when we speak of the observation of Lent in the Lutheran church, we consider the subject less from a historical than from a practical point of view.

The Lutheran reformation was, as in all other respects, on the whole eminently conservative also in dealing with the traditions handed down from earlier periods of the occidental church with regard to the weeks preceding the Easter season. The manifold and gross abuses which had taken possession of this season for a time seemed to recommend more radical changes, and in his *Formula Missae* of 1523 Luther recommended that the week before Easter should not be distinguished from any other week of the year, opposing even the omission of the *Hallelujah* in the services of this week, as during the entire *Quadragesima*. But on maturer deliberation he changed his view, and in his *German Mass* (of 1526) he says, "The Fasts, Palm Sunday, and the Passion Week we retain, not with the intention of compelling any one to fast, but in this wise, that the passion and the gospels ordained for this season shall remain." He recommends that the week be celebrated, not by total cessation of labor, but by daily preaching on the suffering of Christ, while he does away with the superstitious rites and ceremonies practiced under the papacy. And thus throughout the Lutheran church the various regulations of public worship all agreed in setting apart the lenten season, and, especially, holy week, as a time for special services, calculated to lead the worshiping congregations to a better under-

standing and appreciation of the passion of Christ and its significance. In accordance with Luther's recommendation referred to above, that "the passion and the gospels" should be retained, the traditional pericopes for the Sundays of the Quadragesima were left unchanged, and only the Pomeranian liturgy makes an exception by designating the narrative of the baptism of Christ for Quinquagesima Sunday and transferring the lessons properly belonging to Quinquagesima, 1 Cor. 13, 1—13 and Luke 18, 31—43, to Laetare Sunday. The old Agenda further agree in prescribing that during the Quadragesima the passion of Christ should be the subject of the secondary and weekday services throughout the Lenten season.

The texts for these sermons in common use were sections of the harmony of the gospel narratives of the passion of Christ, also handed down from earlier days, but revised by Bugenhagen. According to some of the liturgies the history was to be read and preached upon from the beginning to the end of the Quadragesima; according to others this was to be done once during the earlier part of Lent and once more during the latter part, especially during the week before Palmarum and throughout the holy week before Easter. Still other liturgies reserve the story of the passion of Christ for the latter week, and some other texts, as the story of the resurrection of Lazarus, John 11, for the weeks after Laetare and Judica. The Brunswick liturgy appoints the story of the resurrection of Lazarus for Friday after Judica and John 12 for Saturday before Palmarum, the entrance of Christ into Jerusalem for Palmarum, and the account of our Lord's suffering and death for the "Still Week," thus endeavoring to note the various events on the days on which they came to pass. In some instances, texts from the Old Testament, especially prophecies of the suffering Messiah, were recommended for these special passion sermons, while the reading and expounding of the gospel narrative was reserved for the week beginning with Palmarum.

That such observance of the lenten season is highly appropriate in the church and in good keeping with the idea of a church year, no one will seriously question; but opinions may differ as to what should be the general trend of the sermons preached in these passion services. Many have evidently endeavored to make these weeks a penitential period to be devoted chiefly to the contemplation of the sins of mankind, and of the worshipping congregation and individual especially, as the cause of Christ's suffering and death. With this end in view and the texts prescribed or recommended by church-books or tradition, preachers were largely led to exhibit the sufferings of Christ preponderatingly as evidence of the righteous wrath of God, by pointing out the various sins or categories of sins for which the suffering Savior might be said to have made atonement by certain sufferings which he was made to undergo at the hands of Jews and Gentiles, and by certain performances of active obedience, in Gethsemane, the High Priest's palace, the court of Pontius Pilate, on the *via dolorosa* and Calvary. The great defect of these sermons was in not a few instances this, that far more time and space was given to the consideration of the sinner and his sins than to the exhibition of the Savior and his atonement by his obedience unto death, even the death of the cross, and thus the suffering Savior was made to perform the work of Moses and the law, when more than at any other time he should be permitted to be the embodiment of the grace of God and the gospel of our salvation. We would not be understood to mean that every reflection on sin and the righteous wrath of God should be kept out of a passion sermon;<sup>1)</sup> on the contrary, we are alive to the fact, that redemption and salvation can not be preached or understood where sin and the thralldom of Satan and the wrath of God, wherefrom we are redeemed and saved, are not duly pointed out and properly rated and

---

1) Cf. Luke 23, 28. 31.

taken to heart. All this, however, can be very well exhibited and demonstrated by bringing into relief the multitudes of sin and heinous ungodliness and atrocious wickedness manifested by Judas Iscariot and Simon Peter and Hannas and Caiaphas and the rest of the priests and rulers and Jews, Pontius Pilate and Herod and the multitudes massed together in Jerusalem and about the cross of Jesus.

