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Doctrinal Theology.

THEOLOGY.

(Continued.)

WILL.

Will is an attribute of God inasmuch as he consciously prompts his own acts, and is intent upon the execution of his purposes, the accomplishment of his designs, the realization of his counsels, and the fulfillment of his ordinances. Will is one of the characteristics of rational, self-conscious, personal agencies. The acts of a person are that person's acts inasmuch as they are consciously prompted by such person, and an accessory to an act is again a person who consciously concurs in prompting such act, though the *materiale* of the act be wholly or in part performed by another. Thus God is active by his own promptings. Every act of God not only presupposes, but implies volition. And, again, volition is, in God, linked with action, the conscious and intentional exertion of power. This is indicated in the words, *Who hath resisted his will?*¹⁾ Of him the Psalmist says, *Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did he in heaven, and in earth,*²⁾ and, *Our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.*³⁾ When God acts, his act

1) Rom. 9, 19.

2) Ps. 135, 6.

3) Ps. 115, 3.

Exegetical Theology.

THE PROOF TEXTS OF THE CATECHISM WITH A PRACTICAL COMMENTARY.

GENERAL REMARKS.

Proof texts, in a Catechism, serve a twofold purpose. In the first place, they are adduced as *sources* from which the various points of doctrine exhibited in the questions and answers of the catechism are drawn. Then, again, inasmuch as catechisms present these doctrines in terms chosen and arranged by the authors of such catechisms, the texts are added with a view of showing that these statements of doctrine are in full agreement with the *norm* of Christian doctrine, the holy Scriptures. As these texts, or many of them, are to be memorized by the catechumens, they should not be longer than is necessary for a complete statement of the point or points they are to substantiate. But their brevity does not render them unavailable for their purpose in the catechism; for every plain statement of Scripture is "Scripture" that "cannot be broken,"¹⁾ and "profitable for doctrine."²⁾ Besides, the catechetical instructor is not, in his exposition of the texts, enjoined from entering upon the context and turning its light upon the words adduced in the book; on the contrary, remembering that the exposition and application of the proof texts is the more important part of his work, he will feel thoroughly prepared for his lesson only after careful exegetical preparation for this part of his task. It may be needless to say that we do not think of recommending or inculcating a learned grammatico-

1) John 10, 35.

2) 2 Tim. 3, 16.

historical and theological exegesis before a class of catechumens. But we do recommend a thorough exegetical study of the texts as essential to thorough *preparation* for the work in the class room, and the desire to be of some assistance toward such preparatory work in the minister's study prompts us to offer the following specimens.

Introduction.

1 Pet. 2, 2: *As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.*

These words are addressed to Christians,¹⁾ who were born again by the word of God,²⁾ which by the gospel is preached to them.³⁾ In view of this new birth, they are called *newborn babes*, who have recently entered into spiritual life, not, however, that they should remain babes, but that they should grow. The proper nourishment of a babe, without which it will not grow, but pine away and perish, is milk, and young babes crave that nourishment and eagerly accept the offered breast. And the proper food whereby the spiritual children of God may be nourished and strengthened and preserved and increased is, of course, *spiritual*. Thus Luther correctly understands the Greek *λογικόν*, when, in his commentary published in 1539, he says: "*Das sind abermal verblünte Worte; denn er meint nicht leibliche Milch . . ., sondern saget von einer andern Milch, die da vernünftig ist, das ist, geistlich, die man mit der Seelen schöpft, die das Herze muss saugen,*"⁴⁾ i. e., "These are, again, figurative words; for he does not speak of material milk, but of another kind of milk, which is logical, that is, spiritual, which is taken with the soul and sucked with the heart." The English Bible, rendering *λογικόν* "*of the word,*" while it fails in the interpretation of the adjective, gives a correct

1) 1 Pet. 1, 1. 2.

2) 1 Pet. 1, 23.

3) 1 Pet. 1, 25.

4) Erl. ed. 51, p. 65. The adjective *λογικός* is employed in the same sense, Rom. 12, 1.

comment, stating properly what the figurative term, λογικὸν γάλα, *spiritual milk*, implies; for this food of the children of the Spirit is indeed the word of God.¹⁾

But the apostle adds another adjective, ἄδολον, *sincere, unadulterated*. Thus St. Paul warns the Christians against those who *corrupt the word of God*.²⁾ False doctrine does not come alone, but as an adulteration of sound doctrine, and is all the more dangerous as it comes with the appearance of milk, the proper spiritual food of God's children.

