

THEOLOGICAL QUARTERLY.

VOL. II.

APRIL, 1898.

No. 2.

Doctrinal Theology.

THEOLOGY.

(Continued.)

ATTRIBUTES OF GOD.

The attributes of God are INDIVISIBILITY, IMMUTABILITY, INFINITY, LIFE, INTELLIGENCE, WISDOM, WILL, HOLINESS, JUSTICE, TRUTH, GOODNESS, AND POWER. The first three of the series have been termed *negative, intransitive, quiescent*, or *immanent*, the rest, *positive, transitive, operative*, or *emanent*, attributes. Others have classified the divine attributes as *incommunicable* attributes, or *properties*, which are only in God and in no wise or measure in created things, and *communicable* attributes, or *perfections*, such as holiness,¹⁾ life,²⁾ etc., which may in a mode and measure be communicated to created beings, as men and angels.

INDIVISIBILITY.

God is indivisible inasmuch as he is not a compound being, not made up of component parts, or of a substance and of qualities inherent in such substance, but absolutely

1) Lev. 19, 2. 1 Pet. 1, 15. Matt. 25, 31.

2) Gen. 2, 7. John 10, 28.

The Pulpit.

EASTER SERMON ON MARK 16, 1—8.

In Christ Jesus, the Risen Savior, Dearly Beloved:

In proclaiming the glorious news of His good will towards man, God has at sundry times availed Himself of the ministrations of angels.

To-day I would remind you of but two notable communications made by angels to man. The first of these communications, or I should rather say, sermons, for such they were, was published in that Holy Night on the plains of Bethlehem to the shepherds keeping watch over their flocks; the other sermon is the one related in our text.

The Christmas sermon read: "Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you tidings of great joy which shall be to all the people; for there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior who is Christ the Lord."

And soon the multitude of the heavenly host had assembled and the still air was filled with celestial strains of: "Glory be to God in the highest, and peace on earth, and good will towards men."

The Easter sermon reads: "Be not affrighted; ye seek Jesus of Nazareth which was crucified; He is not here; He is risen; behold the place where they laid Him."

The former sermon was delivered during the night; but this dark night was made brilliant by the glory of the Lord which shone round about the shepherds, symbolizing, as it were, the result this proclamation should bring about—that of illuminating the dense night of spiritual darkness hovering over the whole world.

And the latter—the Easter sermon—was published in a grave; and this grave, too, was rendered transcendent beyond description by the brightness of the visitors from

above, making it apparent that now even that most dreaded abode, the grave, was divested of its terrors.

The Christmas sermon was preached at the beginning of Christ's earthly career, when He "was made of a woman, made under the law that He might redeem them that were under the law;" the Easter sermon, on the other hand, when the work of redemption was complete, after He had spoken the words on the cross: "It is finished!" and when the Father had put His divine seal of approval to the work of His Son.

Weighing these two angelic sermons in the balance, which contains the greater, the more important, the more joyful news? Idle question! Both are fraught with joyful news too deep for us to fathom.

Moreover, when the Christmas anthem was sung by that angelic choir, in the sight of God the Easter message we hear proclaimed to-day was already a reality, and again without the Easter message: "He is risen!" the Christmas tidings which speak of great joy for all people because of the birth of the Babe at Bethlehem, would be meaningless.

These two sermons are like beautiful, brilliant gems lying side by side in a casket. It is very hard to give the preference to either. So then, as during Christmas we have considered the Song of the Angels, so let us now in this joyous Easter tide hear

THE JOYFUL EASTER SERMON OF THE ANGEL IN THE GRAVE
OF OUR LORD.

It contains

- I. *An admonition:* "Be not affrighted."
- II. *A proclamation of the resurrection:* "He is risen; He is not here."
- III. *A command:* "Go, tell His disciples and Peter."

I.

"And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary, the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint Him. And

very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun." vv. 1. 2.

