

# THEOLOGICAL QUARTERLY.

VOL. II.

JANUARY 1898.

No. 1.

## Doctrinal Theology.

### THEOLOGY.

Theology in the narrower sense of the term is the doctrine of holy Scripture concerning the true God.

Theology in this sense must be distinguished from Natural Theology, which is a chapter in Philosophy, primarily inscribed in the book of Nature, "*the heavens declaring the glory of God, and the firmament showing his handiwork, day unto day uttering speech, and night unto night showing knowledge,*"<sup>1)</sup> so that "*the invisible things of God from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead.*"<sup>2)</sup> Thus it is that the fundamentals of natural theology swell the volumes of ancient philosophy, and the statement of modern ethnology that "there has not been a single tribe, no matter how rude, known in history or visited by travelers, which has been shown to be destitute of religion,"<sup>3)</sup> says nothing that is new to us who have it from higher authority that there is among all heathen some knowledge of God, since "*that which may be known*

1) Ps. 19, 1. 2.

2) Rom. 1, 20.

3) Brinton, Religions of primitive peoples, p. 30.

of the same one and indivisible Godhead with the Father and the Son, but personally *the Spirit*, not the begetting Person, nor the begotten Person, but the *spirated* Person, proceeding from the Father as the Spirit of God, the Father, and from the Son as the Spirit of Christ, the Son of God, personally the Spirit of the Persons who spirate him, the Spirit of God and of glory,<sup>1)</sup> τῆς δόξης, that glory which the Lord God will not give to another, essentially one God with the Father and the Son, yet personally neither the Father nor the Son, but the Holy Ghost. A. G.

(To be continued.)

---

## LUTHERAN POLEMICS.<sup>2)</sup>

The history of the Reformation is the history of a continuous war of nearly thirty years' duration. . . . On the one side stood Luther, a defenseless monk, with no weapon in his hand but the book of Scripture. . . . On the other side stood the Pope in full armor, with the temporal and the spiritual sword, as he called it, that is, political and ecclesiastical power, in his hand. . . . On the one hand stood error, on the other, the truth; on the one side the word of man, on the other, the word of God; and, above all, on the one hand stood, invisibly, Jesus Christ, the King of Truth and Captain of our salvation, with all his holy angels; on the other, Satan, the prince of darkness and perdition, with all his infernal host. . . .

But the history of the Reformation is not only the history of a war with foreign powers, but also that of a spiritual civil war. The Swiss preacher Zwingli, having at

---

1) 1 Pet. 4, 14.

2) This treatise is a translation of the greater part of a sermon by the late Doctor C. F. W. Walther.

first agreed with Luther and with him valiantly fought for the word of God against the man-made doctrines of Popery, soon fell away and declared it contrary to reason to believe that Christ's body and blood is in the Eucharist. Luther was horrified to see that Zwingli endeavored to substitute human reason for the Pope. Thus it was that after an exchange of polemical writings between Luther and Zwingli a decisive battle was fought at Marburg in the colloquy of 1529. Whether the word of the true and almighty Son of God, "*This is my body, this is my blood,*" should stand, whether the word of God should yield to reason, or reason to the word of God, was the second *casus belli*, the second great issue of war which was to be settled at Marburg. And, thanks be to God, Luther again held his ground. As he had vindicated the word of God against papal authority at Worms, he vindicated the same word of God at Marburg against the authority of human reason. . . .

And now, how is it? Has the victory of the Reformation brought peace to the church. No, indeed. The church above shall be a church triumphant; but here beneath she must remain a church militant even to the sound of the last trumpet. To this every page of the word of God bears witness. Thus St. Jude writes: "*Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.*" We cannot and dare not abandon the good fight for the true and pure doctrine of our church. Why not? Because the pure doctrine of our church is not a property of our own, but a sacred trust committed to us for faithful stewardship. Because the loss of this jewel would be a far more fearful disaster than strife and contention among men can ever be. Because this struggle, being carried on in accordance with the command of God, will surely be crowned in time and eternity by the blessing of God.

We know, there are those who object to what they term "this unceasing wrangling and quarreling" as being contrary to charity, and who chiefly for this reason hold that the time had come when the struggle for the pure doctrine of our church should cease. Christ, they say, tells us in explicit words: "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye *love* one another." They point to the words of St. John: "He that loveth not his brother abideth in death;" and to the words of St. Paul: "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity." They call our attention to the Galatians, who, because of their wranglings and contentions, had been severely reprovéd by the Apostle, who in his epistle to them, said: "If ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another."