The pure, sincere milk of divine truth is what St. Peter would have us *desire*, as a sucking child eagerly craves its mother's breast, and drinks until its hunger is appeased, and craves again after a few short hours. So we, likewise, should seek with eagerness the spiritual milk of the word, largely and frequently partaking thereof.

And this do, says the apostle, *that ye may grow thereby*. By *ἵνα* he indicates that our spiritual growth should be not only a consequence, but an end and purpose of our craving for and partaking of the spiritual food prepared for us in the word. And when he says ἐν αὐτῷ, he says more forcibly than he would by δι' αὐτοῦ, that the word is not only the means *whereby*, but the power *wherein* we should grow into spiritual maturity.

This text, then, should be made to furnish, at the very outset of this course of instruction, an exhortation and admonition to the catechumens that they would earnestly and assiduously and with the proper end and aim apply themselves to the study of this compend of Christian doctrine, the Catechism.

2 Pet. 1, 21: *Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.*

This text is a part of the *dictum classicum* beginning with v. 19 and asserting the firmness or reliability of the divine word of Scripture by emphasizing the fact that it is

1) 1 Cor. 3, 1. 2. Hebr. 5, 12—6, 2.

2) 2 Cor. 2, 17.

the word not of man, but of God. The English Bible fails to indicate the emphasis which, in the original, lies on the words *ὑπὸ πνεύματος ἁγίου*, *by the Holy Ghost*. These words, which, in the translation, occupy the last place, the place which they would also occupy in Greek if they were not emphasized, are placed first in the original, even before the verb, *φερόμενοι*, *moved, driven*. What the apostle would inculcate is that the word of Scripture is not human but divine, the word of GOD. The *holy men of God*, holy and men of God as they were, were not the authors of this word of prophecy. They wrote not under the promptings of their holiness or godliness; they were *driven* to write what they wrote, as ships are driven by the wind that swells their sails;¹⁾ and he who drove, impelled them, was God, the Holy Ghost. And when the apostle says *ἔλαλθω*, he thereby refers not to the thoughts only to which they gave utterance, which he might have done by *ἔλεγον*, but to the *words* they pronounced and the sounds of which those words consist, or the characters representing those sounds. They are called *holy men of God*, because they were the instruments of God, and the emphasized words indicate that it was the Holy Ghost who used them as his instruments, as by and through them he gave utterance to the words of prophecy, which were not their own but his own.

2 Tim. 3, 15—17: *And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.*

This text is not here quoted for the purpose of inculcating the early training of children in the nurture and ad-

1) Thus *φέρεισθαι* is said of a ship driven by the wind, Acts 27, 15. 17.

monition of the Lord, though that may be incidentally pointed out as implied in the opening words of v. 15. What the words here quoted should teach is the nature and use of the holy Scriptures. The term τὰ ἱερὰ γράμματα, *the holy writings*, is used only here to denote the Old Testament Scriptures, the more common terms being ἡ γραφή, αἱ γραφαί, or αἱ γραφαὶ ἁγία. The form τὰ ἱερὰ γράμματα is more expressive of the nature of the holy books as a revelation of God laid down in *written characters*, γράμματα, as distinguished from spoken words, and by the article, τὰ, these writings are presented as a fixed quantity, the books which were known and acknowledged as *the holy writings*. The adjective, ἱερὰ, denotes a relation to God, and distinguishes these writings from secular literature. But while these books may be termed *holy* in various respects, as to their contents and purposes, they are related to God in a peculiar way indicated by another adjective, θεόπνευστος, v. 16.

The English Bible correctly renders θεόπνευστος, *given by inspiration of God*, Luther, *von Gott eingegeben*. The two versions disagree as to the syntactical relation of the adjective, the English Bible taking it as the predicate of the subject, πᾶσα γραφή, and supplying the copula accordingly: *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God*; while Luther takes θεόπνευστος as the attribute of πᾶσα γραφή and, making πᾶσα γραφή θεόπνευστος the subject, and ὠφελιμὸς, etc., the predicate, supplies the copula after θεόπνευστος and translates: *Alle Schrift von Gott eingegeben ist nütze, etc.* Either construction is grammatically admissible. But as the divine inspiration of the Scriptures was not at issue, and the apostle evidently means to state more explicitly than in the previous verse the *use* of the holy Scriptures, Luther's construction would seem to deserve the preference. The καὶ before ὠφελιμὸς, which neither version has noticed, must then be given by *also*, and we would translate, *All Scripture, given by inspiration of God, is*

also profitable, etc. Since, however, what is an attribute of a thing can also be predicated of that thing, the text teaches the divine inspiration of all Scripture, whether *θεόπνευστος* be attributively or predicatively construed, just as holiness is ascribed to the church, whether we say, *the church is holy*, or, *the holy church*.

