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Doctrinal Theology.

CHRISTOLOGY

Christology is the doctrine of the holy Scriptures concerning the Person and the Office and Work of Christ, the Redeemer and Savior of mankind. The doctrine of Christ is not a product of human speculation, or of a process of evolution from the consciousness of the church. *Search the Scriptures*, says Christ, *for they are they which testify of me,*¹⁾ and the risen Lord himself taught his disciples from the same source; *beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.*²⁾ Christ is also the central subject of the New Testament. *The Gospels were written, that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ.*³⁾ The modern distinction between the historical Christ and the Christ of Scripture is a delusion. The Christ of Moses and the prophets, the apostles and evangelists, and no other, is the historic Christ, that was, and is, and shall be. All other Christs, the Christs of Ebionites and Docetists, of Gnostics and Manichaeans, of Nestorians and Eutychians and Apollinarians, of Monophysites and Monothelites, of Socinians and other Unitarians, of Schleiermacher and Strauss and Schenkel and Renan, are caricatures or fictions,

1) John 5, 39.

2) Luke 24, 27.

3) John 20, 31.

transgressors. Christ's Passion, the yielding up of His soul to voluntary death, the shame He bore while He was counted with the transgressors, the intercession He makes for the sinners, are the source and fountainhead of all bliss and happiness which the true believers enjoy even now, and of all blessedness and glory, great beyond all expectation, which they shall enjoy in all eternity, and no knowledge, no wisdom in all the world should be dearer and more precious to us, to the preachers as well as to the hearers of the word, than that which Isaiah teaches in his 53d chapter.

J. HOENESS.

AN APOSTOLIC LESSON IN CHRISTIAN ETHICS.

1 PET. 2, 11—20.

(Epistolary Lesson for the Third Sunday after Easter.)

The apostle Peter addresses his First Epistle "to the *strangers* scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, *elect* according to the foreknowledge of God." (1, 1. 2.)

These Christians are styled "strangers," "elect strangers." *Strangers* they were because they lived scattered in various countries of the Gentiles. They were strangers in a strange land. The principal reason, however, why the apostle applied this name to them was because they still lived in the world. Christians, all true Christians, are strangers and pilgrims, so Scripture describes them.

As strangers these Christians of Asia Minor were despised, hated, and oftentimes persecuted by the Gentiles. Theirs was not an enviable lot. But they were *elect* strangers, chosen out of the *massa perditionis* by God to be His own. Hence, though they were *strangers* and therefore hated by men, they were *elect* strangers, highly honored of God. That was a strong consolation on their miserable pilgrimage.

The peculiarly lofty dignity of these Christians the apostle describes thus: "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light: which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy." (2, 9. 10.)

Then follows our lesson beginning with the earnest exhortation: "Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul." (V. 11.)

What is the connection of this admonition with the previous context? You are Christians, you have been called from darkness to light, you are strangers and pilgrims in this world, therefore prove by your walk that you really believe that you are pilgrims wandering towards the Celestial City. Make it manifest by your conversation that this earth is indeed a strange land unto you. (V. 11.)

He tells them furthermore that one purpose of leading an honest conversation should be to win others for Christ (v. 12) and in the succeeding verses he teaches them how to discharge their duties in the various stations of life.

V. 11: Ἀγαπητοί, παρακαλῶ ὡς παροίκους καὶ παρεπιδήμους, ἀπέχεσθε τῶν σαρκικῶν ἐπιθυμιῶν, αἵτινες στρατεύονται κατὰ τῆς ψυχῆς.

"Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul."

