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Doctrinal Theology.

SOTERIOLOGY.

DEFINITION.

Soteriology is the doctrine of Holy Scripture concerning the application and appropriation of the merits of Christ to the individual sinner, whereby the sinner is led to the actual possession and enjoyment of the blessings which Christ has actually procured for all mankind. Christ is *σωτήρ τοῦ κόσμου*, the *Savior of the world*.¹⁾ *God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself*.²⁾ Christ is the *propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world*.³⁾ The Mediator between God and man reconciled the world with God not partially or potentially, but wholly and actually. *By one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified*.⁴⁾ When he sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high, the work of redemption had been fully performed; *he had by himself purged our sins*.⁵⁾

Yet, among those whom the Lord has bought, there are those who *bring upon themselves swift destruction*.⁶⁾ Though God *HATH reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ*,⁷⁾ and *we WERE reconciled to God by the death of his Son*,⁸⁾

1) John 4, 42. 1 John 4, 14.

3) 1 John 2, 2.

6) 2 Pet. 2, 1.

4) Hebr. 10, 14.

7) 1 Cor. 5, 18.

2) 2 Cor. 5, 19.

5) Hebr. 1, 3.

8) Rom. 5, 10.

Exegetical Theology.

HOW THE CHILDREN OF GOD BEFORE THE FLOOD WERE SAVED.

Reading the six or seven first chapters of Genesis but superficially one might be under the impression that the children of God before the flood had nothing like a distinct knowledge of Christ, of His wonderful person and work, and that they were therefore saved, so to say, by a more general trust or confidence in God's goodness and grace not as yet founded on Christ, the God-man, and His work of perfect and all-sufficient redemption. Even theologians of great renown in the Lutheran church and regarded by many as pillars of this church and staunch defenders of the truth seem to be strongly in favor of such an assumption. We refer to Delitzsch: *Die Genesis*, Leipzig, 1852, page 147; and Keil and Delitzsch: *Genesis and Exodus*, page 82, Leipzig, 1878. Says Keil in his exposition of Gen. 4, 1: "Denn wollten wir uns auch den Glauben der Eva an den verheissenen Schlangentreter noch so lebendig denken, so bot ihr doch die empfangene göttliche Verheissung nicht den geringsten Anknüpfungspunkt für die Erwartung, dass der verheissene Same göttlichen Wesens, dass er Jahve sein möchte, so dass sie hätte glauben können, Jahve unter ihrem Herzen getragen und geboren zu haben." (For even if we would think the faith of Eve in Him that would bruise the head of the Serpent, to have been ever so much alive, yet the divine promise which she had received offered to her not the least indication from which she could have inferred that the promised seed might be of divine essence, that he might be Jehovah, so that she could have believed to have borne Jehovah under her heart and to have given birth to Him.)

But the faith of our first parents and their pious descendants before the flood was nothing so vague and indistinct as that. For as they owed their salvation to the same Savior who saved us, so they knew also and had received the most important and most essential truths concerning Him, and the Gospel which produced true faith in their hearts was essentially the same Gospel which we have, although it was very brief and concise and although at that period of man's history, as through centuries, yea, thousands of years after, promise and not fulfillment. Moreover, as our faith in the Gospel and in Christ is accounted unto us for righteousness, in like manner also they were justified in the sight of God by their faith in the divine Savior, becoming thus children of God and heirs to life eternal, and certainly nothing else than their faith in Christ could have been unto them a perennial source of consolation and sweet comfort in the misery and various trials and tribulations of this world and life.

To substantiate these assertions we shall enter now upon a few passages in the first part of Genesis treating either expressly or virtually of Christ and of the faith in Him. The very first, however, of all these passages, and in fact the very first Gospel message proclaimed to sinful man is Gen. 3, 14, 15.

