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Introduction to Sacred Theology

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direkt Sache der sie konstituierenden Gemeinden. Werden z. B. die Lehrverhandlungen auf allen Distriktssynden als Stimme der Gesamtsynode erklärt und trifft die Synode als solche Vorkehrungen für die Veröffentlichung solcher Bekenntnisse zu Schrift und Bekenntnis, so gelten solche Beschlüsse für die ganze Synode. Aber dabei bleibt sich die Synode doch in allen Fällen bewußt, daß sie nur repräsentativ handelt.

P. E. Kretzmann.

Introduction to Sacred Theology.

(Prolegomena.)

The Nature and Constitution of Sacred Theology.

13. The Purpose of Christian Theology.

In the performance of his sacred functions the Christian theologian must at all times conscientiously keep in mind the true objective of his theological activity. The purpose of sacred theology, so far as it regards lost and perishing mankind, is not the spread of culture nor the establishment of civic righteousness on earth nor the satisfaction of the intellectual craving of the human mind nor the enrichment of human knowledge, but the eternal salvation (*σωτηρία, salus aeterna*) of sinners. In other words, the objective of sacred theology is not academical or speculative, but intensely and absolutely practical (*habitus practicus*), since it leads perishing souls to Christ and through Him to communion with the true God, here in time inchoatively and hereafter in eternity perfectly. This exalted purpose of Christian theology Holy Scripture expressly states in indisputable terms, 1 Tim. 4, 16: "Take heed unto thyself and unto the doctrine...; for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee"; Mark 16, 15. 16: "Preach the Gospel.... He that believeth... shall be saved." If modern rationalistic theology rejects eternal salvation as the primary and preeminent purpose of sacred theology, it is because this obnoxious type of pseudotheology is not Biblical, but carnal; not the divine theology of Christ's Gospel, but the man-made theology of a social gospel. The Lutheran dogmatician Meisner is right when he declares: "Whoever does not continually pursue and keep in mind in his entire study (*Theoria*) this purpose [the salvation of men] does not deserve the name of a true theologian." (*Lehre und Wehre*, 14, 76 ff.)

In accordance with the principle just stated the Lutheran divines have defined the purpose of sacred theology as follows: "The object with whom theology deals is man as he has become a sinner, inasmuch as he must be led to eternal salvation." This definition is truly Scriptural. The object of sacred theology is not man in general, but *homo peccator*, or sinful man, for whose salvation God has sent His

only-begotten Son into the world "that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life," John 3, 16. True, also the state, or the civil government, deals with men as sinners (*homines peccatores*), but its purpose is not the eternal salvation of men, but only their earthly or temporal welfare, in particular, the protection of human life and property. Its interest therefore attaches only to this present life, not to the life that is to be after death. The state has therefore no jurisdiction in the sphere of a man's spiritual and eternal life; its functions cease where this begins. However, to offer to, and to bestow upon, sinful men eternal happiness in the life to come, and this through faith in Christ Jesus, engendered by the divinely instituted means of grace, that is the special and proper function of sacred theology, which consists in the divine message: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him," John 3, 36.

The final purpose of sacred theology (*finis ultimus*) is therefore the eternal salvation of men. The intermediate purpose (*finis intermedius*) may be defined as the generation and preservation of saving faith in Christ Jesus unto life eternal. Rom. 1, 5: "By whom we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations, for His name" (that men of all nations might be led to obey Christ in true faith). The Christian theologian therefore performs his holy office, first of all, in order that sinners may believe in Christ and obtain salvation through Him. But sacred theology effects not only conversion, but also sanctification and good works. This objective the Christian theologian must bear in mind constantly, urging with holy zeal those entrusted to his care to be zealous of good works. Titus 3, 8: "These things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works." However, good works are not the means by which eternal salvation is obtained, but rather the effects and fruits of faith. For good works, in the Scriptural sense of the term, are such works as are done by those who already have obtained salvation through faith in Christ. Rom. 3, 28: "A man is justified by faith without the deeds of the Law." 6, 22: "But now, being made free from sin and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness." Eph. 2, 10: "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." From this it follows that all who preach good works as a condition or means of salvation are under the curse, Gal. 3, 10. On the other hand, the Christian theologian who in accordance with Holy Scripture proclaims salvation by grace through faith produces through this very preaching of the Gospel both the right quality and the required quantity of good works. Titus 3, 14: "Who gave Himself for us that He

might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." 1 Tim. 6, 18: "That they be rich in good works." That does not mean that the Christian theologian neglects the divine Law, for the divine Law is as much the Word of God as is the Gospel. But he employs the Law in its rightful place, to show what good works are and what God demands of the believer with regard to them. The willingness and power to do good works, however, he produces alone through the preaching of the Gospel. The Christian theologian must therefore be able rightly to apply both the Law and the Gospel.

