

SIXTEENTH EVENING LECTURE.

(January 20, 1885.)

No doctrine of the Evangelical Lutheran Church is more offensive to the Reformed than the doctrine that the grace of God, the forgiveness of sins, righteousness in the sight of God, and eternal salvation, is obtained in no other way than by the believer's putting his confidence in the written Word, in Baptism, in the Lord's Supper, and in absolution. The Reformed, especially their theologians, declare that this way of getting into heaven is too mechanical, and on hearing the Lutheran teaching they denounce it as deadletter worship, citing the statement of the Apostle Paul: "The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." 2 Cor. 3, 6. Again, they say; "What does baptizing with earthly water profit? The true baptism is baptizing with the Spirit and with fire." Again: "What is the benefit of eating and drinking the natural body and blood of Christ? The true food and drink by which the hunger and thirst of the soul is really stilled is the truth that came down from heaven." Finally, they say: "How can I be helped by a mortal, sinful man, who cannot look into my heart, saying to me: 'Thy sins are forgiven thee'? No; my sins are not forgiven except when God Himself speaks these words in my heart and makes me feel their force." That is the Reformed view.

Now, does this view agree with Scripture? By no means. In the Scriptural meaning of the term the "letter" is not something dead. The connection in 2 Cor. 3, 6 shows, in the first place, that the apostle refers, not to the Word of God as such, but to the Law. That is what kills. On the other hand, the "spirit" signifies the Gospel. That is what gives life. Consider, in addition, that when the apostle says: "The letter killeth," he cannot mean that the letter itself is dead; for something that is dead cannot kill.

According to the Holy Scriptures, Baptism is not a mere washing with earthly water, but the Spirit of God, yea, Jesus with His blood, connects with it for the purpose of cleansing me of my sins. Therefore Ananias says to Saul: "Be baptized and wash away thy sins," Acts 22, 16; and Jesus says to Nicodemus: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God," John 3, 5. He names the water first and then the Spirit, for it is by this very baptizing with water that the Spirit is to be given me. In Gal. 3, 27 the apostle says clearly and distinctly: "As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ"; and in Titus 3, 5-7: "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ, our Savior, that, being justified by His grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life."

According to the Holy Scriptures the Lord's Supper is not an earthly feast, but a

heavenly feast on earth, in which not only bread and wine, or only the body and blood of Christ are given us, but together with these forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation is given and sealed to us. For, distributing the bread which He had blessed, Christ said: "This is My body, which is given *for you*; ... this do in remembrance of Me." By the words "for you" He invited the disciples to ponder the fact that they were now receiving and eating that body by the bitter death of which on the cross the entire world would be redeemed. He meant to remind them that they ought to break forth with joy and gladness because the ransom that was to be paid for the sins of the whole world was, so to speak, put in their mouths. Offering the disciples the cup which He had blessed, Christ said: "This is the cup, the new testament in My blood, which is shed for you." Why did He add the words "shed for you"? He meant to say: "When receiving the blood of redemption in this Holy Supper, you receive at the same time what has been acquired on the cross by means of this sacrifice."

Finally, according to the Holy Scriptures the absolution pronounced by a poor, sinful preacher is not his absolution, but the absolution of Jesus Christ Himself; for the preacher absolves a person by the command of Christ, in the place of Christ, in the name of Christ. Christ said to His disciples: "As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you." John 20, 21. What is the import of these words? None other than this: "I am sent by My Father. When I speak to you, My words are the words of My Father. You must not consider the humble form in which you see Me. I come in the name of the Father, in the place of the Father, and the word of promise that proceeds from My mouth is the word of My Father. Now, in the same manner as My Father has sent Me I am sending you. You, too, are to speak in My name, in My place." Therefore He continues: "Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained."

Observe, then, the depreciative, contemptuous, and scorning ring in the words of the Reformed when they speak of the sacred means of grace, the Word and the Sacraments, and the grand, majestic ring in the words of the Lord and the apostles when they speak of these matters. Now, who is right, Christ or the Reformed, the holy apostles or the ministers of the Reformed Church? I should feel ashamed to give the answer. You all know the answer.