Verse 14: *And the Lord God said unto the serpent: Because thou hast done this thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life.* These words, and the following, were uttered by God in the garden of Eden immediately after man's fall and apostasy from Him, their Lord and Creator. Conscience-stricken, ashamed and fearing the wrath of God, Adam and his wife Eve had sought to hide from the presence of the Lord, yet in vain. God calls them, finds them, places them face to face with Him with the intention to make them confess their guilt and to pass sentence on the culprits. But the wrath of

God does not so much strike the seduced, as the seducers. After having wrung an unwilling confession from our first parents who tried to excuse themselves, Adam even trying to lay the blame of his disobedience on God Himself, the Lord addresses first the serpent, the brute creature, saying: *Because thou hast*, etc. The serpent had been created like all other beasts for the use and service of man. But now it had been abused for man's hurt, it had been employed by Satan to accomplish his wicked ends in regard to man, it had lent a helping hand to precipitate man, created in God's image and after His likeness, into utter perdition and ruin. And now, because the serpent had done this, God pronounces also judgment on this instrument of Satan. It shall be cursed above all cattle. Instead of retaining its erect or half-erect posture, it shall creep on its belly, and instead of feasting, as Luther explains, on the herbs of the field and the delicious fruits of the trees, it shall live upon its rapine, unable to avoid eating dust with its meat. Henceforth the serpent and its kind shall forever be an object of abhorrence and abomination, its condition shall be base and despicable. Every one can see that this curse applies to the serpent proper, the brute creature, and there is no reason whatever to depart from the literal sense of these words and refer them to the devil. Yet nothing forbids to see in the character, the disgusting form, and the miserable condition of this beast a fit image and type of the devil who used the serpent as his tool, and who in a figurative sense of the word is called *the old serpent*, Rev. 12, 9, or, *the dragon*, Rev. 20, 2.

The question has been raised why God had cursed the serpent, being a beast, destitute of reason and free from responsibility. But we must remember that the whole visible creation had been subjected to man and thus also involved in his fall, being *made subject to vanity, groaning and travailing in pain together until now*, Rom. 8, 20—22. Considering this fact, it cannot, after all, appear so very

strange that the serpent was laid under a special curse and punishment. Analogous cases we find in the law of Moses. A wild ox which had killed a man should be slain, Exod. 21, 29. A beast with which a man or woman lay, was to be killed just as well as the perpetrator of this heinous crime, though in this case the beast served only as an instrument and tool. Even the punishment of such brutes should be made subservient to man's true welfare. It should make sin to him the more detestable and fill him with a sense of God's holiness and vindictive justice. And above all, every serpent is well apt to remind us of our lamentable fall and of our own misery which has come upon us through the fall, brought about by the tempter, the arch-enemy of God and man disguised in the serpent.

The Lord continues, v. 15: *And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.* If these words were still hurled on the real serpent, the brute creature, the chief agent of the fall and apostasy of man would come forth from God's judgment unpunished, and we would also be at a loss to explain who that particular seed of the woman is, marked as an individual person by הוּא = *he—ipse*—in the second part of the sentence. And then, aside from these and similar considerations, there would be no palpable reason why God should declare solemnly and emphatically: *I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed.* For one of the temporal consequences of sin is that man is not only continually at war with snakes and vipers, but not less with a great number of other animals. It is beyond doubt, God turns now to the devil, the irreconcilable enemy of Himself and of man, to pass sentence upon him. It is a most admirable sentence. Like the pillar of a cloud it has a dark side towards the devil and a bright side toward our first parents and their progeny. To lost and lorn mankind it must be of the greatest importance that God declares here His resolution

to put enmity between Satan and the woman, between his seed and her seed. For through and by the fall man had torn the ties of love and friendship which bound him to God, and had become a docile pupil and fast friend of the devil. In his great spiritual blindness he does not perceive that the devil seeks but to work his ruin and to destroy him. Yea, and while he has renounced obedience to God, his creator and real benefactor, he has become the slave and bondservant of Satan, delighted in doing his will, in being his tool with body and soul. No sooner had Eve been seduced than she is willing and ready to persuade her own husband to eat of the forbidden fruit. But this departure and apostasy from God to the devil could not be without the most serious consequences for them. For God had said, Gen. 2, 17: *But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it, for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.* The wages of sin are death, temporal, spiritual, and eternal death. And as through Adam's fall all men without exception have become sinners, they are all by nature under God's wrath and doomed to death. Death, however, had set in as soon as Eve had obeyed the serpent and Adam the tempting voice of his spouse. From that moment on, the life of man is but a journey, a walk to the grave, and it is from that hour on that men have lapsed into spiritual death; they are now all dead in trespasses and sins by nature. Moreover, God would have, without question, executed the last stage or degree of the threatened punishment on Adam and Eve and delivered them to the eternal torments of hell and damnation, immediately after the fall, if he would not have had in store a counsel of salvation, preconceived from all eternity and to be carried out in the fullness of time. By this counsel of salvation the sinister designs of Satan against mankind were to be thwarted, the execution of this counsel should rob him of the fruits of his victory over man, and thus sharpen the judgment which his own rebellion against God

