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Introduction to Sacred Theology

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Introduction to Sacred Theology.

(*Prolegomena.*)

The Nature and Constitution of Sacred Theology.

6. Christianity, the Absolute Religion.

The Christian religion is the absolute religion, inasmuch as it is absolutely perfect, neither requiring, nor being capable of, improvement or supplementation. It is God-given (*θεόςδοτος*) and therefore precisely as God would have it to accomplish its beneficent purpose of "saving sinners." When we ascribe to the Christian religion perfection or absoluteness, we do not mean to say that it is a "logically complete whole" (*ein logisch vollkommenes Ganzes*), or a logically complete and perfect system, in which there are no missing links of thoughts or doctrines. Considered from this viewpoint, the Christian religion is rather fragmentary in its teachings. So St. Paul asserts, 1 Cor. 13, 12: "Now I know in part." What Christianity knows of divine wisdom through revelation is only a part of the unsearchable knowledge of God. Again, the Christian religion is not perfect, or absolute, in the sense of constituting the best system of morality (*die vollkommenste Moral*); that indeed is true. The moral theology of Holy Scripture is perfect; for it centers in, and aims at, perfect love to God and the neighbor, Matt. 22, 37—40. Both its demand and its goal are perfect love, Matt. 5, 48: "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." But this perfect morality does not constitute the essence of the Christian religion; it is rather the effect, or fruit, of the Christian faith which the Holy Spirit implants in the human heart through the means of grace. Or, as we may say briefly, it is the result of Christianity, not Christianity itself, 1 John 4, 9—21; Rom. 12, 1.

Nevertheless the Christian religion is absolute, that is, altogether perfect and unsurpassable; and this for two reasons. In the first place, the Christian religion is not a moral code, teaching men how they may reconcile God through good works, but it is divine faith in the amazing fact that God through Christ "reconciled the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them," 2 Cor. 5, 19. In that sense the Christian religion is absolute, that is, perfect and unsurpassable; for it offers to sinful mankind through the Gospel of Christ a perfect and incomparable reconciliation, effected through the vicarious atonement of the Son of God, the divine Redeemer of the world, who for us and in our stead satisfied the demands of divine justice (active obedience) and paid the penalty of sin (passive obedience), Gal. 4, 4, 5; 3, 13; Is. 53; 2 Cor. 5, 21. Every sinner who believes this reconciliation, or forgiveness of sin, is justified, or declared righteous, by grace, without the deeds of the Law, Acts 26, 18;

Luke 24, 46. 47; Rom. 10, 17; 1 Cor. 2, 4. 5; Rom. 3, 38; 5, 1. That is the glorious promise which Christianity offers to all sinners. It announces to lost mankind that God by grace imputes to sinful man, who in himself is ungodly and condemned, the perfect righteousness of Christ through faith, or that He covers the unrighteousness of the penitent believer with the perfect righteousness of His divine Son Jesus Christ. Rom. 4, 5: "But to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." 1 John 2, 1. 2: "And He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." That is the wonderful absoluteness, or perfection, of the Christian religion: it bestows perfect reconciliation and salvation by grace and puts the believer into perfect and complete possession of God's choicest gifts: His divine grace, His complete pardon, His peace that passes understanding, in short, spiritual and eternal life. Thus Christianity fully accomplishes what religion should accomplish—it reunites sinful mankind with the holy God and restores to him all that he has lost through sin. Col. 2, 10—14: "And ye are complete [perfect, τέλει] in Him."

Of course, it is understood that the Christian religion is absolute, or perfect, only when it is preserved in its purity, that is to say, when its character as a religion of grace and faith is fully maintained by keeping unadulterated its central doctrine of justification by grace through faith in the vicarious atonement of Christ. If this chief doctrine of the Christian religion is perverted or removed, then Christianity is no longer Christianity, but a paganized religion, unworthy of the name it bears and incapable of saving sinners. Thus Romanism, which teaches justification through "infused grace" (*gratia infusa*) and so through "good works" (*Council of Trent, Sess. VI, can. 11. 12. 20*), paganizes Christianity in its central teaching, and the result is that the sinner fails to obtain divine pardon and, besides, is burdened with the curse of uncertainty (*monstrum incertitudinis*) as to his state of grace. Gal. 5, 4: "Christ is become of no effect unto you whosoever of you are justified by the Law; ye are fallen from grace." So also the doctrine of justification by grace through faith in Christ is corrupted by the rationalistic Protestant theologians of to-day, who reject the Scriptural doctrine of Christ's vicarious atonement and inculcate in its place their own erroneous "theories of atonement." They, too, deny the central Gospel-truth that men are justified through faith alone and through their man-made theories of atonement paganize the Christian religion. (*The Moral-Example Theory*: Christ's death should induce men to repent, reform, and better their condition. *The Governmental Theory*: Christ died simply to exhibit to man that sin is displeasing in God's sight, since God's government of the world necessitates that He show