14. The External Means by which Sacred Theology Accomplishes Its Purpose of Saving Sinners.

The external means which the Christian theologian employs to accomplish the salvation of sinners are not the carnal weapons suggested by man's wisdom, such as external compulsion, the sword of the civil government, legal enactments, social service, perfection of church organization, etc. In such things theologians are apt to put their trust if they are guided by principles of reason, as the history of the Christian Church proves. Erring theologians within the Christian Church have always advocated carnal means to maintain and spread church power. Holy Scripture, however, condemns these means, not only as unprofitable, but also as downright injurious. For all of them are based upon the Law; and while the Law can check the gross outbursts of sin and improve the sinner outwardly, it cannot change his heart by producing in it true faith in Christ. But where there is no true faith in Christ, there is also no salvation. Hence the only means by which the Christian theologian can accomplish his preeminent, divinely prescribed purpose of saving sinners unto eternal life is the Gospel of Christ. Matt. 28, 19. 20: "Go ye therefore and make disciples of all nations by baptizing them . . ., teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." Mark 16, 15: "Preach the Gospel to every creature." Acts 20, 32: "I commend you . . . to the Word of grace, which is able to build you up." 2 Tim. 3, 15: "Thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation." Rom. 10, 17: "Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God." These divine injunctions of Holy Scripture the Christian theologian must constantly bear in mind in order that he may not be misled to rely on any means suggested and advanced by his carnal heart, but employ exclusively the powerful, living Word of God, by which alone sinners are transformed into children of God and governed and kept through faith unto salvation. In the Christian Church, as in the entire activity of the Christian theologian, the Word of God must rule alone. It is the only efficacious means of grace because it alone is prescribed

by God. Luther very correctly declares: "Christians cannot be ruled by any other means than by the Word of God. For Christians must be ruled by faith, not by external measures. Faith, however, can come only through God's Word, not through any word of man, as St. Paul teaches, Rom. 10, 17: 'Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.'" (St. Louis Ed., X, 406.) Let the Christian theologian, then, rely alone on God's Word for the successful execution of his holy ministry; for it alone is the imperishable foundation of Christ's holy Church. Cp. 1 Cor. 3, 10—14.

15. Theology and Science.

The question whether the term "science" may be applied to sacred theology has caused no little debate among theologians. Some with great vehemence have affirmed it; others with the same vehemence have denied it. The question itself is not difficult to answer, provided the term "science" is used and understood precisely in the same meaning. It is quite obvious that the term "science" as employed in its common meaning cannot be applied to sacred theology. Christian theology is not a science as, for instance, geology, psychology, biology, etc., are sciences. It differs from these sciences not only in subject-matter, but also in source, method, and purpose. Its subject-matter is the divine truth set forth in Holy Scripture; its source is the Holy Bible; its method (*medium cognoscendi*), faith; its purpose, the salvation of sinners. Sacred theology therefore does not deal with human knowledge, or man's wisdom, obtained by human study, contemplation, or research, as do the common sciences established by philosophers and scientists. The Christian theologian gains his wisdom directly from the Bible, whose truths he receives by faith. The heart of sacred theology is the message of Christ's vicarious atonement, which was revealed to men from heaven; for by nature man could not know or ascertain it, 1 Cor. 2, 6—10. By nature man can know only the divine Law, since God has written it into his heart, Rom. 1, 18 ff.; 2, 14. 15. He has a natural knowledge of God, and this innate knowledge of divine things can be developed through reason and experience; both intensively and extensively it may be increased by contemplation and study. But the Gospel of Christ's redemption does not lie within the natural knowledge of fallen man. It is a "mystery," which he owes entirely to God's gracious revelation and which he knows alone through faith in Holy Scripture. From all this it is obvious that sacred theology cannot be called a science in the ordinary sense of the term.

