

THEOLOGICAL QUARTERLY.

1073 ~~A~~

VOL. XIX.

JANUARY, 1915.

No. 1.

THE CORPUS CHRISTI FESTIVAL AND ITS DOCTRINE.

“*Semper eadem!*” — Ever the same! — that is the proud boast of the Church of Rome. And in one respect we yield her the truth of this boastful assertion. From the time that St. Paul wrote: “For the mystery of iniquity doth already work,” to the spiritual darkness and shadow of death of the fifteenth century; from the time that the Augean filth of popery was swept out of the temple of the Church by the pure Alphaeus of God’s Word, guided by that blessed servant of God, Martin Luther, to this day, when by hypocrisy and deceit Romanism is usurping the very power of the government in our country; from the time that Bishop Boniface III of Rome arrogated to himself the title of Pope to this day, when the doctrine of infallibility has been promulgated, and the dogmatization of the assumption of the Virgin Mary is only a question of time, Rome has been *ever the same* in her hatred of Christ the Savior, the one Redeemer of the world, and His blessed Gospel.

In every other respect, however, we most emphatically repudiate Rome’s claim to the title: *Semper eadem*. Her doctrine of justification by works, her fasting and mechanical praying, her doctrine of purgatory, her canonization of hosts of saints, her mass and her eucharist, her formalism and her festivals, have been developed by a slow process, in the course of many centuries, and Rome, even on mere historical grounds, has not the least shadow of a reason for her proud boast. This will be found true especially of the doctrine of transubstantiation and the establishment of the Corpus Christi festival with its procession.

THE PROOF TEXTS OF THE CATECHISM WITH A PRACTICAL COMMENTARY.

THE THIRD ARTICLE.

OF THE CHURCH. (*Concluded.*)

Marks of the Church.

Is. 55, 11: *My Word shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.*

Believers only constitute the Church; but faith, which makes a person a member of the Church, is invisible, and so, too, the Church is invisible. Where, then, is the Christian Church to be found? Faith is generated by the preaching of the Gospel. Hence the Church exists where the Gospel of

18) *Luther*: "The law of Moses is very old; however, it has been renewed by Moses." (III, 562.)

Christ is in use, and there only, since faith cannot be produced by any other means. Rom. 10, 17; 1 Pet. 1, 23. 25. So *the Word is the only mark* of the Church. This statement does not exclude the Sacraments, the *visible* Word, because they receive their power and efficacy from the Word of God.

Of this Word the Lord says: "*It shall not return unto Me void.*" He sends it for a purpose, *viz.*, to work faith, to preserve faith, and to save by faith. This Word, being God's Word, goes forth with divine power. Wherever it is preached, the Lord's promise holds good: "*It shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.*" The Word always bears some fruit, though rejected by many. Where the Word is, there is the Church. Luther's dictum, "God's people cannot be without God's Word, nor can God's Word be without a people," is Scriptural.—Rome enumerates fifteen marks of the Church, such as its name, Catholic; its antiquity; its succession of bishops; its doctrinal agreement with the ancient Church, *et al.*, none of which has a foundation in Scripture. The one indispensable mark of the Church is the Word—the *audible* and the *visible* Word.

What *consolation*, by the way, this beautiful passage affords the faithful pastor! Often all seems to be topsyturvy in the congregation; the devil seems to be getting the upper hand. How downcast the pastor then becomes! Cheer up, brother, "preach the Word!" Cling to this faithful promise: "My Word shall not return unto Me void."

The Church proper, the *una sancta*, is invisible. Still we sometimes speak of the *visible* Church. What do we mean by that? We see people gathering about the means of grace, the Word. This Word produces faith; *ergo* there is the Church. However, we cannot see into the hearts of our fellow-men to ascertain in whose heart faith has been produced. We consider all such as gather about the Word, profess the Christian faith, and do not contradict such profession by an ungodly life, Christians, believers. These professing Christians we can see, hence we speak of a *visible* Church. So the Church is *visible* inasmuch as we see people flocking to hear the Word of God; *invisible*, inasmuch as we cannot tell which of these that gather about the means of grace believe. Still we do not establish *two* churches. The Biblical definition of the Church—the