In order to make the exhortation all the more impressive the apostle assures his readers of his love by addressing them: "*Dearly beloved.*" Peter would say, "Love for your immortal souls impels me to administer the subsequent admonition. It is your best interests that I have in view." And the wise pastor who loves the flock over

which he has been made overseer will learn from the apostle, imitate his example, and frequently assure his parishioners of the fact that though he may have to say things seemingly harsh, love for their eternal welfare prompts him to do so. He will speak the truth in love. "*I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims.*" All true Christians are strangers and pilgrims in this world. Heaven is their home; the goal of their pilgrimage is that "inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away." (1, 4.) "Hear my prayer, O Lord," says David, Ps. 39, 12, "and give ear unto my cry; hold not thy peace at my tears: for I am a stranger with thee and a sojourner, as all my fathers were." And in Hebrews 11, speaking of the saints of the Old Testament, we read: "They confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city." (Vv. 13—16.)

Such being the character of the Christians it behooves them to keep aloof from those things that belong to the world. An American citizen sojourning in a foreign country should so conduct himself as not to cast reproach upon his native country. A Christian, who is a "fellow-citizen of the saints" (Eph. 2, 19), should so walk in this world as to do credit to Christ and His Church. "Give none offense," says St. Paul, "neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God." Therefore the Apostle says:

"*Abstain from fleshly lusts.*" These ἐπιθυμῖαι, desires, lusts, are called fleshly σαρκικαί, because they have their seat in the flesh, in the σάρξ, the sinful, depraved nature of man. They comprise not only the gross transgressions of the sixth commandment but also many sins which reason may not account sin, as, for instance, unbelief, distrust, despair,

hatred and contempt of God, idolatry, etc. From these fleshly lusts the Christian pilgrim is to abstain; he is to fight against them, to suppress them by the power of God. Christians only can be thus admonished. Natural man finds his home, his heaven, here upon earth. With him fleshly lusts are the ruling principle. St. Paul, writing to the Ephesians, says: "Among whom" (the heathen) "also we all had our conversation in times past in the lust of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." The nature, the condition of man, is evil and from it results a corresponding evil conduct. Natural man is dead in trespasses and sin. He is altogether flesh. He knows of no higher delight than to fulfill the desires of the flesh. He is a slave and stands under the sway of the flesh. The Christian, however, has been freed from the dominion of the flesh. He still has the *σάρξ*, the flesh, and therefore will be assailed by fleshly lusts; but through the power of the Spirit, through the power of God, he suppresses them and abstains therefrom. He is no longer a debtor to the flesh, to live after the flesh, but through the Spirit mortifies the deeds of the body. (Rom. 8, 12. 13.)

The Christian pilgrim hears strains of the siren's song of the world, he feels inclined to halt and listen to the alluring but illusive music, he reminds himself, however, of his true character as a stranger and pilgrim, and abstains from fleshly lusts. If the flesh broods vengeance over some real or imaginary wrong, if bitter words come to the lips with which to hurt his neighbor, he bridles his tongue and thus abstains from fleshly lusts. And though at times he is allured into bypaths, he does not allow the flesh to dominate over him, and through the mercy of God his feet are set aright on the paths of righteousness. Daily he learns to pray more fervently: "Lead us not into temptation."

Oh, an earnest admonition this: "*Abstain from fleshly lusts.*" Why? Peter adduces the reason: "*They war*

against the soul." War presupposes enemies. The enemies lined up in battle array are the fleshly lusts, and the soul, this priceless jewel, is the object for which they are contending. If you do not abstain from fleshly lusts, says the apostle, the latter are victorious, your soul is lost! And that we are in great danger of losing the soul we perceive from the impressive earnestness of the exhortation: "I beseech you, abstain from fleshly lusts." Therefore,

"My soul, be on thy guard;
 Ten thousand foes arise,
 And hosts of sin are pressing hard
 To draw thee from the skies.
 O watch, and fight, and pray,
 The battle ne'er give o'er;
 Renew it boldly every day
 And help divine implore."

V. 12: Τὴν ἀναστροφὴν ὑμῶν ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν ἔχοντες καλήν, ἵνα ἐν ᾧ καταλαλοῦσιν ὑμῶν ὡς κακοποιῶν, ἐκ τῶν καλῶν ἔργων ἐποπτεύσαντες δοξάσωσιν τὸν θεὸν ἐν ἡμέρᾳ ἐπισκοπῆς.

