

# THEOLOGICAL QUARTERLY.

1916

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VOL. XX.

JANUARY, 1916.

No. 1.

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## DID GOD HAVE TO BE RECONCILED BY THE DEATH OF CHRIST?

Paul speaks of "the offense of the cross." (Gal. 5, 11.) He was conscious of the scandalizing effect which his preaching of Christ crucified was continually producing in the world of secular culture and in the world of mechanical religiousness. (1 Cor. 1, 22. 23.) There was a spiritual heroism connected with his ministry, of which many glimpses are afforded the reader of Paul's writings; but it is doubtful whether the quality and extent of this heroism is generally and fully appreciated. Paul had been a devout devotee of the most sanctimonious type of Pharisaism. He was not unacquainted with Greek learning and art. He embraced the cause of the condemned criminal on Calvary with the distinct feeling that he was making a sacrifice. His "knowledge of Jesus Christ" cost him "the loss of all things." (Phil. 3, 7. 8.) His sensitive heart felt the sneer and haughty scorn that greeted the bearer of the tidings of reconciliation which the death of the Nazarene prophet was supposed to have effected between the angry God and rebel man. (Rom. 1, 16.) He was aware that the miseries attending his apostolate reflected the sufferings of the Redeemer (Gal. 6, 17); yea, that no herald of the atoning sacrifice by which God was appeased once for all time could look for a more favorable reception of his evangelical message from the self-wise and self-righteous world than that which had been accorded him. (2 Tim. 1, 8.) The offense of the cross must be perpetual.

## JOHN 17, 20—24.

(Concluded.)

V. 22. *Καὶ τὴν δόξαν ἣν δέδωκάς μοι δέδωκα αὐτοῖς, ἵνα ὧσιν ἐν καθῶς ἡμεῖς ἐν.* (Tischendorf.)

*Καὶ*, in some MSS *καὶ ἐγὼ*, placed at the beginning for emphasis. In this verse Christ shows that He Himself has begun the work of which He asks the completion, and He rests His petitions on this fact. The *τὴν δόξαν* of this verse has been variously understood and interpreted. The word means praise, honor, glory. The Septuagint most frequently uses it for the Hebrew כבוד, several times also for נִיחָה and נִיחָה, etc. Most commentators apply this term *glory* to the kingdom which is to come, and the word *give* (*δέδωκας*, perfect of *δίδομι*; Hebrew, נָתַן) to a property only by *right* (thus Meyer, Reuss, De Wette, Luthardt). But this seems to anticipate the meaning of v. 24. Godet's explanation seems the most natural: "Jesus starts in v. 22 from a fact already accomplished, in order to make it the point of departure for a coming good (v. 23), which will precede the final glory (v. 24). We read, v. 24, that the glory of Jesus consists in being the eternal object of the Father's love; the glory which He has communicated to believers is, therefore, the becoming by faith what He is essentially, the objects of this same divine love; cf. v. 23 ('That Thou hast loved them as Thou hast loved Me') and v. 26 ('That the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them and I in them'). This glory, which is that of adoption, Jesus has communicated to His own by bringing things to this point,—that God can, without obscuring His holiness, convey to them the love which He has for Jesus Himself. By this means we understand the following clause: 'That they may be one as we are' (scilicet, *ἕσμεν*). This love of the Father, of which they are all the objects in common, unites them closely among themselves, and makes them all one family, of which Jesus is the elder Brother."

V. 23. Ἐγὼ ἐν αὐτοῖς καὶ σὺ ἐν ἐμοί, ἵνα ὡσιν τετελειωμένοι εἰς ἓν, ἵνα γινώσκη ὁ κόσμος ὅτι σὺ με ἀπέστειλας καὶ ἠγάπησας αὐτοὺς καθὼς ἐμὲ ἠγάπησας. (Tischendorf.)

