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LUTHER AND THE PROBLEM OF AUTHORITY IN RELIGION

PART II*

Having in Part I of this article given some account of the development, in Luther's religious experience and his career as a Reformer, of the principle of the supreme normative authority of the sacred Scriptures, we shall now try to indicate the main features of his teaching in regard to the nature of this authority.

It is well to recall—indeed, the significance of the fact cannot be overestimated—that it was by a singularly deep and rich experience of the grace of God in Christ Jesus that Luther had come to the double conviction that he was himself a saved man, and that the subject matter of the Bible, culminating in the assurance of the free gift of eternal life through faith in the Son of God, is true and trustworthy. In this experience lay the germ of his power to refashion the religious life of his age.¹ Inheriting the medieval ideas concerning the relative functions of the Scriptures and the Church, he presently found himself constrained, by the logic of his spiritual necessities, to oppose one after another of the traditional authorities that kept thwarting his advances toward full evangelical freedom. One of the greatest conservatives that ever lived,

* For Part I, see this REVIEW, October, 1917, pp. 553-603.

¹ Preuss, *Die Entwicklung des Schriftprinzips bei Luther bis zur Leipziger Disputation*, p. 6, aptly remarks: 'Es ist der Ausgangspunkt und mit ihm das ganze weitere Werden des Reformators ein religiöser, kein humanistischer, ein positiver, kein negativer, ein erlebter, kein erdachter, ein errungener, kein übernommener.' On the importance of interpreting "the whole Luther" in the light of his formative evangelical experience, cf. Harnack, *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*, iii⁴ p. 835.

he had, for the most part, to be literally driven into the successive stages of his development as a critic and reformer of the existing order.² First of all, the "pagan" Aristotle and his too devoted champions, the Schoolmen, were rejected: their Pelagian confidence in man's native ability and their superficial views of guilt and grace flatly contradicted the hard-won but never to be forgotten results of the struggle which the Augustinian hermit in his lonely cell at Erfurt had made to "obtain a gracious God." For a time, indeed, the church fathers and doctors were still suffered to stand alongside of the Scripture as a virtually coordinate authority: the professor, never deeply concerned about theoretical matters but with his eye fixed on practical needs, was content with the privilege of repudiating an occasional opinion of the ancient worthies that could not square with the Pauline exhortation, "prove all things."³ The controversy concerning the papal indulgences in 1517, having bared anew the root principles of the nascent evangelical faith, necessarily raised the question as to the extent of the papal authority. As against Prierias Luther affirmed that "the pope is a man and can err," and that a council is superior to the pontiff. At Augsburg, confronting Cajetan, the accused heretic became convinced that papal decretals have at times contained errors. And finally at Leipzig, in 1519, the last of the medieval authorities was thrown aside: the renowned Council of Constance was convicted of the mistake of condemning some sentences of John Huss which, be-

² Cf. his own confession, EA (the Erlangen edition of his works) *Opp. var. arg.* 1, p. 23: "*Haec ideo narro, optime lector, ut, si lecturus es opuscula mea, memor sis, me unum fuisse (ut supra dixi) ex illis, qui (ut Augustinus de se scribit) scribendo et docendo profecerint, non ex illis, qui de nihilo repente fiunt summi, cum nihil sint, neque operati, neque tentati, neque experti, sed ad unum intuitum scripturae totum spiritum eius exhauriunt.*"

³ WA (the Weimar edition of his works) i, pp. 529 f. (the Protestation prefixed to the Resolutions "*de indulgentiarum virtute*," 1518). This vacillating attitude, as Kunze well says (*Glaubensregel, Heilige Schrift und Taufbekenntnis*, p. 501), shows "wie naturwüchsig und von innen heraus das Schriftprinzip Luthers geworden ist."

cause they were truly evangelical, were irrefutably valid. The Scriptures, understood in the light of his own Christian experience, had become for Luther the sole authority in matters of faith and practice. Having once firmly grasped the Christ of the New Testament by whose grace he had felt himself apprehended when for the first time he obtained "all peace and joy in believing," he learned to defend and protect himself by means of the sacred Scriptures against all merely human authorities and traditions.⁴

Useful as the familiar distinction between the "material" and the "formal" principles of the Reformation may be, this brief review of Luther's development will serve to remind us that the application of the distinction to his case requires to be made with caution. Unquestionably, the starting point of his evangelical experience and his reformatory labors is to be found, not in his adoption of the canon of sacred Scriptures as such, but in his acceptance, by faith, of the pardoning grace of God made known to him, in the first instance, not directly by the Bible but rather by the Word of God as present in various forms in the religious life of the day. He had become aware of the essence, at least, of the true faith, before he realized that the Scrip-

⁴ "Independently of the new ideas of his age, and without having received from them any directive influences, Luther's principle of the Scriptures fashioned itself and developed in a slowly advancing process. As to the Scripture, so also to the Roman Church, Luther clung with his whole heart. The conviction that he was raising only an open academic question and representing the cause of the pope himself; the conviction that church fathers, Church, and Scripture agreed; as also the moderating exhortation of his friends, and his conservative disposition intimidated by his monastic isolation were a retarding influence. But when he had once entered the lists and his opponents kept driving him on, then as a matter of course it was not his inner relation to the Scripture that was changed. For his personal life the Scripture remained what it had been before 1517. But Luther was compelled to assert his basal conviction critically against the remaining, and to him also still valuable authorities. The leading spirits of the earlier opposition now became welcome allies to him, without his identifying himself with them. Rather did he go beyond them and criticize them upon the basis of his understanding of the subject matter of the Gospel."—Scheel, *Luthers Stellung zur heiligen Schrift*, pp. 33 f.

ture is its sole source and norm.⁵ Doubtless, it would be more serviceable in this connection to avail ourselves of another principle—one to which we shall have to return later—as a more exact and at the same time more comprehensive characterization of the essence of Protestantism as embodied and revealed in Luther's development—the *Testimonium Spiritus Sancti*.⁶

At any rate, it is apparent at the outset that the mere assertion by Luther of the supreme and normative influence of the Scriptures does not of itself suffice to indicate his distinctive views concerning the nature of this authority or explain the characteristic traits of the Reformation which chiefly by his use of the Scriptures he inaugurated. The emphasis on the *autoritas solius Scripturae* never of itself

⁵ Cf. Part I, p. 563, especially n. 33; also Loofs, *Leitfaden zum Studium der Dogmengeschichte*,⁴ p. 741; and Loofs, *Luthers Stellung zum Mittelalter und zur Neuzeit*, 1907, p. 9: "Dass er an vielen Traditionen sich stiess, die im Mittelalter sichere Geltung gehabt hatten, war nicht die Folge davon, dass er nur an die Bibel sich hielt; umgekehrt war's: weil seine religiöse Erkenntnis sich an manchen Traditionen stiess, ging ihm ein Blick dafür auf, dass sie nicht schriftgemäss waren." Dr. J. B. Rust, *Modernism and the Reformation*, pp. 59 f., correctly declares that "Luther's conviction that the central point of religion is the relation of the heart and conscience to God, led, without any search theoretically for it, in an entirely practical way, to the material principle of the Reformation, *Justification by Faith*." But in the next sentence the adverb is quite misleading, when he says: "Having found this higher light in the Word of God, he [Luther] in like manner *unintentionally* [the italics are ours] . . . placed the authority of Holy Scripture above the authority of popes, councils, and universities, and thus enunciated the *formal principle of the Reformation*." There certainly was no want of intention in those definitely purposed acts of the Reformer that revealed his conviction as to the supreme authority of the Scriptures, when once the subject matter of the Gospel had—by its own inherent power—approved itself to his heart and mind.