had brought upon him. If God then declares: *I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed*, He means to say to Satan: Thou thinkest that thou canst enjoy thy victory now in peace and security, that men will be forever thy servants and slaves with whom thou canst do as thou pleasest, and that they shall never be free from thy thralldom and tyranny. But thou art mistaken. Thy hopes and expectations are but illusions. For although men are not and never will be able to extricate themselves from thy clutches, I myself will interpose, I myself will put enmity between thee and the woman, between thy seed and her seed, and thou shalt by no means hold undisputed sway and dominion over the human race. The seed of the devil, however, are the evil spirits, and in this connection especially those of the woman's descendants that willingly and deliberately remain in the kingdom of the prince of darkness. For in Scripture the unbelievers are called the seed of the wicked one; and of Judah, which had forsaken the Lord, Isaiah says, chap. 1, 4: *Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers*. The woman is Eve and her seed is, in the proper sense of the word, Christ and, in a wider sense, all those that side with Christ, all those that believe in Him. Between these two parties there shall be enmity, enmity begun, continued, and established by God Himself. Both parties shall be engaged in a continual warfare against each other. Sufficient evidence, however, of the truthfulness of this prophecy is in the history of the world and church. From the days of Cain and Abel the devil and his church have made the greatest efforts to win over the children of God by allurements or persecutions, while, on the other hand, the true believers have made successful resistance, not with carnal, but with spiritual weapons, the mighty word of God. In truth, the church of God has the promise that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. For the one that fights for them and leads them in battle is stronger than the devil and all his power.

We read further on in verse 15b: *It shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.* It refers to her seed, the seed of the woman, but is an inaccurate rendition of the Hebrew אִיִּחַ, the masculine form of the personal pronoun. For this reason it ought to be *He*, especially since the use of אִיִּחַ in connection with the finite verb indicates that God wishes to call our particular attention to the person, or the individual, he is speaking of. Contrary, however, to all rules of grammar and logic, and what is even worse, contrary to the analogy of faith and to all the teachings of Holy Writ the Catholic Bible has rendered אִיִּחַ with *she*, and the teachers of the church of Antichrist have referred this prophecy to Mary, the mother of Christ, and claim that Mary is the one that bruises the serpent's head. Of course, this forgery and blasphemous perversion of God's own word is calculated to support their Mariolatry and to render this idolatry the more acceptable to the senses of an ignorant and pomp-loving multitude. Many popish churches and cathedrals have been decorated with pictures and paintings representing Mary as the one that treads upon and crushes the head of the serpent. But this seed of the woman is not Mary, it is no sinful man or woman conceived in sin and shapen in iniquity, it is Christ, the *One Seed*, of whom St. Paul speaks Gal. 3, 16, that One Seed that has been also promised to Abraham. He shall be true man, born of a woman concerning the flesh, a descendant of Eve, who stands here in the presence of God with fear and apprehension of impending curse and damnation. But this term "seed of the woman," implies more yet. Other descendants of human parents are not called the seed of their mother. Of Seth we read, for instance, that Adam, not Eve, begot him in his own likeness, after his image. Isaac and the people of Israel are called not the seed of Sarah, but of Abraham, Gen. 15, 3; 15, 18, etc. Christ, however, is the seed proper of the woman, He is the One made of a woman having no human father, conceived by the Holy Ghost, and

