

HENRIC SCHARTAU  
AND  
THE ORDER OF GRACE

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Fifteen Sermons by Henric Schartau

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AUGUSTANA BOOK CONCERN  
Rock Island, Illinois

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ROCK ISLAND, ILL.  
AUGUSTANA BOOK CONCERN, PUBLISHERS  
1928

## Septuagesima.

### (Outline).

*Behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last. Luke 13. 30.*

The Lord Jesus says that there will be a peculiar interchange of places in His glorious kingdom, quite different from that which might reasonably be expected.

A. Some who have been known as being outside of the kingdom of God's grace will, contrary to the expectations of many, be found to be within that glorious kingdom.

No one who at the time of his death stands outside of the kingdom of grace will ever be found within the kingdom of glory.

But some who have lived in such a way that all who have had knowledge in the Word of God might know that they were not true Christians become such, though the world which saw their former condition may not have observed the latter.

B. Some who were expected to be seen in the kingdom of glory will not be seen there.

Fear not, O sorrowful heart! No one who, by reason of the Word of God, can be expected in the kingdom of glory, shall be wanting there.

But some who have been called by grace and have

apparently attained to faith have nevertheless remained in their natural condition; and some who have had the true faith have fallen away. These shall be missed in heaven, though it appeared as if they would surely come there.

C. Many who have been expected to receive an exceptionally great degree of glory shall be found to be but barely saved.

Those who have had great gifts, who have been sanctified by grace, and who have thus been brilliant, but nevertheless in personal character fundamentally weak — these belong here.

Those who have had exalted positions and who, by virtue of this, have shown enlightenment and power, but who have in themselves been weak — these may also belong here.

D. Some who have been considered humble and of low degree shall there be first, indeed, some who have had slight gifts and who have had external faults so that they scarcely seemed to be Christians.

### The Text.

*Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? Even so run, that ye may attain.* 1 Cor. 9. 24—10. 5.

In Greece, and especially in the city of Corinth to which the apostle wrote this letter, there were among other physical exercises also those of races on specially made race-tracks. A large number of young people, even from far distant countries, came to take part in the games. After due training, to which belonged temperance in all things, they all exerted themselves to the

utmost to reach the goal first and thus to receive the prize.

The apostle here finds an analogy to the racing for the kingdom of God. He imagines how the athletes rushed on, and he urges the Christian racers to all the more eagerness, inasmuch as they are racing for a crown of greater glory. We can well understand how it frequently happened that some who were last at the beginning of the race gathered strength and advanced to be among the first, and vice versa.

### Proposition.

#### A GREAT INTERCHANGE OF PLACES ON THE WAY TO HEAVEN

- I. The last become first.
- II. The first become last.

### First Part.

#### *The Last Become First.*

The last are also on the way, though they are last at the very first beginning of the race. They have a heartfelt desire to hear and read the Word of God, and they are often moved thereby, though nothing more. They have not yet been enlightened by the Word to see their depravity, nor have they been moved by its power to seek after salvation.

A. Some remain last. There are last which shall be first, says the Saviour, and this implies that not all who are last shall be first, but only a few. "Awake up righteously, and sin not; for some have no knowledge of God." Some Corinthians were awakened, but

not rightly awake, persons who knew not God, but remained lying in their sins.

There are some who gladly hear and read the Word, and are moved to tears, but nothing more. Some can remain in this condition for many years. They are "ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." They are being driven by their learning in the Scriptures and appear to be in the race, but they get nowhere; they ever remain last.

B. Some attain a righteous life in Christ, though they do not become first. They were for some time, perhaps a long while, among the last, but they permitted the Holy Spirit to quicken them to earnestness, and thus eventually attained a righteous life, though they have not made great progress. They are like those of whom we read in Rev. 3. 8, "Thou hast little power." Those who were ignorant have at last learned the rudiments which are necessary for salvation, "the first principles of the oracles of God." These become saved, but scarcely so.

C. Some become first, though they were last. They were last, but they gathered new strength and began to rush eagerly along, passing by all their competitors. They were ignorant, but finally, like David, they became more learned than their teachers. Like the Syro-Phenician woman, they advanced so far from their heathen unbelief that they received the testimony which she received of the Lord Jesus, "Thy faith is great". Instead of merely longing for feelings and relying on them, they have attained a faith like that of Thomas, to not see, and yet believe.

Such were the Thessalonians. Their faith grew ex-

ceedingly, and their love to each other abounded. Their patience had become perfected to the extent that, like Moses, they considered "the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt," and they had gained such stability in their hope that, like Paul, they were sure that nothing "shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

## Second Part.

### *The First Who Shall Be Last.*

What do we mean with the first? We mean those who have just been described, who have attained the greatest measure and the highest degree of the love of Christ.