The true reason for the Reformed view is this: They do not know how a person is to come into possession of the divine grace, the forgiveness of sin, righteousness in the sight of God, and eternal salvation. Spurning the way which God has appointed, they are pointing another way, in accordance with new devices which they have invented. We gained this conviction in our last evening lecture. May the Lord grant us His Holy Spirit to the end that tonight we may be strengthened and confirmed in our conviction and be blessed with a cheerful faith.

The ninth thesis which we are studying is one of the most important in the entire se-

ries. For the confounding of Law and Gospel that is common among the sects consists in nothing else than this, that they instruct alarmed sinners by prayer and inward wrestling to fight their way into a state of grace until they feel grace indwelling in them, instead of pointing them to the Word and the Sacraments. Theirs looks like a very godly and Christian procedure, and an inexperienced person can easily be deceived by it. But God be praised! we have God's Word, which does not deceive us; a Word on which we can rely and by which we can abide in the present darkness, which it lights up for us. When Death summons us hence, we can, though void of any feeling, follow him confidently and say: "I shall gladly go with you. I praise God for my escape from this terrible prison. I entertain no doubt that I shall stand before the throne of a gracious God. Why? Not because I feel that way; not because I have performed good works; not because I have amended my mode of living. All these things would be sinking sand; for it is quite possible that in the hour of death feelings of gladness will forsake me. Being accustomed to rely on the Word, I have the trusty staff which I need for support at my passage through the dark valley of death."

May our heavenly Father fit you out with His Word when entering the ministry lest your efforts turn out a beating of the air? May you be ever conscious of administering to your hearers the Word of the everlasting, living God, to which the devils in hell shall not say, Nay! May your slogan be: "When the Lord speaks, let all keep silence; for He is Lord over all, and all must be in subjection to Him."

To the best of my ability I have so far expounded to you this doctrine as I find it in the Holy Scriptures. In order that you may see that I am not presenting my private opinion, but the doctrine of our dear Lutheran Church, let us hear what the Confessions of our Church say about this matter. But let us first hear a testimony of Zwingli in behalf of the Reformed teaching. Apparently Zwingli has not wielded as great an influence as Calvin, but he laid the foundation of the Reformed Church before God snatched him out of the world of the living by a sudden death. The clumsy work of Zwingli has been smoothed down by Calvin, who by the finesse of his workmanship gained the English and the French over to his side, while he accomplished little among the German people. The doctrine of Zwingli is the source from which all false teachings of the Reformed churches have sprung. What does he say regarding the relation of the means of grace to faith?

Most of you know that in 1530 the Zwinglians wanted to join in the Augsburg Confession, but that the Lutherans denied them fellowship. Accordingly, Zwingli wrote a so-called Augsburg Confession of his own and sent it to the emperor. The most appalling feature of this confession is this: six months previous to this Zwingli had endorsed the very opposite doctrine. For in the late fall of 1529, at the Marburg Colloquy, he had, among other things, signed this statement: "In the eighth Place, the theologians have agreed that the Holy Spirit ... gives faith to no one except through previous

preaching and by and with the Word creates and works faith as, where, and in whom He pleases. In the ninth place, that Holy Baptism is a Sacrament, by which man is regenerated.”

The pure, plain Lutheran doctrine, then, had been laid before the Zwinglians and before Zwingli himself by Luther, and they had accepted it because they desired a union with the Wittenberg theologians. With tears in his eyes Zwingli stood before Luther, offering his hand and asking for brotherly fellowship. Going as far as he thought he could, he declared: “By the spoken Word of God faith is produced in men; by Baptism a person is regenerated.” Half a year later he denied all this. For in his confession he writes: “In the seventh place, I believe and know that all Sacraments, far from conferring grace, do not even offer or present it.” Remember, at Marburg Zwingli had subscribed to the opposite teaching and pledged his hand to the same as being his confession.