Church is nothing else than the congregation of saints — remains intact. For the visible Church is, and is called, a church only on account of *the true believers in it*. *A potiori parte fit denominatio*. A gold ring is a gold ring though the gold is mixed with alloy. A manufacturing city is such though private dwellings and stores are within its confines. A wheat-field has tares in it, still it is a wheat-field. When the Church is said to be visible, this is done by the well-known figure of synecdoche. In 3 John 10 and Rev. 2, 14 ff. we read of *churches* though there was a Diotrephes in one, and Balaamites in the other. Hypocrites were *intermingled* with the true believers. So it is still to-day. This truth the Lord teaches in the parable of the tares among the wheat, Matt. 13, 24—26, and in that of the net that gathered fish of every kind, Matt. 13, 47. 48.

Matt. 28, 20: *Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.*

We have no pet doctrines. We preach all doctrines of the Bible. There are none superfluous, none unimportant. According to our Lord's command in His Final Commission, His disciples were to be taught "to observe *all things whatsoever*" He had commanded. This the Lutheran Church does. She teaches the entire doctrine of the Word of God in all its purity, or, in the words of St. Paul, Acts 20, 27, she declares "*all the counsel of God,*" and administers the Sacraments according to Christ's institution. By God's grace, despite the wild onslaughts of erroneous doctrines, she continues in Christ's Word, John 8, 31. 32. The Evangelical Lutheran Church, therefore, is to-day the *true visible Church*.

The Proper Use of This Doctrine.

2 Cor. 13, 5: *Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves.*

Believers only belong to the invisible Church, the *una sancta*. The outward semblance of being a Christian does not suffice; the mere external membership in the Church of the pure doctrine cannot deceive God. Our chief concern must be to be and remain members of the invisible Church. And to this end we ought frequently to examine ourselves. "*Examine yourselves*"; "*prove your own selves,*" so St. Paul exhorts the Corinthian Christians. The repetition of the same

thought shows how dangerous self-deception is. What is the examination to reveal to them? "Whether ye be *in the faith*." How can they tell? "If Jesus Christ is in you"—you are in the faith, says the context, 5 b. True faith is not a matter of the intellect and the mouth, but a heavenly gift, by which man is united with Christ, and his heart becomes a habitation of Christ. Christ dwells in man when he has the Spirit of Christ, as the apostle elsewhere says: "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." But whosoever has the Spirit of Christ loves Christ, hates sin, and follows after sanctification.—Let us take heed to be and remain members of the invisible Church.

John 8, 31. 32: *If ye continue in My Word, then are ye My disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*

Christ had discoursed on Himself as being the Light of the world. His words had made a deep impression on many of His opponents, the Jews, so much so that they believed on Him. "Then said Jesus to those Jews who believed on Him: *If ye continue in My Word, then truly*"—ἀληθῶς, emphatically put at the head of the phrase—"My disciples ye are." His true disciples are such, He says, as continue, abide, in His Word. Now, what is Christ's Word? Self-evidently not only the few words He here spoke to those Jews, but all the words that are recorded of Him in the Scripture. Only these? No. Christ is God; the whole Bible is given by inspiration of God. The whole Bible is God's, Christ's, Word. 2 Pet. 1, 21; 2 Tim. 3, 15—17.—As we read the Scripture, we find that the writers everywhere speak of the Word of God and the Word of Christ as interchangeable terms, as being one and the same thing; cf. 1 Thess. 2; Col. 3, 16, *et al.* In short, God's Word is Christ's Word; to abide by God's Word is to abide by Christ's Word, *et vice versa*.

Who is a *disciple* of Christ? A disciple of Christ is one who learns of Christ, an adherent of, and believer in, Christ,

a follower of Christ. As such they are characterized throughout the entire New Testament. In Jerusalem, in Antioch, in Ephesus, we find "disciples," believers in Christ. Who are Christ's *true* disciples? He says: Such as "continue in My Word," abide by My Word, adhere to My every word, accept it just as it reads. A disciple is a learner; Christ is the Master. A disciple, being a learner, does not criticize His Master, doubt His Word, or set it aside. Doing that, he is no longer a disciple, but a master in his own conceit. He virtually says: Though the Master says so and so, I'll not accept it; I cannot understand it, hence it is wrong! A true disciple says: "One is my Master, even Christ"; in His Word I'll continue. This is the correct attitude of a disciple, a believer in Christ, knowing that this Master is not a fallible man, but the "God over all," "the Mighty God." And this humble attitude—to bow before His every word—Christ demands.