His wrath against sin. *The Love-of-God Theory*: Christ died to show how much God loves man, etc.) The central article of Christianity is likewise denied and perverted by all synergists, Arminians, and Pelagians, who claim that man's salvation depends, at least in part, on his good conduct and works. The Christian religion, if so perverted, is no longer essentially Christian, nor is it in that case absolute, or perfect, since in its paganized form it no longer can save sinners.

In the second place, the Christian religion is absolute, that is, perfect and unsurpassable, because its source and norm is not the fallible word of erring men, but the infallible Word of the inerrant God, as this is set forth in Holy Scripture, John 10, 35; 2 Tim. 3, 15—17; 1 Pet. 1, 10—12; Eph. 2, 20. Since Holy Scripture is divinely inspired, it is the absolute divine truth, John 17, 17; and the Christian religion, which is drawn from this absolute truth, is the only true religion, whereas all other religions, falsely so called, are in deed and truth not religions at all. This fact requires great emphasis to-day when unionistic and syncretistic tendencies are so strong even in Christian circles and norms outside and contrary to Holy Scripture are so readily adopted. Holy Scripture is the only norm of faith, and only that is true religion which is true Scripture-teaching. This truth must be maintained not only against Modernism, which rejects Holy Scripture altogether, but also against modern rationalistic theology, which establishes as norms, beside Holy Scripture, such things as "Christian consciousness," "Christian conviction," "Christian experience," etc., and no less against Romanism, which declares tradition to be a source and rule of faith. In short, all who desire to maintain the Christian religion as the absolute religion must adhere to both the doctrine of justification by grace through faith in the vicarious atonement of Christ and to the doctrine that Holy Scripture, as the inspired, inerrant Word of God, is the only source and standard of faith. For the Christian religion is absolute only if it is presented and taught as God Himself has given it to us in His Word.

The Christian religion was given to sinful mankind immediately after the Fall and was then, as it is now, the only absolute religion because it alone offered to, and bestowed upon, men salvation from sin through faith in the divinely appointed Redeemer of the world, Gen. 3, 15; Acts 10, 43. Throughout the Old Testament the Gospel of Christ was proclaimed no less than it is in the New Testament, John 5, 39; 8, 56; 10, 43, though in the New Testament the preaching of the Gospel differs from that of the Old Testament in clearness and completeness. When Holy Scripture speaks of the abrogation of the Old Testament and the institution of the New Testament, this in no wise refers to the preaching of the Gospel, which is the essence of

Christianity, but to the Mosaic covenant of the Law, which is done away in Christ, Jer. 31, 31—34; Heb. 8, 6—13; Gal. 3, 17 ff.; Col. 2, 16. Thus, while in the Old Testament divine revelation was progressive, inasmuch as the message of Christ's coming and redemption was announced in ever clearer and fuller light, the religion which God gave to Adam and Eve after the Fall was from the very beginning absolute, that is, perfect and complete, because it was adequate to accomplish the salvation of sinners. The claim that the Old Testament presents to us essentially different religions, such as the patriarchal, the Mosaic, the prophetic, etc., is unfounded and contradicts the incontestable statements of Holy Scripture, Rom. 4, 3—6; Heb. 11. Christ was always the only Savior of all sinners, and no one has ever been saved except through faith in Him. Acts 4, 12: "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved."

In view of the fact that the Christian religion is the only true religion it is incorrect to speak of it as the "highest religion" or the "most perfect religion" or the "climax of all religions," etc. Such superlatives express only a difference in degree, whereas the difference between Christianity and all other religions so called is one of kind. Christianity is a God-made religion; all others are man-made. For this reason it is objectionable also to say that Christianity offers to man the "highest satisfaction." As a matter of fact, Christianity alone offers to sinful men satisfaction, since it alone conveys and seals to them the grace of God, forgiveness of sins, and life eternal. The character of absoluteness belongs alone to the religion of Jesus Christ.