Zwingli proceeds: “Possibly I may appear to you, most puissant Emperor, as speaking with unwarranted freedom. But with me this matter is settled. For grace is wrought and bestowed by the Holy Spirit, and hence this gift must be attributed to the Holy Spirit. (I am using the term *grace* in the meaning which it has in Latin and understand it to mean forgiveness, kindness, and benefaction, without any merit and not as a recompense for same.)” He means to say: “That is the reason why preaching, Baptism, and the Lord’s Supper are useless; they are mere symbols.” “The Spirit, however,” says Zwingli, “requires no conveyance, or vehicle; for He is Himself the conveying force by which everything is transferred; He does not need to be transferred. We read nowhere in the Holy Scriptures a teaching of this kind, that external objects, such as the Sacraments, are a sure means of bringing the Spirit to men; on the contrary, whenever external objects have come along with the Spirit, it was in every instance the Spirit, not the external objects, that did the conveying. For instance, when a mighty wind began to blow, the languages came at the same time, by the power of the wind; the wind was not supported by the power of the languages. Likewise, a wind brought quails, another carried away grasshoppers; but never have quails and grasshoppers been so light and nimble as to bring wind. Likewise, when a wind so strong as to lift up mountains went by Elijah, the Lord was not in the wind. To be brief, ‘the Spirit [wind] bloweth where it listeth,’ that is, it blows in a manner agreeable to its nature, ‘and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth. [Zwingli: “*wo er stille wird,*” where it subsides.] So is every one that is born of the Spirit,’ that is, who is enlightened and drawn in an invisible and intangible manner. Truth has spoken these words; hence the grace of the Spirit is not conveyed by this immersing or yonder drinking or by unction. For if this were so, we *should* know how, where, whither, and upon what the Spirit comes. For if the presence and efficacy of grace is attached to the Sacraments, they will operate wherever they are applied; and wherever they are not applied, all will be decrepit and miserable. Theologians at this point must not prate about the substance, or

person, receiving grace, namely, that the grace of Baptism or the Lord's Supper is given to such as are in a proper condition and fit to receive it, as they say. For any one receiving grace by means of the Sacraments, as they claim, either makes himself fit, or is prepared by the Spirit, for its reception. If we do it ourselves, we must have some natural ability, and *prevenient grace* is naught. But if a person is prepared for the reception of grace by the Spirit, I ask whether this occurs in connection with the Sacrament or outside of it. If it occurs by means of the Sacrament, a person is prepared for the Sacrament by the Sacrament, and this process will have to be extended *ad infinitum*, a Sacrament being always required for preparation for a Sacrament. But if he is prepared without a Sacrament for the reception of sacramental grace, surely the Spirit with His grace is present *prior to* the Sacrament; *hence there is grace conveyed and present before the Sacrament comes*. This leads to the conclusion (which I gladly admit and concede in the sacramentarian controversy) that the Sacraments are offered as *public evidence of that grace which exists previously in every individual.*"

In what vulgar terms does Zwingli here speak of these sacred matters! When the Holy Spirit wants to approach man, He does not need the Word of God, the Gospel, Baptism, the Lord's Supper, for a conveyance; He can come without them! It must be a queer Bible which Zwingli read. — In speaking of external objects that are to convey the Spirit, Zwingli inserts the word "surely." That is ambiguous. The means of grace *actually* convey grace, but not in such a manner as to coerce man to receive them. To the person receiving Baptism, God says: "I will be thy God, and thou shalt be in grace and favor with Me." If the person refuses to receive this offer, he obtains no grace; but the reason for that is not because there is no grace for him to receive, but because he despises it. The whole Bible is full of testimonies to the fact that the Word and the Sacraments actually convey the Holy Spirit. For instance, Acts 10, 44: "While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them that heard the Word." Here the coming of the Holy Spirit is attributed to the Word. As regards Baptism, you have heard that streams of the Holy Spirit are poured out with Baptism. — "This immersing," "yonder drinking," is Zwingli's way of referring to Baptism and the Lord's Supper. He also mentions extreme unction because he is addressing the Roman Catholic emperor. Among Lutherans this temporary ceremony, which was in use in the time of the apostles, has never been regarded as a Sacrament. Remember, then, according to Zwingli's teaching Baptism confers no gift because the Holy Spirit requires no vehicle for His conveyance.

"The Church, then," Zwingli continues, "receives by Baptism those who have been first received by grace. *Accordingly, Baptism confers no grace*, but only testifies to the Church that the person receiving it has already obtained grace. ... In the tenth place, I believe that the office of prophesying, or preaching, is sacred because it is highly necessary above all other offices. For, to speak with canonical correctness, we observe that among all nations external preaching by the apostles and evangelists or bishops has pre-

ceded faith” [Zwingli mentions this because it is an undeniable fact, and he calculates that his adversaries will now be unable to charge him with concealing this fact], “and yet we attribute man’s faith to the Spirit alone. For, alas! we behold a great many *who are hearing the external preaching of the Gospel* and yet do not believe *because the Spirit is lacking.*”

There you behold the fanatic. From this teaching fanaticism is bound to crop out. It certainly has cropped out. We have the best evidence of it here in America, where the appeal to the Spirit is heard everywhere.