How simple these words, yet how full of meaning! It is Easter morning. The golden sun is just about to rise in the Orient and to cast his first faint beams over the city of Jerusalem. The tragedy that occurred only a few days ago seems to be forgotten. The city is wrapped in peaceful slumber. But some sleep not. At the break of day, "very early," our text says, three women may be seen wending their way to the Lord's sepulchre. Who are they? Mary Magdalene, Mary, the mother of James, and Salome. The two Marys had been under the cross, they had seen their Master expire; and when He was laid to rest by those two secret disciples, Joseph and Nicodemus, love towards their Lord impelled them to be near and view the place where He was laid. In these pathetic words the Evangelist describes their love for Jesus: "And Mary Magdalene was there, and the other Mary sitting over against the sepulchre."

And now these two Marys in company with Salome are again on their journey to the grave. For them the Lord is dead. They have spices to anoint His dead body.

Who can describe the heart-rending sorrow of these women in that hour? They know that the Just and Holy One has been put to death, He who had been their dearest friend, He who had been their Joy, their Peace, their all! How must Mary Magdalene have felt, the great sinner, whom He had forgiven all her sins! And how much had He been to Mary, the mother of James, and to Salome, the mother of the two apostles!

And now He was dead and they were on the way to His grave.

And what had been their expectation concerning Him? That He should save Israel. And now He was dead! With bowed heads and sealed lips they silently pursue their journey each occupied with sorrowful thoughts. Grief often-

times is so deep that it cannot find expression in words. So it was here.

Let us pause and reflect. In these three women we see our own image. We are wanderers one and all to the grave. There are graves to the right of us, graves to the left of us. Death flourishes his sceptre over all. The summons will come to everyone sooner or later to join the innumerable caravan that moves to the realm of the grave. What a gap death often makes in our lives! The nearest and dearest are taken from us with a ruthless hand. The wife must leave the husband; the husband is separated from the wife, and the lovely child upon whom we have set our hopes and affections must be laid under the cool sod. With bowed heads and downcast eyes we follow mourning to the grave, and oftentimes the question arises in our hearts: "Why is this thus? Why, Lord, must it be so?"—

"And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre? And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great. And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted. And he said unto them, Be not affrighted!" vv. 3—6.

Upon approaching the sepulchre, the women with an effort dispel their somber musings and turn to practical questions: "Who shall roll us away the stone from the door?" Fortunately they had not thought of that before, nor of the seal to the grave, nor about the guard that had been stationed at the grave. They must anoint Him, they must cast one last, long, lingering look upon the dead body of their Master! These thoughts filled their hearts. And the stone and the seal and the guard do not once occur to their minds. Fortunately, otherwise they might have been deterred from coming at all.

How true to life! How often do we not walk blindfolded, as it were. Love to our Lord prompts us to do this

or that; we see not the great obstacles in our way, and lo! when after sober second thoughts these insurmountable obstacles present themselves to our mind, God has removed them. So here. Lifting up their eyes, they observe from a distance that the great stone is rolled away. Picture to yourselves the amazement of the women on beholding this. They know something unusual must have happened. Boldly, though trembling and fearing, they enter the grave. But how is their perplexity heightened when, not finding the Lord's body, they of a sudden see a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment. "His countenance," says Matthew, "was like lightning and his raiment white as snow."

Contemplate this grave. It is empty! The door is open. It is not a dark, deep dungeon, but lit up by the glory of the Lord! Why, this is not the realm of death!

And the women were amazed. Small wonder. But the Angel of the Lord—for such was that young man in the white garment—immediately silences their fears. "Be not affrighted!" says he. You are in a grave, but be not affrighted!

Wonderful, joyful Easter message! It is calculated to take away all dread from the abode of the dead.

Where are most tears shed? At the coffin and the grave. Of what nature are those thoughts that make men shudder? Thoughts of the grave and death; thoughts of the shroud and the pall. And here these women are bidden: "Be not affrighted!" In the environments of death you are; still, fear not!

Indeed, a joyous Easter message if such words issue from the grave. What, then, is the key? It is this: "Fear not ye," says the angel, as St. Matthew has it. "Fear not ye," and he lays particular stress upon the word "ye," as if to say: "These others, the guards of the sepulchre, the enemies of Christ, have need to fear and tremble, but ye, ye lovers of the Lord, 'fear not ye, be not affrighted!'"

