

# THEOLOGICAL QUARTERLY.

VOL. XXIV.

JULY, 1920.

No. 3.

## A Cry of Distress and a Plea for Justice.

Too late for notice in our last issue there came to us from the German Evangelical Mission Aid Society of Berlin-Steglitz the English edition of an address which Dr. Theol. Karl Axenfeld, Director of Missions, delivered before the annual convention of the Mission Aid Society in 1919. Though three valuable months have elapsed since the receipt of this address, the readers, we doubt not, will agree with us that its intrinsic value, its defense of eternal and essential rights, is such that even at this somewhat belated date the message of the speaker should be reiterated here. It is a simple plea for fundamental justice, and is well founded, particularly if one studies Article 438 of the Peace Treaty. We hold no brief for the Mission Aid Society, whose confessional basis is not fully known to us, nor do we subscribe to every sentiment expressed in the address. What the speaker, however, is battling for is an inalienable right of the Church of Jesus Christ, common and dear to every member of the Church.

The title of Dr. Axenfeld's address is, "Germany's Battle for the Freedom of the Christian Missions." The author says:—

The imminent conclusions of peace will not only bring about a great transformation in the political and economic life of the nations, but intellectual values, as well as the spiritual and the *religious*, are at hazard. There is a great danger that these most precious possessions of mankind will not be sufficiently regarded in the battle for wealth and power.

The chief point at issue, however, cannot be confined to the acquisition of additional territory by certain nations, nor to the reinforcement of

---

# The Proof-Texts of the Catechism with a Practical Commentary.

---

## THE LORD'S PRAYER.

### THE FIRST PETITION:

#### *Hallowed be Thy Name.*

What is the name by which God wills to be known among us? "Our *Father*, — hallowed be Thy name," so Jesus taught His disciples to pray. As *Father* God has revealed Himself to us in Jesus. If we know Jesus aright, we know the *Father* aright. — "*Hallowed be Thy name.*" God is holy, so is His name; we cannot render it more holy. "*Hallowed be Thy name*" means that it be *hallowed*, be holy, kept sacred, receive the honor due it, among us. This is done, says Luther, by pure doctrine and holy life. How true this answer is we shall see from a consideration of the following passages.

John 17, 17: *Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy Word is truth.*

The sublime High-priestly Prayer, whence our text is taken, contains three parts: Christ prays for Himself, vv. 1—5; for His disciples, vv. 6—19; and for the Church, vv. 20—26.

“*Sanctify them through Thy truth,*” so Jesus prays in the hearing of the Eleven as He is about to leave them in the world. What a solemn hour, this, for the disciples! *Sanctify, hagiazein*, signifies to separate from the world and to dedicate to God, to set apart for God, to *consecrate* to God. “*Sanctify them in Thy truth.*” These disciples were “*in the truth.*” Jesus says they are “*in the world,*” v. 11, but “*not of the world,*” v. 14; “*they have kept Thy Word,*” v. 6, “*and have known surely that I came out from Thee, and they have believed that Thou didst send Me,*” v. 8. So these Eleven had been *sanctified, consecrated*, to God; but they were still to remain in this world for some time to do very important mission-work. But “*the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world,*” v. 14; so they must be kept “*from the evil,*” v. 15. — “*Holy Father,*” v. 11, “*sanctify them,*” set them apart for Thee more and more, *consecrate* them to Thee more and more to do Thy will; keep them and confirm them in the true faith.

How is this to be done? “*Sanctify them in Thy truth.*” The Greek preposition *en* = *in*, is frequently used in an instrumental sense = *by* or *through*. And naturally we look for the agency or the means by which Christ’s disciples are to be sanctified when we read: “*Sanctify them*” — how? “*Through Thy truth.*” Thus the sense of the original text is given by the Authorized Version. But, taking the usual translation of *en* = *in*, nothing of the instrumental force of *en* is lost, but it is rather augmented by the addition of another, a deeper truth. Luther translates: “*Heilige sie in deiner Wahrheit!*” These disciples had already been sanctified *by* the truth: they believed the Word of God given them by Christ,

v. 14; they were "in the truth." "Sanctify them *in thy truth*," speaks of the truth as being the sphere *in* which alone sanctification can take place, and presupposes that it can be done only *by* the truth. Or expressed differently: *en aletheia* says not only that the truth is the *means* whereby, but also that the truth is the *sphere* in which, sanctification takes place. To illustrate: If one lives *in* a healthful climate, one's health is promoted *by* the climate *in* which one lives.

The sanctification of the disciples *by* the truth is to continue, to be carried on and out "*in the truth*," the only means by which it can be done. "Sanctify them *in thy truth*" = the truth only *can* sanctify. Which is this only sanctifying truth? "*Thy Word* is truth."