In conclusion, Zwingli says, in words that give us a glimpse of his doctrine of absolute predestination: “If, notwithstanding this, the prophets, or preachers of the Word, are sent to any place, that is an indication of the grace of God, who wants to reveal the knowledge of Himself to the elect.” He means to say: “When the Word is preached and there are still so many people unconverted, the reason is not that the Word has not exerted its efficacy, but because there is no efficacy in the Word. The Spirit must produce the effect. God permits preaching only because He wants to convert the elect. Accordingly, He applies His Spirit to some and takes Him away from others.”

That plainly shows what the Reformed Church teaches regarding the relation of the means of grace to grace, righteousness, and the salvation of sinners.

Now listen to a few testimonies from our own confessions. In the *Smalcald Articles*, Part III, Art. VIII, § 10 (Mueller, p. 322; *Trigl. Conc.*, p. 497), we read: “Therefore we ought and must constantly maintain this point, that *God does not wish to deal with us otherwise than through the spoken Word and the Sacraments. It is the devil himself whatsoever is extolled as Spirit without the Word and Sacraments.*” The Spirit comes to men by means of the Word. A person may imagine that he is full of the Spirit to the bursting point, but it is his own spirit of fanaticism. The true Spirit is obtained only through the Word of God. In every passage of the Holy Scriptures which recounts the conversion of people we see that God wants to deal with men only through the Word and Sacraments.

The *Apology*, Art. IV, § 68 (Mueller, p. 92; *Trigl. Conc.*, p. 139): “But God cannot be treated with, *God cannot be apprehended, except through the Word. Accordingly, justification occurs through the Word, just as Paul says, Rom. 1, 16: ‘The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.’ Likewise, 10, 17: ‘Faith cometh by hearing.’* And proof can be derived even from this that faith justifies, because, if justification occurs only through the Word and the Word is apprehended only by faith, it follows that *faith justifies.*” This important statement declares that all who do not esteem the means of grace do not believe from the heart that man is saved solely by grace. For what does their objection to the means of grace amount to? They argue: “Is a person really to obtain forgiveness of sins by the mere application of the letter, Baptism, the Lord’s Supper, absolution? That would be too easy.” But if we are to be saved by pure

grace, why should our salvation be such a difficult task — provided it is to be really grace that is to save us? Just because we are to be saved by grace, God must have arranged matters so that we need nothing but a means by which God offers us forgiveness of sins, grace, and salvation. When God says to the sinner, “Only believe,” He practically says: “Accept what I give you; have confidence in Me. What I tell you is the truth. Only come, lay hold of the gift and take it.” When I hear the Gospel preached to me, I am to believe that it is God who brings me these glad tidings through the preacher who is proclaiming them to me. God at the same time says to me: “Why are you toiling to accumulate meritorious works? Christ has acquired all that you need. Only believe, and all is yours. I am not telling you a lie.” That is what God says.

Now, anything that is predicated of the Word of God is predicated, as a matter of course, also of the Sacraments; for they are also means of grace. They are the visible Word. The Word of God, the Gospel, is only audible, but the Sacraments are also visible, for they are acts attached to objects of sense. Therefore it is a very horrible error, fostered in our time particularly by so-called modern, or up-to-date, believers, *viz.*, that the Word has an efficacy peculiarly its own, that Baptism is a special remedy for other ills, and the Lord's Supper for still others. But these are vain human speculations, of which there is not a word to be found in the Scriptures. Let us hear our confessions on this matter.