A. Some are first and remain first. They keep the faith unto the end. Jesus can say to them as He did to His apostles, "Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations." Other Christians can also give them the same testimony, as, for instance, Peter\* gives his fellow Christians (Acts 1. 21). These keep the faith and a good conscience. They remain "steadfast and unmovable always." The apostle John calls them "fathers" and says concerning them that they "knew him which is from the beginning." They have thus "attained unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ," they are experienced in mind, and they walk stedfastly with their feet.

B. Some come near being last, but do not become last. This was the case with the pastor in Ephesus,

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\* The author says, "Luke, Acts 1. 21."

Rev. 2. 1-5, also with Peter in Antioch, and with the Corinthians and the Galatians.

The pastor in Ephesus had left his first love, but he nevertheless still had faith, and he labored for the sake of Jesus. The apostle Peter came near being one of the last in Antioch, where he fell into hypocrisy, eating with the Gentiles while alone with them, but withdrawing from them when other Jews arrived. But he gathered new power when reprimanded by Paul. The Corinthians had fallen back to the extent that there were factions and quarrels among them, and that they even condoned a manifest work of the devil in their midst. But they accepted the reproof in Paul's first letter to them and repented, so that in his second letter he was enabled to express satisfaction with the results of the reproof.

C. Some who have been first become last, but do not remain such; they revive anew.

Peter had been one of the first. Jesus had borne testimony that Peter had a knowledge of Christ, not attainable by flesh and blood, but the result of a revelation given him by the heavenly Father Himself. He became one of the last when he cursed and swore and denied that he knew Jesus. But he was awakened when the cock crew, he was convicted by the look of Jesus and became converted. He again advanced in the love of Jesus and could appeal to the omniscience of his Master, asserting that he loved Him.

The Galatians had been among the foremost. Jesus had been set before their eyes as crucified. They had become last when they had fallen from grace and endeavored to become justified by the law. But they re-



vived when Paul was "again in travail until Christ was formed in them." He hoped that they would become steadfast in Christ, and he had the assurance that the Spirit and the fruits of the Spirit were still to be found among them. He had the confidence that there were still spiritually minded people among them who could restore those that had fallen in sin.

D. Some who have been first become last, and remain thus.

This was the case with a large number of Jesus' own disciples who had been with Him a long time. Many went back when Jesus had spoken to them about the necessity of eating His flesh and drinking His blood, and we have no record that they ever returned to Him. Judas Iscariot had been one of the first of the apostles who rejoiced to find that the devils were subject to them in the name of Jesus; but he became one of the last. He sold his Lord, and he departed into the outer darkness, in despair having taken his own life. Demas had been one of Paul's disciples, but he left his master, "having loved this present world," and we nowhere read that he again began to long for the kingdom of God. In Hebrews\* 6. 4-6, we read of others who had been first. They had "once been enlightened and tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the holy Ghost, and tasted the good Word of God, and the powers of the age to come." Then we are told how they became last, how they "fell away, crucifying to themselves the Son of God afresh, and putting Him to an open shame." Indeed, we are told that

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\* The author here and elsewhere attributes this epistle to Paul.

these remain last, for "it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance."

### Application.

If you imagine that you are one of the first, or at least nearly so, then you are certainly one of the last, and in danger of drifting away from the way of life. "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

If you admit that you are one of the last and desire to remain so, not wishing to advance, then you are not even on the way of salvation. Though you imagine that this is spiritual poverty and humility, it is nothing but hypocrisy whereby you attempt to cover your laziness and indifference. You desire to stand, as it were, on the boundary between the kingdom of Satan and the kingdom of God. You wish to have a little of each and to serve God and Mammon. You wish to have the grace of God and the friendship of the world, to find pleasure in the Word of God and to enjoy yourself in the Vanity Fair. But beware, lest Satan lay hold on you and pull you back into his dominion. Yea, look and see, if you are not already there. I know how you would like to have it. You would like to be in the world, and you feel quite satisfied, if you but enter the door of heaven, but let me tell you the truth: if you are thus satisfied and not striving to advance, you shall not even enter through the door. No, you will become one of those who shall remain standing outside of the door forever.

Do you begin to realize how blind you have been, thinking that you were one of the first, whereas you

now find with anxiety that you are not even on the way? Behold, this is a prompting of the Holy Spirit. If you are deeply concerned about entering on the right way, then let it be your comfort that God is of a like mind. Awake rightly and be concerned about your salvation before you fall asleep in death. You still have an opportunity. Everything thus far neglected can still be retrieved and made good. The race-course of life lies open before you, and the crown of life may yet be obtained. But neglect it no longer; you have slept long enough. This is the time to arise out of your slumber and to run the race set before you, that you may receive the prize. Pray earnestly that you may be heard. Search the Scriptures carefully, that God may enlighten, grieve, and comfort, and transform your heart.

You know that you are on the way, though you do not know whether you are one of the last or one of the first. Let me advise you to press on as diligently to obtain the crown of life, as if you really expected to be one of the first. Though it may seem to you as if you were one of the last, you will nevertheless advance farther into heaven than you expected, and will there find greater blessedness than you had supposed. Amen.