

John Michael Reu

What is Scripture and How Can We Be Certain of its Divine Origin?



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What is Scripture and How Can We Be Certain of its Divine Origin?

By John Michael Reu, D.D., Litt.D.

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Preface by Lutheran Librarian

In republishing this book, we seek to introduce this author to a new generation of those seeking authentic spirituality.

JOHN MICHAEL REU (1869-1943) studied at Loehe's Neuendettelsau Mission Institute in Bavaria and was ordained to the Lutheran ministry at the age of 20. He served pastorates in Mendota and Rock Falls, Illinois, and taught at Wartburg Theological Seminary in Dubuque, Iowa for 44 years. [Wikipedia] "It was said of Reu, that the Bible was a love story from beginning to end, God wooing back His own and sustaining them with heavenly food. Reu understood the main task of Christian education to be telling the story of God as revealed in scripture. And for Reu, the study of scripture was more than just the pursuit of knowledge, but had to do with formation and feeding of the soul. He leaves a legacy of a man who was a teacher, pastor, student and lover of God's word." [Mark Kvale & Robert C. Wiederaenders; Biola]

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Introduction by Em. Poppen.

About Dr Reu

Dr. Reu, the author of the two lectures, needs no introduction to anyone acquainted with Lutheran theology and theologians of our generation, both in America and wherever else in the wide world there are Lutherans. He has been in the Lutheran ministry for over a half century and has been serving the Church and the Kingdom as a professor of theology in Wartburg Seminary, Dubuque, Iowa, for more than forty years. His outstanding scholarship and the objectivity, clarity and thoroughness of his presentation of theological subjects are too well known to need further commendation at this time. But two facts in his favor, perhaps not so generally known, which should win for him the good will and openness of mind of pastors in all Lutheran synodical groups to devote time and study to the lectures, are his intimate knowledge of the historical background and development of every Lutheran group, not in America only, but in world Lutheranism, and the ease with which he finds himself thoroughly at home in a rural pastoral conference as, well as in a Lutheran World Convention.

Introduction

The first lecture, on Unionism, was delivered before a free conference of pastors of the Missouri Synod and of the American Lutheran Church, in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, May 8, 1939. It was written and presented in the German language and then published in the June, 1939, issue of the *Kirchliche Zeitschrift*, the official German-English theological journal of the American Lutheran Church, which Dr. Ben has edited for many years. For the English version, here presented, we are indebted to Pastor Julius Bodensieck. The exegetical part of the lecture, written as a supplement at the Conference's

request, was presented at a subsequent meeting, held in Cedar Rapids, September 15, 1939. The discussion of the question whether it is God's will that there be agreement in all points of doctrine, is an addition to the lecture, made by the author since the conference meetings at Cedar Rapids.

The lecture on Scripture was delivered at the Luther Academy, at its session at Wartburg Seminary, Dubuque, Iowa, in the summer of 1938. It appeared in *Kirchliche Zeitschrift* in the issues for July and August, 1939.

It is the writer's fond hope and fervent prayer that God may bless the reading and study of these lectures, so that He may thereby be glorified and the cause of Lutheran unity may be furthered.

February, 1940.

EM. POPPEN.

What Is Scripture And How Can We Become Certain Of Its Divine Origin?

1. What is Scripture?

Many are ready to say it is a collection of moral precepts surpassing all other law-books of the world. Even when they refuse to recognize its authority in other respects they will applaud its ethical statements. The Ten Commandments, a number of moral passages in the Psalms and the prophetic books, the sublime character of Jesus and His moral teachings, especially parts of the Sermon on the Mount win their approval. Very many of the eulogies of the Bible that have been written by men of fame are to be understood from this View point. They compare Scripture with the Code of Hammurabi, with the Ethics of Aristotle, the Morals of Epictetus, the precepts of the Koran, the ethical directions of Buddha and Confucius, Spinoza's philosophy of life, with Kant and Eucken and then, sometimes reluctantly and slowly, sometimes with firm conviction and loud enthusiasm, they proclaim the superiority of the Bible. We indeed rejoice over such evaluations, but they do not go down to the root of the matter and do not consider the fundamental difference that exists between natural and biblical Ethics. We are very thankful for the moral directions and principles of Scripture; and in our judgment they surpass all other systems of morality as the light of the sun exceeds the light of all the stars; they stand above them, as the sky above the earth and they have their origin in another world. But to say the Bible is nothing more than a code of morals is to remain at the periphery instead of penetrating to the center and grasping the heart of Scripture.

Others strike a higher note and say: Scripture is a code of divine teaching as they appreciate, not only the ethical but also the doctrinal contents of Scripture. Now it is certainly true that Scripture is brimful of wholesome doctrine; that all the teaching concerning our salvation is to be found in Scripture alone. St. Paul emphasizes its ability to make us wise unto salvation and that it is “profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness (2 Tim. 3:15 f.) that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” But frequently this is understood as though in Scripture, all doctrinal statements are on the same level, like the paragraphs of a code of laws so that one could dive into it at random, pick out a truth in the form of a Scripture passage and apply it to the given case. As far as they all are God’s word, they are undoubtedly on the same level, but it does not follow that they are therefore all of the same value nor even that they are applicable to the given case. Their distance from the center varies and whether they are applicable to the case in question depends upon the connection in which we find them in Scripture and upon the light which the whole of Scripture throws upon them; sometimes their value depends on the stage of revelation in which they are found. Not all Old Testament passages, even though they are divine words can be applied without further ado to our New Testament times. How many heresies arose in the course of history because this fact was overlooked! And many a so-called scripture proof of the old dogmatics was manufactured in just that way. As Hauck once said, Sometimes the whole house of Scripture was ransacked and what was found at times in the most obscure place furnished the Scriptural basis for a certain dogmatical thesis. And a still greater evil crept in. The idea was encouraged that the whole divine revelation consisted in nothing but the transmission of specific truths and concepts, and that, consequently the whole of Christianity, established on this basis, would be primarily or exclusively a matter of the intellect. And this again in many cases suggested and actually led to the idea that what Scripture calls justifying and saving faith is not much more than mere knowledge and a purely intellectual assent to the truths contained in Scripture. It is hardly necessary to demonstrate the viciousness of this error.

No, Scripture is primarily a book of history. It begins with the history of the creation, the primitive state and the fall of man, and leads on to its center, the account of the incarnation, the suffering, death and resurrection of Christ, and we can easily see that the so-called doctrinal and prophetic

books are also necessary links in the great historical process that is related in Scripture.

If, to begin with, we leave the divine factor, active in the production of Scripture, completely out of consideration and consider the Bible as a purely human book like other human books, then the Old Testament presents the history of Israel and the New Testament the history of Jesus and His first congregation on earth. Considered from the purely human standpoint it is quite conceivable that at the time of Moses the idea was entertained of writing a history of the people of Israel and the preceding times. Through the liberation from Egypt and the giving of the law on Mount Sinai, Israel had become a nation and had received its fundamental statutes. This immediately carried with it the need of recording these important events for the coming generations and to transmit them to posterity by means of written records. It was only natural then to go farther back and to show the antecedents of this history as they are found in the time of the patriarchs, and finally by prefacing it with the first eleven chapters so as to make the nation conscious of the fact that its history is only the history of one branch of the tree of mankind. And Moses, the savior and leader of the people, by means of his position and his intimate knowledge of all the wisdom of the Egyptians, which for centuries had included the art of historical presentation, was the logical man to write this fundamental book of history. We understand that in writing things of which he had been neither eye nor ear—witness, he made use of the oral tradition which among the people of antiquity was far more tenacious and reliable than it is today. We would not be surprised if written accounts of the events of the days gone by had been preserved in the sarcophagus of Joseph and had been used by Moses. Since we know that Abraham came from Babylonia with its highly developed culture and at the same time was in contact with Egypt, where there was a similar cultural development, and that in the Amarna period each town of Canaan had its own clerk whose business it was to write the official letters and to note down the important events of his time, there is no longer any reason to reject the assumption of the existence and use of such written accounts. After the basic beginnings of Israel's history had been written down by Moses, these beginnings themselves naturally led nationally minded and prophetically gifted men to record the further development of Israel's history. Since the statutes given by Moses were of fundamental character, the further development had to show how they operated in the life of the peo-

ple; and it was natural to consider the further development of Israel in the light of these beginnings. And this it is what we find in the second part of the Hebrew Old Testament. This view establishes the connection between the earlier and the later prophets. The former do it by means of their historical accounts, the latter by the prophetic discourses. It is hardly necessary to emphasize the fact that the books of Joshua, the Judges, Samuel and the two books of Kings are what we call "Tendenzschriften" taking this term in the good sense of this word. They relate history, relate it in a trustworthy way, but relate it with the special purpose of recording how these fundamentals laid by Moses were carried through, and how the weal and woe of Israel depended upon the measure in which they were observed. And the powerful discourses of the prophets, filled with threats of punishment and calling to repentance are all linked in some way with the foundations laid by Moses and they view their present in the light of that past. In order to understand them correctly one certainly must investigate the historical occasion which demanded them, but this endeavor just mentioned permeates them all. Even many of the great prophetic discourses that point to future salvation or judgment had their basis in the foundations laid by Moses and would never have come into existence without them. And in the third part of the Hebrew canon, in the "Ketubim," we have a collection of such noble blossoms which grew out of the meditation of the especially religious concerning the Law and the preceding national history, and from their hope of its future development. How rich and full these blossoms were we learn from the Psalms, while the book of Koheleth makes one conscious of the limitations under which they developed.

It is the same with the books of the New Testament. Those who experienced such great and unique events as did the disciples in the fellowship of their Master could not keep silence, but must proclaim the story of His life to every one, even if no direct command had demanded this of them; furthermore some of the disciples and their coworkers must have felt the urge of writing down what they had experienced, especially at a time when the eye and ear-witnesses passed away one after another. So certain traditional material for the purpose of preaching came into existence, collections of discourses of Jesus in oral or written form were formed, so our Gospels and the book of Acts as the history of Jesus and His first congregation came into existence. Paul and the other apostles would not have fulfilled their duty if they had abandoned the congregations established by them in their times of

need. They had to come to their assistance by means of their personal presence or by writing letters to them. Now they had to put the work of Christ in its proper light over against heretics of various kinds; now they had to apply the basic directions of Jesus concerning the moral life to the various congregations as it was demanded by the special needs of every one of them. And as the antagonism of the world-power to the Church of Christ became stronger and fiercer, they also had to answer the question concerning the final outcome of this conflict. Thus the ground was prepared for the rise of an apocalyptic literature.

In so far liberal theology will agree, although it claims that parts of the Old and even New Testament are only legends and myths and although it applies the principle of evolution to both, especially to the Old Testament, and in the latter reverses the order of Law and Gospel. It concedes that Scripture is a book of the history of Israel and of Jesus and His first congregation. But is Scripture not more than this? Most assuredly! It is the book of the history of God's dealings with men, of His revelation and of the reaction of man towards this revelation. Everywhere God stands in the foreground, not only in Deuteronomy, often compared with the Gospel of John on account of its inwardness and deep conception of the religious, and not for the first time with the prophets Amos and Hosea, Isaiah and Micah, who, it is said, changed the national God of Israel into the God of heaven and earth, but even in Genesis and all the following books. If we only compare the Biblical account of creation with the Babylonian we will at once recognize the fundamental difference between them. Here we see the free, living God who is Lord over all and who by means of His word, that is, His free will calls the whole universe into being and whose whole creation finds its goal in His fellowship with man who had been made after His own likeness. Here the abiding foundations are laid for the whole history which in following times was to be enacted between God and man. And how God steps into the foreground after the fall of man, in the judgment of His holiness and the grace of His eternal love! Now we have the beginnings of what Scripture calls revelation in the narrow sense of this term. For to reveal means to uncover, to disclose, to draw back the veil, and so revelation presupposes that God, on account of man's sin, has withdrawn from man and retired into darkness, that for man He has become an unknown God. From the darkness He will again emerge into light, from the remoteness into closer touch that we might recognize Him and He might again enter into fellowship with us.

He is about to withdraw that thick, impenetrable veil by which He had covered His face in order that we might look into His face and heart once more. Not all at once, but step by step. As in creation He chose to go the way of gradual development, so now in this self-disclosure to man. And Scripture is the history of this His gradual revelation or self-disclosure. All that it tells us about God's acts and utterances in speech is to be viewed from the angle of revelation, whether this term is used or not.

The word of divine warning and judgment to Cain, the removal of Enoch, the admonition to the antediluvian mankind, the command to Noah, the judgment of the flood, the protection of Noah and the promise given to him was the hardly perceptible raising of the veil from God's face. Directly designated as revelations are the theophanies of patriarchal time. The term *mirah* (ὤφθη in Septuagint) so often used after Gen. 12, "He was seen, showed Himself, appeared" is only another term for "He revealed Himself." The apparition for the purpose of calling Moses, the deliverance from Egypt, the miracles during the migration through the desert, the appearance on Mt. Sinai, the giving of the Law— all these fall under the viewpoint of revelation. The condescending passing by of God before Moses that permitted him to look after Him and to hear the words of that wonderful self-description of God: "Yahweh, Yahweh, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abundant in loving-kindness and truth" which sound as though they were given in the New Testament—what else was it than a drawing back of the Veil in order that Moses could see as much of God's face as mortal man could endure at that time? The appearance of the divine glory in the tabernacle, the introduction into the promised land, the speaking and acting of God with Samuel, the establishment of the kingdom of David, the dwelling of the divine glory in the temple, the influence exerted upon the prophets and the communication of God's decrees to them (compare especially Amos 3:7)— it is all included under the viewpoint of revelation. The leading away into captivity and the deliverance therefrom is often *expressis verbis* termed a divine revelation (Is. 40:5, 9; 35:2, 4).