When the question is considered as to what constitutes the essential difference between the Old and the New Testament, we must seek the difference, not in the religion itself, but in the accidental feature of greater clearness and fulness. Essentially the two are the same. The doctrinal content does not differ, but in both we find the same Moral Law and the same Gospel, namely, that sinners are saved alone by God's grace in His Son, our Savior. This is attested by Christ Himself, who not only declared the Old Testament to be the divine truth, John 8, 24; 10, 35; 5, 39, but also affirmed that He is the Christ of the Old Testament, Luke 24, 25—27. Our divine Lord became incarnate, not to teach a new religion, but to fulfil the Old Testament prophecies concerning Himself and to secure by His holy suffering and death the salvation promised by the prophets, Matt. 5, 17—19; Rom. 3, 28—31; Col. 2, 10—14. As Christ, so also St. Paul declared the Old Testament Scriptures to be able to make believers wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus, 2 Tim. 3, 15—17. So also St. Paul expressly taught that the doctrine of justification by grace through faith was not a new doctrine, but the

doctrine witnessed by the prophets in the Old Testament and believed by all Old Testament believers, Rom. 3 ff.; chap. 4. From all this it is obvious that also the religion of the Old Testament is essentially absolute or that the religion of the Old Testament is essentially the Christian religion, which by its very nature is perfect and unsurpassable.

7. The Christian Religion and Christian Theology.

There are theologians who suggest the following distinction between "Christian religion" and "Christian theology": The "Christian religion" in its subjective sense is the knowledge of God which all Christian believers possess, while "Christian theology" in its subjective sense is the knowledge of God which is possessed by the official teachers of the Church. Rightly understood, this distinction may be accepted; for Holy Scripture, while teaching that all believers possess knowledge of God, emphasizes the fact that the official teachers of the Church must possess knowledge of God in a higher degree, John 6, 45; 1 Cor. 12, 29; 1 Tim. 3, 2; 2 Tim. 2, 1. In these passages it is taught that, while believers are "all taught of God," yet they are not "all teachers" and that bishops, or ministers, must be "apt to teach" and must therefore have the doctrines of God's Word committed unto themselves in such a way that they "shall be able to teach others."—Nevertheless it must be maintained that there is no essential difference between religion and theology. Both have the same principle (*principium cognoscendi*), or source, namely, Holy Scripture; and both are received in one and the same manner, namely, through faith in the Word of God. John 8, 31. 32: "If ye continue in My Word, then are ye My disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth." For these reasons both the religious knowledge and the theological knowledge are fundamentally the same and are obtained by the same method, namely, through the believing study and prayerful meditation of God's Word. Whatever is not taken from, or whatever goes beyond, Holy Scripture is neither religion nor theology, but human speculation. (*Quod non est biblicum, non est theologicum.*) This truth must be held against all rationalistic theologians who assert that Christian theology is something that lies beyond the Christian religion as basically different from it, and in particular, that the Christian theologian intellectually comprehends the mysteries of faith, whereas the common Christian believer merely accepts them through faith. That such views are disastrous both to religion and theology requires no further proof. As a matter of fact, Christian theology is not a speculative system of philosophy, the substance of which lies within human intellectual comprehension; but it is "the wisdom of God in a mystery," 1 Cor. 2, 7. (The sense of Paul's statement is evidently: "In speaking the wisdom of God, we proclaim a mystery.") For this reason a child-

like faith in God's Word is no less essential to the Christian theologian than to the Christian believer in general. A theologian is a Christian theologian only inasmuch as he implicitly believes in Christ and unconditionally accepts His Word.

8. Christian Theology.

Etymologically considered, the term *theology* may be defined as the "Word concerning God" (*λόγος περι θεοῦ*). In the subjective sense the term denotes the knowledge of God (*Gottesgelahrtheit*) as it inheres in the theologian; in its objective sense it designates the doctrine concerning God as it is presented in a book or treatise. (Cp. the meaning of psychology, physiology, biology, geology, etc.) Thomas Aquinas summarizes the meaning and function of theology as follows: "*Theologia a Deo docetur, Deum docet et ad Deum ducit.*" The name *God* in connection with *λόγος*, however, always denotes the object, so that theology in its objective sense is properly the doctrine which teaches God (*Deum docet*).