True, however, as it is that brotherly love is an indispensable criterion of true Christianity, that without charity all the Christian virtues are an empty show, and all, even the most exalted talents are unprofitable, and that uncharitable wrangling and quarreling can be productive of nothing but evil: still this is by no means a reason why we should hold that the time had now come for us to discontinue the struggle for the pure doctrine of our church. . . . Of the true faith, St. Jude says, that it is "*once delivered unto the saints.*" The true faith, or, which is the same, the pure doctrine, is *delivered* to the saints, not conveyed to them as their property, to lord it over and with a high hand to dispose of it, but only confided to them as a sacred trust, which, remaining the property of another, of God, they are to guard and administer as obedient servants and faithful stewards. Now, then, does charity demand of a steward that he should make presents of a trust confided to him, or that he absolve his master's debtors of any part of their indebtedness, or that he quietly suffer the treasures of his

lord, which were delivered to him for safekeeping, to be taken from him? Was it charity, when that steward said unto the debtor, who owed his lord a hundred measures of oil: "Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty"? Was not that rather unfaithfulness, yea, fraud and theft? Does not Christ on that account call him an *unjust* steward? Or if a general, to avoid a contest and forego fighting, permitted the enemy to make even a small breach in the wall he had been ordered to defend: would that be charity? Would not that general be called to account and punished as a traitor? Or is it love, to rob others of their property for the benefit of the poor? Had Luther practiced charity, if he had silenced the truth when its open profession led to strife and contention? And, we ask, if *we* should now discontinue the struggle for the pure doctrine of the Lutheran church, which was delivered, entrusted to us for faithful stewardship; if we should abandon that truth, to gain the friendship of men, and to be credited with charitableness and love of peace:—would that be charity? No, no, not love of the brethren, not love of our neighbor, much less the love of God, but self-love; not faithful stewardship over the high trust confided to us by God, but a disgraceful embezzlement of another's property, yea, nothing short of veritable theft and robbery in God's sight. And thieves shall not inherit eternal life. It well behoves our charity for the sake of peace to yield in things which are at our disposal, but not in things not of our own, but of another's giving. Our love should be ready to sacrifice to our neighbor all we have, even our lives, if it must be; but not that which is not our own, but the property of another. . . . And now, this doctrine is not our property, which we might be at liberty to give away; it is God's own property, which we hold in trust as stewards, and which it is our duty to preserve not only to ourselves, but to all Christendom, yea, to all the world, and to leave and transmit intact to remote posterity. And on that great day of reckoning, God will, with reference to

the pure doctrine of his word, which he has entrusted to the Lutheran church, say to every one of us: "Give an account of thy stewardship." No doubt, it is a poignant disgrace to stand accused of being a heartless and uncharitable wretch, a disgrace which would fain break the heart of many a champion of God's truth, but which it was at all times and everywhere the lot of God's faithful soldiers to bear. In witness whereof our fathers say, and we with them, in the confessions of our church: "*To separate from so many men of many lands and profess a separate doctrine, is a burdensome thing. But here is God's command, that every man should beware of being agreed with those who teach false doctrine.*"<sup>1)</sup> . . .

Yes, indeed, that in all Christendom there should be unceasing contention and endless warfare, not only among the various churches and denominations, but even among members of one and the same church, is a fact so distressing that words of human speech and tears of human eyes cannot adequately bewail and mourn it. Or is it not a deplorable thing that those who would be children of the same heavenly Father, servants of the same Savior, temples of the same Spirit, should make war upon each other? Is it not distressing that those who should stand abreast in a common fight against the innumerable and powerful enemies of Christianity are in arms against one another? Surely, Satan rejoices and shouts as he beholds the dissensions among Christians. Many unbelievers take offense, and are deterred from becoming Christians by the thought that a religion whose adherents are, so to say, cutting and tearing each other, cannot be the true and only saving religion. Many weak and feeble Christians lose faith in the Christian religion and as backsliders return to the world. Should not these considerations induce us to discontinue the struggle for pure doctrine, and, as Isaiah prophesied,

---

1) Smalcald Articles, App. I, M. p. 337.

beat our swords into plowshares and our spears into pruning-hooks, make peace with all Christians, extend to them the hand of reconciliation and fellowship and unite with them in one great congregation of peace? Certainly, if a wholesome universal peace could be purchased with our blood, no Lutheran, and especially no Lutheran minister, should deem his blood too precious, but for so grand a purpose shed it with a thousand joys. And yet we may not discontinue the struggle for the pure doctrine of our church. St. Jude, as he was giving all diligence to write of *the common salvation*, deemed it needful to exhort the Christians that they should *earnestly contend for the faith* which was once delivered unto the saints. Nothing less than our common salvation is at stake. . . . If we contended for gold and silver, for honor among men, for ease and comfort, or other temporal things, then woe to us if we persisted though the peace of the world and the church be disturbed, though unbelievers and the weak in faith be offended, though the work of God be thereby hindered. But the case is different when we contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints. Here we do not contend for temporal, but for the eternal treasures; not for human glory, but for the glory of God; not for this present life, but for the life to come, in short, for our common salvation. And therefore all the prophets and apostles, even Christ himself, unceasingly contended for the pure faith, and Christ explicitly states: "*Think not that I am come to send peace on earth; I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household.*"<sup>1)</sup> The discord which arises as we contend for the pure faith is not a baneful, but a blissful discord, which Christ is come into the world not to abolish and prohibit, but to send and to incite.

