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Doctrinal Theology.

THE LORD'S SUPPER.

The second sacrament of the Christian church is the Lord's supper, *κυριακὸν δεῖπνον*.¹⁾ It has this in common with all other divine institutions that it is what the Lord God himself made it by the act of institution, nothing more, nothing less. It is not what the church, or the state, or any individual man would make it. It is not what St. Paul made it. Paul, where he is about to state the nature of this sacrament, expressly says: *I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you.*²⁾ Marriage as a divine institution is what God made it in Paradise and by his word, just as marriage as an institution of the State of Missouri is what the State of Missouri has made it, and marriage as a civil status in Nebraska is what that state has made it. A union of a man and a woman which, if contracted in Nebraska, would be marriage, may be non-marriage and incest in Missouri, and what may be marriage in this state may be incestuous and void before God. Thus, also, a ceremony established by a Zwinglian church is what that church has made it, and a rite of the Roman church is what that church has made it; and while they both may call their institutions sacraments, the one may be an empty shell and

1) 1 Cor. 11, 20.

2) 1 Cor. 11, 23.

Practical Theology.

DEDICATORY SERMON ON 1 COR. 1, 18—25.¹⁾

When the apostles of Christ, obeying the divine command they had received, went forth and preached everywhere, they were constantly opposed by two powerful agents existing in those mental dispositions which held sway respectively over the greater part of either of the two distinct nations who were the first to hear of the glad tidings of the Gospel of Christ. The Greeks sought after wisdom. Could the apostles have demonstrated to them that what they had to say was consonant with their own persuasions, was merely a new development of their own thoughts, a glorious result of mental exertion proving the excellency of the human mind, and the divine power of reason, to the arbitration of which both human and divine things were alike subject, their preaching would have found ready acceptance, it would have been hailed with applause, and the preachers themselves celebrated as founders of a new and most respectable school of philosophy by the nation in general. But as the object of God's gracious visitation in revealing His saving grace to the world through His ministers was not to make men still prouder of their reasoning faculties, but to save sin-

1) This sermon was written and preached years ago by the late Professor R. Lange of Concordia Seminary. Those who were familiar with Prof. Lange know that he was not only a theologian of extensive theological erudition, but also a profound philosopher who had through many years of original research acquainted himself with the philosophical systems of past ages and modern times, and by independent thought grappled with all the great problems of philosophy. With all these various attainments, of which we find evidence throughout the sermon here reproduced, this powerful and lofty mind united a sobriety and simplicity of Christian faith which enabled him to set forth in plain terms the cardinal truths of the doctrine of Christ, unto Jews a stumbling block and unto Greeks foolishness. In this respect, too, this sermon is worthy of careful and repeated perusal.

A. G.

ners through this preaching of the Gospel, it was haughtily mocked at as foolishness and its preachers as babblers.—The Jews require a sign, says the apostle. Not the signs of healing and helping wretched human beings miraculously, for signs like these they had seen in abundance, but a sign that should convince them of the apostles being divinely authorized to usher in their much longed for glorious reign of the Messiah, the dominion of the world and the subjection of all the nations to their existing hierarchy and laws. As the apostles, however, insisted on this kingdom of the Messiah not being of this world, but that all who believed in the Lord, whether within or without the pale of their hierarchy, should be equally regarded as members of this spiritual kingdom, to live in a holy and eternal communion with God, their preaching was a stumbling block to them, and in killing the preachers they thought they did God service.—But God's saving grace suffers no conditions to be imposed upon it by sinful man, it rather demands a denial of one's self in order to receive the powers of a new life in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

The same dispositions are still found in opposition to the preaching of the cross. There are many who, like the Greeks of old, should willingly accept the truth of the Gospel, provided it was so construed as to confirm the opinions they have formed beforehand concerning religion, and to testify the all-sufficiency of their reason, so that neither humiliation nor repentance was required on their part. But as the Gospel demands that they be converted and become as little children to accept its teachings and turn from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, they scoffingly turn away with a smile at the obscurantists who could demand such things of rational beings.—And again there are those who accept anything in the way of belief, if sanctioned by the proper authority and advancing the glory and power of their hierarchy, which they think divinely entitled to rule

the nations of the world, but who hate and oppose the Gospel of Christ, which does not acknowledge the pretensions of their hierarchy, and are stirred with the same spirit of hatred and persecution against its believers as the Jews in the times of the apostles.