Some MSS., and hence some translations, omit "*Thy*" and read: "Sanctify them *in the truth*." But this omission does not alter one iota of the sense of the passage. There is but *one* such definite truth as "*the truth*," *i. e.*, divine truth, God's truth. Not speculations, fictions, fancies of men, can sanctify, but only "*the truth*," pure and unadulterated. How true this is we see from the corroboration by the next member of the sentence: "Sanctify them *in Thy truth: Thy Word is truth*." Literally translated: *Ho logos ho sos* = "The Word *the Thine* is truth" = The Word *that is Thine* is truth. All possible stress, as we see, is laid upon the fact that the *truth* that is to *sanctify* them is "*Thy Word*," God's Word, and His Word only. Hence in reading our good English translation, all emphasis is to be put on the word *Thy*: "*Thy Word* is truth."

Observing the two members of our text, it is plain that it is one and the same to say: Sanctify them *in Thy truth*, or: Sanctify them *in Thy Word*.

And lest we lose sight of the main thought, let it be repeated: "*The Truth*," "*Thy Word*," without any admixture of human ideas, views, fancies, the *pure* truth, pure doctrine, is the only *means* of sanctification, Acts 20, 42. Impure truth,

false doctrine, in the last analysis, is not truth at all, but a lie. Impure food is not wholesome, neither is impure truth, untruth. False doctrine cannot sanctify, at most it can produce but a caricature of sanctification.

But what has all this to do with the petition, "Hallowed be Thy name"? God's name can be kept holy among us only in so far as His Word is taught in its truth and purity. If this is not done, the honor due Him, the glorification He should receive is detracted from. To illustrate: "The Truth," His Word, teaches that we are saved by grace, for Christ's sake, by faith. Thus *all* glory is given to God; but where this Word is adulterated and men are taught that salvation depends in part on their own merit and works, Christ's and God's glory is diminished. God would have us praise Him: "All glory be to God on high" who has made us accepted in the Beloved.— From glorification of God by *pure doctrine* flows glorification of His name by *holy life*.

Matt. 5, 16: *Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.*

"Ye are the light of the world," says Christ to His disciples, v. 14. Christ is the *lumen illuminans*; His disciples are *lumina illuminata*. His illuminated followers are to illuminate others. The world is enveloped in spiritual darkness; Christ's disciples are the light to dispel this darkness. What high dignity they possess! Do not put your light under a bushel! Do not hide it! Put it on a candlestick! This is the drift of the exhortation: "*So let your light shine before men.*" Possessing the light, you have a solemn duty to perform over against "men." "Men" in contrast to disciples are the unbelievers, the people that are still in spiritual darkness. They are to "*glorify your Father*"; *doxazoosin ton Patera*, to glorify, to give Him the honor due Him. Which is this honor? They are to glorify your *Father*; they, too, are to know Him as *Father* and sing His praises. This can be done only by His

*children*, and such "men" become only by faith in Christ Jesus. Gal. 4. — So these "men" are to be brought from spiritual darkness to spiritual light. How is this to be accomplished? By "*seeing your good works.*" Your good works are the beams of your light shining before "men," by which these are attracted to the light and are thus enlightened. In other words: your good, *kala*, i. e., laudable works, speak a loud language. The "men" know that you profess faith in Christ. *Let your light shine.* Let them see that your life is in conformity with that profession, let them see that you are faithful and honest in your daily vocation, that you do not recompense evil with evil, that you live soberly, righteously, and justly in this evil world, etc. This is a powerful object sermon on faith in Christ. When disciples so live, God's name is hallowed; the Father is glorified. "Men" see, feel, realize, that a higher power is at work in Christ's disciples, enabling them so to live. And "men" that see these *good*, laudable, works may be led to enquire for the power, the source, and thus they may come under the influence of the mighty Word of God, which is able to call also these "men" from "darkness to His marvelous light," and then they, too, show forth the praises of Him that called them. Thus "men" may come to a knowledge that "in time past they were not a people, but are now the people of God" by faith in Christ Jesus. 1 Pet. 3, 9 ff.

"So," disciples of Christ, "*let your light shine*" — this is your duty and your privilege — and then the *end* ("so that") will be attained with some "men": they will "glorify your Father which is in heaven."

St. Peter couches the same thought in this language: "Dearly beloved, . . . having your conversation honest," laudable, right, "among the Gentiles, that . . . they may by your good works which they shall behold glorify God in the day of visitation." 1 Pet. 2, 11. 12.

This is what we pray for in the First Petition: "Hallowed be Thy name." — "Sanctify them through Thy Word,"

so Jesus prays for His disciples, and these sanctified disciples are admonished: "So let your light shine before men," etc. — By pure doctrine (John 17, 17) and holy life flowing therefrom, "hallowed be Thy name."

For instructive examples, showing that the good works of Christ actuated the people to praise God, see Matt. 9, 8; 15, 31, et al.

NOTE. — The hypocrites do good (?) works "that *they* may have glory of men," "that *they* may be seen of men" (Matt. 6, 2. 5); the disciples do good works that the "men," the unbelievers, may see them and "glorify your Father." The hypocrites perform works for the glorification of self; the disciples, for the glorification of God. The source of the former is sin; of the latter, faith.