---

1) Matt. 10, 34—36.

Of course, if no one adulterated the word of God, no struggle would be required, and contention would be a grave and fearful sin. But Satan, the world, and the flesh are continually bent upon falsifying the word of God or the pure doctrine, and never before has such perversion been carried on so variously and extensively as at the present time, so that in our day millions are being carried off into eternal death by the poison of false doctrine. Can we and dare we, in view of this, be silent, merely to avoid the disturbance of temporal peace? Which is more terrible, that men should be deprived of temporal peace, or that they should be robbed of the word of God, by which alone our souls can be saved? Is not the salvation of our souls to be prized more highly than all the world? Does not Christ truly say: "*What is a man profited, if he gain the whole world,*" including also the peace of the whole world, "*and lose his own soul*"? <sup>1)</sup>

Suppose that in the fourth century, when Arius assailed the doctrine of the divinity of Christ, neither Athanasius nor any one else had contended against this false doctrine; suppose that in the fifth century, when the doctrine of man's conversion by grace alone was assailed by Pelagius, neither Augustine nor any one else had contended against that perversion of the truth; suppose that in the sixteenth century, when the entire doctrine of Christ had been adulterated by papal Rome, neither Luther nor any one else had contended against such adulteration; suppose that about a century ago, when rationalism invaded the Christian church, no one had contended against such inroads: surely, the world would have seen far less of strife and discord; but where would the pure word of God be found to-day? Where would the Lutheran church now be? Where would the present generation find the true way of salvation? All this would long ago have disappeared forever from the face of the earth, and thus the salvation of innumerable souls would be undone.

---

1) Matt. 16, 26.



No; that errorists are ever and ever assailing the pure doctrine of our church and thereby causing continual strife and discord in the church, is certainly a mournful and lamentable thing; but that God ever and ever raises up men who valiantly withstand those errorists is not a cause of mourning and lamenting, but of praise and thanks to God; for, to repeat it, our common salvation is at stake.

Finally, there are not a few, even among well-meaning Christians, who admit that it will not do to avoid or repudiate each and every struggle for the true doctrine, but that, on the contrary, it may at times prove necessary to combat error with might and main. Thus it was very proper, they will say, that three centuries and a half ago Luther made a heroic fight for the pure Gospel and to his dying hour lion-like combated the errors of popery, and hence his struggle was crowned with success in a measure unrivaled in the history of the church. But, they will continue, now the time has come when the fight for the pure doctrine of our church must cease, and, instead of making war upon each other, we must join each other in works of peace and exchange the trowel for the sword. For, what has come of all strife and struggle in our day? Nothing but greater dissension and confusion.

But however well such advocates of peace may mean, they are thoroughly and radically wrong. In the first place, it is not true that nothing but greater dissension and confusion has been the outcome of all these years of contention for the pure doctrine of our church. On the contrary, it must be said to the Glory of God, that in consequence of these holy wars the church of the Reformation with her doctrine, pure and unalloyed, as gold from the crucible, has risen as from the dead; more than a thousand congregations have again rallied around the venerable standards of our church, and from America the voice of the old, true Gospel has issued forth through all lands, everywhere enlisting new adherents of the truth and marshalling them

round about the noble banner of our God-fearing fathers. Others, thousands upon thousands, who had been at the point of utterly abandoning the ancient and unperishable faith, have been thereby induced either to come to a standstill on the road of error, or more and more to retrace their steps toward the pathway of truth, from which they had swerved. Thus God has above all that we may have hoped, asked or thought, abundantly and gloriously blessed these struggles.

And though this were not so; though it seemed that in these our latter days all these holy wars in defense of the pure doctrine had proved utterly unsuccessful and in vain: yet we may not and must not abandon the fight. Why not? Because God himself has in clear and explicit words enjoined upon all "*them that are sanctified by God the Father,*"<sup>1)</sup> upon all Christians, the solemn duty of "*contending for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.*" . . . What else do we require? Where is the man, yea, even the angel who should venture to say: "Do not contend!" when God says: "*Contend!*" And when we fight at God's own command, we must never fear that our fight may be in vain. He who performs what God commands, cannot but be blessed in time and eternity. . . . Yea, even though we should on account of our struggle for the pure doctrine of our church stand disgraced before men to the last day, if we but persevere, remaining firm and steadfast in the fight, as surely as God is just and true, the last day shall be our coronation day, and all eternity shall be an everlasting celebration of victory and peace for all the innumerable host of God's own warriors from Adam to the last of the faithful champions who shall triumph at the throne of God.

A. G.

---

1) Jude 1.