And when God by means of law and promise and the whole direction of its history had sufficiently prepared His people, He revealed Himself by the incarnation and the Whole life work of His son in an entirely new and unheard-of way. "God revealed in the flesh." Here the veil was withdrawn completely and all concealment was put aside. "We beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth" says

St. John in jubilant tone. He calls Jesus the λόγος, because God had spoken through Him and revealed His most inner being. And Jesus Himself says, “He that hath seen Me, hath seen the Father.” In Bethlehem we have the appearance “of the kindness of God our Savior and His love” (Tit. 3:4), on the cross the ἔνδειξις or manifestation of His punitive and saving righteousness. In Christ Jesus the hidden God became the revealed God. The Bible is the history of this revelation. The establishment of the Christian Church, the knowledge of Peter that the Gentiles may participate in the salvation wrought by Jesus without becoming Jews, his introduction into the understanding of the Gospel—— this all is called revelation. Even the history of the expansion of the Christian Church among the Jews and the Gentiles was enacted only by means of divine revelation, since none recognizes the Son but alone the Father, and none recognizes the Father but alone the Son and to whomsoever the Son reveals Him. And the letters of Paul and the other apostles were not written without revelation nor did they attain their goal without revelation, that is, without the operation of the Spirit upon the hearts of their readers. This is the reason why Paul in Eph. 1:17 prays that God might give them the spirit of wisdom and revelation. And what shall I say about the final consummation of the Church of Christ predicted by Scripture! Is it not brought about by the apparition, the ἐπιφάνεια or ἀποκάλυψις of Christ? Thus Scripture contains the history of God in His relation to mankind, the history of the revelation and self-disclosure of God in its gradual development from the first beginnings to its final consummation, from the first hardly noticeable lifting of the veil to the full withdrawal of the same, thus enabling us to behold Him as He is. This is What raises Scripture infinitely above all other books in this world.

And the history of the divine revelation recorded in Scripture is the history of a revelation for the sake of our salvation. It is the history of salvation, the history of the preparation of salvation in the Old Testament and the history of the establishment of salvation in the New Testament. It cannot be otherwise if, as we have seen, the history of revelation recorded therein found its climax in Christ, because Christ is the author of salvation, the Savior for all men. We are indebted to the school of Erlangen which emphasized so emphatically the two-fold fact, that Scripture is history and that this history is the history of our salvation, finding its climax and consummation in the incarnate Son of God. For this reason we readily condone Hofmann for having emphasized God’s revelation by deed in such a degree that only

little room was left for the revelation by word without which the revelation by deed is silent and cannot be understood. His overemphasis of the revelation by deed was a wholesome and necessary antidote over against the old dogmaticians who by their strong and almost exclusive emphasis upon the divine revelation as doctrine almost completely forgot what is fundamental, namely, the revelation by deed. The great Wuerttemberg theologian, Albrecht Bengel, whose memory was celebrated in 1937, had already preceded the Erlangen school in this particular, for, according to him, we have in Scripture the gradual unfolding of a great divine economy of salvation, an unum continuum system, an organism of divine deeds and testimonies beginning in Genesis with the act of creation, gradually continuing and finding in the person and work of Christ its summit and in the new heaven and earth predicted in Revelation its consummation.

On account of the unity of this economy of salvation that meets the reader in Scripture, Bengel demanded that all facts and thoughts of Scripture must be understood in their relation to the economy of salvation as a whole. It was a fine observation of Hofmann when, in explaining Micah 5:1, he underscored the fact that instead of Luther's *Ausgang* the Hebrew text offers the plural, and that the terms *olam* and *kedem* are often relative and not absolute concepts, one of them in Amos 9:11 pointing to the times of David and the other one in Micah 7:14, 20 to the days of Moses. Therefore he translated: "His issues, the issues of the Messiah, date back to the days of yore, to the days of remote antiquity" and offered this explanation: "The Messiah is' He who is the goal of the whole history of mankind, of Israel, of the house of David, and all advancements of this history are beginnings of His coming, are issues of the son of Jesse." Whether this explanation of Micah 5:1 is correct or not, the thought expressed is no doubt correct. Ever since Gen. 3:15 the Messiah was about to come, and all progress in the history of salvation, the calling of Abraham, the election of Israel from all nations, its deliverance from Egypt, the establishment of the whole divine service in the tabernacle, the founding of the theocratic kingdom under David and Solomon, the liberation from Babylon with all the prophecies pertaining thereto were beginnings of the coming of the Messiah, were steps leading gradually upward, seeking and finding their goal in Bethlehem and Golgotha. Not only the Law was a *παιδαγωγὸς εἰς Χριστόν*, still more the promise; but also the whole divinely ordained course of Israel's history with its peak in the reign of David and its low point in the Babylonian exile.

When the kingdom of David and Solomon was broken down, the hope for a worldly Messianic reign was also shattered and room was made for a new hope, one that still contained the expectation of earthly glory, but which was completely permeated by the waiting for a spiritual deliverance, the deliverance from sin and death.

Whatever our attitude may be toward Hofmann's great book *Weissagung und Erfuellung*, its fundamental thought, without doubt, is correct. It is this: History itself is prophecy; each stage of its development points to the step following; it holds the germ of future development in its bosom and is a prefiguration of it. So the whole sacred history in all its essential progress is prophecy of the final, abiding relation between God and man. The first advent of Jesus Christ is the beginning of the essential fulfillment—the essential, because He is the new man, the antitype of the former, but only the beginning, for the head demands its body, the firstborn all his many brothers, before the eternally intended complete communion with God becomes a reality. To the prophesying history the word of prophecy is closely attached, having its roots in this history, always accompanying it, and it can be understood correctly only with this as its basis. Each new epoch in history brings an advancement of prophecy. But the final goal to which all advancement tends is Christ incarnate. All the various stages of development are to be explained in view of this goal, without forgetting, however, the gradual advancement of the divine revelation and without pressing artificially the last stage already into those which are only preparatory. So Scripture pictures Christ, the God-man, as the goal of a history of salvation extending through thousands of years and as the source and center of the history of His Church upon earth, without Whom she never would have come into existence and without whom she cannot live. And the history of the Church upon earth is to Scripture again only prophecy of that future stage when Christ's redeemed with body and soul shall rejoice over their eternal communion with God in Christ Jesus.

This then is what we have in Scripture: the description of the complete self-disclosure of God and of His entrance into history, in order to prepare, to establish, to apply and to complete the salvation for mankind, and at the same time the description of the reaction of men over against this revelation of salvation. Therefore the Bible is often called the document or record of the divine revelation. And indeed this term expresses a two-fold truth. In the first place, it shows that the formation of Scripture itself belongs to the

process of revelation. For what distinguishes a document or record from the mere report of any happening? Is it not this that the document or record is in itself an essential part of a certain happening that took place and that this happening comes to a close by the execution of the document? Take the sale of a piece of property. That the sale is reported by the newspaper does not add a single thing to the sale nor does it deduct anything from it. The sale is not closed before the deed is made out and handed to the new owner. So when we call Scripture the document or record of divine revelation, it is likewise designated as something that belongs of necessity to the process of revelation. The production of the Scripture itself then is based upon revelation and is a component part thereof. In the second place, if the Scripture is a document or record, using these terms in their full import, then it is an absolutely trustworthy report of the facts under consideration. This lifts the Bible far above all other historical books. It is then not a book based upon careful human investigation, or the use of merely human traditions and sources; the discourses of the prophets registered therein are not only the result of human deductions and human expectations, and the Psalms are not only the purely human expressions of the reflection made by revelation upon the hearts of men, but revelation itself participated in their formation.

Thus we have reached an important result; however, is it already the full truth or does the testimony of Scripture about itself lead us still farther? The result reached is a truth of great value, but it is still rather general. Does Scripture not speak still more precisely and concretely about its own formation and its abiding character? Theologians such as Ihmels and Hausleiter, although exponents of the Erlangen school, were not satisfied with this assumption of their great teacher Hofmann. They were of the opinion that Scripture should not be defined merely as the record of revelation, but as the documentary testimony of revelation. Ihmels in his *Zentralfragen der Dogmatik in der Gegenwart*, published in 1910 and again for the fourth time in 1931, made this statement: "Scripture has nothing in common with a lifeless book of minutes. It is a living testimony. What we call record is something that is dead as stone, and petrified and petrifying. By registering a certain fact of history it becomes itself a fact of the past. Living testimony, on the contrary, assists us to experience what happened in the past again

and again in our present time. To designate Scripture as the record of revelation is expressing a truth not to be given up, but it does not express the whole truth. Scripture is rather the documentary testimony of the divine revelation enacted in the process of a human-divine history.” This remark of Ihmels is certainly correct, but in the present connection of our investigation it does not lead us farther. The truth it contains shall come to its own, when later on we have to consider Scripture as a means of grace. At the present stage of our investigation it does not lead us a step ahead, because it does not say more in detail concerning the influence of revelation to which we owe the formation of Scripture. When in 1883 at Dorpat, a controversy about Scripture was started by a pupil of Hofmann, Wilhelm Volck, the question debated upon was just this whether Scripture is not more than the record or the documentary testimony of the divine revelation. Volck maintained it is merely this, while pastor Nerling and others defended the assumption, that it is the revelation of God and His word itself. What does Scripture testify about itself?

Our first question is what does the Old Testament testify about itself? In answering we confine ourselves to pointing out a threefold fact:

1. Moses on several occasions was commanded by God to write down parts of the Law and consequently the Law of the Covenant and, in case the pronoun in Deut. 1:5 refers to the preceding, the whole Torah or, to be more specific, the whole code of Law is said to be written by him. This time the *impulsus ad scribendum* was the direct command of God;
2. In not a few cases the discourses of the prophets are introduced with the remark, “Thus said the Lord to me” and thereby are directly designated as the word of God;
3. The prophet Jeremiah expresses again and again his unfaltering certainty not only that he was called by the Lord, but also that it was His word that he spoke. By no other prophet is this certainty so repeatedly and so unfalteringly expressed. If one reads his book carefully he must recognize how sharply he draws the line between that which he received as divine word and that which he says in a merely human way. When he heard the false prophet Hananiah prophesying Jeremiah at first did not know what he should answer (Jer. 28) . He stood there surprised and perplexed. He only would maintain that the former prophets

spoke differently than his opponent Hananiah. Sneered at by the people he left the scene. But all of a sudden he gained the certainty: in this moment Yahweh spoke to me, “return and tell Hananiah that he is a false prophet who will be punished by Yahweh for his false prophecy!” At another time he waited ten days before he gave his questioner a divine answer; but when he did, he was absolutely certain that what he spoke was God’s voice. Although by nature inclined to reflect, one thing never became doubtful to him: that the word of Yahweh was with him. Even his enemies never doubted that. Zedekiah, this weakling of a king, could surrender Jeremiah to them, but secretly he again sent for him in order to ask him whether he had a word from Yahweh. Baruch, the friend of Jeremiah, and Ebedmelech, the stranger from Ethiopia, the priests of Jerusalem, his most bitter enemies, and the common people so fickle and wavering,—in this they all agreed: Jeremiah had the word of God. Some will say, this third point as well as the second mentioned above is of value only as far as the oral word of the prophets is concerned. Certainly, but who will maintain that a man like Jeremiah who when speaking, so carefully made a sharp distinction between his own reflections and God’s word, would have mixed them up when he was writing down his discourses? No, what he called God’s word, was really God’s Word; he only wrote down what God told him. We begin to see that we have more in the Old Testament than a trustworthy, but merely human report; we have in the Old Testament the revelation of God, the word of God itself.

What does the New Testament say concerning the Old? What opinion about the origin of the Old Testament was held by the Jews at the time of Jesus, can be seen, although only through the necessary deductions, from the pseudo-epigraphical literature. For our purpose the well known word of Josephus in *Contra. Apionem* I, 7 f. is sufficient: “Into every Jew it is implanted in his early youth to recognize the canonical books as Θεοῦ δόγματα, to hold fast to this and, if it is necessary, gladly to die for it.” Since this estimation of the Old Testament was so general among the Jews, it was not necessary for Jesus and His apostles to develop a detailed doctrine about the Old Testament and its origin. Their respective utterances are of a more casual character, but nevertheless sufficient, and for that reason perhaps, all the more convincing.

What we notice first in reviewing these occasional utterances is the unity of Old Testament Scripture. It follows from the manner in which Jesus and the apostles quote the Old Testament writings. At times when quoting they mention the name of the author of the respective book (f. i. in Matt. 13:14), but as a rule they do not stress the fact that the quotation is taken from the writing of this or that certain author, but they are content with the fact that the quotation is taken from Scripture, being a part of the whole of the Old Testament Scripture. "It is written" or "Scripture says" is the form generally used in introducing a quotation (compare Matt. 4:4, 7, 10; 21:42; 26:31; Mark 11:7; Luke 20:17; John 6:45; 19:36; Rom. 12:19; 14:11; 15:9 ff. etc.). Jesus and the apostles would not have quoted in this manner, if the books of the Old Testament in respect to their trustworthiness and their origin were not placed by them on the same level and if, in spite of all their differences, they did not form one coherent unity. It is just this absolute trustworthiness and uncontradictory unity of the Old Testament which Jesus maintains *expressis verbis* in the important passage John 10:35: οὐ δύναται λυθῆναι ἡ γραφή. Since Jesus had said, "I and the Father are one" the Jews took stones to stone Him. They considered this word a blasphemy, and according to Lev. 24:16 a blasphemer was to be stoned. Jesus now calls their attention to the fact that in Psalm 82:6 the term Elohim and Bene Eljon is applied to the judges in Israel installed by God. Therefore, instead of being ready to stone him on the basis of Lev. 24:16 they should first examine whether He too, was not similarly called and installed by God and, consequently, would be entitled to the term "God" or "Son of God," at least in the sense in which it was applied to the judges in Israel. Close observation would show them that the Father, already before His birth at Bethlehem, had sanctified Him, that is, set Him apart for the work of redemption and sent Him into the world. When Jesus in this connection says οὐ δύναται λυθῆναι ἡ γραφή, this can mean nothing else but this: The Old Testament Scripture cannot in such a way be dissolved into fragments, that by doing so its unified structure is destroyed and its individual parts lose their validity. If the enemies of Christ want to take their stand upon Lev. 24:16 and stone Him on the basis of this passage, they cannot do, that, since Psalm 82:6, being a part of Scripture as well as Lev. 24:16, would then not receive its due. It is wrong to emphasize one passage of the Old Testament so strongly and one-sidedly that by so doing another passage loses its validity. This hardly can mean anything else but this: The Old Testament Scripture is a wonderful unity without contra-

diction. Jesus apparently was of the conviction: with the formation of the Old Testament God—we say God, not the individual writers, who did not even know that their writings were to become part of a whole, authoritative for all the future—aimed at the establishment of a coherent unity of holy writings containing no contradictions and, therefore, took the greatest care that the statements of the individual book as well as the statements of all books came into a relation of complete harmony to each other. It is further to be noted that neither Lev. 24:16 nor Psalm 82:6 deals with a central truth valid for all times. It is true, behind the designation of the Old Testament judges as *elohim* and *bene eljon* stands the conviction based upon the theocratic idea that the judges in Israel were representatives of God, but this conviction did not demand the term *elohim* or *bene eljon*. It is even probable that in Psalm 82:6 this term was used only in order to emphasize the contrast: They, the judges, have been installed as “gods” (v. 6), but on account of their injustice they must die like men (v. 7). Consequently, even more casual and unimportant statements of the Old Testament dare not be considered negligible nor should they be deprived of their validity by a one-sided emphasis upon others. They belong to that coherent, unified whole in which there are no contradictions. We do not waste words to show that such a unified whole did not come into existence without special divine cooperation, all the more so, since it took a period of more than a thousand years to write the Old Testament Scripture. This leads to the next point.