⁶ Meanwhile compare Dr. B. B. Warfield, "Calvin's Doctrine of the Knowledge of God," in this REVIEW, April, 1900, p. 309: "There is embodied in this ["the testimony of the Holy Spirit"] the true Protestant principle, superior to both the so-called formal and the so-called material principles—both of which are in point of fact but corollaries of it. For it takes the soul completely and forcibly out of the hands of the Church and from under its domination, and casts it wholly upon the grace of God."

led beyond medieval Catholicism.⁷ An Erasmus might even have a true conception of the central place of Christ in the sacred volume and yet have little understanding of the very root out of which the evangelical movement sprang.⁸ It was because of a fundamentally different interpretation of the message of the Bible—due to his experience of an absolutely gratuitous salvation, apart from all merits and doings of his own—that the Reformer became the herald of a new age.⁹ We need, therefore, to examine his teachings concerning the sacred Scriptures, in order to ascertain why he ascribed to them a normative authority.

His statements on this subject are, naturally enough, exceedingly numerous, and, quite as naturally, considering that he is virtually the first theologian to fashion a doctrine of the Word of God,¹⁰ they are rather varied and at times, as we are constrained to believe, inconsistent with one another. He has, unfortunately, given us no connected and comprehensive treatment of the matter. His was not the gift of the systematic thinker. His works, too, are for the most part occasional and controversial writings, and the emergencies of the conflict led to a frequent shifting of the emphasis from one factor to another in the complex total.¹¹ Moreover, his style, though prevailingly clear and

⁷ Loofs, *Leitfaden*, etc., p. 646; and cf. Part I, pp. 555 f.

⁸ Luther early saw the difference between the prince of the Humanists and himself. See his letter of Oct. 19, 1516, to Spalatin, and that of March 1, 1517, to John Lang (Enders, *Dr. Martin Luther's Briefwechsel*, i, pp. 68, 88).

⁹ Loofs, *Luthers Stellung*, etc., p. 12, characterizes his doctrine of justification—the beginnings of which may be traced as far back as 1513—as “eine prinzipielle Loslösung der Religion von jahrhundertelangen moralistischen, mystischen und metaphysischen Verkehrungen.” Cf. Luther's statement (EA *Opp. var. arg.* 1, p. 23): “*Ibi* [i.e., when he knew himself “reborn,” having learned the true meaning of Rom. i: 17] *continuo alia mihi facies totius scripturae apparuit.*” Cf. Hering, *Die Mystik Luthers*, p. 159.

¹⁰ Seeberg, *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*, ii (1898), p. 267.

¹¹ EA 57, p. 99: “Meine Theologie hab ich nicht gelernt auf einmal, sondern ich habe immer tiefer und tiefer darnach forschen müssen. Da haben mich meine Anfechtungen zu gebracht.”

forcible, abounds in highly figurative terms, that are hard to define as to their exact content, and likewise in onesided expressions and bold exaggerations. The result is that we have not only two generic extremes represented in the interpretation of Luther's views concerning the Scriptures,—the writers who persistently read into his statements the fully developed Lutheran orthodoxy of the seventeenth century, and those who make him the forerunner and champion of the Rationalism of the eighteenth century,—but likewise a long array of less widely divergent opinions that fairly fill the space between the two extremes.¹²

We may begin our synthetic presentation of Luther's views with the obvious and all but universally admitted remark, that the Reformer, following the custom of the medieval Church and of his own opponents, commonly uses "Scripture" and "the Word of God" as synonymous and interchangeable terms. Each in turn is called the *Lydius lapis* by which all opinions are to be tested.¹³ As Prof. Loofs reminds us, the pneumatic or allegorical exegesis in vogue throughout the Middle Ages presupposes the equating of the two expressions.¹⁴ The Scripture is *divinitus per spiritum sanctum revelata*.¹⁵ The very existence of the

¹² Cf. Haug, *Die Autorität der hlg. Schrift und die Kritik. Nach der Schrift und den Grundsätzen Luthers dargestellt* (1891), pp. 6, 8, *et passim*. Scheel, as cited, pp. 1-7, gives an admirable survey of the conflicting interpretations of Luther, so far as our theme is concerned, from the days of Wettstein to Köstlin and Harnack; cf. also his concluding summary, pp. 74 ff. Loofs, *Luthers Stellung*, etc., p. 20, n. 1, condemns the unhistorical procedure of the Protestant rationalists, some of whom even reduced Luther to a mere "naturalist," and contrasts therewith the opposite course taken by the Roman Catholic leaders of the Enlightenment, who disparaged Luther in favor of Erasmus. On the general subject of the changing estimates of Luther and his work, one may profitably consult H. Stephen's monograph, "Luther in den Wandlungen seiner Kirche," in *Studien zur Geschichte des neueren Protestantismus*, 1. Heft (1907).

¹³ Cf. *Briefe* (de Wette), vi, 424, and *EA Opp. exeg.* 3, p. 219.

¹⁴ See his *Leitfaden*, etc.,³ p. 373, note, and the 4th edition, p. 747, n. 1, both with polemic references against Harnack, as cited, iii,³ p. 745, n.

¹⁵ *EA Opp. exeg.* 18, p. 245.

Church depends upon the right preaching of the saving Word. Only with those who acknowledge that the writings of the evangelists are the Word of God will Luther hold debates; all others deny the *prima principia* for discussion.¹⁶

On the other hand, it is frequently not difficult to detect differences of connotation in the two terms. In general, the phrase, "the Word of God," is often used to put an emphasis on the distinctively soteriological elements of the divine revelation; while "the Scripture" stresses its normative influence.¹⁷ On occasion, the two are logically distinguished.¹⁸ In fact, "the Word" is both a broader and a narrower concept than "the Scripture": broader, because it is not confined to the sacred page, but may come to us in the form of a hymn, a prayer, a sermon, or other channels capable of conveying religious truth; narrower, because the historically given canon of Scripture conceivably may contain other matter than "the Word of God,"—a consideration to be determined by appropriate methods of criticism.¹⁹

¹⁶ On this whole paragraph, cf. Köstlin, *Luthers Theologie*,² ii, pp. 8 f.; Romberg, *Die Lehre Luther's von der heiligen Schrift*, 1868, p. 5; and Thimme, "Luthers Stellung zur Heiligen Schrift, ihrem Wert und ihrer Autorität," in *Neue Kirchliche Zeitschrift*, vii (1896), pp. 646 ff. Ladd, *The Doctrine of Sacred Scripture*, ii, p. 154, following Reuss (*Geschichte der heiligen Schriften N.T.*, ii, p. 70), declares: "The identifying of Scripture and the Word of God may, then, be pronounced to be a complete departure from the doctrine of Luther." There is a sense, as will presently appear, in which this statement is valid, but the context shows that Ladd is here making the common mistake of confusing Luther's views of the extent or size of the canon with his views concerning the relation of Scripture to the Word of God. Reuss, *History of the Canon of the Holy Scriptures in the Christian Church*, pp. 304 ff., represents the early Reformers and Protestant Creeds as basing the canonicity of a biblical book on the witness of the Holy Spirit.

¹⁷ Thimme, as cited, pp. 646 ff.; Diestel, *Geschichte des Alten Testaments in der christlichen Kirche*, p. 233: the Word of God is "der Ausdruck des göttlichen Willens, vor allem nach seiner religiös belebenden Seite hin."

¹⁸ WA i, p. 506, ll. 18 f.: "*quando scripturam sanctam et verbum dei pervertunt.*"

¹⁹ Dorner, *History of Protestant Theology*, i, pp. 241, 247 f.; Gennrich, *Der Kampf um die Schrift, etc.*, p. 5; Diestel, as cited, p. 233; Lindsay, *A History of the Reformation*, i, pp. 461 ff.