"Having your manner of life good among the Gentiles that in the matter in which they speak against you as evil-doers, they may through your good works which they have seen, glorify God in the day of visitation."

In this verse the apostle approaches the central thought of the entire section. In order to follow the admonition therein contained what was said in the preceding verse formed the necessary condition. Now just what does the apostle here say? Is the meaning simply this that they should adorn their profession by a walk in sanctification? That too is included. But to a walk in the newness of life the apostle had previously admonished them. He had exhorted them, e. g., "to show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness to his marvelous light." Here an entirely new thought finds expression. Peter does not merely say: "Have your conversation honest," but he adds the significant words: "among the Gentiles." So,

then, says the apostle, they should pay particular attention to that phase of their mode of life which was patent to the heathen, which would appear good in their eyes, of which the Gentiles could judge whether it be good or evil. In these matters they ought be exceedingly careful not to give offense. What purpose should they have in view? "*That they (the heathen) may glorify God.*" So, then, the ultimate object to be attained by their good conversation was the conversion of the heathen. Conversion is the work of God alone. It is wrought through the Word. But the good works of the Christians testify of the change of heart wrought in the Christians by the Spirit through the Word. They are an object sermon. They testify of faith, of Christ. The Christians preach the Gospel and lead a holy life according to it. The heathen, the non-Christians, do not read the Bible, but they read the life of the Christians. Perceiving their holy conversation they are constrained to confess: We cannot live as the Christians do. Thus they may be induced to inquire after the source of this good mode of life. Its source is faith. Upon further reflection they perceive that this faith is generated by the Word of God. This may impel them to hear the Word of God, and, coming under the all-powerful influence of the Word, God generates faith in them where and when it pleaseth Him. Thus the matter which at first seemed to give the heathen ground for reviling the Christians became the ground of glorifying God "in the day of visitation."

As the text indicates the Christians were spoken against as *evil-doers*. How did that come about? The Christians spoke of Christ, their King. The heathen, ignorant of the Christian religion, reasoned: The Christians acknowledging Christ as their King deny obedience to our king, to our emperor: they are evil-doers. The Christians spoke of a kingdom to which they belonged, so the heathen concluded: They are opposed to our government; they are evil-doers. Again, the Christians would not bow their knees to the idols

of the heathen, nor would they worship the statues of the emperor. And again the heathen concluded: "These Christians despise our religion and our emperor. This whole Christian religion is rebellion!"

How should they conduct themselves over against such and similar calumnies? "Have your manner of life as one good among the Gentiles that in the matter in which they speak against you as evil-doers they may see your works." In those matters in which they revile you as evil-doers, prove by your walk that they lie. Finally the truth will be victorious. They will see that it was simply owing to their ignorance that they jumped at conclusions and spread false reports concerning you. If, for example, they say the Christian religion is rebellion, prove by your mode of life that you are law-abiding citizens (cf. vv. 13—15). Constrain them to confess, if not publicly, still tacitly: It is true, these Christians speak of Christ as their King, and of the kingdom of Christ, but they are not opposed to our government. They do not bow to our idols, it is true, but nevertheless they are faithful subjects of the crown.

And the Christian servants (vv. 18 ff.) were to lead an honest conversation among the Gentiles by being obedient also to the froward masters, so that the heathen would be compelled to say: They are not evil-doers but the best of servants. Thus the heathen would be led to see the error of their ways, and what was at first a ground for evil-speaking might become the cause of giving glory to God "in the day of visitation." That is one purpose of the good works of the Christians: to win others for Christ. In the Sermon on the Mount the Lord says, Matt. 5, 16: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

Luther says: "Observe the fine order St. Peter maintains. He has taught us what we must do to suppress the flesh and all its lusts; now he also teaches why this should be done. Why shall I suppress my flesh? In order

to be saved? No, but in order to lead an honest conversation before the world. The good mode of life does not make us pious before God, but we must be pious previously and believe before we can begin to lead a godly life. Therefore I should not lead an honest conversation to atone for sin and merit salvation, but in order that the heathen might be bettered and incited through us to come to Christ (which is a work of true love). They slander and revile us and account us the greatest knaves; therefore we should lead such a seemly conversation as to constrain them to confess: 'We can find no fault with them.'" (St. L. ed., IX, p. 1196.)

