

THEOLOGICAL QUARTERLY.

VOL. I.

JULY 1897.

No. 3.

Doctrinal Theology.

BIBLIOLOGY.

(Continued.)

The Author of the Bible is God; not man under God; not man and God; but simply God. The Old Testament Scriptures are "the oracles of *God*."¹⁾ What Moses said in the Pentateuch was "the word of *God*."²⁾ The words of the Psalmist are words which "the *Holy Ghost* saith."³⁾ By that which is written in Jeremiah, the Prophet, "the *Holy Ghost* is a witness to us."⁴⁾ The things that Paul, the Apostle, writes to the Corinthians, "are the commandments of the *Lord*,"⁵⁾ even as what Isaiah wrote was spoken *by* the prophet, but "*of* the *Lord*,"⁶⁾ and *by* the mouth of His servant David, the *Lord God* said what we read in the Psalm.⁷⁾ In short, every part of Scripture is the *word of God* and can not be broken;⁸⁾ and "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God,"⁹⁾ not certain parts of Scripture, of

1) Rom. 3, 2.

2) Mark 7, 10. 13.

3) Heb. 3, 7. coll. Ps. 95, 7. 8.

4) Heb. 10, 15. 16. Cf. Jer. 31, 33. f.

5) 1 Cor. 14, 37.

6) Matt. 1, 22: τὸ ρηθὲν ἐπὶ κυρίου διὰ τοῦ προφήτου. Cf. Is. 7, 14.

7) Acts 4, 24 f. coll. Ps. 2, 1. 2.

8) John 10, 34. 35. coll. Ps. 82, 6.

9) 2 Tim. 3, 16.

Historical Theology.

THE MALUM PIETISTICUM IN SPENER'S "PIA DESIDERIA."

Pietism is largely looked upon as a sanitary movement, as an effort to cure the church of certain ailments which not only impaired its well-being, but endangered the very life of the body ecclesiastic. This was certainly what the leaders of the movement themselves and their followers professed. Spener, the father of Pietism in Lutheran Germany, when he published what may be termed the program of the campaign, his *Pia Desideria*¹⁾, divided his treatise into two chief parts, the first comprising a series of grievances or complaints, the other, a series of recommendations—complaints as to the deplorable state of the church, and recommendations of certain measures and means whereby the diseased and debilitated church might be healed and invigorated.

Now, this conception of Pietism is not necessarily tantamount to a justification of the pietistic movement, even if we concede, as we do, that the Pietists were not concerned about curing a healthy subject, but that the church was indeed affected with certain ailments crying for a cure. Not every drug is a remedy, and what may be intended for a cure may be worse than the disease. But we are not ready to admit that Pietism was really a curative process, but hold that it was itself a disease, a most insidious malady, very rightly diagnosed by Loescher as *malum pietisticum*. The symptoms of this disease are not to be sought in the various and frequent excesses about the hearthstones of Pietism, as at Halberstadt, Giessen, Hamburg, Lueneburg;

1) First printed as a preface to Arnd's Postil in 1675 and republished in a separate edition in the same year.

they did not appear in the course of its development, perhaps abnormal development under unfavorable local circumstances or personal influences; but the *malum pietisticum* is clearly discernible from its very beginning, even in Spener and the *Pia Desideria*.

It is not our purpose to give a complete and exhaustive analysis of the *Pia Desideria*. Much of what Spener here says was eminently pertinent and timely, evincing a deep concern for the welfare of the church. But in justice to the church of those days two things must not be concealed. The first is that Spener has unduly exaggerated when he made such statements as that the "spiritual estate," the ministry, was "totally depraved"¹⁾ in his day. This was not true, Spener himself being in evidence to the contrary together with hundreds of worthy ministers among his contemporaries, who with all faithfulness performed their ministerial duties. In the second place we must bear in mind that what Spener laid to the burden of the church was not said or to be understood as with reference to congregations as we have them in America to-day, but with reference to the entire populations of cities and country districts, to society at large, every member of which was in those days looked upon as in connection with the parish within the territory of which he or she resided, and under the spiritual care of the pastor or pastors of such territory or parish. What would the record of our city congregations be if the religious life of the entire wards within which their churches are located were to be made the standard whereby to estimate the spiritual state of the congregations worshipping in those churches? That after the ravages of the Thirty Years' War, when millions had been born and had grown into manhood and womanhood without ever having known what peace is, when wide territories had been economically and socially and ecclesiastically devastated, not once, but