In its original essence the Word is the Logos Himself, the second person of the Trinity.²⁰ He becomes manifest in the fulness of the time in the historic Christ. In Him God speaks, but the Word also speaks for and by Himself—the highest revelation of God, a disclosure not simply of the divine power and majesty but also of the divine love and grace.²¹ God can be adequately known only by and in the historic Christ, especially as the crucified.²² From Him as an organic centre the ever-living Word that testifies to Him resounds continually through the world. Indeed, this witnessing concerning Christ as Savior was not intended, in the first instance, to be scripturally fixed but only orally proclaimed.²³ And even now, on empirical and psychological grounds, the Word spoken is likely to be far more effective than the Word read.²⁴ God is present through the gracious power of His Spirit not only with the Scripture but also with the sermon. The true preacher must be able to say of his discourse: "that has God Himself said. And again, I have been an Apostle and prophet of Jesus Christ in this sermon."²⁵ As Harnack rightly says: "When he calls this core [of the Scripture] 'the Gospel according to the pure understanding,' 'the genuine Gospel,' 'the genuine Word of God,' 'the promissiones dei,' but above all 'Jesus Christ,' all these expressions are in his sense identical."²⁶

Christ, then, is the centre of the whole body of the

²⁰ WA iv, p. 9, ll. 23 ff.; iii, p. 303, ll. 25 f., p. 262, ll. 6 ff.; Köstlin, as cited, i, p. 59; Dieckhoff, *Luthers Lehre in ihrer ersten Gestalt*, pp. 158 ff.

²¹ Dorner, as cited, p. 248.

²² WA iv, p. 153, ll. 27 f., and cf. Part I, pp. 565 for additional references to the sources.

²³ As Köstlin, *op. cit.*, ii, p. 30, shows, this idea is emphasized by Luther in connection with his distinction between the Old Testament as the law and the New Testament as the higher and more spiritual word of grace. See the particularly striking passage EA 10², p. 388; and cf. Grützmacher, *Wort und Geist*, pp. 26 ff.

²⁴ EA 5², p. 379.

²⁵ EA 26, p. 35. Of course, it is assumed that the preacher is setting forth the pure teaching of the Gospel; cf. Grützmacher, as cited, p. 28.

²⁶ *Lehrbuch, etc.*, iii⁴, p. 828.

sacred writings. Luther's view of the Bible, from the very beginning of his evangelical understanding of its contents, mirrors the depth and vigor of his ideas of sin and redeeming grace. Everything in his discussion of the Word is oriented by his personal experience of salvation. The Scriptures are the word of God in the sense that in them there "is one sort of divine message taught from the beginning of the world."²⁷ Not that they contain the Word equally in all their parts: some sections, as every spiritually enlightened reader would testify, are much richer in their evangelical content than others. But in general, "the Holy Spirit has embodied his wisdom and counsel and all mysteries in the Word and revealed them in the Scriptures."²⁸ The Scriptures—to adopt one of Luther's homely figures—are "the swaddling clothes and the manger in which Christ lies."²⁹ From Him they derive their majesty and glory.³⁰ All Scripture is to be understood with reference to Him.³¹

²⁷ EA 28, p. 342 ("Von Menschen-Lehre zu meiden," anno 1522).

²⁸ EA 51, p. 98 (1534).

²⁹ *Ibid.*, *Opp. var. arg.* 7, p. 77.

³⁰ WA i, p. 362, ll. 18 f.: "*Ergo in Christo crucifixo est vera Theologia et cognitio Dei.*" Cf. Seeberg, as cited, ii, pp. 286 f. What Seeberg says at the conclusion of his discussion of Luther's attitude to the Scripture (p. 289), "so war sie ihm doch Autorität nur als das urkräftige und ursprüngliche Zeugnis von Christo und seinem Heil," needs correction; for, as we shall see, Luther frequently, especially during the controversies with the Roman Catholics and the fanatics, used biblical texts as *dicta probantia* with reference to matters lying far beyond the narrow limits here set for the Scripture as the supreme authority; see Scheel, as cited, p. 70. The same remark applies, though with less force, to Dorner's assertion (*History of Prot. Theology* i, p. 234), "the Holy Scriptures themselves do not seek to hold men fast by themselves alone, but point them to the living Lord Himself, of whom they testify. . . ." The positive elements in both statements are valid; the negative terms unduly restrict the authoritative use which Luther made of the Scriptures in all those cases where—as in matters of ancient history or of natural science—it would be impossible to trace a vital connection with Christ Himself or the heart of His Gospel.

³¹ "Luthers Vorlesung über den Römerbrief," ed. Ficker, in *Anfänge reformatorischer Bibelauslegung*, i, p. 4, ll. 19 f. (on Rom. 1:3) "*Hic magnus aperitur introitus in sacre Scripture intelligentiam, sc. quod tota*

"This," says he, "is indubitable, that the whole Scripture is directed toward Christ"; "Christ is the centre of the circle, and all histories in the Scripture, if they are looked at rightly, point to Christ"; "Christ is the lord of the Scripture"; "take Christ away from the Scriptures, what more will you find in them?"³²

The necessity of the Scriptures follows from their content. Christians need an all-powerful Word on which to build their faith,³³ and the Scriptures are the only adequate source of knowledge as to what constitutes pure Christianity. There is but one thing that raises or lowers the Church—knowledge or ignorance of the *sacrae literae*.³⁴ The Church cannot err, if it teaches the divine Word.³⁵ So important is an accurate and thorough understanding of the Bible that every word ought to be carefully scrutinized: it may prove an inexhaustible fountain for those seeking the wholesome doctrine.³⁶ Not only are the original languages

de Christo sit intelligenda, maxime ubi prophetica." We have already seen how, in his first Lecture on the Psalms, he gave these, following the example of Faber Stapulensis, a prevailingly Messianic interpretation; cf. Part I, pp. 566 ff., and Köstlin, as cited, i, p. 43.

³² Thimme, *op. cit.*, p. 673. Cf. EA *Opp. var. arg.*, 4, 381: "*et scriptura est non contra, sed per Christum intelligenda, ideo vel ad eum referenda, vel pro vera scriptura non habenda.*" It is in view of the many similar passages emphasizing the revelation of divine grace in "the historical activity of the historical Christ" that Harnack asserts (*Lchrbuch, etc.*, iii⁴, p. 837, n. 1), "Das ist die grösste Reform, die Luther, wie für den Glauben so für die Theologie, aufgerichtet hat, dass er den geschichtlichen Christus zum einzigen Erkenntnisprinzip Gottes gemacht hat." Doubtless, for Luther Christ was the *highest* principle of the knowledge of God, but just as certainly not the *only* one. Not only in the early period of his mysticism, but in his later life as well, he regarded nature as a legitimate source of knowledge concerning God: see Hering, *Die Mystik Luthers*, p. 167; Gottschick, "Luthers Theologie," in *Zeitschrift für Theol. und Kirche*, 1914, p. 24; Preuss, as cited, pp. 26 ff.

³³ EA 3², p. 151.

³⁴ Enders, as cited, ii. p. 132, ll. 17 ff. Cf. WA v, p. 21, ll. 40 ff.; p. 131, l. 26.

³⁵ EA 26, p. 35.

³⁶ WA iii, p. 406, ll. 8 f.: "*quodlibet verbum Scripture Dei est fons, quia scaturit aquas inexhaustas omnibus, qui sitiunt doctrinam salu-*

of the sacred text well worthy of study—they are the scab-bards of the sword of the Spirit³⁷—but the very order of the individual words is to be duly considered.³⁸ The Word of God can establish articles of the faith, and no one else can, not even an angel.³⁹ Every word of God must accord with our Scriptures.⁴⁰ It was particularly against the impure traditions and injurious practices and teachings of the papal Church, on the one hand, and, on the other, the wild subjectivism of the fanatics—to Luther both parties were a species of “mere enthusiasm”⁴¹—that the necessity of a permanent form of the Word in its purity and integrity was emphasized. Elsewhere, however, it is the practical requirements of the individual Christian, his need of explicit guidance, strength with respect to particular temptations, comfort amid various sorts of afflictions, that are specially

tarem.” Cf. ibid., iv, p. 318 f.: “Sed omnis locus Scripture est infinite intelligentie.”