The term *theology* in its common significance (*usus loquendi*) does not occur in Holy Scripture. It is therefore a "*vox non ἔγγραφος, sed ἀγραφος, quamvis non ἀντίγραφος.*" The heading of St. John's *Revelation*: *Ἀποκάλυψις Ἰωάννου τοῦ θεολόγου*, as Gerhard correctly points out, was not selected by the author of that book, but was added by later copyists. This fact proves that the term *theology* was widely used already by the earliest Christian writers and was quite generally understood also in its specific meaning. However, the term *theology* was used also by non-Christian authors, and this fact must not surprise us since man by nature has a certain knowledge of God, the divine Law being inscribed in his heart, Rom. 1 and 2. Pagan writers applied the term *theology* to the doctrine of God which their most learned poets and philosophers, whom some styled theologians, taught. Thus Aristotle says of Thales and of the philosophers before Thales, who speculated on the origin of things, that they "theologized" (*θεολογήσαντες*). Cicero declares expressly: "*Principio Ioves tres numerant, qui THEOLOGI nominantur.*" (Cp. Arist., *Metaph.* I, 3; Cicero, *De Natura Deorum*, III, 21.)

Nevertheless the term *theology* has not always been used in the same meaning. This diverse use of the term need not give us concern since the word itself does not occur in Holy Scripture and can therefore be employed in sacred theology in various meanings, as long as it is not made to stand for something which in itself is condemned in God's Word. The concepts which it is made to express should themselves be Scriptural. The term is used correctly and in accordance with Holy Scripture if it denotes —

1. The particular knowledge of God which those possess who are called to administer the public ministry, in other words, the special knowledge of pastors and teachers of the Church, 1 Tim. 3, 2, 5;

2. The particular knowledge of God which is demanded of those who are called to prepare Christian ministers and teachers for their high calling, or the special knowledge of theological professors, 2 Tim. 2, 2;

3. The general knowledge of God which all true believers possess, especially the experienced Christians, whose knowledge of spiritual matters has been deepened by much prayerful meditation and practical experience in the profession of Christ, so that they themselves, in their limited sphere, are competent to teach others, 1 Pet. 3, 15; Col. 3, 16;

4. The special knowledge of certain parts of the Christian doctrine, in particular, the doctrine of the deity of Christ and of the Trinity. Thus Gregory of Nazianz (died ca. 390) was called *ὁ θεολόγος*, because he defended the deity of Christ with special distinction. And Basilus applied the term *theology* to the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. (Cp. Pieper, *Christliche Dogmatik*, Vol. I, p. 47.)

As the term is applied generally, it denotes in its abstract sense, or objectively, either the entire Christian doctrine (*usus generalis*) or the particular doctrine concerning God (*usus specialis*).

If the term *theology* is employed in the above meanings, it is used in conformity with Holy Scripture and therefore correctly. But if it is applied to any doctrine which goes beyond Scripture or to a system of doctrine which is not exclusively based on Scripture, but rather on "Christian consciousness," "Christian experience," "Christian tradition," etc., it is misapplied. For whatever is not drawn from Scripture is not theology at all, but human speculation, which, in the final analysis, is ignorance and self-delusion.

In this treatise we use the term *theology* both subjectively, or concretely, to denote the spiritual ability (*ικανότης, habitus*), to teach and defend the Word of God, in short, to administer the functions of the Christian ministry in the true Scriptural way (2 Cor. 3, 5. 6), and objectively, or abstractly, for the Christian doctrine, either in whole or in part, presented either orally or in writing, 2 Tim. 1, 13. Both uses are Scriptural. Subjective, or concrete, theology is the spiritual habitude of the Christian teacher; objective, or abstract, theology is the product or result of this ability. Also, we hold that the first meaning given of the term is the primary, since theology must first be found in the soul of a person before that person can teach and present it either by word or in writing. If we call the product of the inherent ability theology, this is done by way of metonymy, the effect being named after the cause. For the Christian theologian this distinction is of paramount importance because it constantly reminds him that studying theology means not simply the intellectual apprehension of a number of facts, but the true regeneration, conversion, and sanctification of his own heart, from which his whole ministry must flow.