1) "ganz verderbt."

repeatedly, not for months, but for years and decades of years, there should still be a Lutheran church ministered to by thousands of orthodox preachers was itself a testimonial of the powerful hold which the Gospel of Christ had obtained upon the masses of the people in earlier days of greater prosperity. And besides, those very years and decades of incessant warfare with its untold miseries had yielded a harvest of theological produce so rich and multiform, that the age of Pietism can in no wise offer an equivalent. Pietistic theology has nothing to boast of which will outweigh such works as those of Leyser, Gerhard, Quenstedt, Balduin, Calov, Huelsemann, Meisner, Seb. Schmid, Dannhauer, and others, some of whom had been Spener's teachers in theology.

But Spener had yielded to other influences. He had been at Basel and Geneva, and that climate had impaired his theological health. In a letter written from Geneva he praises the organization of the reformed church, and Labadie so impressed him that he translated the *manuel de prière* of that enthusiast into German. Here his distaste for religious controversies and his inclination toward new measures were engendered. Spener, it must be said, was not thoroughly and consistently loyal to the Lutheran church. Though he was not conscious of having in any point of doctrine deviated from the Lutheran Symbols, and for himself would continue to receive and maintain them *because—quia*—they are in harmony with the word of God, he would not condemn the practice of permitting a subscription of the Confessions "as far as"—*quatenus*—they agreed with the divine word. He could never be prevailed upon to repudiate such writings as those of the wayward shoemaker, Jacob Boehme, the ranting chiliast Petersen, and other fanatics of like or similar stripe, and the bitter enemy of all orthodoxy and panegyrist of the heretics of all ages, Gottfried Arnold, was his "dear brother." While he has not a word of complaint for the

fanatical, rationalistic and syncretistic leaven which had been or was being smuggled into the Lutheran church, he speaks of the needfulness of a reformation in the Lutheran ministry and complains loudly of the undue weight laid upon religious controversies and of the theological subtleties which he sets down as "wood, hay, and stubble" built upon the fundament of faith.

This is also the Spener of the *Pia Desideria*. Speaking of the defects of the ministry, he says: "Now, in the opinion of many, all is supremely well, if we but know how to meet the errors of the other side, without taking thought for the fruits of those articles of faith which we have in common with them."¹)

"It seems needful that all theologians should be reminded several times in the year that the study of theology is not to be sought so much in quarrelsome disputes, as in the practice of godliness."²)

"We cannot deny that, although by the grace of God the pure doctrine of the word of God still remains with us, much that is foreign, useless, and rather savoring after the wisdom of the world is being gradually here and there introduced into theology."³)

Having quoted the warnings of St. Paul, 1 Tim. 1, 4—7; 6, 3—5; Col. 2, 8; he adds: "If a mind is filled up with a theology which, though it retains the fundament of faith from Scripture, has built upon it so much of wood, hay, and stubble, of human curiosity, that the gold is scarcely any longer visible, it becomes exceedingly difficult to comprehend and cherish the simplicity of Christ and his doctrine."⁴)

And further he quotes 1 Cor. 2, 4 and adds: "Yea, we may well say that the highly enlightened apostle, if he

1) Dr. Philipp Jacob Spener's *Pia Desideria*, Leipzig, Koehlersche Verlagshandlung, pp. 22 f.

2) *Ibid.* p. 24.

3) *Ibid.* p. 24.

4) *Ibid.* pp. 27 f.

now came among us, would not understand many things which such curious minds sometimes produce in holy places." 1)

In all this, Spener is not censuring such doctrinal aberrations as those of Weigel, Arnd and their like, or the syncretistic and synergistic theology of Helmstedt and Koenigsberg, but the polemic theology of his orthodox contemporaries who where, though not always wisely and without reproach, yet honestly and zealously intent upon maintaining the good inheritance of the Lutheran church, the purity of doctrine, and it is a gross abuse of Scripture when Spener quotes the texts adduced by him for the purpose he has in mind. Besides, Spener is very careful not to specify any particular point which he deems foreign and useless, wood, hay, and stubble. In fact, he had no special point to mention in this connection. Pietism was a reaction against orthodoxy itself, its theory and practice. Its animus was to make doctrine of secondary and life of first importance in the church. And this was one feature of the *malum pietisticum*, a malady so fearfully destructive that when Pietism had run its course, the days of orthodox Lutheranism were over and past, and rationalism sat enthroned in the high seat of pietistic theology, the university of Halle.