What the apostle writes to the Christians of Asia Minor is applicable also to the Christians of to-day. We belong to that "sect that everywhere is spoken against" (Acts 28, 22). "Sanctimonious people," "hypocrites," are epithets applied to the Christians by the unbelievers. In periodicals, in books, from the rostrum, and from behind the beer-glass, the scoffers vent their venom upon Christ and Christianity. And if perchance they know of one black sheep in the fold, this is reason enough to condemn the whole flock. One Judas casts reproach upon all disciples of Christ.

These vilifications will never entirely cease. Like master, like servant. Even He who could boldly challenge His adversaries, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" (John 8, 46) was He not decried as "a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners"?' (Matt. 11, 19.) Small wonder if we suffer likewise. Nevertheless we should earnestly strive to have our "manner of life good among the Gentiles," and thus put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. The godly life of the followers of Christ is a powerful object sermon for those without, which may bear wonderful results. The cock's crow reminded Peter of his deep fall and brought tears of repentance to his eyes. God oftentimes employs insignificant means to bring about great re-

sults. The good works of the Christians may oftentimes be the reason which ultimately induces unbelievers to embrace Christianity.

Ours is a materialistic age. The idol before whose shrine everybody is supposed to worship is "the almighty dollar." "Make money," is the motto of the non-Christians. Make money by hook or crook, by means fair or foul, just so you escape the clutches of the law. What shall we eat? What shall we drink? Wherewithal shall we be clothed?—after these things do the Gentiles seek. Christian pilgrims, know your calling! On the way to the heavenly Canaan do not be misled to bow to this golden calf. Have your conversation honest among the Gentiles. Prove by your walk that you really believe that He who clothes the lilies and the grass of the field will also provide for you.

Again, our age is an age of revelry, debauchery, and uncleanness. Know your calling, Christian pilgrims, and "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." (Eph. 5, 11.) In short, we should so conduct ourselves that the words of the apostle may be applied to us: "They think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot" (1 Pet. 4, 4).

Vv. 13. 14: *ὑποτάγητε οὖν πάσῃ ἀνθρωπίνῃ κτίσει διὰ τὸν κύριον, εἴτε βασιλεῖ, ὡς ὑπερέχοντι, εἴτε ἡγεμόσιν, ὡς δι' αὐτοῦ πεμπόμενοι εἰς ἐκδίκησιν κακοποιῶν, ἔπαινον δὲ ἀγαθοποιῶν.*

"Submit yourselves therefore to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well."

The general exhortation contained in vv. 11. 12 are now specialized. Strangers and pilgrims ought to conform to the usages and customs of those countries through which their pilgrimage leads them if they be not contrary to the

Word of God. In the world through which the Christian pilgrims wander there are ordinances, institutions, which are good and laudable. And by conforming themselves thereto the Christians "have their conversation honest among the Gentiles." This is the connection in thought between the general and the special exhortations, as may be seen from the little word *οὕτως*, *therefore*, of v. 13.

"Submit yourselves," says the apostle. So submission, subjection, obedience is inculcated. Obedience to what? "To every ordinance of man." What is meant by "ordinance of man" the words following indicate: "whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him." The passage speaks of submission to kings and governors, it treats of obedience to civil government. Romans 13, 1 treats of the same matter. There we read: "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God." It is immaterial in what person or persons this higher power may be vested, whether in a monarch, or in the people at large, wherever government is established it is the duty of the subjects to be obedient to those clothed with authority. "Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's." Matt. 22, 21.