In the *Apology*, Art. XIII, § 5 (Mueller, p. 196; *Trigl. Conc.*, p. 309), we read: “But just as the Word enters the ear to strike our heart, so the rite [Sacrament] itself strikes the eye in order to move the heart. *The effect of the Word and of the rite is the same*, as it has been well said by Augustine that a *Sacrament* is a *visible Word*, because the rite is received by the eyes, and is, as it were, a picture of the Word, signifying the same things as the Word. *Therefore the effect of both is the same.*”

This is an important point. To a hearing person I can preach the Gospel by words. In the case of a deaf person, whom I cannot teach by that method, I may take a picture representing the birth of Christ with the angels coming out of heaven or one that represents the crucifixion. By way of pantomime I can explain the pictures and instruct the deaf without speaking a word to him. That is what God does by means of the Sacraments, which show us in a picture, so to speak, what God proclaims audibly in the Word. “The Sacraments are the visible Word,” that is an excellent axiomatic utterance of Augustine. A person, therefore, who speaks of the Sacraments in terms of depreciation and contempt says the same things against the Word and does not consider the terrible guilt that he assumes. He ridicules God, turning Him into a wretched master of ceremonies, who has prescribed all sorts of pantomimes for us merely for the purpose of exercising our faith. No; God is not occupied with such paltry things, now that the era of types and figures is past. The body itself and the essence of God's gifts have arrived, now that the time of the Old Testament is past.

In his *Brief Commentary on Isaiah*, on chap. 20, 2, *Luther* writes (St. L. Ed. VI, 285) : “In the same manner as the Holy Spirit operates by means of the Word He operates also through the signs, which are, so to speak, nothing else than the acted Word, inasmuch as the same things are expressed by an act as by the words sounding in men’s ears. And since the Word never returns void, the signs cannot be without result either. Thus Baptism and the Lord’s Supper are signs by which our faith is raised up and strengthened.” This citation shows that our Church does not teach that the mere hearing of the Word or immersing a person in water and drawing him out again leads to faith and the obtaining of grace. If that were so, we would be saved by works, would we not? No; the crucial point while we are engaged in pious meditation of the Word is that we say to ourselves: “That is the voice of God speaking to me.” Being baptized without faith is useless, even if the act were repeated ten times a day. Communing without faith would not profit us if we received the Sacrament daily. Nay, these acts, thus performed, would rather increase our blindness and the darkness that enshrouds us, our hardness of heart and spiritual obduration, and, in the end, our damnation. The doctrine of our Church, then, is this: The Word and the Sacraments operate in such a manner as to raise us up in faith and prompt us to lay hold of the blessings offered us.”

In a general way *Luther* treats this subject in *commenting on Deut.* 4, 28. He writes (St. L. Ed. 111, 1691 ff.) : “See whether our new schismatics and fanatics are not leading the people to trust in their own works. Take the Anabaptists: what are they doing, and what do they teach? They declare that Baptism is worthless; they remove from Baptism the element of grace, so that there is no grace and mercy of God, no forgiveness of sin, in it, and baptism becomes an *evidence* of my own godliness, *prior to* my baptism, or a mark that I now *possess* godliness. They separate grace from Baptism and leave us a mere external sign, in which there is *not a grain of mercy*; all grace has been cut away. Now, if the grace of Christ has been removed from Baptism, there remains nothing but a mere work. Likewise, in the Sacrament of the *Lord’s Supper* the fanatics remove the promise offered us in this Sacrament; they tell us that what we eat and drink is nothing but bread and wine. Here, too, the proffered grace is cut away and renounced. For they teach us that the only good work that we do by communing is professing Christ; as to the rest, we merely eat and drink bread and wine in the Supper, and there is no grace in it for us.”

“That is the result of falling away from the First Commandment: a person promptly sets up an idol in the form of some meritorious work, in which he trusts. Therefore Moses says: My dear children, have a care to abide with God and follow Him. Otherwise you cannot avoid idolatry; you will fall into that sin, no matter how much you struggle against it. For the devil at all times assaults the grace of God; *no heresy can bear the teaching of divine grace*. The fanatics of our day all urge the First Commandment, saying: We, too, proclaim grace and mercy through Christ; we do not reject the

doctrine of the First Commandment. They charge that I, Luther, am telling lies about them. However, put them to the test: *True, they confess Christ who was crucified and died for us and thus saved us; but they renounce the means by which we obtain Him; they demolish the way, the bridge, and path leading to Christ.*"