This verse is not merely a repetition of what is stated in vv. 21. 22. But it describes more fully the mode of the unity, or, as Luthardt says: "This verse defines more closely this great analogy of the fellowship, and states the aim of it. The fellowship of the Father with the Son is to find its complement in that of Christ with His own followers, in order by the fulness of the latter fellowship to bring the world to the knowledge of the Son of God." The disciples are to be perfected into one (τετελειωμένοι—perfect passive of τελειῶ, equivalent to τέλειον ποιῶ, to make perfect or complete, accomplish, finish, bring to an end). To be perfected into one is to be perfectly united, or, as it has also been translated: "So shall they come to perfect unity." Here Luther must exclaim: "See how His mouth overflows with one kind of words!" The aim of this admirable unity is, "that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me" (γινώσκη from γινώσκω; Hebrew וָיָדָע; Latin, nosco). In v. 21 we have ἵνα ὁ κόσμος πιστεύῃ; here: ἵνα γινώσκη ὁ κόσμος. These two verbs are very evidently not synonyms. The term *know* includes with the *faith* of the believers (v. 21) the forced *conviction* of rebels. The example of the Christians must perforce leave an impression on the world. Already here on earth the world shall be forced to acknowledge the divine mission of Christ. But this reference, no doubt, goes beyond things earthly. It is quite clearly a reference to the universal homage, voluntary or involuntary, which shall be rendered to Christ, especially on the last day, as we read: "That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things in earth and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2, 10. 11), and again, Rom. 14, 10—12: "We shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. For it is written, As

I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So, then, every one of us shall give account of himself to God." Here on earth the change that has taken place in the believers shall force recognition from the world that certainly the Savior who could effect such a change must be sent by the Father. On the last day the world, that is, especially the unbelieving section of the world, shall be *made* to acknowledge that this Jesus of Nazareth whom they rejected is a Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

*Καὶ ἠγάπησας αὐτοὺς καθὼς ἐμὲ ἠγάπησας*, "and hast loved them as Thou hast loved Me." This completes the clause beginning with *ὅτι*. The world is to recognize, by seeing this bond of unity existing between the believers themselves and between them and Christ, that the Father has really loved them with the same paternal love (the love to them as children by adoption) that He at all times manifested towards the Son. Because they were one with the Savior (v. 23), He had to love them as He loved His only-begotten Son; and here the world, by seeing the Christians *live* Christianity, is to bear testimony to this fact. Thus the argument of v. 22 concerning the *δόξα* there spoken of is also justified as consisting in their being the objects of God's divine love.

In this connection it is interesting to note that *ἀγαπᾶν* is used and not *φιλεῖν*. Thayer explains the difference in the use of these two verbs thus: "The former (*ἀγαπᾶν*), by virtue of its connection with *ἀγαμαι*, properly denotes a love founded in admiration, veneration, esteem, like the Latin *diligere*, to be kindly disposed to one, wish one well; but *φιλεῖν* denotes an inclination prompted by sense and emotion, Latin *amare*. Hence men are said *ἀγαπᾶν* God, not *φιλεῖν*; and God is said *ἀγαπᾶσαι τὸν κόσμον*, and *φιλεῖν* the disciples of Christ; Christ bids us *ἀγαπᾶν* (not *φιλεῖν*) *τοὺς ἐχθρούς*, because love as an emotion cannot be commanded, but only love as a choice."

Daechsel, in his commentary, has a most wonderful interpretation of the word *κόσμος* (world) used in this verse. He explains it as being "the heathen outside the Church and

still on earth, who are, however, no longer tempted by Satan," and refers to Rev. 20, 3 as proof of his assertion. We shall, perhaps, have occasion to look at this statement again before the close of this paper.

V. 24. *Πατήρ, ὃ δέδωκάς μοι, θέλω ἵνα ὅπου εἶμι ἐγὼ κακεῖνοι ᾧσιν μετ' ἐμοῦ, ἵνα θεωρῶσιν τὴν δόξαν τὴν ἐμήν, ἣν δέδωκάς μοι ὅτι ἠγάπησάς με πρὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου.* (Tischendorf.) (Father, I will that that which Thou hast given Me be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which Thou hast given Me; for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world.)

In this verse there is pointed out to us the final end of the ways of God towards the Church of Christ, its participation in the *glory* of the Son of God. *This verse gives us the key to the correct understanding and interpretation of this whole section of Christ's sacerdotal prayer.*