Ezek. 22, 26: *Her priests have violated My Law, and have profaned Mine holy things.*

Among the thousands carried into captivity at Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar, 577 B. C., was Ezekiel. His duty, as God's prophet, was to endeavor to convince the captive Jews of the certainty of the destruction of Jerusalem — a judgment brought upon the city by the faithlessness of the people. These prophecies we find in chapters 1—24. — Our text is taken from a fearful indictment of all classes of people: prophets, priests, princes, people. Their moral deterioration is shown; all have departed from God. "I sought for a man among them," says God, "that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before Me for the land that I should not destroy it; but I found none," v. 30. (Read vv. 23—31.)

Arraigning the *priests*, Ezekiel says: "*Her priests,*" *i. e.*, the land's, Jerusalem's priests, "*have violated*" — rather: *have done violence to* — "*My law, and have profaned Mine holy things.*"

The priests, bound by their order to observe every ordinance of God's Law, not only did not keep it, but, on the contrary, *violated*, did violence to, the Law, *i. e.*, they misinterpreted it (Luther: "sie verkehren mein Gesetz freventlich"), so as to make their violation, their transgression, of the Law seem laudable and in conformity with the Law. *Ut rex, ita grex!* "Like priests, like people!" From laxity in doctrine flows laxity in life; from false doctrine flows ungodly life. "*The priests have profaned Mine holy things.*" The text un-

folds this thought: "They have made no distinction between the holy and the common, neither have they caused men to discern between the unclean and the clean, and have hid their eyes from My sabbaths, and I am profaned among them."

"It was the special office of the priests to keep up the distinction between holy and unholy, between clean and unclean, consecrated and common things. Lev. 10, 10; 22, 1—13. They should have instructed the people what meats were lawful for them, what not; what sacrifices were fit to be brought to the Lord, and what not; who were worthy, and who not, to eat the holy things and to approach unto the holy God. But this they had not done. The law of the Sabbath, as Hengstenberg remarks, is given as an example. This they rob of its deep spiritual character, and limit it to the external rest, as if it were given to animals, and not to men who are to serve God in spirit; cf. v. 8. By these things they profaned God Himself."

*Pulpit Commentary.*

And to-day the *Bible* is profaned by treating it as a man-made book; the *Gospel* is profaned by the many Christless sermons resounding throughout the land from "modern" pulpits; *Baptism* and the *Lord's Supper* are profaned by representing them to be merely signs or symbols, thus emptying them of their meaning as means of grace; the *holy-day* is profaned by neglecting to hear the Word of God, etc. From false doctrine flows unholy life; by both God's name is profaned. From this preserve us, dear heavenly Father!

Rom. 2, 23. 24: *Thou that makest thy boast of the Law, through breaking the Law dishonorest thou God. For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you.*

The English version has an interrogation point after v. 23, making the sentence read as a question. Consulting text and context, we prefer with Luther to place a period. V. 23 is an awful impeachment of the Jews based on the preceding accusations (vv. 21. 22) of gross violations of the Law. This grammatical construction of v. 23 is supported by v. 24: "For the name of God," etc.

After several specific charges of Law-violation, put interrogatively, vv. 21. 22, challenging denial, if they dare, the apostle flings the indictment into the face of the Jews: "*Thou that makest thy boast of the Law, through breaking the Law dishonorest thou God.*" Paul's thought is this: God had given



His holy Law to the Jews. That was a high prerogative; cf. Rom. 9, 4. And the Jews prided themselves thereon; they made a *boast* of it. "Sons of the Thorah" (the Law) was a title they loved to bear. This *boast* of theirs was well known by the Gentiles. But the latter not only had a fine ear to hear the boast, but also sharp eyes to watch their conduct. What did they observe? The Jews stole, committed adultery, committed sacrilege, vv. 21. 22. They *broke* God's Law. What conversation did not tally with their profession. The *Gentiles* made conclusions from the immoral practises of the Jews to the Lawgiver. If the "Sons of the Thorah," who proudly *boasted* of being the possessors of God's Law, lead such an unholy life, then, they inferred, the God of the Jews, who gave this Law according to which His people were supposed to live, must be an unholy God. Thus, declares St. Paul, "*through you,*" through your immoral conduct, God is "*dishonored,*" "*the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles.*" — Are applications of this text to present-day conditions necessary? Alas! they readily come to mind. One Judas casts reproach upon the Eleven; one Christian, who goes astray, causes the unbelievers to jeer and laugh at Christ and the Christian religion. — "The greatest obstructors of the success of the Word are those whose bad lives contradict their good doctrine; who, in the pulpit preach so well that it is a pity they should ever come out; and out of the pulpit live so ill that it is a pity they should ever come in." (Henry.) — Let us pray:

Thy name be hallowed! Help us, Lord,  
 To keep in purity Thy Word,  
 And lead according to Thy name  
 A holy life, untouched by blame.  
 Let no false teachings do us hurt,  
 All poor deluded souls convert.

Springfield, Ill.

LOUIS WESSEL.

(To be continued.)