"Also the Jews believe that there is a God, but they spurn the way that leads to God, namely, Christ, the Man Christ Jesus. The Turks confess God, but they renounce the means, or bridge, by which we come to God, namely, the grace of God. They refuse Christ and any sacraments by which a person obtains grace. They act just like people to whom a preacher says, 'Here I have a treasure,' but who does not put the treasure plainly before them or give them the key to unlock it. Of what benefit would the treasure be to them? *They lock up the treasure from us, which they ought to lay plainly before us, and lead us upon a monkey's tail. They deny me access to the treasure and refuse to hand it over to me that I may have and use it.*"

"Granted, then, that the fanatics talk a great deal about God, forgiveness of sins, the grace of God, and the death of Christ, still, when the question is raised how to come to Christ and obtain grace, how to effect a union with Him, they tell me that the Spirit alone must do this. They make me step on a monkey's tail by saying that the external and oral proclamation of the Word, Baptism, and the Sacrament [the Lord's Supper] are worthless. And yet they preach grace. That amounts to proclaiming the existence of a treasure in fine terms, but taking away the key and bridge that would put me in possession of the treasure. Now, God has ordained that this treasure is to be offered and conveyed to men by means of Baptism, the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and the external Word. These are the means and instruments by which to obtain the grace of God. They deny this truth."

I state these matters because the devil is so cunning that he *professes the words* of this truth, but renounces the *means* by which we obtain what the words declare. The fanatics do not renounce the treasure, but the *use* and *benefit* of it. They deprive us of the method, of the ways and means for getting at the treasure, so that we could enjoy it. They shut us out from the grace which we would very much like to have. They tell us that we must have the *Spirit*; but they will not concede to me the means by which I may *have* the Spirit. How can I receive the Spirit and believe when the Word of God is not preached and the Sacraments are not administered to me? I must have the means; for 'faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God,' Rom. 10, 17.

"To sum up, there can be no schismatic but must run counter to the First Commandment and stumble at Christ Jesus. All heretics meet in a grand *ensemble* at this article. Let us, then, abide by this article: 'Thou shalt have no other gods,' and let us diligently bear in mind its object and scope. For if we put it out of our sight, we are opening the doors wide to all schismatic spirits. *God never proposed to set up His worship in this world without external means.*"

This citation is taken from the sermon which Luther preached at the Marburg Colloquy. He speaks out against the fanatics, the Zwinglians, the Anabaptists. For although Zwingli admitted the correctness of Luther's teaching, we have seen that half a year later he revoked his admission in a solemn address to the emperor. He desired that the emperor would have his confession read at an open session of the Diet of Augsburg. But this was not done, and not until after Zwingli's death was this confession published by his son-in-law, who thought he must by this document rear a monument to his father-in-law. It is, verily, a sorry monument.

This sermon of Luther, then, was preached in 1529. Do not make a mistake about the chronology of the sermon. Did not Zwingli in 1529 unite with Luther in a confession? Did not Luther, then, do Zwingli a grievous wrong by preaching as he did? By no means; at the time when the sermon was preached Zwingli had not yet made this confession. That explains Luther's language.

Let us examine some of the points Luther makes. While the fanatics do not issue orders like these: "You must give such or such an amount to the poor, or you must forgive your enemy; by doing these things you will merit heaven," still, when they declare that it is asking too little of men to demand that they accept the glad tidings of the Gospel, it is proper to declare them non-Christians. For he alone is a Christian who believes that he is saved by grace. When a person has already become a Christian, I may tell him that his toil and strife will now commence because he has faith. I must tell him this, not to make him believe that he is to get to heaven because of his labor and worry; for before a person can engage in the Christian's toil and strife, he must have entered heaven, that is, started his heavenly conversation, here on earth.

The fanatical Anabaptists caused a schism on account of Baptism, although they asserted that Baptism is useless; they said it was a mere act of outward obedience which — imagine their impudence! — a person must render in order to fulfil all righteousness. That is the Anabaptist way of coming to an agreement with the teaching of Christ. When they receive baptism, that is to be viewed as an act of kindness on their part: they are doing God a service by it. That is still their teaching, as I know from my personal experience and through my reading.

This is their terrible doctrine: Grace must have been obtained first; then Baptism is added as a sign that the person already possesses grace. Baptism, in their view, is nothing else than a work that man performs.

Likewise they declare participation in the Holy Supper a good work because by that act the communicant confesses Christ. However, he must come to Communion possessing grace.