Again, sacred theology is not a science in the sense that it represents a higher Christian knowledge, which is above the simple religion of faith professed by the common Christian and which like the human sciences is capable of intellectual apprehension and logical demon-

stration. Sacred theology is not an advanced type of Christianity; it is not a philosophy of religion, but deals exclusively with the revealed truths of Holy Writ, which the theologian both accepts and apprehends by faith, John 8, 31. 32; Rom. 1, 5; 1 Cor. 13, 12. What the Christian theologian knows of divine, spiritual things he knows only because he believes the Word of God and inasmuch as he believes the Word of God. If he knows more concerning the divine truths revealed by God, his knowledge exceeds that of the ordinary believer merely extensively, not intensively. That is to say, he is conversant with the inspired truths of Holy Scripture to a greater extent, simply because he devotes more time to the study of the Holy Bible than the average Christian believer. Hence the difference between the knowledge of the theologian and that of the ordinary Christian is one of degree, but not one of kind. By this we mean to say that the theologian does not *understand* the divine mysteries of faith whereas the Christian church-member only believes them; for also the theologian knows only so much as he believes. Or, to say it in other words, also with the Christian theologian, faith is knowledge, and knowledge is faith. The philosophical, philological, and historical facts which the theologian knows and operates with in contradistinction to the ordinary believer do not belong to the essence of Christian theology, but constitute merely the external scientific apparatus, or the outward means by which he approaches and studies Holy Scripture. They are merely his tools, or instruments, never a source of spiritual knowledge, from which he is to draw opinions or doctrines beyond and against the Word of God. The attempt of modern rationalistic theology to elevate the Christian faith to a science is nothing else than self-deception, and in the final analysis it is tantamount to the absolute rejection of Holy Scripture as the only principle of Christian knowledge, or the only source of faith (*principium cognoscendi*).

Nevertheless, Christian theology may be rightly called a science if by that term we understand a *definite* knowledge, or *accurate* and *reliable* information, in opposition to mere views, opinions, and hypotheses. Understood in this sense, Christian theology is the science of sciences, or the science *par excellence*, the perfect science. This claim we make and sustain for Christian theology because it is God's own infallible wisdom and not the fallible wisdom of man. To err is human (*errare humanum est*), but it is God's prerogative never to err (*errare in Deum non cadit*). John 17, 17: "Thy Word is truth." John 10, 35: "The Scripture cannot be broken." Holy Scripture is in every part inerrant, and therefore Christian theology, which is drawn from Holy Scripture, is the most definite, most accurate, and most reliable, in fact, the only definite, the only accurate, and the only reliable science in the world.

This is the Christian conviction which every true Christian theologians must hold. If he does less than this, if he doubts the truth of what he declares and proclaims to his hearers, he is not a truly Christian theologian, but a reed shaken with the wind, and he has no business at all to teach or preach in the Christian Church. A Christian theologian must be so deeply convinced of the truth of his message that he is able to say with Paul: "But though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed," Gal. 1, 8. This truth must be emphasized over against modern agnostic theology, which denies the possibility of knowing the truth and claims that it is impossible for a theologian to be subjectively assured of his possessing the truth. This agnostic denial sets aside Christ's definite promise: "If ye continue in My Word . . ., ye shall know the truth," John 8, 31. 32. These words are Christ's own guarantee that, as we accept His Word in true faith, we shall become convinced of its absolute truth, and not only as it is set forth in Holy Writ, but also as we possess and confess it in our Christian dogmas, creeds, and confessions. Faith is always assurance of the truth as this is presented both in the Bible and in Christian theology, or doctrine. Nor is such assurance a mere personal or human conviction (*fides humana*), produced by evidence of reason, but it is the divine assurance (*fides divina*), produced directly by the Holy Ghost through the Word of God. 1 Cor. 2, 5: "That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." John 16, 13: "When He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth." By the Holy Spirit, through the external Word of Holy Scripture, the Christian theologian is so guided into all truth that he can know and teach with absolute certainty the truth which is in Christ Jesus. 1 Cor. 2, 12: "We have received . . . the Spirit, which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God." True Christian theology is therefore no less certain than is Holy Scripture, and the Christian theologian must be no less assured of the truth of the doctrine which he teaches than He is of the objective truth of Holy Scripture. Luther remarks very aptly: "The Holy Spirit is no skeptic and has not written doubts or opinions in our hearts, but statements of fact, which are more certain and firm than life itself with all its experiences." (St. Louis Ed., XVIII, 1680.) Christian theology is therefore justly called a science, because it is a knowledge that is absolutely true and certain.