³⁷ *Ibid.*, xv, p. 38.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, iii, p. 486, ll. 16 f.: “*Quoniam omnia verba dei sunt in pondere, numero, mensura.*” As Scheel, *op. cit.*, p. 21, reminds us, there is thus a disturbing element of uncertainty introduced into Luther’s view of the relation of the Scripture and the Word, due to his too rigidly exact equating of the two expressions, even to the extent of his being willing to accept on scriptural authority “*quod certe absurdissime sonaret, si in legenda aliqua legeretur*” (WA iv, p. 639, l. 24). Doubtless, there is here a marked shifting of the emphasis put in the earlier statements on the central and supreme significance of the message of grace and salvation in Christ. But the two views are not necessarily incompatible, and as yet, therefore, we need not speak of a downright contradiction in the Reformer’s statements.

³⁹ EA 25, p. 119 (Schmalkaldische Artikel).

⁴⁰ Cf. the celebrated letter to Melancthon (Enders, as cited, iii, pp. 272 f.) from the Wartburg Castle at the time of the disturbances caused by the radicals at Wittenberg. The letter does not unequivocally deny the possibility of a divine call to a prophetic office equal to that of the biblical seers; but Luther was certain that every divinely given message would have to accord with the scriptural revelation. Cf. Preuss, as cited, pp. 80, 100; Köstlin, as cited, i, pp. 404 f.; Scheel, as cited, p. 39; and Thimme, as cited, p. 662.

⁴¹ Cf. Dorner, *op. cit.*, i, pp. 245 ff., on the influence of the double opposition in developing Luther’s teaching concerning the “essential independence of the holy Scriptures in respect of faith and the Church.”

brought to view.⁴² "The two Testaments, indeed, are two wings by which we are protected, lest as we fly according to the bent of our minds we fall victims to birds of prey."⁴³ In a word, the whole Church, as well as every member of it, should yield obedience to the authority of the Scripture.⁴⁴

We come a little more closely to the heart of Luther's teaching concerning the Scripture, when we inquire concerning the relation which he posits between the Word of God and the Holy Spirit.

The common representation of the matter is that Luther affirms that the Spirit never works in a saving manner without the outer Word. And this certainly is clearly expressed in the Schmalcald Articles: "It is firmly to be maintained, that God gives no one His Spirit or grace except through or with the antecedent outer Word, that we should guard ourselves against the fanatics, who boast they have the Spirit without and before the Word, and thus judge the Scripture or the oral Word."⁴⁵ The Spirit comes with and through the Word and goes no further than such Word goes. One metaphor after another is used to show that the Word is merely an instrument used by the Spirit as the causal agent in operating upon the heart: "a wagon," "feet," "bridges," "path," "ladder," "pencil," "pipes," and the like.⁴⁶

⁴² This aspect of the subject is well presented by Thimme, as cited, pp. 647 f., 662 f.

⁴³ WA iv, p. 68, ll. 33 ff. Cf. (*ibid.*, p. 168, ll. 10 f.) the contrast between "*dictis et scriptis Apostolorum*" (though alongside of these we still—1513-1515—find "*et doctorum magnorum*") and "*de proprio capite*."

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, iii, p. 261, ll. 13 ff. (specifically against the *Heretici*): "*Ecclesia . . . captiva in auctoritatem Scripture, non docens nisi verbum dei*."

⁴⁵ EA 25, p. 138. Cf. *ibid.*, 63, pp. 404 f. Seeberg, *op. cit.*, ii, p. 267, n. 2, draws attention to the fact that these formulas present an interesting parallel to those concerning the Lord's Supper, and that in both cases there is a trace of the Scotistic theory of the sacraments. Cf. Grütz-macher, as cited, p. 13: "Luther's Gottesbegriff ist von dem des Duns Scotus abhängig."

⁴⁶ Grütz-macher, as cited, p. 21, n. 1.

But on the other hand,—and herein there is a real contradiction in Luther's statements,—the Spirit is sometimes represented as working upon heart and conscience without the outer Word. This is no more than we should expect to find in his early works, while he was under the influence of various types of mysticism. Though it is true, as Hering reminds us,⁴⁷ that Luther remained "untouched by that feature of mysticism which transfers the Word of God from the Bible into the soul of man," he nevertheless on various occasions came to the brink of spiritualism. From the dangers of this abyss he was saved chiefly by his unusual sense of sin, and the consciousness of his moral inability, or—to mention the cause of these effects—by his thorough acceptance of the teachings of the New Testament, especially of the Epistles of Paul. He has nothing in common, indeed, with the purely naturalistic and pantheistic mystic.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, his views of the Word are tinged by his own "evangelical" mysticism.⁴⁹ There is, for example, the familiar word about "secretly whispering into the soul" the forgiveness of sins.⁵⁰ And even in his later reformatory career he wrote: "No one can rightly understand God nor God's Word, unless he has it from the Holy Spirit without

⁴⁷ As cited, p. 46.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 10 f., 23 f., 43. The author calls attention (p. 11) to an additional trait in Luther's inheritance from the mystics—his doctrine of the value of "quiescence" or "passivity" as a condition of the soul for the reception of the gifts of grace. This again is something quite different from the "Langeweile" of the fanatics, their tedious waiting for a special revelation from God. *Hering, as cited, p. 101, mentions also the willingness—in its morbid developments, though not in itself, a frequent peculiarity of mystics—to endure suffering as a deserved judgment of God.

⁵⁰ EA 37, p. 393 (*anno* 1517). The passages referred to by Scheel, p. 41, namely, WA ix, p. 470, xii, 531, xv, p. 686, seem less to the point. It is to be remembered, too, that even Scheel, who seeks to make the most of the "contradictions" in Luther's views of the Scripture, admits that there is never any question of receiving an unmediated new revelation that is in opposition to the biblical Word; see his remarks, pp. 42, 22 f., 39. So, too, Hering, as cited, p. 27.

means."⁵¹ If any one is hindered by the use of the outer means, he should discard them, resting in the assurance: "So will the true bishop Christ Himself feed you spiritually with the same sacrament."⁵²

But in the main, Luther must be said to have developed his views more and more in the direction of securing the independence—and with this also the necessity—of the outer Word in the whole soteriological work of the Spirit. Köstlin, therefore, is not quite accurate, in saying that Luther (even before 1517) does not raise the question whether God may not also speak through the Holy Spirit directly—without any mediation through the Word—into the hearts of those to whom He may wish to reveal and impart Himself.⁵³ But certainly the drift in Luther's statements is all the other way. Indeed, mention is made of a divine decision which has established as customary the activity of the Spirit through the Word alone. "For God has determined," he says, "that no one shall and can believe or receive the Holy Spirit without the Gospel as it is orally ["mündlich"] preached or taught, as experience with the Jews and heathens proves."⁵⁴ Adopting Augustine's distinction of the inner and the outer Word, Luther at first conceived the inner Word as following the outer, and then, with ever increasing clearness and fulness, emphasized the gracious work of the Spirit as the real cause of the supernatural effects produced through the Word as the instrument of

⁵¹ WA vii, p. 546, ll. 23 f. (*anno*. 1521). Of course, with reference to the original recipients of the divine revelation, the unmediated activity of the Spirit is to be taken as quite common; *cf.* Grützmacher, as cited, p. 10, n. 2, and the passages there given.

⁵² WA vii, p. 295. *Cf.* also *ibid.*, iii, p. 372, ll. 13 ff. on the "ecstatic theology," and p. 124, ll. 13 f. (both from his first Lecture on the Psalms, 1513-1515). And *cf.* Loofs, as cited, p. 723, and p. 701, n. 4, with reference to WA vi, p. 122, ll. 4 ff., on ecstatic knowledge.

⁵³ As cited, ii, p. 65. Preuss, as cited p. 12 agrees with Köstlin; but the statements in Scheel and Grützmacher, though they clearly deal with exceptional utterances on the part of Luther, are not to be altogether ignored.