we have here also, like in Is. 7, 14, an intimation of His miraculous conception and birth by His virgin mother Mary. But Christ is not only true man, made of a woman, He is also true God. When God says of Him, *He shall bruise the serpent's head*, the same work which God had just before claimed for Himself in saying: *I will put enmity*—is ascribed to Him. He is the one that shall bring this work to a successful end. In His victory shall the enmity between the serpent and his seed, and the woman and her seed, culminate. But if He by His own power and strength shall carry out such a work, which is divine, He cannot be mere man but He must also be true God, the son of God, and only prejudice and unbelief can deny that we have here not only a prophecy of Christ's humanity but also of His godhead, if not *totidem verbis*, yet virtually, implied in these words addressed to the serpent and meant for a powerful consolation to Adam and Eve. Of this blessed and wonderful seed now the Lord says here: *He shall bruise, or crush* (רָשַׁע), *the serpent's head*. This figurative expression denotes the complete victory and triumph of Christ over the devil. If a serpent has its head crushed, it has lost its power of resistance, and is entirely disabled to defend its own. The old serpent had trampled upon the woman, and carried off the whole human race as the spoils of his victory; but when the Seed of the woman, who is stronger than he, Luke 11, 22, shall come upon him, he shall experience just the reverse. Christ shall spoil him, lead him captive, He shall triumph over him, Col. 2, 15, He shall destroy his power, and work to his kingdom on earth a total overthrow. Thus the human race shall be freed again from his power and tyranny, from hell and damnation. They that side with the blessed Seed and believe in Him shall participate in His victory, share in the fruits of His triumph. They shall be delivered from the curse of sin, and instead of death and damnation they shall have life, eternal life and bliss; more shall be restored to them than they have lost, as one of the churchfathers ex-

claims: *O beata culpa, quae talem meruit salvatorem!* It is self-evident, however, that the unbelievers who stubbornly and willingly despise and reject this salvation shall have to bear the consequence of their sins and share in the devil's ruin and perdition.

The Lord concludes this prophecy of Christ with the words: *And thou shalt bruise his heel.* Satan shall try his very best in this struggle, shall make the greatest efforts to defeat the Seed of the woman and to keep his palace, Luke 11, 21. Even while mortally wounded the serpent shall, in desperate fury and rage, turn his venomous tooth against the Victor's heel and bruise it. Here we have then also a clear prophecy of Christ's suffering and death, which is not only the consequence of the eternal counsel of God, but which is also caused by the enmity and malignity of Satan. Satan tempted Christ, e. g., in the wilderness, to draw Him into sin and thus to frustrate His work of salvation. It was Satan that terrified Him in His agony and put it into the heart of Judas to betray Him. Instigated by the Old Serpent Peter denied Him, the chief-priests prosecuted Him, the false witnesses accused Him, and Pilate condemned Him. Christ's heel the devil bruised when His hands and feet were pierced and nailed to the cross. In all this the devil aimed at destroying the Savior, at frustrating His work of salvation. But the devil cannot deprive Christ of His victory, he cannot overcome Him. On the contrary, it was by His very suffering and death that Christ carried to a glorious end the work He had undertaken, executing, at the same time, the divine judgment over Satan, and destroyed him that had the power of death. Hebr. 2, 14. Of this His resurrection is the most indisputable proof.

This is the first promise of Christ, the first Gospel-message of the God-man, the Victor over sin, death, devil, and hell, and the Savior of mankind, and what is true of all the preaching of the Gospel, is also true of this Gospel-proclamation — it did not return void unto the Lord, but it

accomplished that which He pleased and prospered in the thing whereto He sent it. Is. 55, 11. Not in vain had God given to our first parents the promise of the blessed Seed of the woman. This appears from chap. 3, 20, where it says: *And Adam called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living.* God had not freed Adam and Eve from the temporal consequences of sin, as we learn from vv. 16 and 17. The woman is condemned to a state of great sorrow and to a state of subjection to her husband. In the state of innocence she had been his equal, chap. 2, 18: *קָנְיָהּ*. Cursed shall be the ground for Adam's sake, thorns and thistles shall it bring forth; in the sweat of his face shall he eat his bread, until he return unto the ground and unto dust. These temporal penalties were to remind man of the wrath of God against sin and help to bring him to a knowledge of his sin, and were therefore ultimately intended for his good. Christ takes out the sting even of the evils of this life. But considered for themselves, not in the light of the Gospel, without a knowledge and understanding of God's counsel for our salvation, they are such as to fill man's heart with despair and the most intense hatred and enmity against God. But if Adam, in spite of the sentence passed on himself and his spouse and all their descendants, and in spite of their expulsion from the garden of Eden, gives to his wife a new name, and that name is, instead of *אִשָּׁה* = Woman [Männin], *חַוָּה* = Eve, the mother of all living, he certainly was not in a despondent mood, neither had he lost the hope of life and happiness, but he had taken new courage, his heart had been filled with new hope for the future of mankind. And what else could have given him new hope and new courage in all the misery of sin and death, if not the promise of the blessed Seed and the salvation to come? It was the faith in the Gospel of Christ, yea, in Christ Himself that kept him from despair and inspired him with true confidence in God's grace and goodness in His ways with fallen mankind, and it was his faith, likewise, which makes him will-