Dr. A. L. Graebner, in his *Outlines of Doctrinal Theology*, defines theology in its subjective, or concrete, sense as follows: "Theology is a practical habitude of the mind, comprising the knowledge and acceptance of divine truth, together with an aptitude to instruct others towards such knowledge and acceptance and to defend such truth against its adversaries." Theology, in its objective, or abstract, sense, he defines as "an oral or written exhibition of the truths, doctrines, principles, etc., by virtue of the knowledge, acceptance, maintenance, and practical application of which a theologian is a theologian."

9. Theology Further Considered as a Habitude.

Theology as a habitude, or ability, is described in all those Scripture-passages which depict the character and qualifications of the true Christian minister, who, in the sense of Holy Scripture, is a true theologian, possessing the ability (*ικανότης*, sufficiency) to administer the functions of the ministry in the divinely appointed manner. On the basis of Holy Scripture we may therefore describe the theological habitude as follows:—

1. The theological habitude is a *spiritual* habitude (*habitus spiritualis, supernaturalis*), that is to say, an ability which is implanted in the soul not by natural gifts, but by the Holy Ghost. It presupposes personal faith in Christ's vicarious atonement and consequently the regeneration, or conversion, of the theologian. Unbelieving ministers or teachers do not deserve the name of theologian; and in the sense of Holy Scripture they are not theologians, though they may have apprehended the doctrines of the Word of God intellectually and are able to present them clearly and correctly. In other words, there is no *theologia irrogenitorum*, or theology of the irregenerate, since the souls of the unconverted and unbelieving are not inhabited and actuated by the Holy Ghost, but by the "prince of this world," that is, Satan. Eph. 2, 2: "Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." Holy Scripture always describes a true minister of Christ as a penitent, believing child of God, who ascribes to divine grace both his sufficiency and call into the ministry. 2 Cor. 3, 5, 6: "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God, who also hath made us able ministers of the New Testament." 2 Tim. 2, 1 ff.: "Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." 1 Tim. 3, 2 ff.: "A bishop must be blameless, . . . of good behavior, . . . apt to teach." Unbelieving and unregenerate ministers hold their sacred office not by God's will, but only by His permission; and although their personal unbelief does not render inefficacious the Word they preach and the

Sacraments they administer, provided they preach the Word of God in truth and purity and administer the Sacraments according to Christ's institution, yet their hypocritical incumbency and performance of the high office is a disgrace to the Lord, an offense to the Church, and a perpetual menace to the faith and piety of their hearers. Jer. 14, 14—18: "The prophets prophesy lies in My name. I sent them not, neither have I commanded them. . . . By sword and famine shall those prophets be consumed. And the people to whom they prophesy shall be cast out in the streets." (Cp. also Jer. 23, 11—32; Ezek. 13, 3—9; etc.) This important truth, namely, that a true theologian is a true believer, our dogmaticians had in mind when they, with one accord, so emphatically described theology, first of all, as a *habitus spiritualis vel supernaturalis* (*θεολογικός*), a *Spiritu Sancto per Verbum Dei collatus*." Baier's definition reads (I, 69): "*Constat, theologiam esse habitum in substantia sua supernaturalem, actibus nostris quidem, sed per vires gratiae et operationem Spiritus Sancti acquisitum.*" He adds that all theology which is not wrought by the Holy Ghost is so called only in an improper sense. (*Ita non nisi AEQUIVOCE dicta theologia est.*) So also Luther writes: "A doctor of Holy Scripture no one can make for you except solely the Holy Spirit from heaven, as Christ says, John 6, 45: 'And they shall be all taught of God.'" (St. L. X, 339 ff.) The spiritual habitude of theology implies also faith in Holy Scripture as the divinely inspired, infallible Word of God; and this faith, too, is the work and gift of the Holy Ghost.