And what should impel Christians to submit to this ordinance of man? Peter says: Submit for the Lord's sake, for Christ's sake. If Christians would not render obedience to civil rulers, they would thereby cast reproach upon their Master, for the heathen would justly speak of them as evil-doers, and thus their Lord would be blasphemed through them.

What should prompt the Christians to submit to this ordinance? *διὰ τὸν κύριον*, says Peter, "for the Lord's, for Christ's sake." For if they would not be subject to the government the heathen would justly speak of them as evil-doers. "The King of the Christians, Christ," they would

say, "incites his followers to rebellion." Thus their Lord would be blasphemed. But by honoring this ordinance of man, Christ would be honored at the same time.

"Whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him." The word βασιλεύς (king) signifies rulers in general and is here used to designate the Roman emperor. So above all they should render obedience to the king, as the one having supreme power, but also to the governors, the praetors, the proconsuls, as the organs through whom the king exercised his sway. In short, they should submit to all in authority, to high and low officials. It is oftentimes very difficult to obey the petty officials—their characters, their foibles and shortcomings being known to us, but we must remember they are clothed with authority.

What is the object of government? "*For (εἰς) the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well.*" What is to be understood by *evil-doing*, and what by *well-doing*? Nero is emperor, he sends his praetors to punish evil-doing. Nero, the profligate and bloodhound, discerns good and evil. The government of which Peter speaks is a heathen government. How did Nero distinguish between good and evil? By his reason. This section, therefore, treats of the *justitia civilis* only, of what is good or bad in civil life. And notwithstanding that the emperor is a heathen, Peter acknowledges his authority and demands obedience thereto on the part of the Christians. In the eyes of the law there are well-doers and evil-doers, good citizens and bad citizens. And the right to inflict punishment rests with civil government. Hence "lynch-law," which is resorted to to such an alarming extent in our country, is utterly to be condemned. Lynch-law does not administer justice and punish crime, but is itself a violation of justice. It is not only a crime against human law, but also a sin against the commandment of God, "Thou shalt not kill."

V. 15: "Ὅτι οὕτως ἐστὶν τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ, ἀγαθοποιοῦντας φημοῦν τὴν τῶν ἀφρόνων ἀνθρώπων ἀγνωσίαν.

"For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men."

This verse states the reason for submission. For *so*, οὕτως, *in this manner*, by well-doing in civil life, by being good, law-abiding citizens they were to silence the ignorance of their adversaries. The heathen lacked the comprehension of Christian life. In this their ignorance, their foolishness consisted. And because they did not understand the Christian religion nor the life resultant therefrom, they imagined that the characteristic of the Christians was evil-doing, not well-doing; that it was opposition and not submission to the powers that be. But by perceiving their upright, honest conversation the heathen would be forced to see the utter foolishness of the accusations made against the Christians, and thus these senseless calumnies would cease. Thus to silence the ignorance of foolish men, says Peter, *is the will of God*. In a previous verse (v. 13) he had said: Submit to those in authority *for the Lord's*, for Christ's, *sake*, in order that your Master, Christ, be not blasphemed. Here he says, "it is *the will of God*," and thus adds an additional motive for subjection. God has instituted this ordinance and hence you must submit thereto.

V. 16: Ὡς ἐλεύθεροι, καὶ μὴ ὡς ἐπικάλυμμα ἔχοντες τῆς κακίας τὴν ἐλευθερίαν, ἀλλ' ὡς δοῦλοι θεοῦ.

"As free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God."

As free. This is to be connected with *be subject* of v. 13, or with *do well* of v. 15. The sense in both cases is essentially the same. Christians are *free* in the full sense of the word. They are free from the curse of the Law (Gal. 3, 13), free from the dominion of sin (Rom. 6, 12—14), and they are in possession of Christian liberty (Gal. 5, 1. Col. 2, 16. 17). They are free children of God. Their submission to authority is not that of slaves, but as of those who have