This church building is being dedicated to-day not to serve either the pretensions of multifarious reason, or those of the Roman hierarchy, but to be a place set apart for the public preaching of the Gospel of Christ. I shall, therefore, on this occasion beg your attention to a brief statement of the import of this preaching of the cross, of its being a power of God unto salvation and of the newness of life resulting from it in those who believe it.

I.

The glad tidings announced to the world by the Gospel of Christ were first proclaimed by the voice of one crying in the wilderness, "Make straight the way of the Lord," by John the Baptist, the first preacher of the Gospel, with whom began the glorious times of the New Testament foretold by the prophets of old. When he saw Jesus coming unto him he said, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!" These tidings are plainly and distinctly stated by John the Apostle, when he says, "Jesus Christ is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." They are further explained and confirmed by the Apostle Paul, who says, "As by the offense of one (Adam) judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so by the righteousness of one (Christ) the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life." For Jesus, our Lord, "was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification."

The case is this. We all have sinned, we all have offended against God's Law. We are not beings subject merely to infirmities and defects, but there is a power working in us which is ever disobedient to God's Law, which in irrecon-

cilable enmity against God is constantly active in destroying or counteracting all the divine ordinances and workings of His holiness and goodness. We, being instruments and servants of that awful power in our nature, are thus ourselves opposing the holy will of our Creator. But whoever opposes the will of the Lord of the universe, working evil and destroying good, deserves death, the final and eternal expulsion from that world which He created very good. We must die, because we deserve death by sin; we must die also, because sin is in itself a destruction of life. This is made apparent wherever anger thrusts its weapon into a brother's heart, wherever wickedness or despair hurls a sinner into misfortune or death, wherever profligacy and drunkenness prepare the sinner's body for death's maw, wherever hatred, envy, calumny, melancholy, and the like loosen the connection between body and soul, until it finally breaks. We do not see, however, the most awful work of sin, which is done by secretly severing the roots of our life and being from God, the only source of life, in our turning from Him to indulge in godless thoughts and giving ourselves up to the lusts of the world. Thus sin would even anticipate God's righteous judgment and thrust us prematurely into the inevitable doom of endless perdition, but for the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and long-suffering, which wonderfully protect and maintain our lives in spite of sin, and ward off the sting of death to lead us to repentance and life everlasting.

For "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." This Son of God, being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person and upholding all things by the word of His power, became man, our brother, our substitute, our mediator, the redeemer of all whose nature He assumed into the unity of His divine person. He, not being subject to the power of sin within His own holy being, fulfilled all the will of His

Father in our stead and for us, He bore all the penalty the world had incurred by sin, He delivered Himself up unto death for our offenses, giving Himself a sacrifice for us. By His once yielding His soul unto death He reconciled God and man, He saved the world. This was made manifest by His resurrection. In raising our representative and mediator from the dead, God declared to the world that His sacrifice was accepted, His redemption accomplished, the sin of the world taken away. He was raised for our justification, so that when He came forth from the grave justified from the iniquities of the world that had been laid on Him, at that very moment we all have become justified and freed from all sin before God through Him.