Luther's remark about the enmity of all heretics against the grace of God is an important axiomatic statement. Every heresy that has sprung up was caused by the heretic's inability to believe that man becomes righteous in the sight of God, and is

saved, by grace alone. That is the real rock of offense against which all heretics, all false teachers, dash their head. But there is no escape from this dilemma: either believe this truth or see what will become of you. For since the great God came down from heaven, I may not treat this matter lightly.

But must I not add something to make God's work complete? No; you are to fall prostrate before God as a poor sinner, like the leper in the Gospel, and praise and magnify the abounding grace of God. When you do this, you will perceive the fatuity of the fanatics' insistence on having the Spirit. You will then receive the Spirit of God and become ardent in your love of God. You will perceive that this is not a mechanical way of getting into heaven, but the most spiritual way that can be pointed out. This Spirit is no delusion. Spirit and life spring from the Word of God.

Luther touches the main point of the controversy when he speaks of the bridge to Christ that has been demolished by the Anabaptists and Sacramentarians. It is a useless tale when I am told about a precious treasure which I am to fetch and have for my getting if the way to the treasure is not shown me and the means for lifting it. Such talk will seem sheer twaddle. But that is exactly the fanatics' way of talking about the great treasure that lies concealed in the Christian religion. When they are asked about the way by which to get to it, they cannot tell it. It is a true sentiment that is expressed in one of the Lutheran hymns: —

Thy Baptism, Supper, and Thy Word
My consolation are, O Lord,
For they contain my treasure.

Whoever does not go to these places to lift the treasure will not fetch any gold. What he gets may look like gold, but it is mere tinsel. Would that I could press this truth deeply into your hearts and that the sound of my words would not simply sweep past your ears, but bring energy and life to you! Oh, what witnesses you would become by refusing to deny the grace of God in Christ as the fanatics do!

As to the monkey's tail to which Luther refers, what he means to say is this: If a person were seeking for a firm footing while climbing a tree and, stepping forth, would land on the tail of a monkey sitting on a higher limb, he would see on what precarious "footing" he had stepped.

I confess that what Luther says about the treasure of divine grace lying stored up for us in the Word and in the Sacraments is something that caused me considerable worry during my student days. I thought that way too easy and therefore wrong, until I was thrown into great anguish and distress and found out that it is the right way. Since then I have, by the grace of God, stuck to this way. I say by the grace of God, for no one arrives at this knowledge or adheres to it by his own strength. We are all by nature much more inclined to choose the wrong than the right way. In the end, people, even in sectar-

ian circles, if they are children of God, turn to the right way, at least in the hour of death. They may not decide to become Lutherans, but that is not of such moment; for a person may bear the name of Lutheran and yet go to the devil. Without fully realizing what they are doing, these people cast aside everything in which they had placed their confidence and rely only on the mercy of God. The reason why even in the Papacy many are saved is because in the end they cast everything else overboard and cling only to the mercy of God. The goodness and grace of God are marvelous. A person may have despised the grace of God for fifty years and may be burdened with millions of sins, abominable sins; finally he collapses and cries: "God be merciful to me, a sinner!" and God receives him. But this truth must not be wantonly abused. A person may not conclude that he can continue sinning at his ease and in his last hour simply repeat the cry of the penitent publicans. A calculation of this kind leads to hardening, and the outcome may be that the person will be suddenly snatched out of life before he can formulate a single godly thought and presently find himself in eternity standing before the judgment seat of God.

Remember Luther's summing up of the case against the fanatics: The Spirit is not obtained except by simple trust in God's Word. Even when void of any feeling, the person who declares: "God has said so, therefore I shall believe it," will find that the Holy Spirit has entered his heart, filling it with His peace and joy.

Here we shall halt tonight. The discussion of this matter is of such importance that I shall take it up once more next week. I owe you a thorough discussion, for I am conscious of my great responsibility towards you. I shall soon stand before the throne of God to give an account of this great number of dear souls to whose care thousands will some day be entrusted. God will demand of me a statement whether I have fully discharged my office. Therefore I must speak to you on this subject whether you like it or not. However, I have no doubt that you like it, especially those of you who from their childhood have had the precious Word of God. I trust that even you have passed through some spiritual experiences that have taught you the true comfort in every affliction and its only source, the Word of God, which, whenever you feel worried, assures you of your salvation.