And now, my friends, as we stand around the graves of our loved ones, and as we contemplate our own end of life, there comes from the grave this tender message: "Fear not!" For you the grave has lost its terrors. Your grave, too, is lit up by the brightness of the Lord. It is not the dark place so commonly pictured. The grave does not end all. Triumphantly we may sing in bold defiance: "O grave, where is thy victory!" And as we listen to the words of the minister over the grave, words of consolation and hope and peace, we know that he is but doing what the angel did here. He is saying: "Fear not ye!"

And why all this? That we shall learn from the proclamation of the resurrection.

II.

"Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: He is risen; He is not here; behold the place where they laid Him." V. 6.

I know your mission, says the angel; you are lovers of the Lord Jesus, whom you know to be the Messiah, the Savior, but who is so despised, that He was called the Nazarene. Though others despise Him, you despise Him not; your love to Him prompted you to come here in spite of the danger of death from the Jews, who hated Him and, therefore, also hate you.

But why are you so slow of heart to believe all that Moses and the prophets have said concerning Him? "Why seek ye the living among the dead?" (Luke 24, 5.) He is not here; but still He has not been carried away to another place as a corpse, His body has not been stolen; no, "He is risen!" He is risen by His own power, "He lives!" as He said. Investigate every nook and corner of the sepulchre, convince yourselves of the truth of my words; "behold the place where they laid Him;" He "*was* crucified," but that scene is now past. He is risen, and thereby He has declared Himself with might the Son of God.

It is well-nigh impossible to describe the feelings of the women on hearing this joyful Easter message. Matthew says that they were filled with fear and joy. Joy may sometimes be so great, so overwhelming, so bewildering that one cannot believe his own senses. So it was here. We have accompanied these women on their way to the grave, and have listened, as it were, to their innermost thoughts. Surely, this is the Messiah, they said to themselves. Had He not often told them so; had He not proved His Divine mission and His Divinity? But now He lay in the grave. Now He was dead, so they thought. Now all had come to an end. The mystery of it all was too deep for them to fathom.

But now they hear the joyful news: "He is risen!" He *was* crucified! Now the Scriptures were opened unto them. He *was* crucified, but *now* He lives. Why, had He not often spoken to them of His coming death in a most sublime way? Had He not said to His disciples: "Behold, the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken away from you?" Had He not said: "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished. For He shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked and despitefully used; and they shall scourge Him, and put Him to death: and the third day He shall rise again?"

Why had they not thought of that and believed? Had He not said in cleansing the Temple of its unholy and desecrating traders: "Destroy this Temple and in three days I will raise it up again?" And these words had come true. Now was the third day!

These and many other things came back to their minds like a flash. Ah, indeed, he was the Messiah! Awe-inspiring and sublime news at once; small wonder they were filled with fear and joy.

And what was the import of it all? Let Paul answer: "He was delivered for our offences and raised again for our

justification." Now, "who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth."

What was the import? Hear Peter: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath begotten us again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you who believe." As our substitute He had entered death, defied the Devil and all our foes. He has conquered and thus brought life and immortality to light. Our substitute is free and so we are free. The handwriting that was against us is blotted out by the hands of God the Father. "If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain, ye are yet in your sins." But Christ is raised and your faith is not vain, and ye who believe are not in your sins.

Come, sinner, to the empty grave of Christ and read your pardon there.

But more than that. "Christ is risen from the dead and become the firstfruits of them that slept." His resurrection is proof of our own. "He is not here; He is risen!" was said to the women. And so it will be said of us one day: "He is not here; he is risen." And what shall become of us? Job answers: "I know that my Redeemer liveth . . . and though, after my skin, worms destroy my body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." Yes, in this my flesh shall I see God, but this flesh, like the body of Christ, will be in a glorious condition, in a glorified state, for, says St. Paul: "The Lord Jesus Christ shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body."