attained freedom in Christ. The Christians, becoming conscious of their high prerogatives, therefore willingly, gladly submit themselves in these earthly matters which have nothing to do with their faith, "for the Lord's sake" (v. 13), and because "it is the will of God" (v. 15). *Not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God.* Suppose the Christian should argue thus: "I am a free child of God, and hence I need not submit to the tyrannical rule of a Nero,"—this logic, the apostle says, would be utterly wrong. Such a procedure would not be in consonance with their Christianity, but the latter would be merely made to serve as a splendid cloak with which to hide their malice (*κακία*). For opposition to the government is malice. No, says Peter, you are *free* children of God and hence you will *serve* God also in this matter by submitting yourselves voluntarily to the civil power. Non-submission would be an abuse of your Christian liberty.

Luther aptly says: "This is said especially for us, who have heard of Christian freedom, that we may not go on and abuse this freedom, making a cloak of it; that is to say, under the name and show of Christian freedom do all that we lust after."

V. 17: Πάντας τιμήσατε, τὴν ἀδελφότητα ἀγαπήτε, τὸν θεὸν φοβεῖσθε, τὸν βασιλέα τιμᾶτε.

"Honor all. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king."

Honor all according to their position and calling. *Love the brotherhood.* Love in its full sense can only be accorded to them that have the same spirit as we, who are one in the faith with us. To such only can we open our whole heart and confer with them in a brotherly manner. No Christian should say concerning a manifest unbeliever, "He is my friend, my brother." We should honor those who are without the brotherhood, but otherwise have nothing more to do with them than insofar as is necessary not "to go out of the world." (1 Cor. 5, 9, 10.) But does not the Lord

say: "Love your enemies"? "The apparent contradiction of Matt. 5, 44, here presented, where love to enemies is also enjoined, is to be explained on the following principle: that the ἀγάπη is differently conditioned, according as it has different objects. In perfect harmony with its inmost nature, it can exist only between Christians, for only among them is there community of life in God; cf. chap. 1, 22." (Meyer in loco.)

Fear God. *Fear* is more than honor. Fear is due to God. Hence, above all render to God the things that are God's. *Honor the king.* To fear God and honor the king are not things incompatible with each other. On the contrary. But we must observe: *fear* is more than *honor*. Obedience to the king, to those who are in authority under God, must cease where such obedience would demand a transgression of a clear commandment of God. There the exhortation obtains: *Fear God.* Setting aside the will and commandment of the civil rulers in order to obey the King of kings, Peter and the other apostles said to the high-priest and to the captain of the temple and the chief priests at Jerusalem: "We ought to obey God rather than men." (Acts 5, 29.)

This closes the subsection in which the apostle admonishes his readers as subjects to render obedience to the government. Doing this they would "have their conversation honest among the Gentiles" and thus might lead others to embrace Christianity. (V. 12.)

In the following section the apostle addresses the servants and, carrying out the same train of thought contained in v. 12, shows them how they in their humble sphere of life may let their light shine before men that they may see their good works and glorify the Father which is in heaven. Matt. 5, 16.

V. 18: *Οἱ οἰκέται, ὑποτασσόμενοι ἐν παντὶ φόβῳ τοῖς δεσπόταις, οὐ μόνον τοῖς ἀγαθοῖς καὶ ἐπεικέσιν, ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῖς σκολιοῖς.*

“Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward.”

The apostle enlarges upon the relation between masters and servants and exhorts the latter to well-doing.

Servants, *οικέται*, is a milder term for *δοῦλοι*, *slaves*. They are here described as *ὑποτασσόμενοι*, *subordinate*.

Christians should submit to every *ἀνθρωπίνῃ κτίσει* (v. 13). This relation of master and servant is also *ἀνθρωπίνῃ κτίσει*. Remember, the apostle would say, they are the *masters*, the superiors; you are the *servants*, the inferiors. Because they are the *masters* you must be subject to them. And be subject *in all fear*. *Φόβος*, *fear*, is the consciousness of inferiority under a power whose authority it is dangerous to disregard. Be fearful, lest you transgress the will of your master; do your duty faithfully and honestly. Do not believe you have a right to despise them because you are Christians and they are heathen. Acting thus would be an abuse of your Christian liberty. They have authority over you, they are your *masters* and hence have a right to your service. This subjection they owe not only to the kind and gentle masters—this is a comparatively easy matter—but also to the *σκολοί*, the *unfair* or *unjust*, who scarcely are to be pleased at all, who are almost continually nagging and finding fault with you. This harsh, unjust treatment on the part of these froward masters does not change your relation to them, nor does it justify you in disregarding their power.