ing to bear the cross, the temporal consequences of sin and apostasy from God.

This, however, is not the only proof of the fact that our first parents understood and believed the promise of the blessed Seed; the words which Eve uttered at the birth of her firstborn furnish still plainer evidence. Eve, full of joy, called him Cain קַיִן , acquisition, gain, and said, in explanation of this name: $\text{קָנִיתִי אִישׁ אֶת־יְהוָה}$, *I have gotten* [acquired] *a man, the Lord*. Gen. 4, 1. This is the correct translation of the original Hebrew words as they stand, and we have here a confession of Eve concerning Christ, the God-man, that should bruise the serpent's head and free man from the curse of sin. She thought Cain to be this blessed Seed, and hence the name and the words to which she gave utterance. In this, of course, she was sorely mistaken, and it is beyond doubt that ere long she became aware of her error. But it was only an *error personae*, while her opinion, or rather, her conviction that the Redeemer of mankind would be true man and true God in one person—*vir, qui est Jehovah*—, was the true faith, and quite in accordance with the promise she had received. Our English Bible translates אֶת־יְהוָה by = *from, the Lord: I have gotten a man from the Lord*. But this translation could be only correct, if we would read in the original: מֵאֶת־יְהוָה . The simple אֶת is nowhere employed to denote from, or, at the hands of. Another erroneous and misleading rendition of Eve's utterance is: "I have brought forth a man with the Lord," that is, with the help or assistance of the Lord, a rendition furnished by the modern theologians. The latter find in these words nothing more than an expression of maternal joy of Eve over the felicitous birth of her firstborn son, even as to-day yet a mother would say that she has been delivered of a son with the help of God. But these theologians do it with "a bad exegetical conscience." Delitzsch, for instance, concedes that the first impression which אֶת־יְהוָה produces is, that we have here an explanatory apposition annexed to אִישׁ , *man*,

since it often occurs that the objective case is followed by another noun in that case, together with the *nota accusativi*, the second noun being employed to determine the first. Gen. 6, 10; 26, 14. Is. 7, 17. Ezek. 4, 11. He concedes, furthermore, that even the Jerusalemite Targum, carried away by this impression, has translated: "I have obtained a man, the angel of the Lord," and, finally, he also makes the concession that אֶת־יְהוָה, in the signification of "with the Lord," cannot be established from the *usus loquendi* of other passages. But it is a fact, that the Hebrew Bible, in order to express *with God, with the help or assistance of the Lord*, constantly uses בְּיְהוָה or בְּאֱלֹהִים. Conf. Ps. 60, 14. Jer. 3, 23. Josh. 1, 17. Is. 45, 17. Considering all this, it is certainly open defiance of all exegetical rules to translate here, "with God," and to give the explanation: "with the help or assistance of the Lord," and this the more so, since the only correct translation is quite in harmony with the divine promise, Gen. 3, 15. As to the verb קָנִיתִי, we wish to remark that it cannot be taken here very well in the signification: *to bring forth, to produce*. In this sense קָנִיתִי is always predicated of God and His creative activity. Conf. Ps. 139, 13. Prov. 8, 22. Deut. 32, 6, and Gen. 14, 19. 22. But even granted that it would be permissible to take it here in this sense, no woman would say: "I have brought forth a man with the help of God," but to express her joy over the birth of a child, she would utter words like these: "I have brought forth a child, a son, with the help of the Lord." Eve certainly does not mean to emphasize that she has given birth to a child, to a son, but she lays stress upon the fact presumed by her that she has born a child that is at the same time not only true man, but also true God, Jehovah. Enlightened by the first Gospel-proclamation she knew and believed that the blessed Seed would be true man and true God in one person. She confesses her faith at this occasion and gives an answer upon the promise which she had received from her gracious Lord and God. The proper