In spite of this fact it is, however, preferable not to define Christian theology primarily as a science, because the term "science" is subject to so much misunderstanding and downright abuse. Modern rationalistic theology employs that term invariably to denote by it the scientific demonstration of divine truth in accord with the prin-

ciples of human reason. Fundamentally it regards theology as only a more exalted form of philosophy, and hence it applies to it the same principles and methods which are ordinarily employed to demonstrate philosophical truths. Against this mode of procedure the Christian theologian needs must object; for Christian theology with its revealed mysteries is incapable of rational proof or intellectual demonstration. 1 Cor. 2, 14: "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God . . ., neither can he know them." As long as a person is unconverted, no amount of reasoning will render the divine truths of revelation acceptable to him; in fact, the more he allows his reason to mull over them, the more foolish and unreasonable they will seem to him. Hence philosophy can never lead to faith; invariably it leads away from true faith, as the "theology" of modern rationalistic theologians proves. Since, then, human reason is incapable of apprehending the divine mysteries of faith intellectually, Christ simply charged His apostles to preach the Gospel and not to demonstrate it rationally to men, Mark 16, 15. 16. They were to go out and proclaim the truth, but not to turn their divinely given message into a philosophical system acceptable to natural man. In accordance with this command, St. Paul testifies of his ministry at Corinth: "My speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power," 1 Cor. 2, 4. On the basis of the truth just stated our dogmaticians have defined sacred theology as a *habitus exhibitivus*, not as a *habitus demonstrativus*. By this they meant to say that Christian theology is the ability to exhibit, or preach, the Gospel, but not to prove it true by human arguments of reason or philosophy. As the Christian theologian proclaims the truth, he wins souls for Christ, but not as he endeavors to prove true the mysteries of faith by principles of human reason. This is also the meaning of the axiom: "The best apology of the Christian religion is its proclamation." Let the Gospel be made known, and it will of itself prove its divine character. Christian apologetics has therefore only one function: it is to show the unreasonableness of unbelief. Never can it demonstrate the truth with "enticing words of man's wisdom." The reason for this is evident. Unbelief is as unreasonable as it is untrue; it projects the plea of intelligence, while at the bottom of it lies the vicious tendency to do that which is evil. John 3, 19. 20: "For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh he to the light lest his deeds should be reproved." To expose this malice of the carnal heart and to demonstrate the folly of infidelity in upholding its vicious claims is all that can be expected of Christian apologetics. Never can Christian apologetics take the place of the simple preaching of the Word of God. In this connection it may also be emphasized that there are no scientific reasons against the Christian faith. Wherever the Christian faith is opposed, the

opposition has its source not in true science, but in vicious infidelity. The rejection of revealed divine truth can in no case be justified on reasonable grounds; it is the perverted reason of man only that disavows the truth which is in Christ Jesus.

16. Theology and Positive Assurance.

In the preceding chapter we pointed out the truism that the Christian theologian must be himself personally sure of the truth which he teaches. The question how this positive subjective assurance may be secured (*erkenntnis-theoretische Frage*) is being discussed with much vigor both within the conservative and the liberalistic camps. Quite commonly it is thought to be a problem involving most serious difficulties. These difficulties, however, appear only if the theologian surrenders the objective truth of Holy Scripture. As long as he accepts Scripture as the only source and norm of faith, the question is indeed a most simple one. Our divine Lord teaches emphatically both that personal Christian assurance exists and that it is obtained through faith in His Word. John 8, 31. 32: "If ye continue in My Word . . ., ye shall know the truth." This faith, which in itself is perfect assurance, is effected through the Word of God by the Holy Ghost. 1 Cor. 2, 5: "That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." Luther rightly says: "Man is certain passively, just as the Word of God is certain actively." (*Homo est certus passive, sicut Verbum Dei est certum active.*) That means, according to Luther's own explanation: "Where this Word [God's Word] enters the heart with a true faith, it makes the heart as firm, sure, and certain, as it is itself, so that it [the heart] becomes so absolutely firm and hard against every temptation, the devil, death, or whatever it may be, that it boldly and proudly despises and mocks at everything that would doubt, tremble, be evil or angry, for it knows that the Word of God cannot lie." (St. Louis Ed., III, 1887.) This statement is truly Scriptural. Personal, or subjective, assurance is most certainly obtained through the Word of God, and only through the Word of God, as Holy Scripture testifies. On the contrary, every kind of subjective assurance which does not flow from God's Word through faith is self-made and hence nothing but ignorance and self-deception, 1 Tim. 6, 3. 4.