Between the five chapters of grievances and the series of recommendations comprised in the *Pia Desideria*, we find a chapter entitled: "Of the hope of a better state of the church," and if Spener had been looking about for some specimens of wood, hay, and stubble, he might have found them by carefully reading over this chapter of his treatise. He says:

"If we look into holy Scripture, we may not doubt that God has promised a better state of the church here on earth. We have, first of all, the glorious prophecy of St. Paul, the Apostle, Rom. 11, 25—26, according to which, the fulness

1) Ibid. p. 29.

of the Gentiles having come in, *all Israel shall be saved*. So, then, though not *all*, yet a perceptibly great part, of the Jews, hitherto so obdurate, shall be converted to the Lord. The same is, if we but rightly inquire into them, also indicated by many passages in the Prophets (Hos. 3, 4. 5). . . . Although we do not conceal that, with our Luther, some of our prominent Doctors have doubted that such was the meaning of Paul . . ., yet we cannot permit ourselves to be driven from the letter of the text," etc. — This is both the language and the practice of our modern chiliasts, who tell us over and over that they adhere to the text, taking it as it stands, while in fact they dream in the very face of both text and context, just as Spener here does not hesitate to substitute "a perceptibly great part" for Paul's "*all Israel*,"¹⁾ and then declares he will not be "driven from the letter."

Spener continues: "We have, next to this, to expect a still greater fall of papal Rome. For though our sainted Doctor Luther has given it a perceptible thrust, yet its spiritual power is far too great to permit us to say that the prophecy, Rev. 18 and 19, is wholly fulfilled . . .

"If, now, these two things shall ensue, I do not see how it may be doubted that the entire true church will enter into a far more blissful and glorious state than it now holds. For if the Jews are to be converted, the true church must either already be in a holier state than it now is, in order that the holy life of its members may at the same time become a means of the conversion of those people, at least that the obstacles which have coexisted in the offenses hitherto existing have been removed; or, if God should otherwise by his power, in a manner yet seeming impossible to us at present, convert them, it is, again, not conceivable that the example of a people recently converted (in which the same zeal which was witnessed in the first Christians

1) πᾶς Ἰσραὴλ, Rom. 11, 26.

converted from the Gentiles shall doubtless appear), should not bring about a perceptible change and improvement in our church."¹⁾

This is enthusiasm pure and simple. We hold that the Gospel of Christ is the means, and the only means, whereby a sinner may be converted, be he Jew or Gentile. Spener looks forward to the conversion of the Jews on a large scale, and for the realization of his hope, the preaching of the gospel is not sufficient in his estimation; he knows of but two ways by which this great purpose of God may be achieved: the church *must* either be in a holier state, in order that the *holy life* of the Christians should be a means of converting the Jews, or, an assumption which is even worse, God will convert them "in a manner yet seeming impossible to us."

This, then, is a second trait of the *malum pietisticum*; it is enthusiastic ab initio, looking about for substitutes for that by which alone God has promised to work whatever his power and grace would bring about in the hearts of men toward their salvation, the word of God. And thus it was not by accident that the pietistic movement has led to a multitude of fanatical excesses, not intended, of course, by Spener and other leaders, but naturally growing as fanatical fruits from an enthusiastic tree.

Having expressed his complaints and hopes, Spener proceeds to submit certain recommendations, by the execution of which he thinks the defects of the church may be remedied and its state elevated to greater prosperity.