The words *πᾶσα γραφή* are in both translations correctly rendered, *all Scripture*, *alle Schrift*; for *the entire Scripture*, *die ganze Schrift*, would be *πᾶσα ἡ γραφή*. But if whatever is holy Scripture is given by inspiration of God, then the entire Scripture is thus given. There is, however, a significance in *πᾶσα γραφή* which would not be found in *πᾶσα ἡ γραφή*. The latter form, *the whole Scripture*, would be understood to refer to the body of the Old Testament Scriptures as it was then in the hands of the Jews and had been known to Timotheus from his youth as *ἡ γραφή*. *All Scripture*, *πᾶσα γραφή*, says more; it includes not only the Scriptures that had been handed down, Moses and the Prophets, but also the Scriptures that were then being given by inspiration of God through the Apostles and Evangelists. Scripture (Old and New), *whatever is Scripture given by inspiration of God, is also profitable, etc.*: this is what the apostle here says.

Of the *purposes* of Scripture, the apostle here teaches that it is profitable, 1, *for doctrine*, i. e., to teach, to communicate truth to such as would or should learn and know the truth, to give knowledge of those things which are therein set forth; Rom. 15, 4;—2, *for reproof*, i. e., to convict sinners of their sinfulness and the erring and gain-saying of their error; Tit. 1, 9. 13. 1 Tim. 5, 20. Tit. 2, 15;—3, *for correction, for our admonition*, 1 Cor. 10, 11; that we may amend our evil ways in accordance with the divine norm of right and truth;—4, *for instruction in righteousness*, our spiritual *education* toward that ripeness of spiritual manhood which should be the aim of every child of God. Of the ulterior purpose of the written word

the apostle has said before, v. 15; it is *man's salvation* through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

The *perspicuity* of the Bible is asserted when the apostle says that Scripture is profitable for doctrine, and that not only to readers of ripe understanding and profound learning, but even to a child; v. 15. 16.

The *efficacy* and *sufficiency* of Scripture is also apparent, when it is said to be able to make *wise unto salvation*, and to make the man of God *perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works*. The *man of God* is every man who is of the household of God, either in the ministry or otherwise. Whatever duties may be encumbent upon a Christian, he may be fitted for their performance by the word of Scripture, and by the same means he may obtain his soul's salvation. Such is the efficacy and sufficiency of the Book of books.

Thus, then, we have in this text a compend of Bibliology and an earnest admonition to use the Scriptures with all diligence and unceasingly all the days of our lives.

1 Cor. 2, 13: *Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.*

The apostle, having in the preceding context declared that he and his fellow apostles were by the Spirit of God imbued with a *knowledge* of spiritual things, now proceeds to state that the *utterance* of these things was not in words of human wisdom, but that the same Spirit who taught them to know whereof they spoke, also taught them to speak of what they knew, so that when they spoke they uttered the thoughts of the Holy Ghost in words of the Holy Ghost. The progress from *εἰδῶμεν* to *λαλοῦμεν* is marked by *καὶ*, *also*, and *λαλοῦμεν* more expressly than *λέγομεν* denotes the utterance in words, *λόγους*. The verb *συγκρίνειν*, which the English Bible renders *compare*, and Luther, *richten*, means *to match together*. Uttering the *things* of the Holy

Spirit in *words* of the Holy Spirit, the apostles match or join together spiritual things with spiritual, both the things and the words being of the Spirit of God.