Christ has now, as it were, reached the very climax of His prayer *περὶ τῶν πιστευόντων*. And so His petition becomes more and more urgent, more and more intense and decided. No longer does He simply "ask" or "pray" (*ἔρωτῶ*, v. 20), but *θέλω*, "I will,"—very emphatic. In fact, this is the only time Jesus uses this strong word. He does not merely wish, but "nunc incrementum sumit oratio; rogat Jesus cum iure et postulat cum fiducia, ut Filius, non ut servus" (the prayer now takes an increase; Jesus requests of right, and demands with confidence, as a Son, not as a servant). (Bengel.) Each time He desires to impress His petition on the Father, as more than ordinarily important; He calls Him by name; so here: *Πατήρ*. And now, what is the special burden of His prayer here? It is: *ὃ δέδωκάς μοι, θέλω*. The relative clause, *ὃ δέδωκάς μοι*, is placed first for emphasis. "That which Thou hast given Me." Tischendorf has here *ὃ*, while Textus Receptus has *οὓς* (those whom Thou hast given Me). It seems that the *ὃ δέδωκάς* of Tischendorf is probably the true reading (that which Thou hast given Me); it brings out the unity of the believers, that perfect *ἔν* which the body

of the elect will form (v. 23). The  $\delta$  brings out the fact that it is not the apostles He here refers to (He has finished His prayer for them with v. 19), but to the body of believers, the congregation of saints, the Holy Christian Church on earth. The  $\delta$  refers collectively to this body of believers, the invisible Church. This Church He wills to be with Him where He is, and to share His glory. He asks that the Church Invisible may be transformed into the Church Triumphant.  $\theta\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\omega$  is used here and not  $\beta\omicron\upsilon\lambda\omicron\mu\alpha\iota$ . Authorities seem to agree that  $\beta\omicron\upsilon\lambda\omicron\mu\alpha\iota$  designates the will which follows deliberation, while  $\theta\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\omega$  denotes the will which proceeds from inclination. Some linguists, however, reverse this order. In any case, it is very evident that Jesus here gives expression to His last will and testament, and He knows it to be in absolute harmony with His heavenly Father's will, hence the absolute  $\theta\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\omega$ . And what is His will? What is it He so earnestly demands? It is, that *that which the Father has given Him shall be with Him where He is*. Notice here that Christ uses exactly the same terminology with respect to the believers that was used regarding the apostles,—they are given Him by the Father (cf. vv. 9. 11. 12). Notice also the emphasis He places on every word: "*Οπου εἰμι ἐγὼ καὶ οἱ ἄλλοι μετ' ἐμοῦ*". I will that, where *I* am, they shall be with *Me* also. This future fellowship shall, therefore, find its true glory in Christ Jesus, in being where He is. But how can any but the true believers be eternally where He is? How can any one use this passage in any sense whatever in referring even remotely to the visible Church? The more we study the words before us, the more we must become convinced that Jesus' prayer embraces only the true believers, the elect from every nation, the invisible Church, excluding even the *Zeitgläubigen*, those who believe only for a time, but are not faithful till death. How any one could arrive at any other conclusion from these words as they stand is difficult to see. The  $\delta\omicron\upsilon\mu\epsilon\tau\epsilon\kappa\epsilon\iota$  is, of course, a reference to the house not built with hands eternally in heaven, where we shall see our Savior face to face.

And now, what is the final end of this petition? What is it that shall constitute the greatest blessedness for those who are the object of His *θέλω*? It is *ἵνα θεωρῶσιν τὴν δόξαν τὴν ἐμήν* (that they may behold My glory which Thou hast given Me; for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world). *θεωρῶσιν*, —Septuagint for *ἠῶν* and Chaldean, *ἠῶν*, —to be a spectator, look at, behold, equivalent to the German “schauen.” Also, to get knowledge of, partake of; *τὴν δόξαν τοῦ Χριστοῦ*, to be a partaker of the glory, *i. e.*, the blessed condition in heaven, which Christ enjoys. *Τὴν ἐμήν*, My glory, very emphatic, — a glory which belongs to Me. It is a glory given Him by the Father, hence not exactly the premundane glory which He had from the beginning; for this glory is not spoken of as having been given Him. We are rather to think that it is the glory to whose full enjoyment He, as the Incarnate One, who has now accomplished His heavenly Father’s will, now passes over, enriched as it now is by the results of His redeeming work. Through His perfect obedience, even to death, yea, even to the death of the cross, He has won this glory, not only for Himself, but also for all those that are His. This glory the *elect* shall enjoy, or, as Bengel puts it: “spectent, fruentes” (let them behold, enjoying).