"First of all," he says, "we should have a care to introduce the word of God among ourselves more abundantly. We know that by nature we have no good thing within us, but that, if anything should be in us, God must work it in us; and thereunto the word is the efficient means. . . . Now it might seem that the word of God already dwelled among

1) Ibid. pp. 50 f.

us as richly as it ought, since in various places it is daily, in others quite frequently, preached from the pulpit. But by mature meditation on this subject we shall all find in this matter much more that is needful. I do not by any means reject the preaching of sermons, whereby the Christian congregation is to be instructed from a certain stated text and its explanation, as I do in my sermons. But I do not find this sufficient."¹⁾ He then proceeds to recommend daily Bible reading in the families, public cursory reading of the Bible with brief summaries, religious meetings for mutual edification, where the laymen of the congregation might give utterance to their thoughts on spiritual matters, propose questions on texts from the Scriptures to be answered by the preachers or more advanced laymen, the whole being under the management and supervision of the called ministers. But these conferences were not in Spener's mind as meetings of the entire congregations. He says: "At certain times, several of the ministry—in places where there are several ministers—or, under the guidance of the preacher, several others of the congregation, whom God has gifted with a fair amount of knowledge, or who may be desirous of increased understanding, might meet" for the purposes and exercises already mentioned. This measure Spener himself declares the most important, and when we remember that public preaching had by no means fallen into desuetude, but was very extensively practiced and very largely and regularly attended in Spener's day as it had been for generations, it is plain that, if the state of the church had nevertheless become so deplorable as Spener considered it, the measures recommended by him beside public preaching as thitherto practiced must have been in his estimation precisely those which were to bring about what public preaching had proved insufficient to secure. Not the word of God itself and its use, but the *modes* and

1) Ibid. pp. 61 f.

methods of its use and application, and chief among them a measure not designated for the entire congregations or for those members who were most in need of spiritual instruction, but for a select, advanced element *within* the congregation, an *ecclesiola in ecclesia*, were even in this first recommendation foremost in Spener's mind as he contemplated a "reformation" of the church. And thus we are here again confronted by that enthusiastic, fanatical trait in Spener's theology, the spirit of those who seek to build and spiritually benefit the church not simply by the word, in whatever manner employed, nor chiefly by its public preaching through the Christian ministry instituted by the Head of the church, but by self-contrived measures and methods like the *collegia pietatis* introduced by Spener and imitated by the pietists of his following.

The *second* measure recommended in the *Pia Desideria* is the "establishment and diligent exercise of the spiritual priesthood," according to which it is "every Christian's duty not only to offer up himself and what is in him, prayer, thanksgiving, good works, alms, etc., but also sedulously to study the word of the Lord, to teach, admonish, convert, and edify others, especially those of his own house, according to the grace given unto him, to observe their life, to pray for all of them and take thought for their salvation according to his ability." And here, too, Spener's tendency toward singling out the select few asserts itself. He says: "For my humble part, I am fully convinced that if in each congregation several persons might be induced to apply themselves to these two things, the diligent use of the word of God and exercise of their priestly duties, as in other respects, so also and chiefly in fraternal admonition and reproof . . ., much would be achieved and gained, so that by and by more and more might be gained, and finally the church might be perceptibly bettered."¹) But the trouble

1) Ibid. p. 74.

was that the betterment of the "church" would not ensue under the pietistic mildew which would substitute its methodism for the simple "diligent use of the word and exercise of priestly duties."

The *third* measure recommended in the *Pia Desideria* is diligently to inculcate the truth "that Christianity does not consist in *knowing* but in *doing*." Spener might have said that it is not a historical knowledge of the *credenda*, but true and living *faith*, which makes a Christian. But this is not what he says or means to say. What he would inculcate is not faith, but *love*. "Especially," he says, "our dear Savior has repeatedly commended *love* as the true criterion of discipleship."¹) Spener does not utterly ignore the connection between faith and love. He says: "Certainly the entire life of a believer, who is saved through faith, and his fulfillment of the commandments of God, consists in love." But what he emphasizes is not faith, but love. "If we, therefore," he continues, "succeed in exciting and putting into practice a fervent love among our Christians, . . . nearly all that we desire has been achieved." And here, again, his methodism crops out. He again looks toward his selectmen, "who have now earnestly purposed to walk in the ways of the Lord," and recommends that they maintain "intimate friendship with their confessor or some other discreet, enlightened Christian, and always give account to him of their life, of the opportunities they have had for exercising Christian love, and of their use or neglect thereof, in order that, having explored wherein they be still wanting, they may in every case obtain advice and instruction, firmly determined in every case to heed such advice, unless it were distinctly in opposition to the will of God."²)

Spener's *fourth* recommendation concerns the proper conduct in religious controversies. He contends, first, that

1) Ibid. p. 75.

