

we urge men to believe in their Baptism, the meaning is that they are to believe their heavenly Father, who has attached such a glorious promise to Baptism. The idea that God is highly pleased when a person offers his head to have water sprinkled on it is an abominable misuse of the *verbum visibile*. As the Word does not benefit a person who does not believe, even so the Sacraments help only those who embrace them by faith.

Therefore the charge of fanatics that Lutherans do not urge conversion is baseless. The charge rests on the assumption that Lutherans teach men to rely on the fact that they have been baptized and received Holy Communion. But that is not at all what we teach. This is our doctrine: There is a certain promise of God attached to Baptism and the Lord's Supper, which is to be embraced without doubting. That can be done only by men who have become poor sinners. To say to a person: "You must take comfort in your Baptism" and: "You must turn to Jesus Christ" is identical. A person may imagine that he is a believer, but a brief affliction will suffice to dissipate that notion. Only the Holy Spirit can give a person true faith.

### THIRTY-FOURTH EVENING LECTURE.

(September 11, 1885.)

Nowadays any one who insists that pure doctrine is a very important matter is at once suspected of not having the right Christian spirit. The very term "pure doctrine" has been proscribed and outlawed. Even such modern theologians as wish to be numbered with the confessionalists, as a rule, speak of pure doctrine only in derisive terms, treating it as the shibboleth of dead-letter theology. If any one goes to the extreme, as it is held to be, of even fighting for the pure doctrine and opposing every false doctrine, he is set down as a heartless and unloving fanatic. What may be the reason? Unquestionably this, that modern theologians know full well that they have not that doctrine which in all ages has been called, and verily is, the pure doctrine. Furthermore, they even think that pure doctrine does not exist (is a *non-ens*), except in a dream-world, in the realm of ideals, in the Republic of Plato.

The time in which we live is that to which the apostle refers when he says of errorists that they are "ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." 2 Tim. 3, 7. The spirit of our time is that of Pilate, to whom the Lord had testified that

He was a King of Truth in a kingdom of truth, and who sneeringly replied, "What is truth?" John 18, 38. This unhappy man was most likely thinking in his heart that, since the greatest minds for thousands of years had vainly tried to find the answer to the question, What is truth? this poor beggar, this contemptible Nazarene, Christ, made Himself simply ridiculous with His claim that He was the King of Truth and would establish a kingdom of incontrovertible and eternal truth.

Contempt of the pure doctrine is contempt of the truth; for the pure doctrine is simply nothing else, absolutely nothing else, than the pure Word of God. It is not, as some think, the doctrine adapted to the systems of dogmaticians that has been accepted by the Church. Accordingly, contempt of the pure doctrine is proof that we are living in an unspeakably lamentable era. For listen in what terms the Scriptures themselves speak of God's Word and the pure doctrine. In the prophecies of Jeremiah we read, chap. 23, 28: "The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath My Word, let him speak My Word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord." David addresses God Himself in these words of Ps. 94, 20: "Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with Thee, which frameth mischief by a law?" By the term "law" he refers, in general, to the Word of God. What says our dear Lord Christ Himself regarding this matter? In John 8, 31, 32 He says: "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." Over against this, German theologians are not ashamed to say: "Bah! We are seeking after truth, but only a conceited, self-satisfied person will claim to have achieved it." Such talk shows to what depths we have sunk. Does not the Lord say distinctly: "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free"? Jude, the faithful apostle, writes in his epistle, v. 3: "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." The apostle is referring, not to faith in a person's heart, but to faith objectively viewed, that is, to the pure doctrine. John, the beloved disciple, the spokesman of love, writes, 2 Ep. 9—11: "Whosoever transgresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him Godspeed; for he that biddeth him Godspeed is partaker of his evil

deeds." The holy Apostle Paul writes to Titus concerning the qualities of a Christian pastor, chap. 1, 9—11: "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. For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision, whose mouth must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake." In his First Epistle to Timothy, chap. 4, 16, he writes: "Take heed unto thyself and unto the doctrine; continue in them." Lastly, he writes to the Galatian congregation, after errorists had found their way into them, in chap. 5, 7—9: "Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth? This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you. A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." He means to say that a single false teaching vitiates the entire body of the Christian doctrine, even as a little poison dropped into pure water produces a deadly potion.

Let us picture to ourselves as vividly as we can the situation that would have been created in the early Church, when errorists like Arius, Nestorius, and Pelagius arose, if men like Athanasius, Cyril, and Augustine had not earnestly opposed them. As far back as in the fourth and fifth centuries the Church would have lost the primary article of the Christian faith; the foundation would have been removed from beneath it, and it would have had to collapse. That was, indeed, impossible in view of the eternal counsel of God concerning the Church; however, because of that very counsel, God had to raise up instruments such as those teachers were. True, while they lived, they were hated and persecuted as malicious disturbers of Christendom, but for more than a thousand years their names have been beacon-lights, as names of great witnesses to the saving truth, and in eternity they will shine as the brightness of the firmament and as the stars forever and ever. Dan. 12, 3. Let no one, then, be deterred from giving his testimony in behalf of the truth by the charge that he has a false spirit. That charge emanates only from unbelief.

Again, suppose Luther, after learning the truth, had indeed borne testimony for it to his immediate associates, but had not entered into conflict with the Papacy because of the great abominations which it had introduced into the Church, what would have happened? Christianity would have to remain under the soul-tyranny of the Roman Antichrist, and we all should still be subjects of it.

There is no question, then, but that both, yes, both these efforts are necessary: to defend the truth and to oppose every doctrinal error. To qualify you for both tasks is one of the aims of these Friday evening lectures. May God bestow His blessing on the discussion of the subject that is before us to-night! —

At our last meeting we barely began to discuss the important contents of the twenty-first thesis, *viz.*, that Law and Gospel are not properly divided, the one from the other, when it is claimed that by the mere performance of the act of being baptized and going to Communion, salvation can be obtained. This is a most abominable way of confounding Law and Gospel.

The Gospel merely says: "Believe, and thou shalt be saved," while the Law issues the order: "Do this, and thou shalt live." Now, if the mere act of being baptized and partaking of Holy Communion brings grace to a person, the Gospel manifestly has been turned into a law, because salvation then rests on a person's works. Moreover, the Law has been turned into a gospel, because salvation is promised a person as a reward for his works.

One would indeed think it to be utterly impossible for a Christian minister to teach that the Sacraments produce salutary effects *ex opere operato*; still, that is what happens again and again. This awful error is taught by the very men who wish to pass for genuinely strict Lutherans, every time they discuss the Sacraments. When they have finished unfolding their doctrine of Baptism, every hearer has received the unmistakable impression that, in order to get to heaven, it is merely necessary to submit to the act of being baptized. When they have finished their presentation of the doctrine of the Lord's Supper, the people are convinced that, to obtain the forgiveness of sins, all that a person has to do is to mount the altar steps and take Communion, because God has attached His grace to this external action.

A week ago I began to show you that this teaching is diametrically opposed to the doctrine of the Gospel. This is proved by all passages which testify that the Gospel requires nothing but faith and makes faith the one essential. That being the case, no one dare say that this or that work will benefit a person. If the Word that is preached will not benefit a person unless he believes it, neither will being baptized and taking Communion benefit any one without faith. Telling a person that he shall be saved by faith means nothing else than that he shall be saved by grace. Most people express the matter thus: "If you wish to be saved, you must