The second point resulting from the testimony of Jesus and His apostles concerning the Old Testament is this: The Old Testament came into existence only by the cooperation of a divine and human factor. This again can be seen from the manner in which the Old Testament is quoted. It is true, in many passages the Old Testament is quoted as the word of Moses, David, the Psalmist, Isaiah, etc. (f. i. in Acts 2:16 ff.; 1:20; Heb. 2:6; Rom. 10:19, 20; 11:9), but not seldom as the word of God, the word of the Holy Spirit, most frequently so in Acts and Hebrews (f. i. in Acts 1:10, 16; 4:25; 13:34; 28:25; Heb. 1:5 ff.; 3:7 ff.; 8:8 ff.; 9:8; 10:15), but not in these writings alone, f. i. also in 2 Cor. 6:16. This is possible only, if God made use of human writers and spoke through them. Several times we read *expressis verbis*: God spoke through David, through the prophet (f. i. Matt. 1:22; 2:15); even in Hebrews we find examples, as in 4:7. The prepositions used are *διὰ* and *ἐν*; they make it evident the Lord or the Holy Ghost is to be considered as the real author, man only the instrument used by Him. If, therefore,

Church Fathers or some dogmaticians of our own church called the human authors *notarii, calami, amnuenses, instrumenta*, this is by no means to be considered wrong in every respect. It is wrong only if one, by the use of these terms, degrades them to merely mechanical instruments or machines that wrote without participation of their soul life. It is correct and an expression of a Biblical truth only if these terms are used merely to designate human instrumentality without any definition of the latter. The prepositions used give us the right of speaking of a cooperation of the divine and human factors in the formation of the Old Testament Scripture.

Those utterances of the apostles that speak in a more doctrinal manner of the Old Testament point in the same direction. I have in mind Heb. 1:1, 2; 2 Peter 1:20, 21; 1 Peter 1:11, 12; 2 Tim. 3:16. In Heb. 1:1, 2, it is true, we find only the rather general statement that it was God who in the time of the Old Testament spoke through the prophets (ἐν τοῖς προφήταις), and it is exclusively or primarily the spoken word to which the writer refers. Also in 2 Peter 1:21—not in 2 Peter 1:20—it is the spoken prophecy that the apostle has in mind. He proceeds in 5:20 from the πᾶσα προφητεία γραφῆς, that is, from the prophecy at his time written in the Old Testament, and makes the statement that it is not subjected to ἰδία ἐπίλυσις, that is, to an explanation which man can find by his own reason. But why is the prophecy of Scripture not subjected to man's own interpretation and why can it not be explained by human reason? Verse 21 gives the answer and in doing this goes back from the written word of prophecy to the spoken word and its origin: In the first place the spoken prophecy did not come into existence by the activity of human reason. If it did not come into existence by the activity of human reason, how should human reason be able to explain it? How did it come into existence? In this manner that men carried or driven by the Holy Ghost have spoken ἀπὸ θεοῦ, from God. The correct reading without doubt is: ὑπὸ πνεύματος ἁγίου φερόμενοι ἐλάλησαν ἀπὸ θεοῦ ἄνθρωποι. Ἄνθρωποι emphatically stands at the end: Men they were who spoke; but at once at the beginning of the sentence they are characterized as being men driven by the Holy Spirit, and their speaking is described as coming to them from God as the source. Also the contrast between οὐ θελήματι ἀνθρώπου and ὑπὸ πνεύματος ἁγίου is to be observed, not by the Will of man, but by the Holy Ghost. Whether we translate carried by the Holy Ghost, or driven, set into motion, makes no difference. Φέρειν means to carry, but often connoting movement. to move by use of force in order to change the location.

So in Homer's Iliad it is used with ships that are moved from one place to another, but also with the winds that fill the sails and move the ship. In Acts 27:15-17 we read of the ship that was to bring Paul to Rome: "it was unable to make headway against the gale; so we gave up and let it drive" (ἔφερόμεθα). Thus it fits excellently into our context. Also here it was a wind that drove the prophets to speak, but it was a holy wind, πνεῦμα ἅγιον, the Holy Spirit. It is, in the second place, hardly accidental that Peter wrote ἄπὸ {Ix-zoo; it designates the source out of which came what the prophets spoke. So it is a two-fold fact that we find expressed in this passage concerning the spoken prophecy:

1. The prophets spoke only when and because they were driven by the Holy Ghost; in the old dogmatics this is called the impulsus;
2. What they spoke under such impulse, they did not speak from themselves, but it came to them from God. Our passage speaks of prophecy. Since this word, in consonance with the Hebrew *nabi*, is often used in a wider sense, Benjamin Warfield, the great Princeton theologian, was inclined to take it here in the same wider sense, designating the whole Old Testament. But this is a generalization not permitted by our context. Peter speaks of prophecy, and of the spoken prophecy of the Old Testament at that. But this we are permitted to conclude: What is said about the spoken prophecy can be applied to the written prophecy. The writing down of the prophecy did not occur without the divine impulse, and what they wrote came to them from God. It was not their own word, but the word of God.

Whether 1 Peter 1:10-12 is to be considered in this connection depends upon the answer to the question whether it speaks of New Testament or of Old Testament prophets. While it was common to think of Old Testament prophets, this assumption became somewhat doubtful through Wohlenberg's argumentation. In case the apostle speaks of Old Testament prophets, then he says about those among them who prophesied that salvation is to come also to the Gentiles (εἰς ὑμᾶς) that, at that time when they spoke of this salvation, the spirit of the preexistent Christ testified in them just as the Spirit poured out on Pentecost was active in Paul and those of his coworkers who brought the Gospel to the congregations in Asia Minor. The operation of the Spirit upon the Old Testament prophets and the operation of the

Spirit upon Paul and his coworkers is put on the same level. Reference is also made to their writing down of their prophecies, but only in order to emphasize that thereby they rendered a valuable service to the New Testament congregations. Finally it is stated that they made their own prophecies, after having received and very likely written them down, an object of study, not their contents —because then they would not have understood what they predicted—but at what time their prophecies concerning the participation of the salvation by the Gentiles would find their fulfillment. This finds its explanation when we recall the peculiarity of the Old Testament stage of development. At that time the Spirit did not yet take permanent habitation in the prophets, but came upon them only at certain periods and for a definite purpose. Even the disciples before Ascension and Pentecost were still asking at what time the establishment of the kingdom of Israel would take place, and we would not wonder if even Paul after Pentecost at times had asked himself when Christ would come again to usher in the final consummation of all.

2 Tim. 3:15-17 is of special importance for our question. Here the purpose is noted for which the Old Testament has been given to us and which is to be attained by those who have known Scripture from childhood. The Scripture of the Old Testament is able to make wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. Why? “Because *πᾶσα γραφή θεόπνευστος* is also profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” What does *θεόπνευστος* and *πᾶσα γραφή* mean? Cremer in his *Woei'terbuch de'r neutestamentlichen Graezitaet* years ago tried to prove that it is to be taken in the active sense and translated *Gottes Geist atmend*, and Dr. Schodde in his *Outlines of Biblical Hermeneutics* followed him. And it is true, there are examples for the active meaning of participial adjectives ending in *τός*, but the most frequent sense is the passive, f. i. *ἀγαπητός*, *εὐθετος*, *διδασκός*, *γραπτός*, *κρυπτός*, and among the forms connected with *θεός* there is only one with active meaning. So *θεόπνευστος* is to be translated “produced by the breath or the waft of God,” *geistgewirkt*, *gottgehaucht*. Also *πᾶσα γραφή* has been translated in different ways. The most improbable version is “every scripture” in the sense of “every book of the Old Testament,” because *γραφή* is never used in this sense in the New Testament and since we do not know that at Paul's time the theopneusty of one or the other book of the Old Testament canon was doubted, we would hardly understand why he should have emphasized “ev-

ery Old Testament book.” Others translate “the whole Scripture,” but then we should expect the article: *mica ἡ γραφή*. After all, only two translations deserve serious consideration: either “all Scripture” which the A. V. offers, or “every Scripture” in the sense of “every Scripture passage,” which the R. V. prefers. Since we may rightly assume that what Timothy had learned from a child consisted in individual Scripture passages, we might be inclined to accept the rendering of the R. V. as the correct one. However, the following words would hardly fit, because not every Scripture passage, although written down under the influence of the Holy Spirit, is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, etc. (f. i. the passage Gen. 12:6; “and the Canaanite was then in the land”). So Luther’s *alle Schrift* and the rendering of the A. V. “all Scripture” is to be preferred. Πᾶσα γραφή then has its analogue in *mica οἰκοδομή* in Ephesians 2:21, or *γραφή* as designation of a known quantity is treated as a proper noun, as *πᾶσα ἱεροσόλυμα*. Of less importance is the question whether *θεόπνευστος* is to be taken predicatively (“all Scripture is breathed by God and profitable”), or attributively introducing an explanation or reason (“all Scripture breathed by God, is also profitable”), although the latter rendering is linguistically quite possible and fits best into the context. That the term *mica γραφή* is to be understood in the light of the preceding *ἱερὰ γράμματα* and, therefore, refers to the Old Testament, does not need to be proved.

The progress between the passages considered before and 2 Tim. 3:15-17 consists in this: Here for the first time we have a statement not about the spoken, but about the written word; so we do not have to draw a conclusion from the former to the latter. And the statement is made about the written word of the Old Testament in its whole extent that it has been produced by the breathing of the Spirit of God. Whether some one else participated in its production is not stated, it is neither maintained nor denied. Emphasized, however, is the fact that God was the *causa prima* in producing it; He is the *author principalis* of the whole of the Old Testament Scripture; it is He Himself who here speaks with us. And because it is really God who is speaking here with us, therefore even the word of the Old Testament Scripture is a means that informs us about the will of God, that convicts the sinner, improves the penitent, trains for a life pleasing to God.

Finally we call attention to the fact that the New Testament does not only confirm all the important deeds of God related in the Old Testament beginning with the creation of the world by His almighty word, but that also the

less important and' as it seems insignificant and trifling is to the writers of the New Testament so trustworthy that they draw from it far reaching consequences. To the reader of Genesis 12-25 it might seem of no importance that in the account of the life of Abraham we find related first his justification and afterwards his circumcision. Not so to Paul. In Rom. 4:10 he uses this sequence as a proof for the fact that his circumcision did not help to bring about his justification. He was justified before he was circumcised; the circumcision following afterwards was only a seal for the justification experienced before. To the superficial reader it might seem of little significance that in Gen. 21 the expulsion of Hagar and Ishmael is told in such detail, but Paul in Gal. 4:21 if. draws important deductions from this particular incident.

Above all, attention must be called to Gal. 3:16, a passage on account of which the apostle is so often sneered at, although only by people who wrongly interpret the whole verse. Here it is of importance to Paul that he reads in the promise given to Abraham καὶ τῷ σπέρματι αὐτοῦ and not καὶ τοῖς σπέρμασιν, the singular and not the plural. This, indeed, is not caused by his lack of sufficient mastery of the Greek and Hebrew languages as some expositors would make us believe. He knew as well as they the collective use of the singular *sema* or σπέρμα and did not from the use of the singular draw the deduction that it points to a definite individual, to Christ. He knew the Greek and Hebrew better than some of his critics. In view of the fact that Abraham was the ancestor of three different lineages—one by Sarah, one by Hagar and one by Keturah—when the question was to be decided to whom the inheritance promised to Abraham belongs it was of importance to Paul that the Old Testament promise nowhere spoke of a number of lineages, but only of one, that of Sarah and Isaac; to that lineage and to that lineage alone the promise was given. When the apostle adds the relative clause ὅς ἐστιν Χριστός he does not want to be understood as if to him the use of the singular σπέρμα would prove that Christ was meant. By no means. Since, however, the Old Testament promise points to only one lineage, that of Sarah and Isaac, the important question arises: in whom do we find today when finally the inheritance is to be disposed of, this lineage? Paul by this relative clause gives the answer: today this lineage is represented by Christ; only he who is in fellowship with Him can participate in this inheritance. Only one who was convinced of the absolute trustworthiness of the Old Testament account could make use of this line of argumen-

tation. Paul could do it, because to him the whole of the Old Testament Scripture had come into existence by the breath of the Spirit of God and, therefore, was God's own word.

What testimony does the New Testament give concerning itself? Since at the time when the apostles wrote, the New Testament was still incomplete, we cannot expect such general statements as we have them in the New Testament concerning the Old. We are, however, by no means left entirely in the dark about the question concerning its origin and its abiding character.

We must recall the fact that the apostles were called to be witnesses of Christ the Crucified and Risen One in order to gather by their witnessing a congregation of Christ upon earth, and that for the giving of this testimony the Holy Ghost was promised to them in order that He should "teach them all things" and "bring all things in their remembrance whatever Jesus had said unto them" (John 14:26), "that He should reveal and show them things to come and guide them into all truth" (John 16:13-15). "To bring to their remembrance"—this referred to the preaching of what they had heard and seen; "reveal"—this included the disclosure of the future; "lead into all truth"—this refers to the introduction into the right understanding of the saving value of the facts of Christ's life. Pentecost came and the outpouring of the Spirit upon all disciples, and the Spirit fulfilled all that Jesus had promised. The apostles experienced the unique influence of the Holy Spirit necessary for their life work and consequently maintained with all certainty that their message was the word of God (2 Cor. 5:20; 1 Cor. 14:37). Paul curses him who dares to preach another gospel (Gal. 1:8), because he can triumphantly say: "What no eye has seen and no ear has heard, this God has revealed unto us by His Spirit" (1 Cor. 2:9, 10). Out of this Spirit he and his coworkers spoke, and they spoke in words "taught by the Spirit" (1 Cor. 2:12, 13). The Spirit did not only drive them on to speak, He was also the source from which their words flowed. This power to speak the word of God Paul certainly possessed in no lesser degree than Jeremiah of old. And yet there can be no question that their preaching was at the same time labor of their own mind performed under the exertion of all their mental powers, a labor that accommodated itself to the needs and peculiarities of the changing audience—compare the sketches of the sermons of Peter and Paul given in Acts 2 and 3 and 4 and in Acts 14 and 17—, which they performed in the strength of their own resolution and in conformity with the rules of human oratory. They certainly were no mere talking-machines and lifeless tools;

their speeches were efforts of their whole person— ality with all its intellectual, emotional and volitional powers. Haman's word has been rightly applied to them: Πάντα θεῖα καὶ, ἄνθρωπινα πάντα, although we have to emphasize the divine factor more than he did.