⁵⁴ EA 45, p. 358.

this activity: "Now that God has let His holy Gospel go forth, He deals with us in two ways; at one time outwardly, at another inwardly. Outwardly, He deals with us through the oral Word of the Gospel and through bodily signs, as, for example, baptism and the sacrament. Inwardly, He deals with us through the Holy Spirit and faith, together with other gifts: but all this in such wise and regulation, that the outer elements ["Stücke"] should and must precede, and the inner ones come after and through the outer; so that He has determined to give the inner element to no one without the outer element."⁵⁵ The Spirit's power is variously related to the (outer) Word, the prepositions used being "in," "with and through," "thereby and thereunder."⁵⁶ It need only be added in this connection, however, that Luther's views are different in two important respects from those of some of his followers of a later day: on the one hand, he never goes the length of asserting that the activity of the Spirit is invariably simultaneous with that of the outer Word; and on the other, he is a stranger to the idea, so strongly expressed by the seventeenth century Lutherans, that the Spirit is continuously immanent and intrinsic in the Word, even *extra usum*.⁵⁷ Having in the main overcome his Neo-Platonic mysticism by the time of his Lectures on Romans (1513-1515),⁵⁸ he was already so thoroughly

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 29, p. 208.

⁵⁶ Cf. Seeberg, as cited, ii, p. 267.

⁵⁷ For the evidence, see Grützmacher, as cited, p. 15, n. 2, and p. 31. Hering, indeed (*op. cit.* p. 45), declares: "Das Grundthema seiner Schriftauslegung: das Wort ist Geist, ist von dem Zusatz begleitet zu denken, dass Geist im Wort ist." But apparently Hering is here referring, correctly enough, to the presence of the Spirit "in" the Word during His life-giving activity ("Tödtung des alten und Lebendigmachung des neuen Menschen") through the Word. Otto, *Die Anschauung vom heiligen Geist bei Luther*, 1898, especially pp. 68 ff., goes quite too far in the opposite direction of representing Luther as teaching that the Word without the Spirit is sufficient for saving purposes. See Walther, *Zur Wertung der deutschen Reformation*, p. 266 f., and Grützmacher, as cited, pp. 43-47, for some needful strictures on Otto's work.

⁵⁸ Ficker, as cited, p. lxxxii (against Loofs, *Leitfaden*, etc., p. 692).

grounded in a sound evangelicalism by the time he came under the influence of the German mysticism (early in 1516⁵⁹), that this latter influence had practically nothing to do with the shaping of his views of the Scriptures. Then with increasing frequency and force he emphasized the person and work of the historic Christ as the highest source of our knowledge of God, and completely surmounted or altogether avoided the dangers of subjectivism by his intensely practical doctrine of the Word, with which the believing soul becomes vitally connected, and likewise of the Scripture which embodies the Word.⁶⁰ The Spirit—this becomes the usual and all but universal mode of representation—works only “in,” “by,” “under,” “with,” “through” the Word; but His power is not intrinsic in the Word as a permanent presence therein, without reference to the use or non-use of the Word; nor does the Spirit’s activity in the employment of the Word always synchronize *eodem momento* with the influence of the outer Word itself upon the believing heart.

But the most important question concerning the relation of the Spirit to the Word is still unanswered: what is the nature of the Spirit’s influence as exerted “in,” “with,” “through,” “under,” or “by” the Word? What does He accomplish by the use of this instrument? In particular, how, by His operation, does the Word become related to the faith of the Christian?

The responses to these and other closely connected questions give us the first hints of our characteristically Protestant doctrine of “the testimony of the Holy Spirit.” No doubt it is to Calvin that the immediate and general acceptance of this principle among the Evangelicals is to be traced,⁶¹ but as it is commonly the case in the field of theological construction that fruitful reflection follows in the wake of religious experience, so here, the virtue and value

⁵⁹ Loofs, *ibid.*, p. 701, n. 2.

⁶⁰ Cf. Loofs, as cited, p. 724, especially n. 1; and Preuss, as cited, p. 65.

⁶¹ Cf. the article by Dr. Warfield already referred to, pp. 310 ff.

of this doctrine were understood and its benefits practically applied—especially in connection with the apologetic defenses of the new Church against Roman Catholicism—long before the implications of the teaching were clearly grasped or satisfactorily systematized. It was inevitable, therefore, that even the first of the Reformers should have occasion to say something concerning the ground of his assurance as an evangelical Christian.

Luther had come to regard the Scriptures as his final authority because in his own experience he had found them true.⁶² Taking their message as a whole—it is significant that the Reformers commonly speak of a *verbum Dei* rather than *verba Dei*—he acquired a conviction, intuitive and final, that God, speaking to him directly from the sacred page, was infallibly revealing to him the one and only way of salvation.⁶³ For him Scripture thus came to rest for its authority, not on human traditions or the declaration of the Church, but on its own self-evidencing power.⁶⁴ The Church,

⁶² Among the earliest proofs are the following: WA iii, p. 397, l. 12 (“*est veritas*”); and *ibid.*, p. 454, ll. 25 f.: “*Ita Scriptura est venter, unde oritur veritas divina et Ecclesia*” (1513-1515). Cf. Köstlin, as cited, ii, pp. 4 ff., *et passim*.

⁶³ Cf. Dörner, as cited, p. 231: “The grand original certainty, on which all other certainly depends is the justification of the sinner for the sake of Christ, appropriated by faith; this is only expressed objectively, when it is said, that in his view Christ as Redeemer is the original certainty, in resignation to whom faith finds perfect satisfaction, and knows that it is standing in the truth. It thus stands fast, that for him the great original certainty which attests all other truths, as it is not the authority of the Church, so also is not the authority of the canon of the Holy Scriptures handed down by the Church. It is rather the *subject-matter of the Word of God*, which, however different may be its forms of expression, is able to attest itself to the hearts of men as the Word of God by itself and its divine power. As Luther himself did not arrive at faith and the assurance of salvation by the direct reading of the Holy Scriptures, nor on account of their authority, he could not assign to the formal authority of the canon the position, that it is first of all to be believed, but it is the *subject-matter* of the Christian evangel, which captivates him, as a lively need for it was awakened in him, and whose self-evidencing power he experiences, after he confidently entrusted himself to it.”

⁶⁴ Augustine’s confession, “*ego vero evangelio non crederem, nisi me*

as we saw at the Leipzig Disputation, cannot give a book—the specific instance was that of II Maccabees⁶⁵—more authority than it has in itself, and even a council “cannot make Scripture out of that which by its nature is not Scripture, just as the Church was not able to make the Gospels, even though it approved the Gospels.” The indefeasible certitude of the Christian as to the divinity of the Word comes from God Himself.⁶⁶ “You must by yourself,” says Luther, “feel Christ Himself in your heart and unshakeably experience that it is God’s Word, though all the world should fight against it.”⁶⁷ And with special reference to John xv: 26 ff., Luther in a sermon on Ascension Day

catholicae ecclesiae commoveret auctoritas,” occasioned Luther a great deal of difficulty. Again and again he wrestles with it; cf. Thimme, as cited, pp. 649 ff. But finally he rejects it, so far at least as its historically correct interpretation is concerned, with the remark (EA 28, p. 340): “Dazu muss St. Augustinus nicht also verstanden werden, als wolt er sonst dem Evangelio nicht gläuben, ihn bewegt denn das Ansehen ganzer Christenheit. Denn das wäre falsch und unchristlich. Es muss ein iglicher allein darumb gläuben, dass es Gottes Wort ist, und dass er inwendig befinde, dass es Wahrheit sei, ob schon ein Engel vom Himmel und alle Welt dawider predigt.” Cf. Köstlin, as cited, i, p. 243 f.; Scheel, as cited, pp. 35 ff. Compare what is said shortly after the above passage (*ibid.*, p. 341): “Und wo dieser Verstand in St. Augustini Spruch nicht ist, da ists besser den Spruch verleugnet; denn er ist wider die Schrift und Geist, und alle Erfahrung, wo er jenen Verstand behält.”