Others have endeavored to picture to their hearers the suffering Savior as the man of sorrow, stricken and afflicted, the despised of men, in a way to enlist in his behalf the compassion and commiseration and tears of the congregation, little thinking that in this they were rather repeating what Pontius Pilate did when he exhibited the bleeding and lacerated form of the Nazarene to the gaze of the multitude, saying, "*Behold the man.*" Again we are far from maintaining that the preacher must in no way or measure bring home to his hearers the truth that the body and soul of Jesus under the faithlessness of his disciples and the blasphemies of the High Priests and rulers, the buffetings and ignominies heaped upon him by their subordinates, the gross injustice of Pontius Pilate, the cruel scourge and crown of thorns, the excruciating tortures of the crucifixion, and the bitter pangs of death, were indeed an object which should not fail to move and melt even a heart of stone, and sufficient to call forth tears from the eyes, not only of the daughters of Jerusalem, but of all who may behold these sufferings, which stand unrivaled in the history of mankind. But where tears of compassion and pity are all that the preacher has elicited, he has achieved very little of enduring value and might fitly be reminded of the words of Christ directed to the weeping women, who bewailed and lamented him, "*Ye daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.*" Emotional preaching has its use, and the Holy Spirit himself in the Psalms and in the Prophets, and Christ and his apostles, did not fail to take into account that the human heart is cap-

able of emotions and the human breast of sighs and the human eye of tears. But to stir up emotions merely or chiefly for the sake of producing such affect may be the aim of playwrights and actors, but is out of place in the pulpit everywhere, and especially in sermons on the atoning sacrifice of Christ.

In the days of rampant Rationalism the sufferings of Christ were a subject in little favor with many preachers, and where they preached lenten sermons at all, Christ was rarely exhibited as the lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world, but chiefly or exclusively as the virtuous wise man of Nazareth, who was true to his doctrine, even when it brought upon him the hatred of Pharisees and Sadducees, and who, in his suffering and death, set an example of steadfastness and humility and meekness and charity and loving concern for his frail disciples and his bitter enemies, eminently adapted to elevate the moral standard of those who walk in his footsteps. Others preferred to speak of Pilate's wife and the captain of the guard rather than of the suffering Jesus, and felt relieved when the season was over, as one of them candidly, though certainly not reverently, confessed, that he always breathed more freely, when "Christ once more had ascended into heaven." Still others more consistently dropped the passion services altogether, and thus managed to forego what was uncongenial to themselves and unprofitable to their hearers, many of whom, especially among the country people, would obtain what their preachers could not and would not give them, in the old parchment-bound postils and other books of devotion, in which their fathers had found true edification by the daily contemplation of their Savior's passion.

To be truly and enduringly profitable, passion sermons should, as all other sermons, be sound and solid expositions of what the evangelists have recorded or what the prophets and apostles have written concerning the vicarious atonement of Christ by his obedience unto death. They

should be in the best sense of the word doctrinal and didactic, since what is true of all Scriptures is preeminently true of those parts of the inspired word which treat of the work of our redemption, that they are profitable, in the first place, for doctrine, and that whatsoever things were written aforetimes were written for our learning. The lenten sermons should lead the congregations to a more thorough and intensive, as also a more extensive, knowledge of the doctrines of the person of Christ, the God-man, the divinely ordained High Priest, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and higher than the heavens, of his deep humiliation, of his self-sacrificing love toward sinful mankind, of vicarious atonement and our redemption from sin, Satan, death, and damnation, of justification by faith, of sanctification and the restitution of the image of God in the redeemed, of hope and patience under the cross and in the billows of death, and of life everlasting. The Law and the Gospel in their proper relation to each other, the doctrines of sin and of grace, should be the elements, as of all our preaching, so also of what we furnish forth to our hearers during the season of Lent. We know of no better summary of what these lenten sermons should inculcate than Luther's exposition of the second article of the Apostles' Creed in the small Catechism, and where the preacher in a given year intends to preach on texts of his own choice, it may not be amiss to follow this summary as a plan for an entire series of passion sermons, reserving the closing words for the keynote of his Easter sermons, in which he will make it a point to follow the example of the angel preacher at the empty sepulchre, who greeted the women of Galilee, saying, "Be not affrighted. Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him." Thus the resurrection of Christ will appear as what it really is, the divine acknowledgment of the validity and sufficiency of Christ's atoning sacrifice and the absolution of the world because of the redemption which is in Christ

Jesus. And here the inestimable value of a well prepared and well delivered series of passion sermons is once more manifest. No one can truly appreciate the significance of the risen Lord and Savior, who has not learned to know and to understand Christ crucified. It was only after the disciples, who had been slow of heart to believe all that the prophets had spoken, had been led in a measure to understand in all the Scriptures the things concerning Christ, especially concerning his suffering and entrance into glory, that they began to rejoice in the risen Lord. Luke 24, 25—27. 32—34. And likewise did true and abiding Easter gladness enter the hearts of the eleven only after Christ had said unto them, "These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me," and after he had opened their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures, and said unto them, "Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things." Luke 24, 44—48.

A. G.

---

## SERMON ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE SEASON OF LENT.

For the Sundays and festivals in the ecclesiastical year we have certain traditional texts, the epistles and gospels. But there are seasons in the ecclesiastical year requiring a special series of sermons and for these there are no texts prescribed or suggested. For the evening sermons in Advent and Lent the pastor must make his own selection of texts. Sometimes this is tedious work. It is not a wise policy to pick out texts at random, without any systematical