The apostles, however, would have misconceived their calling if they had not put down their spoken word in writing. This was a necessary and essential part of their calling as witnesses of Christ. Over against those congregations in which grave moral faults were in danger of prevailing, they would not have fulfilled their duty if they had not warned them either by word of mouth or by letters. Furthermore, since death took away one after the other of the eye and ear-witnesses it became more and more necessary to fix in writing what they had heard and seen in order that they might bear witness also after their death. And finally, the certainty of the fact that the final struggles between the Church of Christ and the world-power would cause many afflictions and sufferings for the Christian congregations demanded a book of comfort as we have it in Revelation, in order that the Christians through all these tempests would have a guide and a hold. And if the fixation of their testimony in writing was a necessary part of their calling, then the promise of Christ extended also to this and they performed this work under the same influence of the Spirit as when they orally preached and taught. If it were right to differentiate in this respect between the spoken and written word we would have to recall the principle expressed in the Latin saying *Litem scripta manet* and maintain a still greater measure of divine influence for the fixation in writing, because the spoken word is more for the present moment, the written for the future; indeed, in God's plan it should be the abiding testimony for the whole development of the Church until the end. Beside this, in I John 1:1-4 the apostle puts his written word positively on the same level with his spoken word, and Paul does likewise in 2 Thess. 2:15. Also when the apostles in their calling fixed their message in writing they were conscious of the fact that at all times and in all matters they wrote nothing else but the Word of God, so much so that Paul in a certain instance when he gave advice according to his own personal judgment, makes this known *expressis verbis* as something extraordinary (1 Cor. 7:25).

The unique influence of the Holy Spirit upon the writers of the Old and New Testament is an established fact. Are we now in a position on the basis of the testimony of Scripture itself to define this influence more closely? In some quarters of the Lutheran Church in our country this is denied and the slogan has been formed: "We confess the fact of inspiration, but we refuse to define its mode." This sounds like noble minded reserve, always commendable when we speak of spiritual matters. But by one stroke the situation changes when by this reserve statements of Scripture are as much as eliminated, especially statements that do not speak of the mode of inspiration, but of its extent. About the mode of inspiration we also on our part are not ready to make any statement. The mode was a mystery and will remain a mystery at least for this life. It is always a mystery how the Spirit of God works upon human personality. He who has experienced this operation is able to state the fact, but cannot define the mode. All the more, this holds true when we speak of inspiration, because here we have to deal with something unique experienced by none of those now living. But this inability dare not keep us from making a statement about that concerning which Scripture is not silent. According to Scripture three points must be mentioned as describing the extent of the divine factor in inspiration:

1. the *impulsus ad scribendum*;
2. the *suggestio rerum*;
3. the *suggestio verbi*. The *impulsus ad scribendum* mentioned in 2 Peter 1:21 *expressis verbis* concerning the spoken word of the prophets, was of very different character. In some cases it was given in form of a special command, as sometimes with Moses (Ex. 17:14; Deut. 31:19), with the prophets (Is. 8:1; Jer. 36:2; Heb. 2:2), with the author of Revelation (Rev. 1:11). In other cases it was given by the divinely ordained historical situation. God shaped the course of history in such a way that the situation thus brought about was for the author an unmistakable divine impulse. This holds true especially of the New Testament letters which were occasional writings in the full sense of this word. Perhaps it likewise holds true of the Gospels of which at least the Gospel of Matthew is easily recognized as written for Jewish Christians in defense of the life and teachings of Jesus against Jewish attacks and slander. Luke 1:3 with his ἔδοξε μοι perhaps even demands the assumption that sometimes the authors were not conscious of the

divine impulse; mentioned, at least, is only Luke's own determination. By awakening in the hearts of the authors the determination to pen a writing the Spirit in no way deprived them of their freedom. At times their own determination formed spontaneously may afterward have come home to them brought forth by the Spirit of God. To use a comparison: the manifestation of love toward God in the life of a Christian is the free action of his innermost life and yet at every moment and in its whole extent based upon and brought forth by the urges of the divine Spirit. Entirely wrong, however, would be the assumption that the writers were conscious of the fact that their writings were destined to become parts of a whole called Holy Scripture, or that they were inwardly driven to write a book for this purpose. That would be imaginable only with Moses who with his thora laid the abiding religious foundation for his people. In nearly all other cases they were occasional writings in the narrow or wider sense of this term. Certainly the writers were aware of the fact that their written messages and accounts were something more abiding than their oral word. We know of Paul's direction in Co]. 4:16 that the congregations at Colossae and Laodicea should exchange the letters primarily addressed to them. But this is entirely excluded that the authors knew beforehand that their writings later should become parts of the Old and New Testament canon, still more that they had been inwardly urged to write them for that purpose. God, indeed, knew about this, He aimed at that and took care that such writings came into existence as He could use later for this purpose.

The *suggestio rerum*, the communication of the contents, is the second element included in divine inspiration. This follows from 2 Peter 1:21: they spoke ἀπὸ θεοῦ; from 2 Tim. 3:16: all Scripture is θεόπνευστος, brought forth by the breath of God, is His word; from the mode of quotation according to which it is God who spoke; from other statements according to which it is God who admonishes through the word of the apostles (2 Cor. 5:20), or according to which what Paul writes are the commandments of God (1 Cor. 14:37). What Paul writes in Gal. 1:8 cursing every one who preaches another gospel would be the conceit of a deranged mind if the contents of his gospel had not been given him by God. The mode of the communication of the contents, of course, was varied. At times God put the contents in the form of a vision before the mental eyes of the writers; as, for instance, when

John wrote his Revelation. Perhaps likewise when the account of creation was penned; because, if God puts future events in the form of a vision before the writer's eyes, what would hinder Him from using the same means of communication in revealing events of the past that no human eye has observed? Or as Daniel received a revelation concerning the four world-powers which he saw in the form of beasts. How often the Old Testament speaks of visions; and during the New Testament times not only John, but also Peter and Paul had visions. The vision was usually accompanied by the audition, the hearing of what was spoken by God or His messenger. At times the divine communication took the form of an imageless inward divine speaking; it consisted in the awakening of the remembrance of what the writer once had heard or seen, or also in the direction of the writer's mind to sources of which he could and should make use, in an extraordinary, unique ability of distinguishing between the trustworthy and untrustworthy. It is probable that Moses made use of material that came to him by oral or written tradition; but this traditional material passed through the cleansing fire of the Holy Ghost; the wafting of the Spirit began, and utilizing this material brought forth the absolutely trustworthy account that today stands before us as the word of God. Why should the Spirit not have directed Mark who knew only very little of what he relates in his Gospel as an eye and ear witness to the spoken word of Peter or other written material and then formed his presentation in such a manner that the outcome was the Word of God? The Spirit supplied the writer with the material and gave him the correct understanding. He introduced it into his memory, his thinking and feeling, put it so before his eyes that he grasped, it, meditated upon it, pondered it, molded it, arranged it—all under the permanent influence of the Spirit. From this follows again that the writers themselves were no machines nor lifeless tools, no mechanical amanuenses nor dead flutes through which the Spirit worked, they were rather mentally active, as active as today any human writer is in the production of his works, and their whole personality participated in their efforts. How well Matthew arranged the material in his Gospel, in the best possible conformity with its purpose; what nearly systematic presentation we have in Romans; how Paul in Galatians step by step takes away the foundation upon which the errorists stood and victoriously maintains the truth of his law-free gospel. This was mental work for the apostle, and yet at every moment he was absolutely certain, the real driving, urging, writing and acting agent was not he himself but God

and His Spirit. Luke says *expressis verbis* that he used sources, probably oral as well as written sources in order to write all “from the beginning” (ἀνωθεν), carefully (ἀκριβῶς) and in a certain sequence, “coherently” (κατεξῆς), in order that Theophilus might be convinced of the trustworthiness of the things of which he so far had only a superficial knowledge. Luke permits us here to look into the workshop, as it were, in which the third Gospel came into existence, and yet at the same time the Spirit of God was active in such a measure that the outcome was God’s own Word. Or one might compare the fourth Gospel with its eclectic and supplementary character so distinctive of this Gospel in comparison with the Synoptics, and yet not John but the Spirit of God is its *author principalis*.

Finally, the *suggestio verbi*, the supply or communication of the fitting word, always conform to the contents was the third divine element in the inspiration of Scripture. Verbal inspiration was the storm center during the last 150 years, and is so still today. It is true, there is a theory of verbal inspiration that must be refuted. It is that theory of inspiration that degrades the authors of the Biblical books to dead writing machines who without any inner participation wrote down word for word what was dictated to them by the Spirit. We meet this doctrine in the Lutheran Church occasionally already during the sixteenth century, more frequently in the seventeenth century although it can hardly be called the earmark of the presentation of all orthodox dogmaticians; later it is limited to popular writers, and today it is found only in some fundamentalist camps. This theory is in direct contradiction to everything that Scripture says elsewhere about the influence of God upon human personality, and several facts in Scripture itself speak against it. When, however, during the last years a hot pursuit was started against this theory in some quarters of our church, this appears to me to be nothing more than a “fight against windmills,” because there are hardly many among us who cling to this mechanical theory. Alas, not seldom this pursuit aims at the verbal inspiration in every form, and thus the combat becomes a fight against the testimony of Scripture concerning itself. We do not want to emphasize at present the fact that without verbal inspiration we lack every guarantee that the divine content is expressed in Scripture correctly and without abbreviations; we rather stress the fact that Scripture itself demands it. It is demanded by the form of the quotations: “The Holy Spirit speaks,” “God says;” furthermore, it follows from the fact that Jesus as well as Paul draw important conclusions from the wording of Old Testa-

ment passages, a few times even from a single word as *elohim* in Ps. 82:6 or σπέρμα in the story of Abraham; and in particular does it follow from 1 Cor. 2:12, 13: ἃ καὶ λαλοῦμεν οὐκ ἐν διδακτοῖς ἀνθρωπίνης σοφίας λόγοις, ἀλλ' ἐν διδακτοῖς πνεύματος, πνευματικοῖς πνευματικὰ κρίνοντες: “Of these we also speak—not in words which man’s wisdom teaches us, but in those which the Spirit teaches—interpreting spiritual (things) by spiritual (words).” Here concerning the word spoken by the apostle and his coworkers we find expressed both the operation of the Spirit and the cooperation of the apostle. Bachmann recognized that and expressed it better than many another expositor. Even the formation of the word was taught by the Spirit. Not as if man had been inactive. Even here and not only as far as the contents are concerned, the writers worked as living personalities. Paul at times apparently is wrestling with the language; the richness of thoughts flowing in upon him is now and then so overwhelming that he drops the construction, from the Septuagint which he as a rule is following he goes back to the Hebrew original, once or twice he corrects himself as in the well known passage about the numbers of those he had baptized in Corinth (1 Cor. 1:14-16); and above all, each author uses his own style, has his own vocabulary and his own circle of concepts. And yet the finished product is after all not his word but God’s Word, even the selection of the fitting word was taught him by the Spirit. So 1 Cor. 2:13 while not being the only proof passage for the *suggestio verbi* is nevertheless an important statement concerning the question at hand. Some exegetes, indeed, maintain it does not belong here at all, because the λαλεῖν mentioned would not refer to the word of apostolic preaching. Since Paul uses the first person plural he would speak of the λαλεῖν of all Christians. But this is not tenable, the context points to nothing but the apostolic preaching. In 2:1-5 Paul characterized his own preaching at Corinth as a preaching not adorned with surpassing power of eloquence or earthly wisdom. In 2:6ff. he continues and says, that also he can speak words of Wisdom when he has to deal with mature Christians. In both sections he refers to his preaching; the transition from the first person singular in 2:1-5 to the first person plural in 2:6ff. shows only that he no longer speaks only of his own preaching activity but also of that of his coworkers. In 2:1-5 the apostle had to use the first person singular because he spoke of his activity at Corinth where he had no coworkers; in 2:6 ff. he makes the general statement about the preaching among the mature wherever they are; here it was only fitting not to speak only of his own preaching but also of

that of his coworkers. Therefore, we do not see any reason why we" should eliminate 1 Cor. 2:13 from our discussion. Still less do we stoop to what some call an "atomistic use of Scripture" when we refer to this passage, because the whole context speaks exactly of the same matter with which we are dealing here. It is true, Paul here speaks of the spoken word while we think of the written word; but it should not be necessary to repeat that what is true of the spoken word holds all the more true of the written word.