reason, however, why these modern theologians, learned as some are, make such blunders in the interpretation of Holy Scripture, is their unbelief. They deem it an impossibility that Eve should and could have possessed such a clear understanding of the Gospel-message as to know that the Seed of the woman would be likewise true God, or as to have regarded herself as *θεοτόκος*. In that case, they claim, her knowledge would have gone beyond that of Mary, the mother of Christ. But while thus giving room to an ill-seasoned skepticism they deny the perspicuity of the first Gospel-message to sinful man and the illuminating power and activity of the Holy Ghost in the hearts of the first believers. They also represent our first parents as persons who never, or very seldom, would have pondered and moved in their hearts the glorious comfort and consolation which God Himself had given to them after their fatal and deplorable fall. But we abide by the clear and unmistakable words of Holy Scripture, and admire the greatness of God's love and grace which made the very first sinners to understand that their salvation rested not on a mere man, but on Jehovah, on the Son of God Himself. Moreover, it gladdens our hearts and strengthens our faith when we hear from the lips of our common mother, from the lips of the very first sinner, the same confession which Peter made in the name of all apostles. When asked by the Lord: *But whom say ye that I (the Son of man) am?* he answered without one moment's hesitation: *Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.* Matt. 16, 16.

By this their faith the children of God before the flood became righteous, were justified, just the same as the true children of God amongst the people of Israel and in the New Covenant. This we learn especially from what is said of Abel, the second son of Adam and Eve. When grown into manhood, Cain was a tiller of the ground, Abel a keeper of sheep. They had been instructed by their parents in the true knowledge and fear of God, and in process of time both

offered to God sacrifices. Of Abel now it is said: *And the Lord had respect unto Abel, and to his offering, of Cain: But unto Cain, and to his offering, he had not respect.* Gen. 4, 4. 5. God was pleased with the person of Abel, as well as with his offering, while neither Cain nor his sacrifice was acceptable to Him. We cannot tell exactly in what manner God showed His pleasure and displeasure, but, from similar cases, we conjecture that He made fire fall from heaven which consumed Abel's offering. Conf. Lev. 9, 24. 1 Kings 18, 38. But even if this has to remain a conjecture, we are told very plainly in Holy Writ, why God discriminated here in favor of Abel. It is said, Hebr. 11, 4: *By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and by it he being dead yet speaketh.* Abel offered his sacrifice in true faith. Cain's offering was prompted by unbelief and selfrighteousness. But without faith it is impossible to please God, and so the Lord could not have respect to Cain and his offering, while both the person and the sacrifice of Abel were exceedingly pleasing to Him. The faith, however, which, in this passage, is ascribed to Abel is the same faith of which the Holy Ghost had said shortly before, Hebr. 10, 38: *Now the just shall live by faith.* It is the same faith which the writer of this epistle and all true Christians possess. For the apostle continues in the same strain, Hebr. 10, 38 b. 39: *But if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.* It is the same faith, according to the subsequent context, which Abraham and Sarah had, the patriarchs and the prophets, it is that faith which a cloud of witnesses, a cloud of martyrs have sealed with their life-blood, Abel being the first. It is the faith of those that *desire a better country, that is, an heavenly*, and for whom God has *prepared a city*, the heavenly Jerusalem, Hebr. 11, 16. By this

faith Abel was righteous, justified in the sight of God and enjoying the forgiveness of sins, by this faith the merit and righteousness which the future Redeemer, the blessed Seed, would acquire for sinful man was imputed to him and all believers even in that period of man's history, and prompted by this faith, he leads also a godly life and brings an offering to God. And God Himself gives testimony that Abel's offering of the firstlings of his flock was a work of true faith, and that Abel was a righteous man. Cain, on the other hand, lacked this faith and was of the wicked one, a seed of the old serpent, and consequently not only his fratricide, but all his works were evil.