This is the Christian theologian's reply to the false claim of modern rationalistic theology, which asserts that the real personal, or subjective, assurance is "self-assurance" (*Selbstgewissheit*), or assurance which the theologian owes to his own regenerate self. This error, which was first proposed by Schleiermacher, has been quite generally adopted, even by theologians of the positive wing. This erroneous view rejects Holy Scripture as the only source and norm of faith; and so its advocates rely on their "Christian consciousness" or their

"Christian experience" as the norm of their faith. Accordingly, their "Christian theology" is built not exclusively on Holy Scripture, but on their "regenerate heart," or their own "sanctified ego"; and it is from this that they propose to derive their positive personal assurance of divine truth. But every assurance thus obtained must be rejected as false, since it is neither Christian nor scientific nor assurance at all. It is not Christian because it discards the specifically Christian foundation of faith; it is not scientific because it makes the human mind an authority in matters of which natural man is totally ignorant; it is, lastly, not assurance, but imagination, because the Christian theologian can know the divine truth only in so far as he continues in the Word of God. The unchristian character of modern rationalistic theology proves consistently that it is impossible to draw the Christian faith from any other source than Holy Scripture; for this brand of agnostic theology does not only reject the specific doctrines of the Christian religion, but it also sets up contradictory teachings in opposition to Holy Scripture and the Christian faith. Thus modern rationalistic theology denies the Scriptural doctrine of justification by grace through faith and teaches in its place salvation by work-righteousness. Such "assurance" therefore rests upon grounds which God's Word positively condemns.

In short, divine truth can be known by men, or, what is the same thing, the human mind is capable of personal assurance of the divine truth. But this assurance is actual only if the theologian clings to Holy Scripture and in simple faith believes what God has spoken in His written Word. It is the unique characteristic of the Word of God both that it is the absolute truth and that it renders the believer absolutely certain of divine truth. If this is denied, then the possibility and actuality of faith must be likewise denied; for personal assurance is nothing else than personal faith.

17. Theology and Doctrinal Progress.

Modern rationalistic theology of both wings, the conservative no less than the liberalistic, demands theological progress, or doctrinal development, in accord with the advanced and ever-advancing religious vogues of the age (*Lehrfortbildung*). Its claim is that Christian theology cannot be stagnant, but must adjust itself to the varying views of the times. So insistent it is with regard to this matter that it brands all Christian theologians who oppose doctrinal development as unfaithful to their high commission. In modern rationalistic circles loyal theologians who cling to Holy Scripture as the only norm of faith are styled "repristinating theologians" (*Repristinationstheologen*), a term which implies both censure and contempt.

However, as a matter of fact theological progress, or doctrinal development, is impossible and must be condemned as apostasy from

the Christian faith. The reason for this is obvious. According to Holy Scripture Christian theology constitutes a unit which is complete and perfect in itself and hence incapable of either addition or subtraction. Matt. 28, 20: "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." 2 Thess. 2, 15: "Stand fast and hold the traditions [the doctrines] which ye have been taught." Rev. 22, 18: "If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book." Christian theology, or Christian doctrine, is therefore, according to the express teachings of Holy Scripture, a fixed body of divine truths, which must never be altered, increased by human additions, or diminished by omissions of any kind. The Christian theologian must acknowledge and proclaim "all the counsel of God." Cp. Acts 20, 20. 21. 27: "I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have showed you, and have taught you publicly and from house to house, testifying both to the Jews and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." In addition to this Holy Scripture very emphatically affirms that the Church of Christ is built "upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief Corner-stone," Eph. 2, 20. The "foundation of the apostles and prophets" is the fixed doctrine which these holy men have written in Holy Writ by inspiration of the Holy Ghost. So also our Lord declares that those who are saved shall be saved through the Word of the apostles, John 17, 20. Moreover, the Word of God warns all believers most impressively against all errorists that pervert this fixed and definite Word either through addition or subtraction. Acts 20, 29: "After my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock." 1 Tim. 4, 1: "In the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils." Hence, both Christ and His apostles declare that the Christian doctrine is a perfect and complete body of inspired truths, which must be preserved pure and unadulterated. Every possibility of doctrinal progress or development is therefore absolutely excluded. Evolution in the realm of doctrine or theology is as preposterous and unscriptural as it is in the realm of nature or creation. Holy Scripture affirms positively that the same God who made man also gave to him the divine doctrine by which he must be saved. Over this divine doctrine, man has no jurisdiction; it is God's sanctuary which sinful man must not defile either by addition or subtraction or, to use the modern euphemism, by doctrinal development.