By this unique operation of the Spirit upon the holy writers a Scripture came into existence which in all its parts is God's infallible word for mankind for the purpose of its salvation. It is well known that not a few limit this infallibility or inerrancy of Scripture to those parts that pertain to our salvation. And, indeed, this is the chief thing, and when we remember the purpose for which according to 2 Tim. 3:16 the inspired Scripture is given, and the emphasis with which we stressed the fact that Scripture is the history of the divine revelation for the sake of our salvation, then no doubt the inerrancy of the parts mentioned is nearest to our heart and our first care. Scripture is no textbook on History or Archaeology or Astronomy or Psychology. But does from this follow that it must be subject to error when it occasionally speaks of matters pertaining to that field of knowledge? A certain holy awe kept me always from the assumption of errors in the original copies of the Scripture and its parts; even the mere possibility of errors seemed to me excluded by this reverential fear. However, this reverential fear alone should not hold one back from a serious reckoning with this possibility. It may be the result of training, and this training may have been wrong. Then there is the difficulty of drawing an absolutely correct line of demarcation between those parts that pertain to our salvation and those that do not. With some passages it might be drawn successfully; with others, not. Passages that today apparently do not belong to the sphere of salvation might in the course of history be experienced by the Church at large or by individual members as pertaining to that sphere. These are serious considerations, but none of them is decisive. The testimony of Scripture alone is decisive. And here 2 Tim. 3:16 and John 10:35 again stand before our eyes. If in 2 Tim. 3:16 it is said of "all the Scripture" that it is θεόπνευστος, brought forth by the Spirit of God, does this not exclude every error from the origi-

nal copy to which the term θεόπνευστος alone can refer? If in John 10:35 the general rule “The Scripture cannot be broken” is applied to a single, one might say, incidentally written word—if in Scripture we may term anything at all as casual and incidental—which was, indeed, important for the understanding and time of theocracy, but has nothing to do with our salvation, have we then a right to assume errancy for any part of Scripture? I know some answer that Jesus and Paul in speaking or writing these passages were subject to the tradition of their times and assumed in these things what was common among their Jewish contemporaries. Some point as an explanation even to the state of κένωσις in which Jesus lived when He spoke John 10:35. I must confess this assumption makes me all the more careful. Where does Scripture speak of such a κένωσις that made Jesus subject to the errors of this time concerning the nature of Scripture? This does by no means follow from Mark We repeat, the inerrancy is to be ascribed only to the original copies. Not a few wonder about this limitation, but hardly with good reasons. We speak here of the operation of the Spirit upon the holy writers called inspiration, and this was active not in the preservation of the existing copies, but in their production. The original copies were the outcome of that operation. Whether they have been preserved in every respect in their original state is another question. We know this was not the case. The large number of variant readings makes that evident. In some cases the text as it has come down to us is entirely impossible. So we read in the Hebrew text of I Sam. 13:1: “One year old was Saul when he became king, he reigned two years over Israel.” This impossible text we find also in the Septuagint; it is therefore at least as old as 200 years before Christ. Other examples could be mentioned. Facts like these give rise to objections such as this: Of What practical advantage is it to hold fast to the inerrancy of the original copies as long as the text that has come down to us is not inerrant? Was it impossible for God to preserve the inerrant text? Since He did not do it, why do we any longer defend the thesis of the inerrancy of the original text? We answer:

1. Careful and painstaking work of the text critics can restore and has in many cases restored the original reading;
2. because Scripture itself demands this assumption, we have not only the right, we have the duty to maintain it even if we cannot point out its practical value. We remember, however, the historical development of

the doctrine of inspiration; at first, the inerrancy of the Bible in non-religious portions was questioned, then the inerrancy in portions joining the religious field or already belonging to that, finally the fact of inspiration was given up entirely and the Bible was degraded to the level of a purely human book, by many representatives of higher criticism with their various source theories it was rated even below that level; for what independent human writer would pen a book that has more resemblance to a crazy quilt than to a coherent and harmonious whole, the outcome of a sound and independent mind? *Vestigia terrent*. Even in the Lutheran Church of our country the development is on the down grade. Some already doubt not only the inspiration of Scripture, but also its authority and trustworthiness even in religious matters and reserve the right to distinguish between the binding and not binding force of Scripture for their enlightened modern minds. This down grade development in our own Lutheran Church causes me to emphasize the Scripture truth of the inerrancy of the Bible more than I did before.

It is true, there are many observations concerning the original as well as the present text of Scripture which make it difficult to hold fast to the absolute inerrancy of Scripture. I mention only the various accounts of one and the same event, especially in the Gospels, which now and then seem to contradict each other, or the difficulty of harmonizing the chronological data of the history of Israel's kings. What are we to do about them? Shall we conceal them? shall we artificially bridge them over as has often been done? By no means. We shall apply all our grammatical and historical knowledge and make use of all sound methods of scientific investigation, and when we still find ourselves unable to verify Biblical data by our knowledge of other sources, then we shall let them stand until further discoveries bring the verification—as so far was very often the case—, or, being unable to harmonize some features of one account with others, we again shall wait for further enlightenment—and the history of exegesis is full of cases in which later expositors by new and closer investigation have found the key to a door closed perhaps for centuries. And finally, we should not forget that the statement “Scripture is the inerrant word of God” is a statement of faith. Faith, however, according to Haman is the *coincidentia oppositorum* and, according to Luther, brings about the necessary *mediatio*. Faith does not

close its eyes to what has been called the “*Knechtsgestalt*” (μορφὴ δούλου) of Scripture; it recognizes what is human in Scripture not less than its critics; but at the same time faith keeps an open eye for its glory and, therefore, holds fast to Scripture as the Word of God. It is the art of faith to see both and to ascend above both in order to find and hold their unity.

Since Scripture is the history of God’s revelation for the sake of our salvation and is itself the Word of God, the old dogmaticians were right when they ascribed to it the following *affectiones* or permanent characteristics: *auctoritas causativa et normativa, sufficientia* and *perspicuitas*. When they spoke of the *auctoritas causativa* and *normativa* of Scripture, they did not intend to say anything else than what Luther expressed in these words: *Die Schrift allein kann Glaubensartikel stellen*, or what the Formula of Concord means when it calls Scripture “the pure, clear fountain of Israel” (*limpidissimi et purissimi fontes*) and the only true standard by which all teachers and doctrines are to be judged (*unica et certissima regula, ad quam omnia dogmata exigere et secundum quam de omnibus tum doctrinis tum doctoribus iudicare oporteat.*) Because it is the Word of God it is the only authority in matters of saving knowledge and faith. I do not need to enlarge here upon the fact that this is to be held fast in contrast to Rome, which recognizes beside and beyond Scripture the Church and the Pope as authorities in matters of doctrine and faith, as well as in contrast to all who consider human reason and experience, be it the reason and experience of natural man or the experience of the reborn man, as authority in matters of faith or as the source from which religious knowledge flows. The Erlangen school considered Scripture as the norm in matters of faith, but not as the source; compare the dictum of Hofmann: “*Ich, der Christ, bin mir dem Theologen, eigenster Stoff meiner Wissenschaft.*” But if we have in Scripture and nowhere else the embodiment and re-presentation (*Vergegenwaertigung*) of the divine revelation, God’s own Word apart from which no man, past or present, ever could attain to saving knowledge, then Scripture is not only the norm but also the only source. The Old Testament was used again and again as norm by the people of the New Testament. About the Jews of Berea we are told, “they searched the Scriptures daily whether those things preached by Paul were so.” The proof taken from prophecy and fulfillment

that played such a great role in the New Testament age presupposes the fact that Scripture is the decisive norm for all preaching and teaching. We stated advisedly that Scripture is the source and norm of religious doctrine and saving faith; not in order to take back what we said about the inerrancy of Scripture in the preceding, but in order to emphasize the purpose for which Scripture has been given. It does not intend to convey information of every sort to the Church, but only such elements of knowledge that make wise unto salvation. It is the religious standpoint from which Scripture must be viewed and judged. All other items of knowledge are subordinate to saving knowledge.

Because of the interpenetration of the divine and the human elements Scripture as the re-presentation (*Vergegenwaertigung*) of divine revelation, and in view of the purpose for which Scripture is given, possesses the attribute of perspicuity, that is to say, it is the clear and perspicuous Word of God. This point must be emphasized over against the Roman Catholic doctrine that Scripture is obscure and ambiguous, that, therefore, the church fathers, tradition and the popes are needed as the necessary and the only dependable interpreters of Scripture—whereby these factors, especially the Pope as the inspired mouthpiece of the Church is actually raised again to a position higher than Scripture. The perspicuity of Scripture cannot be disproved by reference to Acts 8:31, because the literal sense of Isaiah 53 was understood by the Ethiopian, but he wanted to know to whom this prophecy pointed and in whom it finds its fulfillment. Nor can the reference to the various interpretations of the Words of Institution or to 2 Peter 3:16 disprove the perspicuity. The Words of Institution offer no difficulty for the literal understanding; the difficulties arise only then when the reader approaches them with certain philosophical or otherwise rational presuppositions which hinder the literal understanding. And in 2 Peter 3:16 it is true, Peter-admits that among those points which Paul treated in his letters (we have to read ἐν οἷς among those points, not ἐν αἷς in which letters) there are some that are difficult to understand (f. i. Rom. 5:20 where sin abounded, grace did much more abound), but he also adds for whom they are difficult to understand, namely for those Who are unlearned and unstable and ready to distort them. No, the Scriptures are clear and perspicuous per 36; their perspicuity is the basis and presupposition for all exegetical work in the Church. But this perspicuity must be rightly understood. It will not do to cite Luther's well known discussion of the clearness and simplic-

ity of the Christmas Gospel and generalize that and apply it to the whole of Scripture. All of us in reading the Bible or in doing exegetical work have met with puzzles whose solution we did not find easy. For Gal. 3:20 more than 400 different shades of exposition have been counted. The perspicuity of Scripture is a growing thing and here John 16:13 with its promise, “The Spirit will lead you into all truth,” is to be applied. It is a fact that the Church did not from the very beginning understand every phase of Scripture, but during the course of history, under the guidance of God, the meaning of Scriptures becomes ever plainer and clearer. Centuries passed and St. Paul was not understood, and Luther himself had read his Bible for years, being certainly an honest seeker after truth, and did not find the right understanding of Rom. 1:17 with its term *δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ*, until God Himself opened his eyes. If the Church continues faithfully to ponder the Word of God, if it makes ever more complete use of all auxiliary branches of study (such as grammar, lexicography, history, etc.), and if it makes moral progress, then the Spirit will lead the Church in corresponding measure, but in His own time, into the comprehension of Scripture, often in opposition to errors that may arise from time to time. The sin of man not seldom works as a barrier, obscuring what is clear per se. That is the reason why we mentioned also progress in sanctification as one means that might accelerate the process. Furthermore, the exegetical work must be done according to proper principles:

1. Each passage has but one sense or meaning, the *sensus literalis*, and it is our task to discover this sense with the aid of grammar and dictionary, through a reconstruction of the historical situation with all its psychological possibilities, and by careful observation of the context;
2. The individual passage is to be considered in the light of the whole Bible, because Scripture is its own interpreter;
3. Obscure passages are to be interpreted in the light of the clear ones dealing with the same truth;
4. The sum total of the perspicuous passages is to be, as it were, the guardian of truth so that a disagreement between individual exegetical results in explaining an obscure passage and this sum total is an indication that the divinely intended sense of the respective passage has not yet been discovered.

This last rule which is really a specification of the second we find applied, f. i., when the Formula of Concord refutes the thesis of Flacius that original sin belongs to the essence of fallen man. Here the Formula proves the untenability of the thesis by showing that it is in conflict with the doctrine of creation, incarnation, sanctification and the final resurrection.

What has been said so far indicates that not seldom the understanding of Scripture by the Church and here again, especially by those who have been called upon to interpret Scripture precedes the understanding by the individual members. To concede that, is not Romanism, it is only the statement of a fact, and long experience of the Church; it becomes Romanism, however, when it exempts the individual from the duty, the right, and the privilege of studying Scripture independently, and when it denies the ability of the Christian to study Scripture independently. In reference to the prophesying in the congregation of the Thessalonians Paul admonishes the members "Prove" all things, hold fast that which is good," and Wilhelm Loehe put this as a motto under his pulpit, both expressing and stressing thereby the hearers' ability as well as their duty to examine the preached word whether it be true to Scripture. So far we had in mind Christians already instructed in the fundamentals of Scripture; the same can not be said of non-Christians who were never made acquainted with the fundamental Biblical truths. Although we do not deny that now and then a heathen soul can find the way of life by mere Bible reading without the help of any spoken word of the preacher or missionary or Christian layman, this is certainly not the rule but an exception. Therefore, we Lutherans do not believe that distribution of the Bible among non-Christians is the better part of missionary work. We mention that, only to show the necessity of guarding our thesis of the perspicuity of the Bible against a wrong understanding. And yet the fault is not with the Bible, it is perspicuous per se, but with man and his sin. In the end the Church of God will learn that by the grace of God the meaning of Scripture has been ever more fully disclosed. The last book of the New Testament will then be understood as was the Epistle to the Romans during the time of the Reformation, and in eternity even the last exegetical riddle will be solved.

Finally, by virtue of that unique cooperation of God and man, by which Scripture became the Word of God, it possesses as permanent characteristic also *sufficiencia*. Instead of *sufficiencia* sometimes the term *perfectio* is used. It is better not to use it, because it is so often misunderstood. Indeed,

Charles Porterfield Krauth years ago published an admirable essay “[The Bible, a perfect Book](#),”¹ entirely free from any vestige of these misunderstandings. In 1638, however, the theological and philosophical faculty of the University of Wittenberg had to examine a writing published at Hamburg which conceded that in the New Testament Greek there were some linguistic barbarisms. What opinion did the revered and learned faculty voice regarding this? It said: “Whoever charges Holy Scripture with a single barbarism, is guilty of a by no means insignificant blasphemy.” And about 40 years later Quenstedt wrote: *Stylus Novi Testamenti ab omni barbarismorum et soloecismorum labe immunis est*. And Hollaz ascribed the *perfectio* even to the *textus receptus* claiming that it contained nothing but the original reading: *Advigilante provida Dei cum canon biblicus in verbis omnibus et singulis adeo illibatus et purus conservatus est, ut neque Iudaeorum malitia textus hebmicus Veteris Testamenti sit depravatus, neque textus Graecus Novi Testamenti haereticorum perfidia falsatus neque descriptorum incuria aut inscitia textus originalis in omnibus exemplis corruptus sit*. You understand why I prefer to speak of *sufficiencia* rather than of *perfectio*.

From the manner in which the New Testament builds upon the Old it is apparent that Jesus considers the Old Testament as the sufficient foundation until His own revelation set in. He quoted the Old Testament, but not once any of the many traditions in circulation among the Jews. The canon of the Old Testament sufficed for His purpose. Should not the same hold true concerning the New Testament? The New Testament, however, not without the Old which together form one organic whole. The attacks upon the Old Testament, now so fierce in Germany, and the readiness of so-called Christians to give up the Old Testament and to be content with the New is dangerous. The whole Scripture, Old and New Testament together, is sufficient for the Church’s mission of leading the world into fellowship with God, and it is sufficient to assure its own continued existence; for whatever religious problems may arise, Scripture will provide an answer—though only for religious problems, because the religious field alone is its province; other problems may be solved by science. Scripture is also sufficient for the individual Christian: it offers him enough light, so that he can find the way to the Father; but if he independently studies the Bible he should not despise nor ignore the assured results of the Church’s theological scholarship, although it is to be used with discrimination. Adding the word of tradition or new revelations to Scripture is superfluous; more yet, to wait for new revelations

militates against the all-sufficiency of Scripture; we must rather, in the light of Scripture, examine everything that claims to be a new revelation, as to its truth and correctness, precisely as Christ and the apostles demonstrated the truth of their revelations by a comparison with the Old Testament Scripture.