⁶⁵ Cf. Part I, p. 600.

⁶⁶ EA 13², p. 230: “du musst selber beschliessen, es gilt dir deinen Hals, es gilt dir dein Leben. Darumb muss dirs Gott ins Herz sagen: das ist Gottes Wort; sonst ist es ungeschlossen.” Cf. Rabaud, *Histoire de la doctrine de l'inspiration des saintes Écritures*, etc. p. 33: “It [the Bible] is for him truly a religious axiom, a postulate of the faith, and not a dogma or a theory; it is revealed to his believing soul independently of all intellectual activity. Accordingly Luther, trusting in the action of the Holy Spirit as He operates through the Scripture, does not stay to prove its authority, nor to establish it didactically; it imposes itself; a systematic presentation is not necessary. . . . It seemed idle to Luther, one might say, to try to establish by argument what to his eyes was evident. He does not try, then, to prove the authority of the Bible; he affirms it often in burning words, by fits and starts, in vehement passages, but rarely, if ever, proceeds in the way of a formal demonstration.”

⁶⁷ EA 28, p. 298.

speaks at length of the convincing, convicting, enlightening and sanctifying power of the Spirit, whereby the carnal heart comes to the assurance of its acceptance with God.⁶⁸ The Word cannot come into the heart at all except through the activity of the Spirit. If, therefore, it is true, on the one hand, that there can be no faith or grace without the Word, it is equally true, on the other, that these gifts cannot be imparted except through the agency of the Spirit. God allows the Word to go forth openly, that every one may hear it; but that any one should inwardly experience it in the heart, this is the result of faith and is a secret work of Christ.⁶⁹ Where this work is being done, one has knowledge that it is due to a divine influence.⁷⁰ "We should hold fast to that teaching and preaching for which we have both sure Scripture and also experience. These should be two witnesses and, as it were, two touchstones of the true teaching."⁷¹

Doubtless, there is in this coordination or at least correlation of Scripture and experience a renewed danger of subjectivism; but the peril is overcome by the assurance that it is one and the selfsame Spirit who speaks through the Word and who leads the believing heart to the knowledge of the truth. Indeed, the seeming disharmony of these two ideas

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 12², pp. 251 ff.

⁶⁹ WA xii, p. 631. Grützmacher, as cited, pp. 12 f., justly remarks that while Luther does not cancel the outer activity of God by means of the Word, he really secures no adequate explanation for such activity in connection with his doctrine of the witness of the Spirit. Calvin's treatment of the matter is more thorough and satisfactory; see Warfield, as cited, pp. 275 ff.

⁷⁰ EA 11², p. 205; "Du musst wissen und empfinden, dass solches Gott in dir wirke." Cf. Gottschick, as cited, pp. 20 f., for additional references to the sources.

⁷¹ EA 51, p. 103. And compare the noble dictum (WA v, p. 107, ll. 14 ff.): "Experience is necessary for the understanding of the words of God, as we have often said. For they are not simply to be said and known, but also lived and experienced [*"gelebt und empfunden"*]." Cf. Otto, as cited, p. 81 f. Nagel, *Zwingli's Stellung zur Schrift*, pp. 13 ff., emphasizes that for Zwingli, quite as much as for Luther, the religious experience of the truth of the Scriptures was the basal fact determining the view concerning their authority.

is completely removed by the further statement that the Spirit is Himself the giver of the faith by which alone the Scriptures can be apprehended.⁷² We have, therefore, the double postulate underlying Luther's view of the witness of the Spirit: that there is a real objective ground for the divinity and consequent authority of the Scripture in the person and work of the Holy Spirit; and that this same Spirit now dwells in the community of believers—those whom He has Himself regenerated—as their teacher and guide. The Word and faith are correlative but by no means coordinate powers: the Word, by the agency of the Spirit, creates faith as the organ for the reception of the Word; faith thus becoming in turn the condition for the efficacious application by the Spirit of the saving truth of the Gospel.⁷³ It was largely, indeed, by this closeness of the relation

⁷² Gottschick, as cited, p. 20; Grützmacher, as cited, pp. 32 ff. Dr. Warfield, *loc. cit.* pp. 264 f., brings out sharply the fact that with Calvin the doctrine of the testimony of the Spirit is "no isolated doctrine . . . standing out of relation with the other doctrines of his system: it is but one application of his general doctrine of faith; or to be more specific, one application of his general doctrine of the function of the Holy Spirit in the production of faith. Given Calvin's general doctrine of the work of the Holy Spirit in applying salvation, and his specific doctrine of the *testimonium Spiritus Sancti* in the attestation of Scripture, and in the applying of its doctrine as well, was inevitable"; *cf.* pp. 267 ff., 296, 299, and 302. We can scarcely speak of Luther's having any "doctrine" of the Spirit; here, too, Calvin's work was as epoch-making as it was original; but in the case of Luther, too, we may say that the witness of the Spirit was "but one application of his general doctrine of faith."

⁷³ *Cf.* Grützmacher, as cited, pp. 32-34. "Die scheinbare Dissonanz, dass der Geist einmal dem Glauben voranzugehen, ein andermal ihm zu folgen scheint, findet ausser der schon oben angedeuteten Lösung, dass der Geist sich den Glauben als das Organ seiner Aufnahme schafft, noch die andere, dass der Geist, von dem gesagt wird, er gehe dem Glauben voran, ihn meint als denjenigen, der der persönliche Schöpfer des neuen Lebens im Menschen ist, während mit dem Geist der auf den Glauben folgt, mehr die Gnadengaben des h. Geistes gemeint sind" (*ibid.*, p. 34). Compare also the characteristic remark in the Table Talk (EA 58, p. 375): "Wir unterscheiden den Glauben nicht vom Heiligen Geiste, welcher ist die Gewissheit selbs im Wort und nicht ohn das Wort, sondern wird gegeben durchs Wort und ohne dasselbe nicht."

between the Word and the Spirit that Luther overcame his mysticism.⁷⁴ Faith and the promises of the Word belong to one another.⁷⁵ The *donatio fidei* and the *donatio Spiritus* coincide.⁷⁶

The peace and consolation of the Christian are due to the faith begotten by the Spirit and attested by Him. The assurance that belongs to faith at its best is not always perfect: we can still trace Luther's growing comfort in the certainty of his salvation as we follow him through the Lectures on Romans and the immediately succeeding works.⁷⁷ Nevertheless, it is a peculiarity of his conception of the relation of faith to the Word and its content, that he repeatedly emphasizes the immediacy of the union of the subjective feeling and experience with the inner conviction of the objective truth as such, and likewise the immediacy of the union of the certitude in regard to the content of the authenticated Word and that in regard to the divine origin and authoritative character of the Word.⁷⁸ Faith and the Scriptures are not only not disparate elements, but by the efficacious action of the Holy Spirit—and in this connection we are dealing throughout with saving faith only—the two are brought into a vital relation of such sort that each demands the other as a condition for its own proper functioning in the supernatural creation, instruction, and sancti-

⁷⁴ Cf. Harnack, as cited, iii. p. 846, n. 1, and *Loofs, Leitfaden, etc.*,⁴ p. 743.

⁷⁵ Cf. Ficker, as cited, p. 40 (the gloss on Rom. iv:14) and p. 42 (the marginal gloss on Rom. iv: 16).

⁷⁶ Loofs, *ibid.*

⁷⁷ Cf. Ficker, as cited, p. 81 (the gloss on Rom. viii: 38: "*nullus tamen certus est se esse electum lege communi*"), with p. lxxxiv, and with the Commentary on Galatians (1519), WA ii, p. 458, ll. 29 ff.: "*Cave tu, ne aliquando sis incertus, sed certus, quod in teipso perditus; laborandum autem, ut certus et solidus sis in fide Christi pro peccatis tuis traditi. Quomodo potest fieri, ut hanc fidem, si sit in te, non sentias, cum beatus Augustinus asserat, eam certissime videri ab eo qui habet?*" Cf. also the 19th of the 95 Theses of October 31, 1517 (WA i, p. 234).