So come, my Christian friends, and look into the grave of Christ once more. It is empty; so yours one day will be empty. Of Christ it was said: "He is not here; He is risen;" likewise of you it will be said: "He is not here; he is risen." There is a rising after death just as there is a rising after sleep. Do you fear sleep? No. Then fight down in the armor of God that terror of the grave, and

view your grave in the light of the Easter message as your "cemetery," as your sleeping chamber, hallowed by Christ. Fear not! Your soul will be carried into Abraham's bosom and on the latter day body and soul shall be reunited and you shall be with the Lord always in those heavenly mansions which He has prepared for you.

Oh, for the joyful news of this Easter sermon of the angel in the grave! To whom does it apply?

III.

"Go your way," says the angel to the women. Out of love you have brought sweet spices to anoint your dear Master, but as you see it is love's labor lost. There is no need for that; do something better: "Tell His disciples."

Oh, for the great love of the Savior! But perhaps the disciples deserved to have this glorious news made known unto them? No, no! Each and every one had proved faithless. In the hour of His greatest need when Jesus was taken captive, and when His disciples should have acquitted themselves like men, we read: "Then all His disciples left Him and fled." (This cowardly flight on the part of the disciples was a great sin.) They believed that He was Jesus, the Son of God. Christ, moreover, had told them beforehand how everything should come to pass, and still they fled.

He had taught them three years with all diligence, and still they proved faithless—they fled. They sinned against better knowledge. And when Christ was on the cross, where were His disciples? Under the cross, perhaps, standing by their Master to the last bitter end? No, again, one disciple whom He loved was there; the rest were women.

Where were His disciples? Behind closed doors! Surely, these disciples had deserved to be cast away. "Tell the world of my resurrection, but not these my one time disciples!" Had this command been given to the angel it would have served those faithless disciples right.

But, behold the love of the Savior! These very same men who had deserted Him in the hour of anguish, these men who had secured themselves behind barred doors out of fear for the Jews, these men should be told: "He is risen!" Why? They most of all were in need of comfort, they must know that they have a living Savior, that He died for their sins and rose again for their justification.

And what these women were bidden to do, that too is my blessed privilege this evening. The command: "Tell His disciples!" is valid still to-day.

Have you been a disciple of the Lord and have you also proved faithless? I am bidden to tell you that the Savior will not cast you away. Think but of these faithless disciples, and as truly as He received them, He will also receive you.

"But," you say, "all good and well; that may be joyful news for some, but my sins like scarlet are; I am past hope."

No, my friend, I shall not allow you to escape. Come to Jesus; He is calling thee. Hear what the text says and dare believe. "Tell my disciples and Peter." Why is the addition made, "and Peter?" Peter was a disciple, why then mention his name expressly? Why not simply say: "Tell my disciples?" that would include Peter. No, the Lord knew better. Peter was most in need of this Easter message, and he would be the very one, most likely, who, on hearing the message proclaimed in a general way, would exclude himself and say: "Good news for you, my fellow disciples, but it is not intended for me; my sins are too great and too many."

Peter had fallen more deeply than the rest. At the first trial of Jesus, Peter stood at the fire warming himself, and when asked: "Art thou also one of His disciples?" Peter denied with an oath and said: "I am not!" And after the space of an hour being again asked as to his discipleship, he began to curse and swear, "I know not this

man of whom you speak." This was the same Peter who a little while before was ready, as he said, to die with the Lord. Peter, Peter, you knew who your Master was! You made a good confession once upon a time when you said to Jesus: "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God!" And now with a gesture of contempt you say, "I know not this man!" Peter, you had deserved to be cast away. But the Lord is full of mercy and forgiveness, too deep for us to comprehend. Tell this great sinner, Peter, is the command: "He is risen!" Don't forget Peter.

And now, my friend, whoever you are, and if you are a Peter who has denied his Lord—the Savior's love towards you is so great that He bids me tell you that He will not cast you away. He accepted Peter, He will accept you. Be not unbelieving but believing and thank and praise the Lord.

And if perchance there are some here this evening who never have tasted that the Lord is good; who never have been His disciples, you too the Lord bids come. For if He accepted His faithless disciples and Peter, He surely will accept you who never as yet have been His followers and therefore have not as yet proved faithless. Simply believe the Easter message, and though it may seem too great news to you, appropriate it unto yourselves, nevertheless, and rejoice with all true Christians over this Easter sermon from the grave. In Christ's name we bid you: Come! He says: "Whosoever cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." Therefore answer:

Just as I am without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me
And that Thou bidst me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come.