Scripture is not a dead record but a living testimony with the power to give life. Ihmels and Haussleiter emphasized this. In the connection in which they stressed it it did not help us much, but now this observation is to come into its own. The old dogmaticians mentioned as the fourth *affectio Scripturae* its *efficacia*. When we speak of the *efficacia verbi*, we think primarily of the spoken or preached word, and Scripture, as a rule, ascribes the *efficacia* also to the spoken word; so did Luther and the Augsburg Confession. The form of this Confession of May 30th makes this especially clear by quoting as proof Rom. 10:17: "So then faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God." Contrasting the word read in the Mass and the preached word Luther once even said: "The devil does not care about the written word, but when it is preached he flees." And yet to Luther Scripture is a means of grace, as he repeatedly emphasized. Scripture and experience testify to that. In 2 Tim. 3:16 it is the written word of the Old Testament to which Paul refers and "it is able to make wise unto salvation and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works," and in the Psalms we find similar statements concerning the written word. Experience confirms this, for how often did meditation upon the written word bring comfort, peace, strength! In conceding this we do not take back what we formerly said about the circulation of Bibles as a sufficient means of missionary activity.

II

The divine origin of Scripture is a fact well established by Scripture itself. But how can we become subjectively certain of this fact? It is indeed, a good thing if one is trained from childhood in this belief. Happy is he who had teachers who did not make him uncertain in this belief. And yet all this might be no more than a purely intellectual conviction, no more than a bowing down before outward authorities, no more than *fides humana*. We repeat, we think by no means little of such a recognition of and assent to outward authorities, especially not because Scripture itself is one of these au-

thorities, the only and the most authoritative one of all. But now we want to know how we can become subjectively, inwardly, in heart and conscience certain about the divine origin of Scripture. There is too much purely intellectual knowledge about it, too much is merely *fides humana*; and this does not stand the test in time of tribulation, at least it does not make the heart happy and glad and firm in the midst of trial and sorrow. How do we become subjectively, inwardly certain of the divine origin of Scripture? —this is, therefore, our question.

Melanchthon introduced into the dogmatics of our Church a number of “*indicia*” or “*testimonia*” of the trustworthiness of the Christian doctrine and the divine origin of Scripture upon which this doctrine is based. Most of the later dogmaticians followed him in this. So the Catechesis of David Chytraeus published originally in 1554 and much enlarged since 1575—next to Melanchthon’s *Loci* the most used book on dogmatics in all the Latin schools of Germany; I have traced not less than 95 Latin editions between 1554 and 1611, that means nearly two editions for every year. It asks the question: *Quae est causa certitudinis in doctrina Christiana?* and after having answered: *Causa certitudinis est autoritas et patefactio divina, quae extat in libris prophetarum et Apostolorum*, it goes on with this Question: *Quod autem sola haec doctrina sit vera, certa et divina testantur?* And not less than eight *testimonia* are mentioned:

1. *Miracula, quibus sola doctrina Christiana confirmata est;*
2. *Universalis experientia omnium piorum;*
3. *Antiquitas;*
4. *Vaticinia illustria;*
5. *Ipsum genus doctrinae patefaciens arcana et ignota humanae rationi;*
6. *Miranda conservatio ecclesiae;*
7. *Odium diaboli adversus hanc doctrinam;*
8. *Series doctorum et instauratorum doctrinae continua inde usque ab initio generis humani.* Since then for centuries hardly a single dogmatical work was published without a chapter on these *indicia* or *testimonia*. When Loeber in 1711 published his popular dogmatics under the title: *Die Lehre der Wahrheit zur Gottseligkeit*—republished in America by Walther in 1872—he counted not less than ten such *testimonia* for the divine origin of Scripture. We mention the *sufficiencia et sanctitas Scripturae*; 2. *Stili simplicitas cum gravitate coniuncta*; 3. *Antiqui-*

tas; 4. the prophecies and their fulfillment; 5. the miracles; 6. the expansion of Christianity into the whole world; 7. the martyrs who gave their life for the truth of the Scriptures, etc. Loeber concedes these testimonies are hardly convincing when taken separately, each for itself, but he maintains when they are taken together they constitute an absolutely reliable proof for the divine origin of Scripture. Here we cannot follow. We do not say, these testimonies are without value. In my own popular book *The Book of Life* the reader will find paragraphs setting forth the following statements:

9. The Bible taken as a collection of so many books is the oldest of books;
10. The Bible is the most persecuted of books;
11. The Bible is the most widely distributed of all books;
12. The Bible is the most significant of books answering those questions upon which all in life and death depends, so clearly and simply;
13. The Bible is the most uniform of books forming a wonderful unity although written in the course of 1500 years;
14. The Bible is the most efficacious of books. But in the same connection I also stressed the truth that all these facts can make no one inwardly certain of the divine origin of the Scriptures; they prove the superiority of the Bible over all other books, but not its divine origin. They produce a readiness of the soul to read that Book and listen to its message, but not more. They may perhaps create a *fides humana*, an intellectual conviction of the divinity of Scripture, but not that inward unshakable certainty about it.

This certainty cannot be created by any rational consideration. It cannot be created otherwise than as the subjective certainty of the truth of Christianity in general into whose province it belongs. And how is such certainty brought about? Certainly not by means of scientific investigations. For in that case only they who are able to engage in such investigations could attain to such certainty.

Is this really an evangelical thesis? Would it not, finally, lead to an intolerable dependence of the Christian layman and most of the pastors and leaders in the Church upon the work of a few? Can we forget how forcefully Luther once warned against building the certainty of truth upon the authority of the Church? Every certainty built alone upon these foundations

will not hold when needed most. Luther said, “If you are at the point of death and have no other certainty than the pope and the councils and say, this is spoken by the pope and decreed by the councils, the holy fathers, Augustine, Ambrose have decided thus, then the devil immediately will strike a hole into your faith and ask you, ‘what, if that is not true? what if they have erred?’ As soon as such temptation befalls you, you already are overcome.” Would Luther not say the same against a papacy of science? And I firmly believe even the scientific man is helpless in the critical hour if his certainty does not rest upon a better foundation than his own investigations. I am afraid that in the face of death he would not be able to marshal all his scientific findings in the unbroken sequence in which alone he formerly considered them an invulnerable proof. Furthermore, the certainty of which we speak is a religious certainty; is it possible to arrive at religious certainty in any other way than in the religious? Does not scientific investigation belong to an entirely different sphere? If I really had arrived at the certainty of the trustworthiness of the Scripture by way of strict historical investigation would that really help me? The certainty (upon which everything depends) that in that history related by Scripture God has opened His heart, revealed His will and stretches out His hand toward me to take me to His heart—that certainty can never be gained by scientific research. Only when God Himself stoops down to me, moves my heart, convinces my soul of His reality, His holy love, His gracious will, does He create in me that faith which trusts His word and depends upon it alone. Ask any of those who have come, let me say, from their theoretical unbelief to the certainty of the truth, how that happened. They will all answer, “Not that we laid aside step by step our former scientific convictions and arrived step by step purely intellectually at the truth; but truth came upon us when we did not expect it, God who is truth personified got hold of us and led us into truth.” In Jer. 20:7 we find a strange word: “Thou hast deceived me and I was deceived; Thou art stronger than I and hast prevailed”; it is to be understood from the personal situation in which the prophet was at that time, but take it in a more general sense and it expresses exactly what happens when God comes upon man and convinces him of the truth. Such a man can afterward say, “Thou hast persuaded me, and I was persuaded; Thou hast been too strong for me and hast prevailed.” Now we repeat: we arrive at the subjective certainty of the divine origin of the Bible in the same way in which one attains to the certainty of Christian truth.

It is Scripture itself by means of which this certainty is given, or, it is Christ and His Spirit working through the written or oral word who creates it in man. We don't have to wait until our own investigations or those of others concerning the genuineness of this or that part of Scripture or concerning the history of the canon or the efforts at solving this or that exegetical problem have come to a successful end. All that is necessary is to hear and read the Word and to abide by it. We do not know when the Spirit begins His work on the individual soul (Augsburg Confession, art. 5), but we know that He works by means of the Word and we have the promise that He is all willingness to work faith in all who hear the Word. In His own time and place He works through the Word in such a manner that we know and experience: now we are confronted with God, the Most High. To withstand the Word is to withstand God and His Spirit. As Jacob after that wonderful dream could say, "Surely, the Lord is in this place and I knew it not, How dreadful is this place! this is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven," so the soul knows in that hour: it is God with whom I am dealing, and the conscience confirms it in an unmistakable way. This consonance of the voice of conscience and the voice of God speaking through the Word makes it still more impossible not to recognize the divine voice. The soul, of course, can resist the voice of God and the voice of conscience, but it cannot deny that it was dealing with God. The voice of God was the voice of the Law and possibly also of the Gospel. In case it was the spoken Word of God, as is usual, which man heard, he then finds the same word in Scripture, and when he reads it the message has the same effect upon him. That makes him sure, inwardly certain: it is God's word that here speaks to me. At first, this is only a certainty of the divine character of the words which he heard and read. But now he begins to perceive that other parts of Scripture have, in spite of all differences, the same message, Law and Gospel, and exercise the same power and influence; he begins to see and experience the fact that Scripture is a living organism in which all parts are closely connected and share in this divine life from their center out into their farthest periphery. Furthermore, as a believer he is a member in the great communion, the Christian Church of all ages, his fellow believers all have had this experience, and the individual does not wonder that the extent of their experience is wider than his own. His partial experience is proof to him for the authenticity of their wider experience, and

so in growing measure he becomes inwardly certain: Here is truth, divine truth, the Bible as a whole is the Word of God.

But our question was not, how do we become subjectively certain of the divine truth of Scripture? but how do we become subjectively certain of the origin, the divine origin of the Scriptures. And yet, the result at which we arrived is by no means without value for finding the answer to the question about the origin of Scripture. If the whole of Scripture is full of divine life, should it then have come into existence without the exercise of this life? But more than that. If we have become certain of the fact that Scripture is the book of divine truth, why should it not be true in that which it testifies about its own origin? If it is true and trustworthy when it says, “Thou art the sinner and must face God’s wrath and condemnation” or, “Here is Christ, the Risen One, in Him alone is salvation,”—and as Christians we have experienced that it is true—why should it not be true when it says, “The prophets were driven by the Holy Ghost and spoke ἀπὸ θεοῦ,” or, “Paul and his coworkers have spoken in words taught by the Spirit,” or, “All Scripture is θεόπνευστος,” or, “The Scripture cannot be broken?” The question about the truth of the Bible is not identical with the question about its divine origin, but by proving the first we immediately prove the second; our subjective certainty about the divine origin of Scripture is based upon and given with our subjective certainty about the truth of the Bible. One follows the other of inner necessity. I hope no one will understand what we here said about the subjective certainty of Biblical truth and the divine origin of the Bible so hopelessly wrong as if we belonged to those that think the contents of the Bible are not to be considered as truth before we have gained that subjective certainty. No, our experience neither adds anything to nor takes away anything from the Bible. It stood there in all its beauty and splendor, trustworthiness and absolute authority long before our experience. But something might be true centuries before it becomes true for me. However over against the legalistic idea: here is the Bible; it is a code of doctrine that must be recognized by all as the jurist recognizes the statutes of the state, we ask, “Is there not also an evangelical approach to the Bible by which we can become inwardly certain of its truth?” And to this question we find the answer in what we said. And against that superficial merely intellectual assent to the Bible which is so frequent among us we emphasize the necessity of becoming inwardly certain of its objective truth. Many fight for the Bible who never have become subjectively certain and are not be-

coming subjectively certain of it more and more. Nor do we think little of the written Word, as if anyone could do without it after having made the inner experience of its truth. The Church at large needs the written Word. The Church was founded by means of revelation. Just as a kingdom can be preserved only by the same means by which it was established, so here either continuous revelation would have been necessary or its continuous presentation in literary form. Nor can the Church permanently remain in fellowship with Christ unless its faith is nourished from Scripture and its life and teaching corrected according to the norm of Scripture. Also the individual Christian needs the written word. He would not be able to persevere in affliction unless he possessed a firm objective assurance and undoubted, documentary evidence of God's good and gracious will. In the hour of trial mere subjective experience is insufficient. A believer who does not reflect may for a while be satisfied with his happy experience of salvation in Christ. But when, in the time of trial, the feeling of God's gracious presence vanishes, when we are compelled to inquire about the ultimate ground of our state of grace and after definite assurance of our salvation, then we need some objective reality, something absolutely independent of vacillating emotions, something on which we can stand and which will offer a safe refuge. Such objective realities are the means of grace, the spoken word, Baptism, the Lord's Supper, and the Written Word of God, namely Scripture. Even the spoken word of absolution, Baptism and the Lord's Supper, in turn, however, can be such firm realities only, if they are divinely instituted and if the Spirit testifies to me, that Scripture which relates their institution, is reliable ground, created by God Himself, that it is the Word of God itself.

NOTE: In *Luther and the Scripture* (Lutheran Book Concern, Columbus, O., Wartburg Publishing House, 2018 Calumet Avenue, Chicago, Ill.) the author shows that the position taken by him in this pamphlet is in full consonance with Luther's standpoint. Compare also his *Luther's German Bible*. (Columbus, 1934).

1. Available from lutheranlibrary.org↩

An Open Letter To The Lutheran Pastors Of The United States And Canada

Dear Brethren:

Those of you to whom the postman will bring a copy of this little volume should be informed that it is a gift of the Board of Publication of the American Lutheran Church.

It was the intention of the Board to provide a complimentary copy for all Lutheran pastors in the United States and Canada. The undersigned was therefore authorized to make an offer to this effect to the presidents of all Lutheran synodical bodies. This was done and the offer was accepted by the presidents of the following eight synodical groups, to-wit: The United Lutheran Church in America; The Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin and Other States; The Norwegian Lutheran Church of America; The Evangelical Lutheran Augustana Synod of North America; The Lutheran Free Church; The United Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church in America; The Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church (Suomi Synod); The Finnish Evangelical Lutheran National Church of America. Every pastor of the American Lutheran Church will also receive a copy. The cooperation of the presidents of the synodical groups mentioned above is hereby acknowledged with appreciation and thanks.

The American Lutheran Church, at her 1938 convention, resolved to observe 1940 as her Tenth Anniversary Year. Through God's gracious providence she came into being August 11, 1930, by the merger of three Synods, Buffalo, Iowa, and Ohio. Gratitude for God's unmerited and abundant mercy and goodness in all her needs and problems prompted our Church to set certain goals as objectives whose attainment should be a worthy aim and an expression of faith, gratitude and zeal on the part of our parishes and pastors. Some of the objectives sought after are material; others—and these

are to be kept in the foreground— are spiritual. Some of the latter center in the earnest and unified effort to seek, by God’s grace and guidance, the spiritual strengthening and enrichment of our entire constituency. One of the spiritual objectives, which led to the distribution of this publication, was expressed in the following words by our 1938 Church convention, to-wit: “To endeavor to carry forward in a larger way the unification of our scattered Lutheran forces in the land, endeavoring to repeat, in a manner more glorious, the victory which made our merger in 1930 such a happy consummation.” The distribution of this little book is our Publication Board’s contribution to such a worthy cause.