From that time the Gospel of Christ goes forth into all the world to be preached to every creature, proclaiming eternal peace between God and man, declaring that their sins are all propitiated for and forgiven. For "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead; be ye reconciled to God." The gates of heaven are thrown open to all, all are invited to enter, all are bidden to the wedding of the divine and the human natures in Christ, which has brought about the salvation of the world. God will have all men to be saved, He has reconciled all to Himself through Christ, who gave Himself a ransom for all. The Gospel bids you give up all your endeavors to reconcile God to you by your own works, penances, pilgrimages, masses, pardons, and the like, or by the interventions of saints or priests, your sins have all been atoned for long ago, they are forgiven, God is reconciled. All you need is to believe these joyful tidings, to believe that the abundance of His grace and love surpasses your own weak and paltry thoughts of God as much as the glory of His divine being surpasses the worm in the dust. All you need

is to accept your eternal salvation as a free gift from Him. There is not a debt of yours that is left unpaid, there is not a single sin of yours left not atoned for. Only one thing may condemn you now, and that is your refusing to accept of His grace and love and to be reconciled to Him.

II.

Having thus briefly stated the Gospel of Christ I must now beg your notice of the fact, that the Gospel of Christ is the power of God, as the apostle says, unto salvation. All creation is filled with wonderful and mysterious powers. There is not a single element in the universe but has its specific powers given to a specific end. They were all brought forth by the creative power of the word of God; and He still directs them to effect His ends and purposes. "All wait upon Thee," says the Psalmist, "that Thou mayest give them their meat in due season. That Thou givest them they gather, Thou openest Thine hand, they are filled with good. Thou hidest Thy face, they are troubled; Thou takest away their breath, they die and return to their dust. Thou sendest forth Thy Spirit, they are created, and Thou renewest the face of the earth." But all this wonderful and vast variety of natural powers only serves to maintain, increase, protect, and adorn our earthly life. There is none among them that could remove the burden of sin from man's conscience, that could give rest unto his soul, satisfy his yearnings for peace and real and lasting happiness; that could take away the sting of death and the horrors of the grave; that could free him from the awful doom at the tribunal of the divine Judge of the dead and living and transform his nature into that purity and holiness which alone is capable of enjoying a blissful fruition of God in the world to come. All this God's grace and love to fallen man has provided in that power, to obtain which you neither need to ascend into heaven, nor descend into the deep, but which is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart, it

is the Gospel of Christ, the power of God unto salvation. This is the only power on earth which makes man a new creature, gives joy and comfort in the darkest hours of affliction, unites God and man, brings forth eternal life amidst death, and creates heirs to all the glories of the world to come.

But few, however, experience the divine power contained in the words that proclaim Christ the Savior of mankind. They seem so foolish, so weak, so different from what man would do, were he to lead a fallen world to a life of bliss. Men think themselves too wise to learn wisdom of God and His ways with man; they prefer perishing in their sins to humiliating themselves before God, to know that the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. Paul says, the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness, but unto us, he adds, which are saved, it is the power of God.

That there is power in the words of the Gospel no man can deny. Even those but slightly acquainted with historical facts must be aware that eighteen hundred years ago a very few men of the despised race of Judah with only the words of Christ the Redeemer in their mouths attacked heathenism, when it was at the height of its strength and glory, sustained by hosts of priests and the most powerful on earth; ennobled and glorified by the highest genius in science and art when, agreeable and pleasing as it was to the natural instincts of man, it was most firmly rooted in the habits of the people. The result is known. The temples of their gods are deserted ruins, the gods themselves, then worshiped by millions, are now admired merely as specimens of exquisite artistic skill. Three hundred and fifty years ago Luther, having found the Gospel, commenced preaching it, and the power of popedom, the greatest power on earth at that time, was shaken to its very foundations. And had all those that were alarmed by the strange com-

motion accepted its teachings, the cowls, hoods, habits, relics, beads, indulgences, dispenses, pardons, bulls, those powers by which the pope still holds millions upon millions of souls in subjection, would now be things of the past. That there is power in the Gospel has at all the time of persecution been manifest even to those who in their hellish rancor endeavored to destroy its influence by consummate cruelty, and were forced to acknowledge that the heavenly joy and divine firmness that arose from the Gospel were even in the most tender children and virgins mightier than the excruciating pain on the rack or at the stake.