“*Ὅτι ἡγάπησάς με πρὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου.*” “*Ὅτι* is a causal conjunction meaning “for,” “the reason why anything is said to be or done, because, since, for that.” “*Ὅτι* is used for *εἰς ἐκεῖνο ὅτι* (in reference to the fact that, which, put into English, would read: seeing that, in that). “*Ὅτι*, therefore, means “in that,” and serves to explain wherein this glory of the Son consists: it is in having been the eternal object of the Father’s love. *Πρὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου*, before the foundation of the world. These words are added in order to show, as Luthardt says, “that the eternal future is based upon the eternal past. For even before the world the Father saw and loved in the Son the bearer and future executor of the divine loving will. With this, moreover, the future glory was also codetermined.” Is there any glory to be compared with this

glory? Through the redemptive work accomplished by Jesus, we, too, who believe, shall share this glory, *i. e.*, be made the objects of the Father's eternal love. Then shall we know as we are known; then shall we see face to face; then shall faith and hope have passed away, and loving fellowship shall have become our inheritance; yes, then shall we not only understand the essence of the Triune God, but we shall, in a sense, be made partakers thereof. Can greater glory than this come to the believing Church of Christ, to His true saints? And still we have Christ's sacerdotal prayer as a convincing testimony of the fact that such glory shall one time be granted the elect. And must we not, in conclusion, here see an analogy in what Paul later writes to the Romans (8, 29. 30): "For whom He did foreknow He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the First-born among many brethren. Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called; and whom He called, them He also justified; and whom He justified, them He also glorified"?

Accordingly, we are convinced that this last part of Christ's sacerdotal prayer has certain well-defined limitations, and we have no right to press the words to mean something that He who uttered them did not intend them to mean. As the words stand, the prayer cannot include anything but the invisible Church, the congregation of true believers, those enjoying the fellowship of the Father and the Son, the communion of saints, the direct heirs of life everlasting. The whole prayer, indeed, has to do with none but such as enjoy membership in this invisible congregation of believers. Christ prays but for Himself as the Author, the apostles as the mediating agency, and the believers as the object, of His saving grace.

The thought contained in these petitions seems clearly to proceed along a descending and an ascending scale. Notice the descending scale; and here we must think of the *persons* prayed for:—



a) Christ prays, first of all, for Himself, that He may be glorified. As the Author and Finisher of our salvation it is only natural that, as the chief figure, the Father should glorify Him.

b) Next He prays for the apostles, the Eleven, that they may be kept to the end. As the mediators of the salvation accomplished by Him, they are a step lower than He is. But all these Eleven (not Judas; for he has himself made an exception in his case) undoubtedly belonged to the elect, and were to be glorified.

c) The believers are on a step lower than the apostles in His thoughts. They were to be saved through faith in the apostles' word. But all of these for whom He here prays are also to see His glory, v. 24.

The ascending scale becomes evident when we consider the *comparative difficulties* in the fulfilment of each succeeding petition:—

a) That Christ should see glory follows from the nature of the case. He has glorified the Father on the earth, He has finished His work, v. 4; therefore the Father must glorify Him, vv. 4. 5.

b) In the case of the Eleven this was fraught with greater difficulties. They were yet in the world, and the world would hate them. But as the bearers of His mission they, too, must be kept, sanctified, glorified.

c) The most difficult task, humanly speaking, was in the case of the believers, the objects of this mission. In the first place, they must become believers through the Word, they must be kept in the intimate fellowship with Christ and the Father, they had their mission over against an unbelieving world; but they, too, were the objects of His divine love as well as of the love of the Father. Therefore they must, in spite of all the difficulties that, humanly speaking, stood in their way,—they *must* see His glory, v. 24; and so Christ raises Himself to the grand climax of this prayer in His divine *θέλω*, “I *will* that that which Thou hast given Me

shall be with Me where I am," v. 24. As far as I can see, Christ, however, only prays for the *possible*, and, according to this interpretation, *the final glory of all here prayed for* is not only possible, but has been, and will continue to be, accomplished.

There are objections to this view. The burden of the criticism that is leveled against this interpretation bases its argument on what Christ here says shall be a manifestation of the prayed-for unity, namely, that the world may believe and the world may know, vv. 21. 23. However, it has been shown that this is the faith worked in the believers through the word of the apostles, the faith that unites them intimately with the Father and the Son, and again with each other; it is the manifestation of this faith that shall make the world both believe and know that He has been sent by the Father. When we as Christians show our faith in holy living, then we are making possible the fulfilment of this prayer,—that the world may believe and know. Surely, it is not wrong to conclude this here; for Scripture expressly states our faith to be the victory that overcometh the world. Cf. 1 John 5, 4. 5: "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?"