But even Cain could have obtained forgiveness of his atrocious deed and of all his sins, if he would have only taken to heart what he, together with his brother, had been taught by his parents. He knew that the Lord was gracious and that there was a forgiveness of sins, although it was with him only a historical knowledge. The very words which he utters in his despair, indicate this: *גְּדוּל עוֹנֵי כְּנָשׂוּא*, *My sin is greater than that it may be forgiven.* Thus Luther and the older versions of the Holy Bible. The English Bible has: *My punishment is greater than I can bear*, and the modern theologians have also given preference to this rendition of the original. But there is no reason whatever to depart from the old version. The proper signification of *avon* is not punishment, but sin, iniquity, guilt of sin, and the expression *nasah avon* occurs very often, denoting, to remove, remit, forgive sins. Ps. 32, 5; 85, 3. Gen. 50, 17. Lev. 10, 17. Cain, heretofore a secure and proud sinner, is alarmed, stricken in his conscience, otherwise he would not also complain afterwards that he shall be hid from the Lord's face, that he was driven from those amongst whom Jehovah manifested His grace, from God's church, where He forgives sins through His word. Formerly he had not cared for these things, now, after his conscience has been awakened, he knows that he needs forgiveness of sins, but thinks while

others could have it, his bloody deed bars him altogether from the grace of God; he yields himself up to despair, to the repentance of Judas, and it is his very despair for which he must forsake the Lord's presence and be to his parents and their other children, to speak in the terms of the New Testament, as a heathen man and a publican. And the fear that God would not forgive him his deed makes death so terrible for him that he says, evidently in great apprehension and with trembling: *And it shall come to pass, that every one that findeth me shall slay me.*

The patriarchs of the first world, however, did not only believe in the Lord's promise, but they also regarded the word of the Lord, this very promise, as the means of grace, as a power unto salvation. For we read Gen. 4, 26: *Then, at that time when Enos was born to Seth, men began, or, it was begun, הוֹחֵל, to call upon the name of the Lord. קָרָא בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה* means to proclaim the name of Jehovah solemnly, and this is done by public invocation and preaching. Public worship, public services were instituted at that time, and those that attended these services were reminded and told of the fall of man and his sinful corruption, but also of the grace and salvation of the Lord as manifested in the promise of the blessed Seed. Thus the pious patriarchs before the flood meant to worship God and to propagate the true faith, to build the kingdom of God in their own midst, and to give, perhaps, also to the descendants of Cain an opportunity of becoming acquainted with the way of salvation. And this proclamation of the name of the Lord, the preaching of the word, was afterwards continued amongst the sons of God. Enoch, for instance, the seventh patriarch after Adam, was not only conspicuous for his eminent piety, but likewise as a preacher and a prophet of God, at a time when the promises of God were promulgated by word of mouth from generation to generation.

Of this holy man we read, Jude, vv. 14. 15: *And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying,*

Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him. The days in which Enoch lived were very evil. The wickedness of the Cainites was fastly increasing, many of the sons of God fell away and went over to the other side, and the church was persecuted and oppressed. At that time Enoch arose, warned against apostasy, and held up to all evildoers the wrath of God and the future judgment, and the very words which Jude uses in his epistle, intimate that his preaching was in the spirit and with the fervor of Elias. But his preaching was not only in words, it was also in deeds. His life was a continual rebuke to the lukewarm in the church, as well as to the manifest evildoers. Twice it is said of him, Gen. 5, 22 and 24: *And Enoch walked with God*, that is, at the side of God, in the most intimate communion with Him. He walked with God as a priest that had access to the holy-place of the sanctuary, or even as a high-priest who could enter the most holy place in the temple to speak with the Most High. This is indicated by the expression *יִתְחַלֵּץ אֶת-הָאֱלֹהִים*, which is to be distinguished from *אֶתְחַלֵּץ הוּא* or *הִתְחַלֵּץ לִפְנֵי הוּא*. Like Abel he had this testimony that he pleased God even before his removal from the earth. This his piety sprang also from true faith, conf. Hebr. 11, 5. 6, and was most graciously rewarded by the Lord. *And he was not, for God took him*, writes Moses, Gen. 5, 24, and Hebr. 11, 5 we read: *By faith Enoch was translated, that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him.* In the midst of his days he was like Elias taken by God in heaven, without seeing or suffering death, the separation of body and soul. This was, of course, another testimony that he pleased God, but it was likewise a confirmation of his preaching by which he had announced to the ungodly the day of judgment and of the wrath of the righteous God.