The greatness of this power and the infinite blessings pouring forth from it, will not, however, become apparent before the great day of judgment. But even now, while the new life created by it is hid with Christ, all those that do not oppose it know and feel that the words of the Gospel are spirit and are life, that the Spirit of God, who once moved upon the face of the waters, when the world was created, is now moving and working through those words to renew man's spirit, and this as a token of His once quickening their mortal bodies also to the likeness of Christ's eternal glory. Let no man, then, despise the Gospel. Whoever preaches it, priest or layman, man or woman, young or old, administers to his hearers the Spirit of God. If you know the Gospel, you possess the power of God, by which you shall both save yourself and them that hear you.

III.

The immediate effects of the Gospel in those who believe it are a peace of the soul which passeth all understanding, and a newness of life which has no other purpose than love and gratitude. The Gospel, not making any distinction whatever between men, as they are all sinners, requires nothing of them in order to obtain salvation but to believe, firmly, steadfastly, unwaveringly to believe, that Christ died for their offenses, that He was raised for their justification,

that their debts are paid, their sins forgiven, that God is reconciled to them. For we thus judge, says Paul, if one died for all, then were all dead, and he that is dead, is freed from sin; having suffered his punishment in the person of Christ, his representative and mediator, he is before God in the condition he was before he sinned. And he who so believes is thus made a new creature, paradise is opened to him, old things are passed away, all things are become new. This is, indeed, a heavenly comfort, that our salvation rests not in our own holiness, in our own piety, not even in our feeling of having God's mercy, but in the merit of Christ. Whenever we feel oppressed by sin and the fear of God's rejecting us, whenever we are lying in the depths of anguish, we are bidden by the divine voice of the Gospel to leap over the great abyss that separates God, the Holy One, and man, the sinner, and rejoicingly look upon Christ who had our sins imputed to Him and laid on Him, and now behold, they are all away for ever, and He is in glory at the right hand of God, our peace, our joy, our life, our all.

And those who thus believe in the joyful tidings of the preaching of the cross know also, that having died with Christ once, they must now be alive unto God for ever; being redeemed from the power of sin, they must now walk in newness of life; having through Christ's redemption been made subjects in God's holy and eternal kingdom, they must now serve Him without fear in holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of their lives; having become children of God and heirs to His glories, that mind must be in them which was also in Christ Jesus. They know that Christ died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them and rose again. The object of Christ's redeeming us was to free us for ever from all the power and effects of sin, to renew us after the image of God, that we might live in holy communion with God. The Spirit of God is administered to us through the Gospel, that we all, with open face

beholding in the Gospel as in a glass the glory of the Lord, might be changed into the same image from glory to glory. This glory of the Lord is shown in the Gospel by His communicating all to His creatures in His infinite love, by His having given His best, even His only begotten Son. It is shown by Christ's denying all for our sakes; though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor, that we by His poverty might be rich. This, then, is our great calling, henceforth not to live unto ourselves, not to do anything for the sake of ourselves, for the sake of any gain, or joy, or honor accruing to ourselves, but to live only for the benefit of our fellowmen whom Christ has redeemed as well as ourselves. He has done everything necessary for our salvation, nothing is left to be done by us for ourselves, that all our energies might be exercised in the divine work of doing good, of serving others in love. Whosoever is not thus minded, does not believe in the Gospel; the faith he may suppose to have is self-deceit, he has not experienced in his own person the divine work of salvation. And who, on hearing the gracious message of reconciliation from his Creator and Redeemer, obstinately and perseveringly refuses even to ponder it, judges himself unworthy of everlasting life, to be lost for ever.—But God be praised, there are always some to preach it and to believe it. May, then, this house, too, never be wanting of hearers to whom the Gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation. To Him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.