Just as I am: Thy love unknown
Has broken every barrier down;
Now to be Thine, yea, Thine alone,
O Lamb of God, I come."

Amen.

L. W.

SERMON ON JOHN 3, 16—21.

Again Pentecost is come, the anniversary of that great Pentecost at which the beginning was made of preaching the gospel in all the world, the beginning of the church of New Testament. Oh, what bliss and salvation has since then come unto millions upon millions of people! We ourselves also this day think of it with praise and thanks toward God, that we also are partakers of this salvation, and but yesterday we confessed, that the Holy Ghost has enlightened and converted us also, and still leads us from knowledge to knowledge.—But with all this grace which we enjoy in common with all Christendom, we might forget that, although the gospel resounds in all the world, yet so many, yea, the most people, are lost. And ever again the question then arises within us: Whence is it so? Why are not these also saved? And ever again we must then recall the answer which the word of God gives to this question: That some are saved, is by the grace of God alone; and that the others are lost, is by their own demerit.

True, this is an answer with which reason will not be satisfied. She thinks the two sentences of this answer cannot be made to agree with each other. If with the one the grace of God works all, says she, then why not also with the others? If it is the grace of God alone, and in no wise man's own merit and doing, that some are saved, then, on the other hand, it cannot be man's fault alone that some are not saved, but in this case also the cause must, in part at least, be sought in God's grace as being deficient with regard to those who are lost. Such thoughts, however, are very dangerous, and must not be allowed to prevail. In the end they set aside both gospel and grace and lead to total unbelief. Man's own thoughts, here as in all spiritual things, are wrong and nothing but error. God's word alone is true and a certain guide. Thus also our gospel lesson is a safe guide in this question. At the hand of this text let me now show you

HOW CERTAINLY TRUE IT IS THAT THOSE WHO ARE SAVED, ARE SAVED BY THE GRACE OF GOD ALONE, AND THAT THOSE WHO ARE LOST, ARE LOST BY THEIR OWN FAULT ALONE.

This is evident

- I. *from what God has done for man's salvation;*
- II. *from the fact that all who believe in Jesus Christ are saved;*
- III. *from the fact that many do not obtain faith, merely because they persist in the love of sin.*

I.

"God so loved the world," etc. The text is the close of a lengthy discourse, in which Christ the Lord has explained to Nicodemus the scribe the way unto salvation. After having said a few words on regeneration He added: "And as Moses lifted up the serpent," etc. What? Nicodemus might have asked, shall the Son of Man, who is the Messiah and the Son of God, be made a sacrifice for men? And upon this Jesus answers and says: Yea, for "God so loved the world," etc.

The world, that is, all men were lost; for all were transgressors of God's commandments. And God had said: "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." And the Apostle also writes: "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." After God had passed such judgment upon men, their fate really was already sealed. What could men do against it? Nothing in time and eternity. And if now we should here find words as these: "For God so hated the world that he gave it over to its well-earned damnation," we should have no reason to be surprised. We could but say: "Thou art righteous, O Lord, and righteous are thy judgments." But what do we hear? "God so *loved*," etc. Behold, the world shall not perish; it shall be saved. Whence is this? It is of

God. God did not hate the world, as it had well deserved by its falling away from Him; but He *loved* the world. Why? Was it perhaps because He did not hate sin, because, after all, sin were not an abomination in His sight? No, most certainly not for this reason. The poor, lost world he loved, because He is gracious and merciful. Thus it has been forever. When He foresaw that man, whom He would create, would fall into sin and merit everlasting damnation, even then love and mercy stirred His heart, that He purposed to do everything to rescue and save the lost world. Who does not already see sufficiently from this, that the salvation of sinners is of God, and of God alone? Out of His own impulse, without even being reminded by anyone, out of His free and gracious will God tenders the lost sinners a heart full of love. From this it is already certain that, whosoever is saved, is under obligation to the grace of God alone.