2. The theological habitude further includes the ability to refrain from all human opinions and thoughts on God and divine things, to draw all doctrines from Holy Scripture, and thus to teach nothing but God's Word. John 8, 31. 32: "If ye continue in My Word, then are ye My disciples indeed." Likewise St. Paul writes to Timothy, 1 Tim. 6, 3. 4: "If any man teach otherwise and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ and to the doctrine which is according to godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words." That the "words of our Lord Jesus Christ" are not merely the words which our Savior Himself spoke during His sojourn on earth, but all the inspired writings of the prophets and the apostles, is proved by such passages as John 17, 20; 1 Pet. 1, 10—12; Eph. 2, 20, etc. These passages disqualify and bar all teachers of the Church, who, while rejecting Holy Scripture as the sole source and norm of faith, draw their doctrines from false norms, such as the "Christian traditions," the "regenerate heart," "Christian consciousness," "private revelations," the "Christian experience," etc. Luther, in his exposition of Jer. 23, 16, correctly remarks: "Behold, all prophets who do not preach out of the mouth of God deceive, and God forbids that we should hear them. (St. L. XIX, 821 ff.)

3. The theological habitude includes, moreover, the ability to teach the whole Word of God as it is set forth in Holy Scripture. In order to attest his ministerial faithfulness, St. Paul said to the elders of Ephesus, Acts 20, 27: "I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." Only by declaring "all the counsel of God" do Christian ministers remain guiltless in case their hearers should forfeit their salvation by unbelief, as St. Paul witnesses, Acts 20, 26: "Wherefore I take you to record this day that I am pure from the blood of all men." And it is for this very reason that the apostle so earnestly admonishes Timothy, 1 Tim. 4, 16: "Take heed unto thyself and unto the doctrine; continue in them; for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee." A Christian teacher should therefore "take heed unto the doctrine," study it with great zeal and diligence, preach it fully and without admixture of human opinion, and thus prove himself faithful by presenting to his hearers all the doctrines of God's Word. Matt. 28, 20: "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." 1 Cor. 4, 2: "Moreover, it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful." Jer. 48, 10: "Cursed be he that doeth the work of the Lord deceitfully" (marg. note: negligently). Such ability, however, is not of man's own power, but of God.

4. The theological habitude implies also the ability to convince the gainsayers. Titus 1, 9: "Holding fast the faithful Word as he hath been taught that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers." Holy Scripture never prohibits polemics, but rather commands it, since controversy, if carried on in the commendable spirit of Christian charity, is never destructive, but highly profitable and greatly necessary. Every kind of polemics which is prompted by, and exhibits, a carnal, factious spirit is, of course, an abuse of Christian controversy and therefore forbidden. Titus 3, 9: "But avoid foolish questions and genealogies and contentions and strivings about the Law; for they are unprofitable and vain." 2 Cor. 10, 3: "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh." Again, true polemics requires not only the refutation of false doctrine, but also the clear and Scriptural presentation of the true doctrine in order that the opponent may be won over to the divine truth; for this, after all, is the final purpose of all true polemics, that falsehood may be eliminated and divine truth be received. Toleration of false doctrine within the Church is unfaithfulness to God's Word and therefore unfaithfulness to God Himself, who has entrusted His divine truth to the care of the theologian. For this reason also the ministry of Christ and of His apostles was largely spent in polemics; for while they were teaching the truth, they testified also against error. Matt. 7, 15: "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening

wolves." Rom. 16, 17: "Now, I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them." False doctrine is so pernicious and so displeasing to God that He demands not only the refutation of all error, but also the excommunication of the errorist in case he proves himself a heretic. Rom. 16, 17: "And avoid them." 2 John 10: "If there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house neither bid him Godspeed." Clearly and emphatically Holy Scripture declares itself in these injunctions against every form of syncretism and spiritual unionism.*

5. The theological habitude, in the last plan, is the ability to suffer for the sake of Christ and His Word. 2 Tim. 2, 3: "Thou therefore endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." 2, 9: "Wherein I suffer trouble as an evil-doer, even unto bonds. But the Word of God is not bound." The suffering of Christians in general and of Christian ministers in particular is caused by the hatred of, and contempt of the world for, God's Word. 1 Cor. 1, 23: "We preach Christ Crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block and unto the Greeks foolishness." The result of the world's antagonism to the Gospel of Christ our Savior describes as follows: "Ye shall be hated of all nations for My name's sake," Matt. 24, 9. Unwillingness to suffer for the Gospel's sake leads to compromise with error, to the denial of divine truth, and, in the end, to apostasy from divine grace. 2 Tim. 2, 12: "If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him; if we deny Him, He also will deny us." Unless the Christian and, above all, the Christian theologian is ready to renounce for Christ's sake ease and friendship, to take upon himself the loss of honor and property, and to lay down his life for the sake of divine truth, he cannot serve his divine Master as this is required of him.