John 5, 39: *Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.*

This is an endorsement of the entire Old Testament as a revelation of God to teach the way of salvation and testify of Christ, the Savior. The plural, *τὰς γραφὰς*, refers to the various books of Scripture, *the Scriptures*, the writings of Moses and the Prophets, and Christ approves them all without exception or restriction. The verb, *ἐρευνᾶτε*, is of peculiar force, denoting a thorough search as distinguished from a superficial view or hasty perusal. *Ἐρευνᾶτε* may be either indicative or imperative. If the latter, it is an injunction, if the former, an approval, of the study of the written Word, not for the purpose of Higher Criticism, for which this text leaves no room, but that the reader may be made wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

Luke 11, 28: *Blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.*

A voice out of the multitude had pronounced the mother of Jesus blessed because of her motherhood. The Lord accepts the macarism, but gives a different reason. Mary was indeed blessed, but not because she had been made the mother of Christ. Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Ghost, had given the proper reason, saying, *Blessed is she that BELIEVED.*¹⁾ Mary had believed the word that came to her by the angel in the annunciation,²⁾ the words that the shepherds reported in the night of the nativity,³⁾ the words of the boy Jesus spoken in the temple,⁴⁾ the words spoken to the fathers of old,⁵⁾ and we are repeatedly told that she *kept* these sayings and things and *pondered* them in her heart.⁶⁾ Such was the manner of Mary's blessedness. Not by im-

1) Luke 1, 45.

2) Luke 1, 38.

3) Luke 2, 19.

4) Luke 2, 51.

5) Luke 1, 54. 55.

6) Luke 2, 19. 51.

maculate conception, not because of her virgin motherhood, but by the word of divine grace which she had heard and kept, was she blessed. And this blessedness was not open to her alone, but to all who would likewise hear and accept and keep the word of God in which we have eternal life.

The Ten Commandments.

Micah 6, 8: *He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?*

This text closes the first act of *the Lord's controversy* with his people.¹⁾ The Lord has challenged the ungrateful people to state what grievance they may have against Him who has done them no evil and only good.²⁾ Thereupon Israel, knowing and acknowledging that the people cannot lay charges against the Lord, but that, on the contrary, the Lord has just claims to make against the people, answered the question, "What have I done to thee?" with the counter question, "What are we to do to the Lord? What does he demand of us? Would he have sacrifices of calves, of thousands of rams, of ten thousand rivers of oil, of our own firstborn?"³⁾ The climax is very emphatically expressive of the people's readiness to balance their account with God, to be even with him at any cost. To humble the pride and arrogance hidden in this offer of the conscience-stricken people, the prophet steps in with the words of our text. He accosts the speaker, *O man*, אִישׁ, as if to say, "What manner of language is this? Hast thou forgotten what thou art, *man*, taken from the dust of the earth, flesh born of the flesh? Wouldst thou place thyself on a level with the Lord, thy Maker, and barter with him? What wouldst thou give him that is not already his own? It is *thyself* thou owest him, thy body and soul, and in order that thou shouldst serve him in righteousness, he hath shown

1) Micah 6, 2 ff.

2) Micah 6, 3—5.

3) Micah 6, 6. 7.

thee what is good, and requires of thee to live according to his commandments, not in arrogant self-righteousness, but loving mercy and walking humbly with thy God." *With thy God*, עִם-אֱלֹהֶיךָ, is not the same as *before* thy God, but indicates that our ways should be the ways of God, he being ever with us and we with him, *walking*, that is, moving forward step by step, as he directs us and leads us by his commandments. And this conformity with the commandments of God should not be of outward works only, but also of heart and soul, a heart that *loves mercy*, and a soul that is *humble* and trusts in God, *its* God. This is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.¹⁾

Deut. 6, 6. 7: *And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children.*

The words referred to are the words of the *law*, and the present admonition is addressed to Israel, the people of God.²⁾ The speaker is Moses, by whom God promulgated his law in Israel, and what he here says is itself an injunction to all those to whom he was, under God, the lawgiver of the people. It is a maxim of human law that the first demand the law makes is that it should be known. And here the duty to know the law and to bear it in mind is imposed upon all whom the law concerns. Ignorance of the law is no excuse, but is itself a violation of the law. And inasmuch as a father is responsible for his children and bound to see to their welfare, it is also his duty to teach the law to his children, and to do this with all diligence, lest his children, being ignorant of the law, in and by such ignorance offend against the law. Again, the children also are not excused by ignorance of the law, and if it is the parent's duty to teach them the law, it is their duty with all diligence to learn the law and to keep it in mind at all times and everywhere. See the continuation, Exod. 6, 7—9.

1) Mark 12, 33.

2) Dent. 6, 4. 5.