And more than this, his glorious removal to a better world without tasting the pangs of death, was a great encouragement to the people of God which was in distress while the wicked Cainites prospered. Enoch's translation was a clear evidence to them that the end of faith and piety is the crown of life, that there *remains a rest to the people of God*, Hebr. 4, 9. It was, furthermore, a corroboration of the resurrection of the body of the pious and its continuance in the future state of glory, and finally an indication that God shall also crown graciously signal piety with signal honors, according to his goodness toward those who walk with the Lord, forsaking houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for His name's sake.

With these godly patriarchs of the old world it was as afterwards with the pious Israelites who were sighing, Ps. 14, 7: *Oh that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion! when the Lord bringeth back the captivity of his people, Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad.* The more wickedness, corruption, and unbelief increased, the more of God's people apostatized, the more they yearned for the salvation to come. When to Lamech, the grandson of Enoch, a son was born, he called him Noah, Rest, saying: *This same shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed.* His complaint is not so much of the toil and misery of this life as of the curse which sin has brought upon man, being well aware that the cause of all evils is sin, man's alienation from God, and what could he wish more than that the Deliverer from sin and the curse of sin would come and restore peace between God and man. And he thinks now that in Noah the blessed Seed had appeared, and that the salvation of mankind was at hand. His profound longing for the day of salvation was from the Holy Ghost, but he was mistaken in the time and in the person, as Eve was when Cain was born. But still Noah was not like Cain. On the contrary,

he was the last patriarch of the first world, another conspicuous example of great faith and eminent piety. The Epistle to the Hebrews calls our attention also to his faith, chap. 11, 7, and his faith must appear to us very strong and great if we take into consideration that when all the other descendants of Seth had forsaken God and the true religion, he alone remained faithful with his family. As to his piety, Noah is not only called a *just man, and perfect in his generations* (יָדָבָר, and תָּמִים, integer), but it is also said of him, as of Enoch: *And Noah walked with God.* Gen. 6, 9. Noah is furthermore called a *preacher of righteousness*, 2 Pet. 2, 5, and he had the special commission to announce to his iniquitous contemporaries the approach of the great flood if they would not repent. Amidst the sneers and the scorn of a secure and impenitent humanity he discharged these his duties faithfully, and prepared the ark which was to carry him and his family through the waters of the great flood. The whole generation of men which then lived was drowned for their impenitence and their unbelief, and hurried to the eternal prison-house of hell prematurely, 1 Pet. 3, 20. But he remained, a man justified before God by faith in the promised Seed, an heir of the righteousness which is by faith, Hebr. 11, 7. And God being pleased with his faith made him also an ever memorable monument of sparing mercy. When the fountains of the great deep were broken up, the windows of heaven were opened and all the high hills and mountains that were under the whole heaven were covered to swallow up all flesh, the same waters were bidden to preserve him with his family, that he might become the father of a new world in which the church of God was to be built again to the fulness of time and thereafter to the end of the world, and that he might become also one of the most illustrious ancestors of the promised Savior of mankind.

Thus we have seen that the children of God before the flood knew very well in whom they believed, although their

light was not as bright as ours, and that they were one in faith with the true, invisible church of God, with the *Una Sancta Ecclesia*, at all times. Amongst them were heroes of true faith, the most illustrious examples of an exemplary conversation and holy courage, which well deserve our special consideration. A minister of the Gospel would certainly do well not only to hold up to the view of his hearers the wickedness of the first world, but also to call their attention to these examples of true piety. This could be done occasionally or in special services, perhaps in the season of Advent. And while these humble efforts might serve as a guide, we would recommend the careful study of Luther's interpretation of Genesis as the best preparation for such sermons.

J. H.