And now note the glorious assurance these *true* disciples are given: "*Ye shall know the truth.*" In this age of doubt, of unrest, of skepticism, where round about us Pilate's cynic question, "What is truth?" is bandied about as the acme of intellectual wisdom, Christ's true disciples possess *truth, the truth*—absolute truth. Take My Word, says Christ, read it, understand it just as it reads, adhere to, continue in, this Word, believe it, and you shall know—what? *τὴν ἀλήθειαν, the truth.* He does not say: If you do not understand this or that, try to harmonize My Word, endeavor to make it acceptable to human reason; if you do not understand the how and the wherefore, reject it. Nothing of the kind. Christ says of Himself: "I am the Truth." He cannot err; if we continue in His Word, we have the truth, we cannot be in error. Are all opposing doctrines wrong? Yes. Why? There is but *one* truth. "What arrogance of the Lutheran Church!" we hear some say; "other denominations are more liberal; they modestly say, 'This is *our* view of this doctrine'; 'Jesus here *seems* to teach'; 'in *my opinion* the apostle would say.'"

Is that teaching the *truth*? Is it not rather teaching doubts? Is it honoring Christ? He says: "Continue in My Word, and *ye shall know the truth.*" Here is the one infallible rule to arrive at the truth according to the promise of our Lord. And what is not truth is a lie. Sad to say, such a simple, self-evident statement finds little favor in our times of wishy-washy theology. Said a noted English divine a few years ago:

"People look at you with amazement if you suggest that there is such a thing as a fixed truth; and they eye you with supreme contempt if you dare hint that the opposite of truth must be a lie. You must be some old foggy or antediluvian, or you would never make such an observation. The sooner you are back in Noah's ark the better. A man says that black is white, and I say that it is not so. But this is not kind to say, 'It is not so,' you should say, 'Perhaps you are right, dear brother, though I hardly think so.'"

Brethren, let us thank God that without any merit or worthiness in us He has given us *the truth*.

This truth, Christ says, "*shall make you free.*" Of which freedom does Christ speak? The explanation follows in the text: "If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." It is the freedom the Son of God has merited by His sufferings and death, and which they possess who believe in Him: the freedom from the dominion of sin, from the accusation of the devil, the freedom from death and its terrors and from the tortures of hell. This heavenly, spiritual freedom he attains who possesses the truth.

Our Lord does not countenance such phrases as these: It is immaterial to which church you belong; one church is as good as the other. Again and again we are bidden to avoid false prophets, and to shun false doctrines. It is our bounden duty to adhere to the truth, to the Church of the pure Word and confession, and in our times this is the Evangelical Lutheran Church.

1 Cor. 9, 14: *The Lord ordained that they which preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel.*

In vv. 3—14 Paul claims the right of getting the means of sustenance from those to whom he preaches the Gospel, and

adduces various interesting and striking arguments in proof thereof, the culmination of which we find in v. 14. "*The Lord,*" ὁ κύριος, that is, Christ, "*ordained that they which preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel.*" It is the duty of the congregation to supply the minister's temporal wants. His salary, often meager indeed, is not an alms, but money earned by hard, honest, unselfish labor. Aye, the money-remuneration can never be an equivalent for the faithful pastor's services. "*If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?*" V. 11. Emphatically, no. Let it be impressed upon the hearts and minds of our parishioners that ministers "*should live of the Gospel.*" Thus the Lord ordained. "The workman is worthy of his meat," Christ says, Matt. 10, 10, and Luke 10, 7: "The laborer is worthy of his hire." (Cf. Gal. 6, 6; 1 Tim. 5, 17. 18; 1 Thess. 5, 12.) It is the Christians' bounden duty,—aye, rather call it their blessed privilege,—to contribute to the maintenance of the church.