Rom. 2, 14. 15: *For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another.*

The text is here quoted to substantiate the statement that God, in the creation of man, wrote the law in man's heart.¹⁾ St. Paul speaks of the Gentiles and describes them as *having not the law*. He thereby distinguishes them from the Jews, who had the law, that is, the written law as it was codified and promulgated through Moses, the lawgiver of Israel. And yet the Gentiles are not without law. While they have not the law as the Jews have it, given in the form of a code of law written in the book of the law, they *are law unto themselves*, a norm of right and wrong which is really and truly *law*, νόμος, the published will of the lawgiver, of equal stringency with the law of Sinai, but differing in form and in the mode of publication. Through Moses the law was published as a code of statutes written in the book of the law, or as words or commandments graven in tablets of stone. The Gentiles, too, had the moral law, but differently published, *written in their hearts*, and in a different form, *shewing the WORKS of the law*, indicating in every instance of internal or external human action what was in accordance with the will of God, so that, whatever any man would do or forbear, commit or omit, he might, by consulting the moral norm inscribed in his heart, know whether such act or work was good or evil, in conformity or at variance with the divine will. Thus the Gentiles, when they obeyed their superiors and maintained conjugal fidelity, or when they abstained from murder and theft and fornication, *did the things contained in the law*. And doing these things *by nature*, they shewed the works of the law written in their

1) Q. 8.

hearts, a natural law handed down from generation to generation, not by traditional statutes, but by natural propagation, inheriting with their nature the natural law. And as at no time a new race of men had been created from which the Gentiles had taken their origin, but as *from one blood all nations of men* have come,¹⁾ the natural law must have come down to the later generations of men from the same source from which their common nature was descended, from Adam and Ève, our common ancestors, in whose hearts as in those of their natural descendants the natural law must have been written by their Creator's hand.

That this natural law is really *law*, a stringent and authoritative norm of right, is evinced by man's *conscience*, which *bears witness* to the law and testifies to every man that he is subject to that law and responsible to him who has given it and, as a jealous God, watches over and vindicates its dignity. As a law, it is not an aesthetical, but an ethical norm, not a rule determining what is pleasing and beautiful or the contrary, but what is right or wrong, and, therefore, the thoughts that are set astir by the voice of this law and the testimony of man's conscience are not of aesthetical, but of ethical concern, *accusing or else excusing one another*.

1 Tim. 1, 5: *Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart.*

The *commandment*, *παραγγελία*, here spoken of is the doctrine which Christian ministers are charged to preach concerning those things which Christians should observe in holiness of life. The *end*, *τέλος*, that to which it should tend or lead, is said to be *charity*, *ἀγάπη*, *love*, *out of a pure heart*. Sin, the transgression of the law, proceeds out of the heart, the impure, evil heart.²⁾ Thus, also, the fulfilling of the law should proceed from the heart, a pure heart, sanctified by the Spirit of God. While, according to this

1) Acts 17, 26.

2) Matt. 15, 19.

text, compliance with the law may seem a very simple and easy thing, only love and nothing more, the text teaches that the fulfilling of the law is not only difficult, but impossible, to the natural man, who lacks precisely that from which the fulfilling of the law must spring, *a pure heart*.

Rom. 13, 10: *Therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.*

In the 8th verse of the chapter St. Paul has said, *He that loveth another hath fulfilled the law*. This he has proved in the 9th verse by showing that all the special commandments of the law are summed up, ἀνακεφαλαιωῦται, are briefly recapitulated, in the word, *Thou shalt Love thy neighbor as thyself*. For this he gives a reason when he says, v. 10, *Love worketh no ill to his neighbor*. To work ill to his neighbor is the manner of an enemy, who hates his neighbor, while love is kind, χρηστεύεται,¹⁾ a disposition to do good, to benefit others. Now, every commandment of the law which regulates our relations to our neighbor serves as a safeguard and protection to the neighbor's interests, his dignity, life, spouse, property, and honor, his welfare in general. Hence, the apostle concludes in our text, *love is the fulfillment of the law*, as already stated in the words above, *He that loveth another hath fulfilled the law*, and not only the commandments of the second, but also those of the first table, since only *he who loveth God loveth his brother also*.²⁾

THE FIRST COMMANDMENT.

Is. 42, 8: *I am the Lord: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.*

This text condemns idolatry of every kind, gross and fine. To give to any person or thing besides God the honor

1) 1 Cor. 13, 4.