2) Ibid. p. 77.

not all manner of disputation is beneficial, but that only which is free from carnal affections; and, secondly, that disputation, also if rightly carried on, is not the only way and means of maintaining the truth. He says: "In order that the glory of God may be promoted, it is necessary that the scope of disputation should be such, that the opposing party may be thereby converted, and that we may be willing to apply the vindicated truth toward due gratitude and holy obedience to God. The *convictio intellectus*, or conviction of the truth, is far from being faith; but hereunto more is required. It is necessary that there be a purpose to add what more is needful, that the erring one may be converted, and to remove what may prevent him therefrom, and first of all the desire afterwards to apply in ourselves and others all that we may learn toward the greater glory of God, and to serve him in such light."¹⁾ Here we have the same Spener as before. The truth, convincingly asserted, so as to produce a *convictio intellectus*, is again not sufficient to gain over those upon whom it is brought to bear in religious controversies; it is the subjective attitude of the orthodox disputant, his charitable desire to win his opponent, whereby, according to Spener, the objective truth must be complemented in order that the opponent may be "converted." Spener fails to see or to remember that in religious controversy as well as elsewhere the truth of God, and that only, is the power of God whereby the gainsayer may be convinced,²⁾ while all else may only serve as pedagogy to induce the opponent or unbeliever to pay attention to the arguments advanced from the word of truth instead of refusing even to hear and ponder that which bears with it that power of spiritual enlightenment and conviction which God alone can work in a heart benighted by falsehood and error.

1) Ibid. p. 82.

2) Tit. 1, 9: "That he may be able *by sound doctrine* both to exhort and to convince the gainsayer."

The *fifth* recommendation of the *Pia Desideria* concerns "the education of preachers in schools and universities." Here Spener says: "We are so constituted that by example as much is effected in us as by doctrine itself, and sometimes even more. Gregory Nazianzen says, that Basil's word and doctrine was (in power) as thunder, because his life was as lightning." Now, Gregory does not say this. He says: *Βροντὴ σέιο λόγος, ἀστεροπὴ δὲ βίος*,¹⁾ *his word was thunder, but his life, lightning*; the causal conjunction is of Spener's own making. But such is Spener; *our* example is to him of equal importance with God's doctrine, or even more efficacious "than doctrine itself." We hear him say further on: "The students should be unceasingly instructed that a godly life is no less important than their diligence and study, yea, that the latter is of no value without the former. The words of old Justin should be always in their thoughts: 'Our religion does not consist in words, but in deeds;'²⁾ and this he had learned of St. Paul (1 Cor. 4, 20). 'The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power.'"³⁾ Here again Spener misapplies Scripture; for the "word" whereof Paul here speaks is not the divine word of sound doctrine, but the mere verbal profession of those who are "puffed up,"⁴⁾ while they lack the truth in Jesus.⁵⁾ It is, likewise, a perversion of the true import of the terms when he says: "Since theology is *habitus practicus*, everything must be directed to the practice of faith and life;"⁶⁾ for the "practice" to which theology should be directed is first of all the practice of doctrine, the exposition and application of the word of God, and important as the life and subjective faith of the preacher most certainly is, it is not of chief importance, as Spener would make it.

1) Epitaph. Basil., vers. 40.

2) Here also Justin is not precisely quoted. He says: *Ὁὐ γὰρ τοὺς μόνον λέγοντας, ἀλλὰ τοὺς καὶ τὰ ἔργα πράττοντας, σωθήσεσθαι ἔφη.* Apol. I, 16.

3) Ibid. p. 87.

4) 1 Cor. 4, 19.

5) Eph. 4, 21.

6) p. 88.