Since her beginning, the American Lutheran Church has made earnest and continuous efforts to help in bringing about true spiritual unity among Lutherans. She has expressed this desire and fostered this purpose at her conventions, in her publications and by all other available means. It was with this end in view that she helped to organize and constitute the American Lutheran Conference. She has had two Commissions on Fellowship at work, which have for several years held conferences with similar groups of the United Lutheran Church and of the Missouri Synod. In all these negotiations, the American Lutheran Church has not sought or encouraged the promotion of any plan of further synodical mergers. Her aim has been, and is still, the establishment of pulpit and altar fellowship on the basis of Scriptural and Confessional unity in the faith, and cooperation in the furtherance of the Gospel and the extension of the Kingdom of God.

It may be of value and interest to many Lutheran pastors outside of the American Lutheran Church to have an authentic record of the actual results of the deliberations of our Fellowship Commissions with the Commissions of the United Lutheran Church and of the Missouri Synod.

The negotiations with the Commission of the United Lutheran Church culminated in the so-called “Pittsburgh Agreement,” which was adopted at a joint meeting of the two Commissions in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, February 13, 1939.

The document is as follows:

Fellowship Negotiations With The United Lutheran Church In America

The following Recommendations and Doctrinal Statement have been unanimously adopted in joint sessions of the Fellowship Committees of the United Lutheran Church and of the American Lutheran Church:

I. Recommendations

"We recommend that the American Lutheran Church and United Lutheran Church in America adopt the following Resolutions:

"1. That all persons affiliated with any of the Societies or Organizations designated in the Washington Declaration of the U. L. C. A. as 'Organizations injurious to the Christian faith,' should sever their connection with such society or organization and shall be so admonished; and members of our churches not now affiliated with such Organizations shall be warned against such affiliation. Especially shall the shepherds of the flock be admonished to refuse adherence and support to such Organizations.

"2. That Pastors and Congregations shall not practice indiscriminate pulpit and altar fellowship with Pastors and churches of other denominations, whereby doctrinal differences are ignored or virtually made matters of indifference. Especially shall no religious fellowship whatsoever be practiced with such individuals and groups as are not basically evangelical."

II. Doctrinal Statement on Inspiration and the Scriptures

"1. The Bible (that is, the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments) is primarily not a code of doctrines, still less a code of morals, but the history of God's revelation, for the salvation of mankind, and of man's reaction to it. It preserves for all generations and presents, ever anew, this revelation of God, which culminated and centers in Christ, the Crucified and Risen One. It is itself the Word of God, His permanent revelation, aside from which, until Christ's return in glory, no other is to be expected.

"2. The Bible consists of a number of separate books, written at various times, on various occasions, and for various purposes. Their authors were living, thinking personalities, each endowed by the Creator with an individuality of his own, and each having his peculiar style, his own manner of presentation, even at times using such sources of information as were at hand. Nevertheless, by virtue of a unique operation of the Holy Spirit (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21) by which He supplied to the Holy Writers con-

tent and fitting word (2 Peter 1:21; 1 Corinthians 2:12, 13) the separate books of the Bible are related to one another, and taken together, constitute a complete, errorless, unbreakable whole of which Christ is the center (John 10:35). They are rightly called the Word of God. This unique operation of the Holy Spirit upon the writers is named inspiration. We do not venture to define its mode, or manner, but accept it as a fact.

“3. Believing, therefore, that the Bible came into existence by this unique cooperation of the Holy Spirit and the human writers, we accept it (as a whole and in all its parts) as the permanent divine revelation, as the Word of God, the only source, rule, and norm for faith and life, and as the ever fresh and inexhaustible fountain of all comfort, strength, wisdom, and guidance for all mankind.”

This statement will be submitted for ratification to the United Lutheran Church and to the American Lutheran Church at their next regular conventions, both of which will be held in October, 1940.

Fellowship negotiations between the Commissions of the Missouri Synod and of the American Lutheran Church made such favorable and encouraging progress that definite statements indicating the extent of agreement reached could be made to the 1938 general conventions of both synodical bodies.

The statements submitted were the following:

Declaration Of The Representatives Of The American Lutheran Church

Having carefully discussed with representatives of the honorable Synod of Missouri, in a number of meetings, and on the basis of the Minneapolis Theses, the Chicago Theses, and the Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod, the points of doctrine that have been in controversy between us or concerning which a suspicion of departure from the true doctrine had arisen, we now summarize what, according to our conviction, is the result of our deliberations in the following statements:

I. Scripture and Inspiration.

- a. The Bible (that is, the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments) is the Word of God, His permanent revelation, aside from which, until Christ's return in glory, no other is to be expected.
- b. The Bible consists of a number of separate books, written at various times, on various occasions, and for various purposes. Their authors were living, thinking personalities, each endowed by the Creator with an individuality of his own, and each having his peculiar style, his own manner of presentation, using at times even various sources at hand (Num. 21:14; Josh. 10:13; Luke 1:1-4). Nevertheless by virtue of inspiration, i.e., the unique operation of the Holy Spirit (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:21) by which He supplied to the Holy writers contents and fitting word (1 Cor. 2:12, 13) the separate books of the Bible constitute an organic whole without contradiction and error (John 10:35) and are rightly called the Word of God.
- c. Since the Bible is the Word of God, it is the only source, rule and norm for faith and life, and the ever fresh and inexhaustible fountain of all comfort, strength, wisdom and guidance, a means of grace for mankind (John 5:39; Rom. 1:16).

II. Universal Plan of Salvation, Predestination and Conversion.

A. We confess that there is an eternal divine plan of salvation according to which God before the beginning of time resolved to prepare salvation for all through Christ (Acts 2:23; 4:28; 1 Pet. 1:20; cf. 2 Cor. 5:18) and to communicate the salvation prepared for all mankind to all men through Word and Sacrament (Luke 14:16-24; Matt. 11:28; John 12:32; 1 Tim. 2:4-7). To this end it is His purpose by His Word to work in all men true repentance and creatively to produce saving faith in them (2 Cor. 4:6; Eph. 2:10; 1 Pet. 1:23), not irresistibly but in all cases with the same seriousness and the same power (Luke 14:23; Isa. 55:10, 11). To this end He also purposes to justify those who have come to faith, to preserve them in faith and finally to glorify them (1 Cor. 2:7; 1 Pet. 1:5); which, however, does not exclude but rather includes that those who have come to faith must at all times work out their own salvation with fear and trembling (Phil. 2:12; Hebr. 3:12; Col. 1:23). To this universal plan of salvation, revealed in Christ and proclaimed in the Scripture, all Christians must adhere.

B. We confess that in addition there is an eternal election or eternal purpose of God, according to which we declare with Paul that the fact that we have come to faith and will finally be saved is due to nothing whatever in ourselves nor to anything whatsoever that we have done or not done, omitted or not omitted, with natural powers or with so-called “powers of grace bestowed upon us,” here in this life, but solely and alone to this eternal election or eternal purpose of God (2 Tim. 1:9; Eph. 1:3-6; Rom. 8:28-30).

C. Concerning the relationship of the universal plan of salvation and the eternal election to each other, we declare the following:

1. Only when both are maintained with equal emphasis will the full Scripture truth be expressed.
2. According to the Scripture, the eternal election took place solely by grace, for Christ’s sake, and by way of the universal order of salvation, and it is carried out in time in the same manner.
3. When the Scripture speaks of this eternal election, it as a rule takes its position in time, after men have come to faith, and in presenting this doctrine Scripture addresses itself only to believers.
4. Whenever Paul speaks of eternal election, he does so with a feeling of unspeakable gratitude for the grace experienced, or for the purpose of consoling believers in all manner of tribulation, but in no case implying that God had considered him and the rest of the believers better than the others and had elected them unto faith on that account, or that his election is due to a grace of God that exists exclusively for the elect.
5. The eternal election of the believers unto sonship is not founded upon a second, different will of grace, but upon the identical universal will which God earnestly entertains regarding all men.
6. Beyond these truths the Scripture teaches nothing concerning the relation of the universal plan of salvation to the eternal election. For that reason all attempts to combine the two and thus to explain why some come to faith and salvation and others do not, are human constructions which should be avoided. As such a well-intended but nevertheless human construction we consider the statement of the old dogmaticians, made under peculiar circumstances, when they said that the eternal predestination took place *intuitu fidei*. It is true: if the term “election in view of persevering faith (*intuitu fidei finalis*)” is interpreted in this

manner only, that God has decreed from eternity to give on Judgment Day—for the sake of the merits of Christ imputed to them—the crown of glory to those whom He Himself by His grace has brought to faith and has kept in faith unto the end, then such an interpretation expresses indeed a truth clearly revealed in Scripture. It is also true that the Scripture doctrine of election includes as the final step the glorification of the elect. But the Scripture and the Confessions do not say that the eternal election or predestination unto the adoption of children took place in view of faith. Hence, for the sake of clarity in doctrinal presentation this terminology should be avoided.

III. The Church.

In connection with the doctrine of the Church, the question debated was, whether it is permissible to speak of a visible side of the church when defining its essence. We declare that to do so is not a false doctrine if by this visible side nothing else is meant but the use of the means of grace.

IV. The Office of the Public Administration of the Means of Grace.

The office of the public administration of the means of grace is a divine institution. The power to forgive or retain sins, to preach the Law and the Gospel has been committed by Christ not to an individual person as Peter and his so-called successors, nor only to the twelve apostles, nor to a special order, but to all Christians (Matt. 16:19; 18:18, John 20:19, 20; to be compared with Luke 24:33-36). In order to have one in her midst who exercises this power publicly, in her name and by her order, the Christian congregation calls a capable person. By the call the congregation erects the office of the public administration of the means of grace in her midst. Ordination is the confirmation of the call; it is not a divine but a commendable human ordinance.

V. The Doctrine of Sunday.

That which is contained on this point in the “Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Ev. Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio and Other States”

is *publica doctrina* among us.

VI. The Doctrine Concerning the Last Things.

A. In General.

When considering the question concerning the Antichrist, the future conversion of Israel, the resurrection of the martyrs, and the millennial reign of Christ, the fact must not be overlooked that we are dealing here with the correct understanding of prophecy and fulfillment, that this understanding is not always easy, and that even in the days of Christ the believers had an entirely different conception of the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy in many points than actually occurred but that nevertheless the fulfillment coincided exactly with the prophecy. We are certain that the same will be the case with respect to the New Testament prophecy. Not only will the great events, which even now stand out clearly and unmistakably in the prophecy of Jesus and His apostles—the return of Christ, the resurrection of the dead, the final judgment, the passing away of the old world and the creation of the new heaven and the new earth, the twofold termination of all history in eternal life or eternal damnation—find their realization, but even the individual details will be fulfilled, though the latter perhaps in an entirely different manner than some of the faithful expect on the basis of their understanding of Scripture. However, since all New Testament revelation constitutes a unity, nothing should be taught concerning the subjects named in our introductory sentence that would involve a negation of the following truths:

1. That as Christians we must at all times be ready for the return of Christ;
2. That as Christians we are bound, until the return of Christ, to the use of the means of grace and to the way of salvation revealed in the Gospel.
3. That the Church on earth, until the return of Christ, will continue to be a kingdom of the cross.

B. In particular, we confess the following:

1. In regard to the Antichrist we accept the historical Judgment of Luther in the Smalcald Articles (Part II, Art. IV, 10) that the Pope is the very

Antichrist (German: “*der rechte Endechrist oder Widerchrist*”), because among all the anti-christian manifestations in the history of the world and the church that lies behind us in the past there is none that fits the description given in 2 Thess. 2, better than the papacy, particularly since the denial of the fundamental article of the Scripture on the part of the papacy, viz., the justification of the sinner by grace alone, for Christ’s sake alone, by faith alone, constitutes the worst perversion imaginable of the very essence of Christianity and inevitably carries with it the dissolution of every God-pleasing moral world-order.

The answer to the question whether in the future that is still before us, prior to the return of Christ, a special unfolding and personal concentration of the antichristian power already present now, and thus a still more comprehensive fulfillment of 2 Thess. 2, may occur, we leave to the Lord and Ruler of Church and world history.

2. With reference to the question concerning the conversion of Israel, which some find indicated especially in Rom. 11:25, 26, we declare with Dr. Walther that to assume such a conversion “must not be regarded as a cause for division” (Milwaukee Kolloquium, page 156).
3. With reference to the assumption of a physical resurrection of the martyrs, which some find indicated in Rev. 20:4, we declare that we are not ready to deny church fellowship to anyone who holds this view, merely on that account; since we cannot consider the argument that this assumption violates the analogy of Scripture as cogent (cf. Matt. 27:52, 53), and since the representatives of this opinion do not assume a rule of the martyrs here on earth but hold that they go directly to heaven and rule there with Christ.
4. With reference to the thousand years of Rev. 20 we declare with Dr. Walther (Milwaukee Kolloquium, page 157), that “it is not possible to say with absolute certainty either that the thousand years have already been fulfilled or that they still lie in the future.” If they should still lie in the future, nothing must be taught concerning the then existing Church on earth that would contradict the limitations stated under VI, A.”

"With the other points of doctrine presented in the Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod we are conscious of being in agreement. We also believe that in regard to the points touched upon in Sections I-IV the doctrines stated in the Brief Statement are correct. However, we were of the opinion that it would be well in part to supplement them in the manner stated above, in part also to emphasize those of its points which seemed essential to us. With reference to Section III and VI, B, we expect no more than this, that the honorable Synod of Missouri will declare that the points mentioned there are not disruptive of church fellowship.

If the honorable Synod of Missouri will acknowledge Sections I, II, IV, V, and VI, A, together with the statements following after VI, B, concerning our attitude toward the Brief Statement, as correct, and declare that the points mentioned in Sections III and VI, B, are not disruptive of church fellowship, the American Lutheran Church stands ready officially to declare itself in doctrinal agreement with the honorable Synod of Missouri and to enter into pulpit and altar fellowship with it.

At the same time we recognize it as our duty to do what we can to bring about the acceptance of these doctrinal statements by the bodies with which we are now in church fellowship."