⁷⁸ Köstlin, as cited, ii, p. 43.

fication of the subject of redemption.⁷⁹ The will of God, the nature of the Word, and the disposition of the soul (as believing and receptive or spiritually blind and dead) must all cooperate in the making and perfecting of the new man in Christ Jesus.⁸⁰

What has now been said about the work of the Holy Spirit in testifying to the subject matter of the Scriptures, and especially in making faith the organ for the reception of His own Word, will help us to understand Luther's statements concerning the relation of the human reason ("Vernunft," "*ratio*") to the divine revelation. It is obvious that he uses these words in two quite different senses: they either signify the power or faculty of the mind by which logical (and therefore valid) inferences are made from accepted data; or else they denote an independent source of knowledge—that is, to be more specific, the carnal or natural mind of man, his whole philosophy conceived as undetermined by the Spirit of God. In the former sense, reason is highly commended: it is not only not arrayed against the Scripture, but is viewed as a necessary faculty for investigating, classifying, and weighing all such biblical facts as do not require the supernatural illumination of the mind for their right understanding; while in the case of the regenerate, these same tasks are performed by the reason, thus divinely qualified, with respect to the whole compass of the biblical truth. This is the sense of the word even in the famous deliverance at the diet of Worms (1521): "It is impossible

⁷⁹ Cf. Dorner, as cited, i, p. 250 ff.

⁸⁰ As for the first of the three factors—the will of God—Grütz-macher, *loc. cit.*, p. 12, following Dieckhoff, *Luthers Lehre in ihrer ersten Gestalt*, p. 183, prefers to speak of the "freedom of the divine will" in the Scotistic sense, and not of predestination, although he admits that many of the passages chosen for comment date from the time when Luther was deeply interested in predestination. On page 30, however, he seems to admit the predestinating activity of God as a cause of the different effects of the Word on believers and unbelievers. Hering, as cited, p. 162, also admits the "strong Augustinism" of the period of the German mysticism, but likewise rejects its application to this question. The statements of both writers seem to be quite inconclusive on this point.

for me to recant unless I am proved to be in the wrong by the testimonies of the Scriptures or by evident reasoning" (*"testimoniis scripturarum aut ratione evidente,"* i.e., by plain scriptural statements or valid deductions from them). Reason thus conceived is a beneficent gift of God for the ordering of our secular affairs; for warning us against gross and noticeably harmful sins—enforced celibacy is included among these, because its results are patent even to the natural man; for formulating precepts in harmony with divine revelation (as, e.g., that God ought to be worshipped); for the refutation of syllogistic errors in the Schoolmen; and, above all, for the proper administration of man's civil or political life.⁸¹ But in the other sense of the word, reason is a principle that is utterly at variance with the doctrine of the testimony of the Spirit. For the natural man cannot discern spiritual things. He cannot know the sacred writings: they are foolishness to him, or else an intolerable offence. Hence Luther's impassioned hostility to Aristotle and the Schoolmen, who, he felt, were misusing reason as a prop for selfrighteousness and the doctrine of human merit, and to the Romanists, fanatics, and the "sacramentarians" of every stamp: they were all, in his judgment, perverting the Scriptures through their reliance on their own wisdom and their rejection of what he considered the plain teachings of the Bible. Irreconcilable, however, as his own practice was with his theory about the use of reason in religion, and utterly unjust, uncharitable, and absurd as were many of his charges against his foes,⁸² his statements in the main

⁸¹ Cf. Preuss, as cited, pp. 15 ff., 30 ff., 35 ff., *et passim*; Köstlin, as cited, i, p. 48 f., 320 f., 377 f.; Romberg, as cited, p. 32; Kropatscheck, as cited, p. 69; Dieckhoff, as cited, pp. 41 ff., Gottschick, as cited, pp. 25 f.

⁸² Cf. Harnack, as cited, iii, p. 869. Berger, *Martin Luther*, i, p. 177, rightly says: "Er hat damit die letzte Konsequenz aus der scholastischen Lehre von der zwiefachen Wahrheit gezogen, indem er die Gebiete der Philosophie und der Theologie, der Vernunftkenntnis und des praktischen Heilswissens einfach gegen einander abschied und damit einer selbständigen Entwicklung beider nach den in ihnen selbst gegebenen Bedingungen die Bahn brach." And compare p. 465. Berger

reveal an insight, as true as it is profound, into the Pauline teachings concerning the noetic effects of sin and the utter inability of fallen man, apart from the regenerative work of the Holy Spirit and His testimony to the truth of the Word, to attain to the knowledge of faith. Even in this respect, too, his very limitations were unquestionably a source of some of his power as a religious leader.

Closely connected with the question as to the function of the reason and its relation to faith is the question as to the mode, psychologically considered, by which the Holy Spirit gives His testimony. Little, however, can be said on this point beyond what we have already indicated as Luther's teaching on the relation of the Spirit to the Word. So far as we have been able to learn, there is no specific treatment of this subject. Luther contents himself with statements concerning the fact of this witness and its characteristic results; and it is only by inference from these statements that we can get some idea of his conception of the mode of this divine testimony. Thus it is plain from even the most casual survey of the many references to the matter, that this work of the Spirit is something quite different from a merely subjective human resolution; it is an assurance wrought in the mind of the believer by the Spirit through the objective Word of God, and this testimony is not to be confounded with the human consciousness, in and through which it is given, and with which, though distinguishable therefrom, it is inseparably united.⁸³ The consciousness of

throughout his suggestive treatment of the Reformer emphasizes the "doublesideness" of Luther's views.

⁸³ Dorner, as cited, p. 238 f.: "His meaning, however, is not, as might be supposed from isolated expressions, that we are simply to resolve or decree by ourselves that we are God's children, and that the assurance of salvation rests only on the strength of the resolution to consider ourselves as God's children. As little as he places this assurance of salvation outside of ourselves in the sure objective word, or the sure sacramental signs of grace, so little does he consider this assurance a merely subjective human work. He rather regards this *subjective* assurance as an effect of the *objective* Spirit, accomplished by means of the objective Gospel, but an effect different from the testi-

the child of God must be conceived as being double at least in this sense, that he becomes keenly aware and absolutely sure that his new spiritual judgments, affections, desires, and purposes—his renewed mind—are not an achievement of his own nature and will, but are due to the efficacious operation of the Holy Spirit. This assurance is something other and more than a mere blind conviction created in the heart of the sinner by the Holy Spirit: rather does the Spirit, operating upon the natural man, secure the grounding of this conviction in the alteration of the functioning of the human faculties when they have been spiritually renovated and sanctified. The conviction is intuitive and immediate, indeed, at least so far as its vital centre is concerned, since it is not due to a process of reasoning and reflection; nevertheless, it is a conviction grounded in the very depths of our new Christian consciousness, whereby we recognize that our new childlike trust in God and devotion to Him and His truth are the results of a divine influence operating at the very centre of our personal life.⁸⁴ On the other hand, however, Luther knows nothing of the fanatic's ecstatic assurance as to the precise moment of time when the Spirit may have entered the heart. What the Reformer professes to be conscious of, is the efficacious working of the indwelling

mony contained in the Gospel, although coinciding with it, for the spirit of the child recognizes itself again in the Gospel. If there were no witness created within us, whereby our self-consciousness is made to bear testimony to our divine childhood, our Ego and the testimony of the Scripture would remain severed, the Scripture would be to us only a law, and we should be without the new consciousness."