But, since this is a very difficult lesson to learn, the apostle adduces reasons why they should obey their masters in all fear in order to encourage them to follow the exhortation willingly.

V. 19: *Τοῦτο γὰρ χάρις, εἰ διὰ συνείδησιν θεοῦ ὑποφέρει τις λύπας πάσχων ἀδίκως.*

“For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully.”

The special meaning "grace" is not to be attached to the word *χάρις* here, as though the clause were to be explained thus: "It is to be regarded as grace, if one can suffer for the sake of God." (Steiger, cf. Meyer in loco.) The expression *τοῦτο γὰρ χάρις*, in v. 19, and *τοῦτο χάρις παρὰ θεῶ* are parallel with each other. And the parallelism shows that the meaning of *χάρις* can only be *acceptable, well-pleasing*. Thus also Gerhard: "Hoc est Deo gratum et acceptum." If the Christian servants were patient under their hardships, while they suffered wrongfully, this patient suffering would be well-pleasing in the eyes of God. And since it is the Christian's greatest concern to be acceptable to God, this reason for being subject also to the froward masters afforded great consolation to the servants.

But why is it said: This is thankworthy, if a man *for conscience toward God*, *εἰ διὰ συνείδησιν θεοῦ*, endure grief? *συνείδησις* means *conscience, consciousness*. This knowledge of a certain fact, this consciousness stands in a certain relation to God, therefore it reads: *διὰ συνείδησιν θεοῦ*. *θεοῦ* is object. gen. Calov tersely remarks: "Quia conscius est, id Deum velle et Deo gratum esse." So the explanation of the phrase would be: I am conscious of this that it is the will of God that I, the Christian servant, ought to be obedient to the froward masters also, and patiently suffer wrongs; and, therefore, I submit myself for conscience' sake, in the fear of God, who has placed these masters, also the froward, over me as my superiors.

This patient endurance of unmerited wrongs, Peter says, is well-pleasing to God. If, on the other hand, the servants would submit to wrongs simply because by the force of circumstances they could not do otherwise, this would not be acceptable to God.

In order forcefully to bring home the truth in this statement, the apostle appeals to the judgment of his readers. He says:

V. 20: Ποῖον γὰρ κλέος, εἰ ἁμαρτάνοντες καὶ κολαφιζόμενοι ὑπομενεῖτε; ἀλλ' εἰ ἀγαθοποιῶντες καὶ πάσχοντες ὑπομενεῖτε, τοῦτο χάρις παρὰ θεῶ.

“For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.”

Take a supposed case. The Christian servant sins; he is punished for his disobedience and takes it patiently. Is there any glory? No, he has acted contrary to the will of God, contrary to the will of his master, and when punished receives but his just deserts. But, per contra, “when ye do well and suffer for it, and take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.”

The Christian “*does well*,” but nevertheless is made to *suffer*. For what reason does he suffer? He has been obedient to his master, he has done “well!” Obedience is not a cause of suffering. Why, then, was punishment inflicted upon him? Because he is a Christian. Hatred to Christ and Christianity, his faith in Christ, was the cause that enflamed the froward master to vent his spleen upon the faithful servant against whom he could find no fault. If you suffer thus for Christ’s sake, says Peter, and take it patiently, and notwithstanding this ill-treatment from your master, serve him in all fear, this patient endurance is acceptable with God. And the Christian servants bearing this in mind would be consoled with their lot, would be strengthened and fortified to bear the undeserved hatred of their superiors.

L. W.