2) 1 John 4, 21. Note, also, Luther's explanation of the commandments of the second table.

and praise we owe to God, is idolatry. This is a sin for which there is no excuse. God has revealed himself to man as *the one personal* (☩, I,) *Supreme Being*; this is his *name*, whereby we should *know him* as what he is and would be *to us*, and whereby he would be called by us, *Thou, the Lord, my God*. Instead of this, the idolater turns around and says *to the fine gold, Thou art my confidence*,¹⁾ or *cries out, saying, Great is Diana of the Ephesians*,²⁾ giving honor and praise to a graven image. Such is idolatry.

Matt. 4, 10: *Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.*

This text pertains to the words of Answer 15, *actually to . . . adore a creature as God.*

Satan had tempted Jesus in the desert to commit idolatry by worshipping him, and this is a part of Christ's reply to the tempter. Being himself God, he might have said: "Get thee down before me, Satan, and worship me." But being man, *made of a woman and made under the law*,³⁾ in his state of humiliation, he gave as the reason for his refusal to comply with the devil's demand a commandment of God saying, *It is written, Thou shalt, etc.* He refers to such passages as Deut. 6, 13 and 10, 20; and thus his refusal to worship Satan is stamped as an act of obedience to the law of God. But if this law, though it does not mention Satan, prohibits the worship of Satan, it also prohibits the *worship* of all other creatures, all manner of idolatry.

Ps. 115, 3. 4: *But our God is in the heavens; He hath done whatsoever he hath pleased. Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands.*

This text sets forth the blasphemous perverseness and foolishness of idolaters, who, instead of trusting in God, the almighty Maker of heaven and earth, who from his celestial throne governs the universe, repose their trust and

1) Job 31, 24.

2) Acts 19, 28.

3) Gal. 4, 4.

confidence in what is so far beneath themselves as they are beneath God, idols of silver and gold, the work of their own or other men's hands. This ungodly foolishness is more at length described and derided in the verses following our text,¹⁾ as also in Is. 44, 9—19 and Jer. 10, 3—9. Such foolishness is also practised by those who seek help and succor before the statues or pictures of saints, etc.

Matt. 10, 28: *Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.*

The context shows that these words are specially directed to those who are threatened or afflicted with persecution because of their confession of the Christian faith.²⁾ God is almighty and omniscient; he has numbered the very hair of our heads and promised us his protection,³⁾ while, on the other hand, Christ will deny those who deny him, and he that finds his life by denying him shall lose it⁴⁾ under the just judgment of him who *is able to destroy both soul and body in hell*. On the other hand, our enemies and persecutors are creatures who may, at their utmost, kill the body, and that only with the permission of Him without whom no sparrow falls to the ground.⁵⁾ In view of all this it is evident idolatry to fear the creature instead of fearing the Creator, the Father Almighty, and putting our trust in Him.

Matt. 10, 37: *He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.*

That children should love their parents, and that parents should love their children, is proper according to the will and commandment of God. But filial and parental love is perverted into a sin when it infringes upon the love we owe

1) Ps. 115, 5—8. 2) Matt. 10, 16—39. 3) Matt. 10, 30, 31.

4) Matt. 10, 31, 39.

5) Matt. 10, 29, 30.

our Savior and our God. He is Supreme, over all, God blessed for ever;¹⁾ and hence, to love any inferior being more than God is clearly idolatrous, placing that creature not only beside but even above God. The judgment which Christ pronounces upon such idolaters is, 'They are *not worthy of me*. The meaning of these words appears from the parallel text, Luke 14, 26: If any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother . . . , *he cannot be my disciple*. Christ loved the Father above all things, also above his mother according to the flesh,²⁾ even above his own life,³⁾ and his disciples must do likewise. Hence an idolater cannot be a disciple of Christ; and he who is not with Christ, is against him, an enemy of Christ and under the wrath of God.

Prov. 3, 5: *Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.*

God is the supreme Intelligence. *The Lord by wisdom hath founded the earth; by understanding hath he established the heavens.*⁴⁾ Hence, to lean to our own inferior understanding instead of trusting in the Lord with all our heart is idolatry. As in the previous text God does not prohibit filial and parental love, but its perversion into idolatry, so also here God does not forbid the ordinate *use* of our understanding, but its idolatrous *abuse*.

Jer. 17, 5: *Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord.*

The continuation of this text is, *For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited.*

Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the

1) Rom. 9, 5.