To this the objection has been raised that the Christian Church at all times has actually developed the Christian doctrine by establishing creeds and confessions. But this objection involves an intolerable fallacy. In its creeds the Christian Church has never developed the

Christian doctrine, but only declared the express doctrine of Holy Scripture in its full truth and purity against the errors of heretics and schismatics. Thus the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, the Athanasian Creed, and the like, are not declarations of new, man-made teachings, but the very doctrines of Christ and His apostles set forth in Holy Scripture. Whenever the formulation of creeds necessitated the coining of terms not found in Holy Scripture (*ὁμοούσιος, θεοτόκος, mere passive, etc.*), this was done only to present the Scriptural doctrine in clearer light, but never to foist man-devised and unscriptural teachings upon the Christian Church. So also the particular Lutheran Confessions are only specific declarations of the Scriptural doctrine against the errors of Romanism, Calvinism, and enthusiasm. Luther writes very truthfully: "We fabricate nothing new, but retain, and hold to, the old Word of God as the ancient Church confessed it; hence we are, just as that [Church], the true ancient Church, which teaches and believes the same Word of God. For this reason the papists blaspheme Christ Himself, the apostles, and the whole Christian Church when they call us innovationists and heretics. For they find nothing with us but the old [doctrine] of the ancient Church." (St. Louis Ed., XVII, 1324.)

That theological progress, or doctrinal development, is intrinsically impossible, is proved experimentally by the fact that all attempts to develop the Christian doctrine have invariably led to the perversion of divine truth. Modern rationalistic theology, which champions doctrinal development as a prerequisite of the continued existence of the Church, has completely surrendered the very doctrines with which Christianity stands or falls, such as the doctrines of inspiration, of the vicarious atonement of Christ, of justification by grace alone, through faith, etc. Its doctrinal development has proved itself so fatal that it has virtually destroyed Christian theology and enthroned in its place a paganistic body of principles and teachings. And the reason for this is not hard to find. At the foundation of all doctrinal development lies the blind, perverse, and Satanic rationalism of the carnal heart, which cannot bear the sound doctrine of God's Holy Word and which consequently is determined to teach what is opposed to the saving truth which is in Christ Jesus. Our divine Lord castigated this rationalistic spirit of unbelief when He told the Pharisees: "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar and the father of it," John 8, 44. Let the Christian theologian remember that the Christian religion is the absolute religion, which is so complete and perfect in itself that St. Paul could write: "But though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed," Gal. 1, 8.

If sound, Biblical theology must go by the name of "repristination theology," then let the Christian theologian rejoice in that term. For that is the only kind of theology which deserves a place in the Christian Church, since it is the only kind of theology which Jesus Christ, the Head and King of the Church, recognizes as true and divine. May God in His mercy retain in His Church "repristinating theologians," for they are theologians after His heart, whom He will honor and glorify throughout eternity as the true builders of His Zion of grace.

JOHN THEODORE MUELLER.

(To be continued.)

Studies in Hos. 1—3.

Introductory Thoughts.

The Name of the Prophet.

"The Word of the Lord that came unto Hosea, the son of Beeri." Hosea is the name of the prophet = help, deliverance. It was Hoshea (Oshea), the son of Nun, Num. 13, 8. 16, who, true to his changed name Joshuah, placed his hope of salvation solely in Jehovah and pleaded with his people to follow him in his loyalty to the Lord, Josh. 24, 1—28. It was Hoshea, the last king of Israel, who, unlike his great namesake, sought salvation and deliverance from strange gods, from an alliance with Egypt, 2 Kings 17, 4, instead of making the Lord his help. It was Hosea, the prophet, who warned — alas! in vain — against seeking deliverance and help with the idols and pleaded — again in vain — with them to look for help to Jehovah alone.

The Time of His Activity.

Hosea tells us that he prophesied in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam, the son of Joash, king of Israel. Uzziah reigned 810—758,* Hezekiah, 727—698, Jeroboam II, 783—743. Chap. 1, 4 indicates that the house of Jehu was still enthroned in the Northern Kingdom; yet the end of this dynasty was fast approaching. Hosea therefore spoke his first prophecy in the closing days of Uzziah's reign some time between 760 and 758. Since he does not mention the fall of Samaria, 722, he may have finished his book before that event, in the early days of Hezekiah. Accordingly we may assign to him a period of about thirty-five years, 760—725.

His Personal History.

We know very little of the personal history of Hosea. His family is unknown. Early Jewish writers identified his father, Beeri, (1, 1), with Beerah, a prince of the tribe of Reuben, carried into exile

* All dates are given according to Ussher.