Certainly, we cannot make the assertion that the outward union of the Christian Church has been the means of bringing the world to Christ, unless we wish to sanction the claims of the Catholic Church that it, because of its union, or unity, as you please, is the only saving church. Nor do we, I dare say, wish to assert that to this day Christendom has lived in continual error as regards Christ's sacerdotal prayer. If that should be the sense of this prayer, that the Christian Church must present a united front against the world in order to be a means of bringing the world to a recognition of His divine origin, then, indeed, we have hitherto lived in error, Christ's prayer has not been fulfilled, nor are there any indications

that it will be fulfilled here on earth. And since Christ says: "When I come again, shall there be faith on the earth?" we have reasons to believe that He never thought Christendom would realize outward unity. To hope for outward unity would be, virtually, to discount entirely the reality and presence of sin in this world.

But if we make Christ's prayer embrace the members of the invisible Church, as, indeed, the words declare, then His prayer has been fulfilled both in the Apostolic Church and in the Church of succeeding ages, is being fulfilled at present throughout Christendom, and shall be fulfilled till the end of the world. For through the preaching of the Word countless souls have been brought to believe, through it they have become members of the one, true Christian Church, and by their faith they have also entered glory.

That this is the primary sense, and the only real sense, of this passage, seems entirely clear. Only in a secondary sense could certain parts of this section be made to apply to the outward, visible Church. And even then it would be absolutely impossible to carry such an idea through to its natural conclusion with v. 24. For I take it that there are not many who desire to claim that it is the visible Church that one time shall be where Christ is, and shall see Him in His glory. And if the argument cannot be carried through to its final and proper conclusion with v. 24, have we any right to attempt to use this passage in any such interest?

Those who object to the interpretation presented must take upon themselves the burden of explaining how Christ can say of *all members of the visible Church* (notice this) that they are *one* with Him and the Father, that they have been *given* Him by the Father, and that *all these shall see and share His glory*, yes, that it is His *firm will* that they shall all be with Him in glory. How about the hypocrites,—the tares among the wheat, etc.?

While, by holding the view that Christ here prays only for those who are really His, the prayer remains in complete

harmony with the teachings of Scripture, by holding the opposite view, we encounter the greatest difficulties, yea, we stand in danger of making false conclusions, conclusions that the Word of God gives us no right to make. If Christ here prays for the visible Church, then we must conclude that a time is coming when all Christendom will stand united, a doctrine that naturally resolves itself into that held by the Chiliasts and others. And that is just exactly what is being done. Notice how Daechsel falls into this error, when, by way of explaining this passage, he says: "From this it is evident that the Lord, after He, in v. 21, has had the beginning of the evolution of His congregation in mind, . . . now considers the end of this development. We, on our part, have not this last before us, but are much more, by v. 22, referred entirely to that prophetic word which later on was entrusted to St. John in his Book of Revelation, and if this book is as yet to a great extent closed to our present understanding, we must not marvel at the fact that the proper understanding of Christ's prayer is also to a great extent closed to commentators. The reader will, however, be able to surmise as much as it is possible regarding the future, when he compares the above-mentioned passages from the Revelation of St. John with the explanation given in this commentary. He will not hesitate at the thought of the schism in the present Church, which as yet, no doubt, gives no intimation of the fulfilment of Christ's prayer, but only enjoys *that* blessing from it that it is not entirely destroyed by this continued strife, but in spite of this proceeds onward toward a higher goal, — with a hopeful spirit he turns toward *that Zion-church of Rev. 14 and the so-called millennium of Rev. 20*, although he personally can be neither a member of that congregation nor share in that kingdom. For us the comfort against the future lies in the following v. 24" (literal translation).

Thank God that, when we believe, we may find comfort, not only in this verse, but in this whole prayer. As believers we have the right to consider ourselves the objects of Christ's

earnest petition. As members of the congregation of saints we may derive true comfort from it; yes, because we believe that we are believers and the objects of Christ's sacerdotal prayer, we can glory in this His last will and testament to us, and so be assured of victory over sin and of final salvation; for listen,—even now can we hear the echo of that gloriously powerful, saving prayer: "Father, I *will* that that which Thou hast given Me be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which Thou hast given Me; for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world."

(While preparing this paper, I did not have access to Luther's commentary on this passage; hence the few citations from Luther. Since then, however, I have read his exposition of these verses. What he says gives me no reason to change anything of what I have written. In fact, I can find no word of his that would indicate that he understood this passage otherwise than I have, in my humble way, attempted to set forth in this thesis.)

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