3) John 14, 31.

2) Luke 2, 48. 49.

4) Prov. 3, 19.

*waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.*¹⁾

Here, then, we have two parallel statements, the one beginning with, *Cursed be the man*, and the other with, *Blessed is the man*. The blessing is pronounced on *the man that trusteth in the Lord*, and his blessed state is then described as a state of prosperity such as God only, the Almighty, can give. The curse is, correspondingly, pronounced on him who in his heart *departeth from the Lord* and places his trust in man and his reliance on flesh, making that *his arm*, i. e., his strength,²⁾ and when God in his wrath leaves these idolaters to their gods, their lot is as the prophet describes it, *like the heath in the desert*, etc.

Eph. 5, 5: *For this ye know, that no whoremonger, or unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.*

The statement in point is that the covetous man is an idolater and cannot inherit the kingdom of God. The covetous man, *πλεονέκτης*, is he who craves for MORE *possession* (*πλέον ἔχειν*). The German *habsüchtig* or *habgierig* comes near the Greek word, but does not quite cover it. But why is covetousness, *πλεονεξία*, a species of idolatry? Because the insatiable love which the covetous man bears toward created things is greater love than that which man may bear toward God. For the love of God satisfies the soul, so that having Him the heart will want no more. But the covetous man is never satisfied, but, having much, wants more, and still more, and infinitely more. Thus covetousness, *πλεονεξία*, is in its very nature idolatry, placing silver and gold not only beside, but above God, and justly

1) Jer. 17, 6—8.

2) Cf. Ps. 84, 5: *Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee.*

excludes the covetous from that inheritance of which the Psalmist says, *I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.*¹⁾

Phil. 3, 19: *Whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.*

The form of idolatry here described is, like that of covetousness, largely prevalent in our day, as it was in the days of St. Paul. It is the sin of materialism, of those *who mind earthly things*, who are absorbed in the things of this world; whose maxim is, *Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.*²⁾ Of such the Apostle says, *they serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly,*³⁾ or, in our text, *whose God is their belly.* Man was made *for God,*⁴⁾ and every man should say with St. Paul: *God, whose I am and whom I serve.*⁵⁾ Christ has died for all, *that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them and rose again.*⁶⁾ To live for this world and to serve the belly instead of living unto Christ and God and serving him is, therefore, manifest idolatry, and idolatry of a base kind, whereby the votaries of the belly seek their glory in what is their shame, disgracing themselves in dishonoring God.

Ps. 14, 1: *The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works.*

The denial of God is also a violation of the first commandment, *Thou shalt have no other Gods before me;* for this implies that man should regard and adore as his God the one true God who places at the head of his commandments the statement, *I am the Lord thy God.*⁷⁾ The text calls him who denies the existence of God a *fool*, whose sin is not only ungodly, but also unreasonable, being at variance with the joint testimony of all the creatures of the

1) Ps. 17, 15.

2) 1 Cor. 15, 32.

3) Rom. 16, 18.

4) 1 Cor. 8, 6. *εις αὐτόν.*

5) Acts 27, 23.

6) 2 Cor. 5, 15.

7) Exod. 20, 2. Deut. 5, 6.

universe, the *fool* himself not excepted, whose very existence and nature would be impossible without a Maker of heaven and earth. But the text gives also the reason why such fools deny the existence of God: *They are corrupt; they have done abominable works.* Being wicked, they have an interest in denying the existence of a righteous, holy, and almighty God who will punish their *abominable works*. And this motive, their surpassing love of darkness which prompts them to hate the light¹⁾ again stamps them idolaters.

John 5, 23: *That all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He that honoreth not the Son, honoreth not the Father which hath sent him.*

This text is directed against a species of idolatry also very prevalent in our day, especially in secret societies which perform religious rites and ceremonies, but exclude the worship of Jesus Christ, the Son of God and only Savior of mankind. It will not do to say, "We pray to the Father in the lodge and do not prevent others from praying to the Son without the lodge." *All men* should honor the Son *even as* they honor the Father, and he that does not honor the Son, not only withholds from the Son the honor which is His, but does not truly honor the Father whom he professes to worship. For *whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father.*²⁾ What has he then? An idol, the creature of his own imagination, a false, man-made god no more the true God than any idol of wood or stone.

A. G.

1) John 3, 19. 20.

2) John 2, 23.

(To be continued.)