But furthermore we hear, what in His love and mercy toward the lost world God has done. We read: "God *so* loved the world, *that He gave His only begotten Son.*" So ardent is God's love to the world, so powerful His desire to save the sinners, that He gave His only begotten Son. We know what is meant by this. The 14th verse tells us: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness," etc. So the Son of God did not merely come to this earth for a short and hasty visit; neither did He merely dwell for some time on earth in the form of a man in order to teach men how they might atone for their sins and save themselves. Such an easy matter it has not been even for almighty God to save them that were lost. It was a most arduous task. Obstacles that seemed insurmountable, had to be overcome for this purpose. The heavy guilt of men; the awful curse of the law, which for the sake of sin bore hard upon the transgressors; death, which they had earned, the power of the devil and of hell, into which they had fallen—all this had to be done away with. And for *this* task God has given

His Son. These obstacles He was to put out of the way, to prepare the path, to clear the road to heaven. For this purpose He was not only made man, but also spent His life on earth in deep humiliation, in obedience, as a servant, and finally, after severe and painful suffering, died on the cross. Behold, thus has God given His Son. He hath not spared His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all. Thus has God sent His Son, that the world might live through Him. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself." Thus we are now all reconciled unto God through the death of His Son.—Now I ask: What, then, is it if a sinner is saved? Is it his own merit, or is it God's grace? Grace, grace alone it is, everyone must confess. For God has not only made the beginning; He has not only gone half-way to meet men, leaving it to them to come the other half. Nor has He given men to understand that He would be lenient with regard to their sins, if only they would endeavor, as much as it were in their power, to expiate their guilt by mending their ways. No, He has come to them, and saved them from all sins and has taken away all that obstructed our way to salvation. What, then, remains to be done, that men must do or could do for their salvation? There remains for them but to praise and glorify the grace of God, because He so loved us and gave for us His Son. And since this grace has come upon all the world, then is it not man's fault alone, if still a great number perish?

II.

This is, indeed, evident, in the second place, also from the fact *that all who believe in Jesus Christ, are saved.* This we read in the 15th verse, and again here is our text. But what does this mean? Since God has given His Son for the redemption of the world, everything has in fact been done that was to be done. A complete and eternal redemption has been obtained. And this God causes to be preached to sinners, just as when to a condemned criminal who has

been pardoned you proclaim the joyful tidings, or as when to a revolting city it is made known that the sentence passed upon them shall not be executed, that the poor condemned people need fear no longer, but may rejoice. And now every sinner should believe these joyful tidings. He should believe and confess: true, I was lost because of my many sins, but, praise be to God, I am saved! God gave me His Son for a Savior, who loved me and offered Himself up for me. — One might perhaps still doubt of his salvation by the grace of God, if now, after God has given His Son, He should demand of sinners: First convert and reform yourselves, and pray diligently, and do all that you can, in a measure at least, to expiate your sins; then you shall be saved. If such were the gospel of our salvation, it would certainly no less be by man's own demerit if he were lost; but then it would also be, in part at least, by man's own merit if he were saved. And oh, how many are they who think it to be thus! But why? Perhaps because they have read this in Scripture? No, indeed; but because free grace seems to them too great, and because reason cannot comprehend that salvation should be given entirely as a free gift, and that man should do nothing for it. But Scripture is quite clear on this point. "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast." Eph. 2, 8. 9. Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. The publican believed that God would be merciful to him, and he went down to his house justified.

But notwithstanding all this, is it not still true, that the sinner must also perform something, before he can obtain grace? Is not this very faith his own accomplishment, his work? If one believes and trusts God, is not this a good work, a work which God demands in the first commandment? This opinion is widespread in our days and is proclaimed even by such as are called Lutherans. But they are very wrong. The very contrary is what Scripture

teaches. Just because we are saved by faith, therefore it is evident and certain, that a man can contribute nothing to his salvation, but it is entirely the work of grace if he is saved. Thus writes the Apostle: "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace." To a beggar a gift is not given because he takes it, but he takes it because it is given. Thus also God is not gracious to a sinner because the sinner believes in grace, but he believes in grace because God is gracious. Or do you think that the malefactor will thank himself in paradise for having believed that the Lord would graciously receive him? No, in all eternity he will extol the grace of God which has saved him. Therefore the words: "Whosoever believeth in the Son shall not perish,"—mean this: without any work or co-operation of men, out of mere grace, for Christ's sake by faith God will bestow salvation.