* No matter what the motives may be that induce men to depart from Holy Scripture and to cause divisions and offenses contrary to the truth of God's Word, they must all be condemned as carnal and sinful. There are no "noble" motives for causing divisions within the Church, but they are all equally reprehensible and ungodly. Holy Scripture describes them as follows: "belly service," Rom. 16, 18; pride, 1 Tim. 6, 3; the inordinate desire for honor, John 5, 44; fear of suffering for Christ's sake, Gal. 6, 12; envy, Matt. 27, 18; perversion, 1 Tim. 6, 4; John 16, 3; 1 Tim. 1, 13; the personal vanity and viciousness of theologians, 2 Tim. 3, 1—9; etc. (*Multae in ecclesia haereses ortae sunt tantum ODIO DOCTORUM.* Apology, III, 121.) Divisions within the Church are therefore not pleasing to God, nor do they exist by the will of God, but they are God's just punishment upon those who do not love the truth. 2 Thess. 2, 8—12: "Because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved, for this cause God shall send them strong delusion that they should believe a lie, that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."

The theological habitude may, then, be said to consist in the ability, divinely bestowed, to teach the pure and unadulterated Word of God, to declare the whole counsel of God unto salvation, to oppose and refute false doctrine, and to suffer for Christ's sake all the consequences which the proclamation of the Word of God entails.

JOHN THEODORE MUELLER.

(To be continued.)

Artikel X der Variata.

„Res et verba Melancthon; verba sine re Erasmus; res sine verbis Lutherus; nec rem nec verba Carolostadius“, dies ist das Lob, das der Reformator seinem Gehilfen zollt. (Erl. 62, 346.) Melancthon hatte die herrliche Gabe, die Fülle des Geistes Luthers in kurzen, prägnanten, dogmatischen Lehrformeln wiederzugeben, und bestreuen wird er mit Recht der Lehrer Deutschlands genannt. Im Studier- und Massenzimmer hat Melancthon Großes geleistet. Der gewaltige Zulauf zu seinen Vorlesungen — manchmal an die 2,000 Studenten — legt ein beredtes Zeugnis ab für den Einfluß, den Melancthon auf die zukünftigen Pastoren und Lehrer der jungen Kirche ausgeübt hat. Wenn aber Magister Philipp aus seinem Elemente herausmußte, um die Kriege des Herrn zu führen, da zeigte sich eine solche Charakterschwäche, daß man leicht seine Verdienste um die lutherische Kirche ganz übersieht. Es ist das beständige Bestreben, durch menschlichen Vorwitz Frieden bei Kirchen und Schulen zu erhalten. Während er bei Ausschweifungen der Studentenschaft in Wittenberg sich als einen ganzen Mann zeigen konnte (Schmidt, Melancthon, 14), so rieb ihn die ängstliche Sorge um die Kirche und um das Vaterland fast auf. (De Wette, Luthers Briefe, III, 470.) Es war nicht Nachgiebigkeit gegen seine Frau, wie Dubigné meint (*History of Reformation*, Bk. VI, chap. V), was ihn veranlaßte, sich auf verhängliche Kompromisse einzulassen, sondern das ernstliche Bemühen, um jeden Preis einen Religionskrieg zu verhüten. Mit Schrecken dachte er 1530 an die Folgen, falls der Kaiser die Augustana nicht freundlich aufnehmen sollte, und schrieb aus der Angst seines Herzens heraus an seinen Bruder: „Alles will ich gerne ertragen, . . . aber was mich ganz niederschlägt, ist Zanf und Streit. Im Geiste sehe ich Schmähungen und Kriege, Verheerungen und Schlachten voraus. Und wenn es nun an mir läge, [durch die Konfession] solch großes Übel zu verhüten?“ (Schmidt, l. c., 234.) Dieser Brief erklärt das scheinbar widersinnige Verfahren Melancthons auf dem Reichstage. Gegen die Römischen war er so nachgiebig, daß er in fast allen Artikeln zu Konfessionen bereit war (*Historical Introductions, Triglotta*, 19), so daß sich die Nürnberger Delegaten bei Luther über das „kindische Verfahren“ Melancthons beklagten (L. u. W. 22, 334), während er gegen die Straf-