But what are we to say when, in the course of this "recommendation" Spener even goes to the length of advising the educators of future ministers to place into the hands of their students such books as the "German Theology," which Luther republished and prefaced in 1516, the writings of the Dominican Tauler, and Thomas a Kempis' "*de imitatione Christi*"? When Luther recommended the "German Theology" and the works of Tauler, it was in the joy of his heart at having found books which, though contaminated with papistical errors and an unsound mysticism, yet spoke to the reader of sin and grace and communion with God, and that in the German tongue, at a time of universal poverty and famine, before the work of the Reformation had been thought of even by the Reformer himself, when the rich harvest of that summer of grace had not even yielded its first fruits. And Thomas a Kempis! Of the "Imitation of Christ," Dean Milman has fitly said: "It is absolutely and entirely selfish in its aim, as in its acts. Its sole, single, exclusive object is the purification, the elevation of the individual soul, of the man absolutely isolated from his kind, of the man dwelling alone in the solitude, the hermitage of his own thoughts; with no fears or hopes, no sympathies of our common nature: he has absolutely withdrawn and secluded himself not only from the cares, the sins, the trials, but from the duties, the connections, the moral and religious fate of the world. Never was misnomer so glaring, if justly considered, as the title of the book, the 'Imitation of Christ.' That which distinguishes Christ, that which distinguishes Christ's Apostles, that which distinguishes Christ's religion—the Love of Man—is entirely and absolutely left out. Had this been the whole of Christianity, our Lord himself (with reverence be it said) had lived, like an Essene, working out or displaying his own sinless perfection by the Dead Sea: neither on the Mount, nor in the Temple, nor even on the Cross. The Apostles had dwelt entirely on the internal emotions

of their own souls, each by himself, St. Peter still by the Lake of Gennesareth, St. Paul in the desert of Arabia, St. John in Patmos. . . . The 'Imitation of Christ' begins in self—terminates in self. 'He went about doing good,' is wanting in the monastic gospel of this pious zealot. Of feeding the hungry, of clothing the naked, of visiting the prisoner, even of preaching, there is profound, total silence. . . . Christianity, to be herself again, must not merely shake off indignantly the barbarism, the vices, but even the virtues of the Mediaeval, of Monastic, of Latin Christianity.'¹⁾—And here we have a Lutheran theologian, living amidst an abundance of printed wealth amassed and accumulated from the days of Luther to those of Gerhard, and pure as gold from the crucible, a theologian contemplating a reformation of the Lutheran church and recommending this *testimonium paupertatis* of mediaeval popery to the young theologians whom he would see better prepared for work in the Lutheran church! But it is not by chance that the father of Pietism should laud and recommend another perversion Christianity. Pietism is also a species of selfishness, though not in the manner and degree of that isolated piety of the recluse shaped after the model of Thomas a Kempis. The pietist looked about for those who, like himself, aspired to a more exquisite form of godliness than that attained by the "crowd," the common Christian living on the common fare of the congregation as offered forth in the sermons of public worship by the common preachers; he craved for edification of a more congenial stamp, bearing the imprint of an *ecclesiola*, the enjoyment of which was an advantage and prerogative of a spiritual nobility of which we have found various indications in the *Pia Desideria*. The animus of the Pietist was not so much to draw and elevate the masses of Christians to his own superior level or what he considered such, but rather to come out of the

1) History of Latin Christianity, vol. VIII, pp. 300 f.

throng and withdraw with the preferred few to the privacy and seclusion of the *collegium pietatis* with its peculiar methods and means of spiritual advancement and enjoyment. Pietism is here again what it is *ab ovo*, enthusiasm, substituting piety, and not a sound, wholesome, God-given, but an unsound, self-made piety, for the word and sacraments, the means of grace entrusted to the church at large and to every local congregation for the conversion of sinners, the upbuilding of the church, and the edification of all its members. And thus the progress from Pietism to Rationalism was but a shifting from one form of enthusiasm to another, from emotional to intellectual enthusiasm. It was not at all by chance that the same orthodox Loescher who had written the *Timotheus Verinus* against Pietism should have to raise his warning voice against the theologizing philosophy of Leibnitz and Wolff in his papers entitled, *Quo ruitis?*, "*Whither are ye rushing?*" and that, what had been the chief stronghold of Pietism, Halle, should be turned into the first stronghold of rationalistic theology in Germany.

A. G.

RANDOM PASSAGES FROM PASCAL.

One can not read the brief account of the life of Blaise Pascal (1623-'62) by his sister without deeply regretting that his austere life, self-inflicted torture, and weak constitution hurried on the death of that extraordinary man at an age when his great intellectual force had matured and when he was laboring under torments to compose a great work on the evidences of the Christian religion. He never finished it or even approached the arrangement of the stray papers which were afterwards published as his "*Pensées.*" Had he lived longer, and had his health been better, it is not improbable that instead of the profound fragments left us we