Oh, how ought we to thank God that such is the gospel of our salvation. Otherwise no sinner could take comfort by it. Praise and thanks be to God that He is so gracious, that He has not only given His Son as a Savior, that by faith in Him we should find comfort in Him. Now everyone can be saved. Yea, that with such grace even *one* sinner is *not* saved, is almost incomprehensible. For this man certainly must be blamed alone, simply because he does not believe, because he rejects the grace. For only he that believeth not shall be damned. "*He that believeth not is condemned already,*" etc. v. 18. Through sin man is under divine judgment. He is, therefore, already by nature a child of wrath. There is but one thing that stands above this judgment and sets it aside, or reverses it, that is grace. For this reason he that believeth on the Son and thus accepts grace, shall not be condemned. But if any person does not believe and thus will not accept the grace, then there remains nothing for him that might annul his judgment. He is and remains condemned. Therefore it is certainly true, etc.

III.

Finally, this is evident also from the fact, *that many do not attain to faith, merely because they persist in the love of sin.* If, perhaps, after all that we have now heard, we should ask: what, beyond what it has already done, could the grace of God do for them that do not believe and therefore perish? someone might answer: God might give them the faith which they lack. Let us enter upon this thought. It is true, this also, that some do believe, is the work of God, as we read Col. 2, 12: "Ye are risen through the faith of the operation of God." And in our Catechism we confess: I believe that I cannot by my own reason, etc. So also we heard yesterday from 2 Cor. 3, 18, that faith is of that image into which the Spirit has transformed and still daily transforms us. No one would become a believer, unless the grace of God converted him to faith and bestowed upon him faith. Yea, so truly, so entirely it is the work of God's grace, if a man becomes a Christian and is saved. Why is it, then, that so many to whom the gospel is also preached, do not believe and are not converted to faith? Is the grace of God unwilling to make them believers? No, this is not the reason. As truly as God has given His Son a Savior to all the world, as truly is He also willing to work in every heart the faith through which this Savior is known and apprehended. What is it, then, that prevents many from becoming believers? The answer we find in v. 19. 20: "And this is the condemnation," etc. Behold, this is the reason why so many, notwithstanding that Christ redeemed them and notwithstanding that the Holy Ghost is willing through the gospel to give them faith, yet remain in unbelief and therefore under judgment. The light shineth in the world, i. e., the light of the gospel, and the Holy Spirit is willing to enlighten by it all them that hear it, that they might repent, and know that hitherto they have lived and moved in sin, and that they might find the only

help and rescue in Christ and receive Him in faith. But what obtains in many? They will not know this; they will not stand exposed before God and their conscience as poor sinners; they will not repent and leave off from sin and, like the publican and the malefactor, as wholly unrighteous and damnable sinners take refuge with grace. Their previous life, their opinions, their principles, their words and deeds are indeed all utter darkness. This is made manifest in the light of the gospel. But they will not admit this, they will not have this revealed to them. They will not let their thoughts, words and deeds be counted for darkness, because they are not willing to abandon them: They love their own ways, love the darkness, love sin and will remain in it, and they are not willing to be disturbed in this by the light of the gospel. In short, for this reason only many do not obtain faith, because they persist in the love of sin. And, therefore, it is certainly true that they that are saved, etc.

Therefore, beloved Christians, let us continue to rejoice in the grace of our God, and to glorify and to praise it, for that it has done so much in our behalf. And let us not grow secure, but take care to abide by the gospel and remain in grace, then by the power of God's grace through faith we shall be kept unto salvation. But you, who have hitherto not been converted and made believers, you have no excuse. You are responsible for your present state, because you have loved darkness rather than light. Oh, do perceive this and be alarmed at it and do no longer resist the light of grace, for the Holy Ghost would gladly enlighten you too and convert you to faith. Then you shall not perish with the unbelievers, but with all the faithful you shall have eternal life. Amen.

C. C. S.

Transl. by J. F. C. S.