Matt. 28, 19: *Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.*

These well-known words are taken from Christ's Final Commission. "*Go ye,*" My disciples, "*therefore,*" since "all power is given to Me in heaven and in earth," v. 18, since "I am with you always," v. 20, to guide, protect, and assist you, "*and teach,*" μαθητεύσατε, *i. e.*, make disciples of, "*all nations.*" Here is the divine command to do mission work. The Gospel is for all nations. "Preach the Gospel to every creature," πᾶσιν τῇ κτίσει. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Mark 16, 15. 16. The Gospel is for "every creature," *i. e.*, of course, for such creatures as can believe, for men, all men, all nations. "*Go ye, make disciples.*" How? "*Baptizing them . . . teaching them. . .*" Vv. 19. 20. Thus His disciples are to "make disciples" by propagating the Gospel of salvation.

Matt. 7, 15: *Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing; but inwardly they are ravening wolves.*

We find this solemn warning towards the close of Christ's wonderful Sermon on the Mount. — Having entered the strait gate and walking on the narrow way, Christians must know of the dangers besetting their path. One is mentioned in the text.

"*Beware!*" That certainly is a danger signal. For the protection of unwary and unsophisticated strangers signs are often posted in public places in our large cities, reading: "Danger!" or, "Beware of pickpockets!" Thus they are put on their guard.

"*Beware of false prophets*" — thus the Savior's voice of warning puts the disciples on their guard. You are on the narrow way, "which leadeth unto life"; but *beware!* — there is danger of your being misled into walking the broad way, "that leadeth to destruction." Whence this danger? "*Beware of false prophets.*" Who is a prophet? A spokesman of God, God's mouthpiece, one who speaks for God, one who teaches the Word of God. So the Lord speaks of the preachers of the Word. His note of warning is sounded against *false* prophets. Who are they? Prophets, preachers, who pretend to proclaim the Word of God, but who pervert it, do not give the true meaning to all the Word of God, but a false one. The false prophets are those "that use *their* tongues and say, *He*" — the Lord — "saith," Jer. 23, 31. They are deceivers, falsifiers, liars.

Now as to their outward appearance. "*They come to you in sheep's clothing.*" This is emblematic of the external appearance of innocence, gentleness, and harmlessness. A wolf in sheep's clothing does not look dangerous; to all appearances he is a sheep. So with the false prophets. What is his sheep's clothing? He is a prophet, he holds the office of a preacher of the Gospel. He claims that God has sent him. He says:

“Lord, Lord,” vv. 21. 22, *i. e.*, he frequently uses the name of the Lord, speaks of Him as reverently as do the true prophets. They “*come to you,*” unbidden, as prophets; they show a great concern about your soul’s welfare; they, perhaps, make house-to-house visits to gain proselytes, as do the Mormon apostles; they may distribute tracts and pamphlets galore, as do the Russellites. That is their sheep’s clothing. They employ “enticing words,” Col. 2, 4; “feigned words,” 2 Pet. 2, 3; “goods words and fair speeches,” Rom. 16, 18, and make “a show of wisdom,” Col. 2, 23. That is their stock in trade — their sheep’s clothing.

But as to their true inward character, — “*inwardly they are ravening wolves.*” Image the picture of a ravening wolf in sheep’s clothing among a flock of guileless sheep. Such is the true inward character of a false prophet — he is a *wolf*; such is the danger threatening the sheep of Christ — he is a *ravening* wolf.

What does a wolf do among a flock of sheep? He kills, devours, the sheep. And the false prophet in sheep’s clothing kills, destroys, the souls of the sheep of Christ. How? Why, he is a *false* prophet; he *perverts* the Word of God, *misconstrues*, *misinterprets* it, and thus “uses his own tongue,” and still says: “He” — the Lord — “saith.” False doctrine leads to destruction. A poisonous fluid poured into wholesome water changes the pure water into poison. A little pin-prick has often caused blood-poisoning. Error mixed with truth does not make the error truth, but the truth, error. “A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump,” Gal. 5, 9. How necessary the exhortation, “*Beware of false prophets!*”

Paul’s farewell words to the Ephesian elders are very illuminating and instructive in this connection. We offer them without further comment. Observe that the “grievous wolves” either come from without, they “*enter in among you,*” or they arise from within, “*of your own selves shall men arise.*” — We read: “For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves *enter in among you,* not sparing the flock.

Also of *your own* selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears," Acts 20, 29—31.

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(To be continued.)