The statement of the Missouri Synod Commission was as follows:

Statement Submitted To The Intersynodical Committee Chicago, January, 1938 By The Representatives Of The Missouri Synod

"As to further steps to bring about church fellowship between the two bodies represented here, the representatives of the Missouri Synod submit the following statement:

1. The establishment of Church fellowship between the American Lutheran Church and the Missouri Synod will depend on the action taken by both bodies with reference to the Brief Statement and the Declaration of the Representatives Of the American Lutheran Church.
2. The establishment of church fellowship between the American Lutheran Church and the Missouri Synod will depend also on the es-

- establishment Of doctrinal agreement with the aforementioned Brief Statement and Declaration on the part of those church bodies with which the American Lutheran Church is in fellowship.
3. It is understood that, as far as the Missouri Synod is concerned, this whole matter including the Declaration Of the Representatives of the American Lutheran Church, must be submitted for approval to the other synods constituting the Synodical Conference.
 4. We deem it advisable that until church fellowship has been officially established, the pastors of both synods meet, in smaller circles, wherever and as often as possible, in order to discuss both the doctrinal basis for union and the questions Of church practice."

Copies of both documents were distributed at all 1938 District conventions of the Church. There was a free and open discussion of their contents at all our District conventions.

Copies of both documents were also sent to the Presidents Of our sister synods in the American Lutheran Conference and to the President Of the Conference.

At its general convention in June of this year, the Missouri Synod adopted the following report Of one of its floor committees, which pertains to the "Declaration" and the "Statement":

Report And Resolutions Of Committee No. 16 Relative To Overture 513

"At the last Synodical Convention in Cleveland (1935) the appointment of a Committee on Lutheran Union was authorized. This committee, appointed by the President Of Synod, has held six meetings with the representatives of the Hon. American Lutheran Church.

As a result of these meetings the representatives of the American Lutheran Church accepted the doctrinal contents Of the "Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod," but in order to supplement and emphasize their position the representatives of the American Lutheran Church made an official statement called "The Declaration Of the Repre-

sentatives of the American Lutheran Church.” The Brief Statement of the Missouri Synod, together with the Declaration Of the Representatives Of the American Lutheran Church, show the doctrinal position which the American Lutheran Church representatives accepted.

Your Committee finds in the position of the representatives Of the American Lutheran Church:

- a. First of all an agreement in the doctrinal statements concerning teachings disputed in the past or still in debate in some sections of the Lutheran Church of America, notably in the doctrines of inspiration, predestination and conversion, Sunday, and the office of the public administration of the means of grace. It is with great joy that we note that in the chief difficulty which separated our Synod from the constituent bodies of the American Lutheran Church, the doctrine of predestination, unanimity has been reached and the false teachings held by some Lutheran teachers have been repudiated. Concerning agreement in this doctrine, the sainted Dr. F. Pieper declared thirty-five years ago in his *Die Grunddifferenz in der Lehre von der Bekehrung und Gnadenwahl*, page 28: “If unanimity in this point can be attained, that is from the heart we refrain from seeking a rational answer to the question, ‘Cur alii prae aliis’ ‘why some rather than others’ (are elected), this is a sign that we are truly of one spirit... A Lutheran Church in America thus united would have to become a great blessing for the Church of the whole world.” It is similarly gratifying that concerning the Holy Scriptures the Declaration of the American Lutheran Church representatives specifically and in opposition to some other Lutheran bodies emphasizes the verbal inspiration and the inerrancy of the Scriptures.
- b. In some non-fundamental points concerning the doctrine of the Last Things, the Declaration of the American Lutheran Church representatives asks tolerance for certain teachings and interpretations which have been rejected in our circles.
 1. This concerns particularly the doctrine of the Anti-Christ. With the Missouri Synod, the Declaration of the American Lutheran Church, on the basis of the Scriptures and the Smalcald Articles, teaches that the Pope is the Anti-Christ; but the question as to whether the" future will

bring a specific unfolding and personal concentration of the present Anti-Christian power is left to God.

While the Missouri Synod teaches on the basis of 2 Thess. 2:3-12 and in accord with the Smalcald Articles (Part II, Article IV:10) that the Pope is the very Anti-Christ for the past and the future, your Committee finds that the Synodical fathers have declared that a deviation in this doctrine need not be divisive of church-fellowship (Lehre u. Wehre, Vol. 19, 1873, p. 290; Lehre u. Wehre, Vol. 25, 1879, p. 25E).

Note: In this and the following paragraphs the Synodical fathers are mentioned and quoted. This must not be understood in any way as if we were basing any doctrine on what the Synodical fathers teach. We simply mention the fact that they considered some non-fundamental doctrines as not necessarily divisive of Church fellowship.

2. A second non-fundamental doctrine which the Declaration of the American Lutheran Church representatives mention is the doctrine concerning the conversion of the Jews. The American Lutheran Church representatives do not state that their church teaches, in opposition to ours, that there will be a universal conversion of all Jews. They do state, however, that some find this doctrine indicated especially in Rom. 11:25 and 26, and that the acceptance of a conversion of the Jews must not be regarded as divisive of church-fellowship.

While the Missouri Synod teaches on the basis of the Scriptures that we are not to look forward to a universal conversion of all Jews before the end of the world, your Committee finds that the Synodical fathers have declared that such deviation in this doctrine need not be regarded as a cause of division (Lehre u. Wehre, Vol. 14, 1868, p. 252) .

3. A third non-fundamental doctrine on which the Declaration of the American Lutheran Church representatives report is the “assumption of a physical resurrection of the martyrs.” The Declaration does not state that this is the doctrine of the American Lutheran Church. It merely declares that if anyone teaches this physical resurrection, the American Lutheran Church is not ready to deny church-fellowship on that account.

In regard to this assumption of a physical resurrection of the martyrs before Judgment Day, the Missouri Synod teaches that this is a misinterpretation of Rev. 20, 4, since, according to the statements of the Scriptures and the Confessional Writings, there will be only one resurrection and that on Judgment Day. Your committee finds that the Synodical fathers have declared that this erroneous assumption need not be divisive of church-fellowship (Lehre u. Wehre, Vol. 19, 1873, page 74ff.)

4. The fourth point in the teachings concerning the Last Things, on which the Declaration of the American Lutheran Church representatives reports is the “thousand years” of Rev. 20. This Declaration is willing to leave the time of the fulfillment of these prophecies (whether in the past or in the future) undecided. It demands of those who place the thousand years in the future that they profess the truth that the Church on earth, until the return of Christ for Judgment, will continue to be a kingdom of the cross, and that all Christians should be prepared for the coming of Christ at any moment.

In regard to the fulfillment of these “thousand years” in Rev. 20 and the question as to whether they lie in the past or the future-Synod has allowed the right of different interpretation of this passage, provided such interpretation is not out of harmony with the analogy of faith, and no chiliastic associations are involved.

In all other parts of our teachings concerning the last times, the American Lutheran Church representatives agree with us. Their declaration repudiates Chiliasm by emphasizing that the Church will continue to be a kingdom of the cross until the end and by asserting that “Christians must at all times be ready for the return of Christ.”

- c. In the fundamental doctrines discussed in the Declaration of the Representatives of the American Lutheran Church, we note in connection with the doctrine of the Church that they declare it permissible to speak of “a visible side of the Church,” when defining its essence “if by this Visible side nothing else is meant than the use of the means of grace.” While the Declaration of the American Lutheran Church representatives, in accepting the Brief Statement, also accepts the doctrine of the Church as the invisible communion of the saints, it has been felt

by some that if this expression, “the visible side of the Church,” were permitted to remain unexplained it might give occasion for the fostering of false doctrine, such as the Romanizing teaching which represents the Church as an external religious or social institution. Your Committee finds that our synodical fathers conceded that the Word and the Sacraments may in a certain sense be considered as belonging to the essence of the Church. Therefore a difference in this point need not be divisive of Church-fellowship, when this expression, “the visible side of the Church” is understood in the light of our Synod’s pronouncement by Dr. Walther, *Das Buffaloer Colloquium*, 1866, page 9.

- d. In regard to all other fundamental doctrines the Committee found itself in accord with the teachings of the Declaration of the American Lutheran Church representatives. While the phraseology employed was sometimes not that which we use, we feel, especially in view of the explanations by our Committee on Lutheran Union, that these statements contain the truth as expressed in the Scriptures and our Lutheran confessional writings. We have accepted these statements as the sincere expression of the American Lutheran Church representatives.

After conducting many meetings and a number of public hearings, after reading various communications sent us in connection with Overture 513, and being confronted with the duty of recommending resolutions to Synod concerning the Declaration of the American Lutheran Church representatives, your Committee submits the following resolutions:

RESOLVED, 1. That we raise our grateful hearts and voices to the Triune God, thanking His mercy for the guidance of the Holy Spirit by which the points of agreement have been reached and imploring His further guidance toward the consummation of the efforts to bring about church-fellowship between the Missouri Synod and the American Lutheran Church, even though we believe that under the most favorable circumstances much time and effort may be required before any union may be reached.

2. That Synod declare that the Brief Statement of the Missouri Synod together with the Declaration of the representatives of the American Lutheran Church and the provisions of this entire report of Committee No. 16 now being read and with Synod’s action thereupon be regarded

- as the doctrinal basis for future church-fellowship between the Missouri Synod and the American Lutheran Church.
3. That in regard to the points of non-fundamental doctrines mentioned in the Declaration of the American Lutheran Church representatives, (Anti-Christ, the conversion of the Jews, the physical resurrection of the martyrs, the fulfillment of the “thousand years,”) we endeavor to establish full agreement; and that our Committee on Lutheran union be instructed to devise ways and means of reaching this end.
 4. That in regard to the propriety of speaking of “the visible side of the Church” we ask our Committee on Lutheran Union to work to this end that uniform and Scripturally acceptable terminology and teaching be attained.
 5. That since for true unity we need not only this doctrinal agreement, but also agreement in practice, we state with our synodical fathers that according to the Scriptures and the Lutheran confessional writings, Christian practice must harmonize with Christian doctrine; and that where there is a divergence from biblical, confessional practice, strenuous efforts must be made to correct such deviation. We refer particularly to the attitude toward the anti-Christian lodge, anti-scriptural pulpit and altar fellowship, and all other forms of unionism.
 6. That regarding the establishment of church-fellowship between the two bodies on this basis, Synod recognize the following points which embody and augment the four recommendations of Synod’s Committee on Lutheran Union.
 - a. The establishing of church-fellowship between the American Lutheran Church and the Missouri Synod will depend on the action taken by each body with reference to the Brief Statement, the Declaration of the representatives of the American Lutheran Church, and the Report of this Committee as adopted by Synod.
 - b. The establishing of church-fellowship between the American Lutheran Church and the Missouri Synod will depend also on the establishing on the part of the American Lutheran Church of doctrinal agreement with those church bodies with which the American Lutheran Church is in fellowship.
 - c. As far as the Missouri Synod is concerned, this whole matter must be submitted for approval to the other Synods constituting the Synodical

Conference.

- d. Until church-fellowship has been officially established, the pastors of both church-bodies are encouraged to meet in smaller circles wherever and as often as possible in order to discuss both the doctrinal basis for union and the questions of church practice.
7. That if by the grace of God fellowship can be established, this fact is to be announced officially by the President of the Synod. Until then no action is to be taken by any of our pastors or congregations which would overlook the fact that we are not yet united.
8. That for the purposes herein stated we recommend to Synod that the Committee on Lutheran Union be continued.
9. That we express our sincere gratitude to the, members of the Committee for Lutheran Union for their diligent, painstaking and conscientious work and bespeak for them continued divine blessing."

The 1938 convention of the American Lutheran Church adopted unanimously the following resolutions relative to fellowship with the Synod of Missouri, to-wit (see 1938 Convention Minutes, Pages 255 and 256, III. Fellowship A):

"Since our Fellowship Commission and the Commission of the Synod of Missouri have arrived at a doctrinal agreement and since the Synod of Missouri, assembled in convention at St. Louis, has unanimously accepted this doctrinal agreement, be it

RESOLVED, 1. That we raise our grateful hearts and voices to the Triune God, thanking His mercy for the guidance of the Holy Spirit by which the points of agreement have been reached.

2. That we declare the Brief Statement of the Missouri Synod, together with the Declaration of our Commission, a sufficient doctrinal basis for Church fellowship between the Missouri Synod and the American Lutheran Church.
3. That, according to our conviction and the resolution of the Synod of Missouri, passed at its convention in St. Louis, the aforementioned doctrinal agreement is the sufficient doctrinal basis for Church-fellowship, and that we are firmly convinced that it is neither necessary nor possible to agree in all non-fundamental doctrines. Nevertheless, we

- are willing to continue the negotiations concerning the points termed in our Declaration as “not divisive of Church-fellowship,” and recognized as such by the Missouri Synod’s resolutions, and instruct our Commission on Fellowship accordingly.
4. That we understand why the Missouri Synod is for the time being not yet ready to draw the logical conclusion and immediately establish church-fellowship with our church. We, however, expect that henceforth by both sides the erection of opposition altars shall be carefully avoided and that just coordination of mission work shall earnestly be sought.
 5. That we believe that the Brief Statement viewed in the light of our Declaration is not in contradiction to the Minneapolis Theses which are the basis of our membership in the American Lutheran Conference. We are not willing to give up this membership. However, we are ready to submit the aforementioned doctrinal agreement to the other members of the American Lutheran Conference for their official approval and acceptance.
 6. That, until church-fellowship has been officially established, we encourage the pastors of both church bodies to meet in smaller groups in order to discuss both the doctrinal basis for union and the question of church practice.
 7. That we humbly pray to the Lord of the Church that He might guide the course of both church bodies so that we may be lead to the establishment of full fellowship as an important contribution to the unity of our dear Lutheran Church in America.
 8. That we commend our Commission for its painstaking, and thorough work and hereby accept and ratify the report with sincere appreciation and thanks."

The foregoing material may seem to be an unnecessarily prolonged introduction to the lectures that follow it. It has been included here solely because numerous requests for the official documents reprinted here, and many inquiries about their contents and meaning, which have come to the undersigned, have convinced him that this material should be made generally available. It will also be conducive to a better understanding and evalu-

ation of the lectures. [Unionism and What is Scripture and How Can We Be Certain of its Divine Origin?]

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Cover image “A Bible handwritten in Latin, on display in Malmesbury Abbey, Wiltshire, England. The Bible was written in Belgium in 1407 AD, for reading aloud in a monastery.” by Anonymous/arpingstone. {{pd-us}}

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Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen. (Jude 1:24-25)

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