⁸⁴ EA 112, p. 99: "Und heisst darumb Geheimniss, dass es geistlich und heimlich ist und wohl bleibt, wo es nicht der Geist offenbaret. Denn obgleich viele sind, die es sehen und hören, so vernehmen sie es doch nicht. Als viel sind jetzt, die Christum predigen und hören, wie er sei für uns gegeben; aber das ist alles noch auf der Zungen und nicht im Herzen; denn sie gläubens selbs nicht, föhlens auch nicht, wie St. Paulus I Corinth. 2 (v:14) spricht: Der natürliche Mensch vernimpt nichts vom Geist Gottes. Darum spricht er hie: Euch ists gegeben; das ist, der Geist gibts euch, dass ihrs nicht allein höret und sehet, sondern auch mit dem Herzen erkennet und gläubet; darum ists euch nicht mehr Geheimniss."

Spirit, as manifested in the fruits of grace, and not the act of His entrance.⁸⁵ Nor does the testimony depend, according to Luther, upon the moral excellence of the preacher of the Gospel: he cannot of himself communicate spiritual gifts; and even if he is godless, he may still be used of the Spirit to bring the true Word home to the heart and conscience of the hearer.⁸⁶ Again and again we are brought back to the basal fact: the Spirit, in a way that we cannot fathom, but in harmony with our rational nature and quite along the lines of our personal consciousness, works in us, through faith as the receptive organ of the soul, the new assurance of our salvation, the comforting and joyous conviction of our personal justification and acceptance with God.

Precisely how much, according to Luther, we are to include in the content of the Spirit's testimony—the objects certified to the believer thereby—is a matter of dispute.⁸⁷ Certainly, what we have just indicated as one of the elements in this witness calls for no further comment; it is so often stated that one might at first even be tempted to think it is the only point covered by this assurance.⁸⁸ But it is clear

⁸⁵ Cf. EA 92, p. 178 f., and Walther, "Das Zeugnis des heiligen Geistes nach Luther und nach moderner Schwärmerei," in his *Zur Wertung der deutschen Reformation*, pp. 274 ff.

⁸⁶ WA iii. p. 256, ll. 18 ff.: "*foris pronunciare potes ex abundantia cordis et spiritus, sed non potes ipsum spiritum effundere foris, neque ipsum infundere ac sic sentificare, sicut tu sentis.*" There is, indeed, a juridical and penal infliction by God upon the Church, when ministers abandon the truth of the Gospel and lead the congregation astray; but the divine sovereignty in the operation of the Spirit is not to be conceived as thereby limited; cf. EA 21, pp. 201 f., and Walther, as cited, pp. 280 ff. Walther gives a further presentation of Luther's views as against "modern fanatics," who teach the necessity of special conventicles ("Gemeinschaften") of the perfectionists, and likewise of the "sudden awakenings" for the securing of an adequate testimony of the Spirit to our sonship.

⁸⁷ The same is true even in the case of Calvin, whose views, however, are far more definite and satisfactory; cf. Warfield, *loc. cit.*, pp. 283 ff.

⁸⁸ Cf. Köstlin, as cited, ii, pp. 10 f., and Romberg, as cited, p. 34, who sums up Luther's view in this characterization of the testimony as "die durch selbsteigene Herzenserfahrung von der Angst der Sünde,

from other passages that the conviction of the forgiveness of sins and acceptance with God does not constitute the whole of the Spirit's testimony. Embraced therein is also the certitude of the objective work of Christ, his essential Deity, and the objective existence of God as revealed through the Son.⁸⁹ Moreover, as has already appeared from some of the citations, the Spirit induces the conviction that the Word conveying the subject matter of the Gospel is not only true and trustworthy but also authoritative for faith because divine in origin and content.⁹⁰ But there is a widespread opinion that Luther, and the early Reformers in general, sought to make the testimony of the Spirit available also for a particular doctrine of inspiration of the Scriptures and likewise for their canonicity and even for their textual purity.⁹¹

von dem Zorne des Gesetzes und von dem Frieden der Erlösung gewirkte Ueberzeugung, dass das, was den Sünder vor Gott rechtfertige und aus dem alten einen neuen Menschen schaffe, ein Wort des schaffenden Gottes sei;" but Romberg wrongly rejects from the scope of the testimony "die Ueberzeugung von der Wahrheit der biblischen Lehre" (*ibid.*).

⁸⁹ Köstlin, *op. cit.*, ii, p. 40.

⁹⁰ Cf. Dörner, as cited, p. 239: "Thus salvation reaches its goal in the independent formation of the new man, who knows of his own salvation and of Christ as Redeemer no longer merely from hearsay, or on the authority of others, nor merely on account of the authority of the Scriptures, nor merely by means of his own judgment, but from his *personal experience*, the result of the objective Holy Spirit and of the saving power of the Word which brings Christ to us, whereby what was preliminarily a trustful and hopeful receiving is made a blessed assurance, an independent knowledge of Christ, His majesty, and His merit. And only now does there take place the *proper attestation* of the Holy Scriptures, of their SUBJECT-MATTER, to our hearts, a divine assurance of the truth of that matter, kindled by God through the illumination of His Spirit, and infinitely higher than a faith in the Scriptures, which is only the acceptance of the ecclesiastical canon, and confidence in the correctness of the decision of the Church regarding the Scriptures."

⁹¹ Cf., *e.g.*, the confused statements on this subject by the late Dr. C. A. Briggs, "Critical Theories of the Sacred Scriptures in Relation to their Inspiration," in *The Presbyterian Review*, July, 1881, pp. 559 ff., together with the criticisms of those views by Dr. John DeWitt, "The Testimony of the Holy Spirit to the Bible," in *The Presbyterian and*

The elucidation of this question calls for an examination of varied lines of evidence. We need to examine in some detail Luther's concrete treatment of individual books of the Bible as well as his ideas of the canonicity, inspiration, and authority of the sacred Scriptures as a whole.

We may perhaps most advantageously begin our consideration of this phase of the subject with a presentation of those facts which most clearly show the differences between him and the medieval Church in the manner of handling the Word of God.

The most obvious statement to make in this connection is that Luther's attitude was determined by his new-found evangelical freedom, the freedom of his Christian faith.⁹² The Humanists had, to be sure, made their own contribution to a better understanding of the Scriptures, and their critical work necessarily influenced the early Reformers in their opposition to the traditions of the Church.⁹³ But the decisive fact, alike for Luther and for his fellow leaders, was that

Reformed Review, January, 1895, pp. 71 ff. Cf. also A. Köhler, "Die Heilige Schrift als Gottes Wort," in *Neue Kirchliche Zeitschrift*, vii (1896), pp. 433 ff., 453 ff.

⁹² Cf. Thimme, *op. cit.*, pp. 645 ff., 665 ff.

⁹³ It is important to remember that Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin—the first, to be sure, the least; the last, the most—were influenced by the historico-critical spirit of the Renaissance. For Zwingli, see Nagel, as cited, pp. 3 ff.; for Calvin, see Warfield, as cited, pp. 245 ff. The significance of the historical and critical spirit in Luther will become evident when we take up his estimates of some of the biblical books; meanwhile, cf. Kunze, as cited, p. 518. Scheel, as cited, pp. 9 ff. gives a general account of the "liberating" influences of the revival of classical and biblical studies under the Humanists, and following Kunze (*ibid.*), shows how not only Erasmus but also Cardinal Cajetan had imbibed freely at this fountain. Reuss, *History of the Sacred Scriptures of the N. T.*, p. 343, limits "their [the Reformers'] independent criticism of existing opinions" to "those doctrines which were closely connected with the fundamental article of Protestantism, justification by faith." This is true, but in determining the limits of their criticism we must be on our guard against all who, like Reuss, unduly depreciate the historico-critical work of the Reformers and try to base their statements concerning the canon on their "religious" subjectivism. Loofs, *Luthers Stellung, etc.*, agrees with Kunze that Luther was indebted to Erasmus for his critical views.

they saw the Word of God in a new light and appraised its treasures at a much higher value than had been the case during the Middle Ages.⁹⁴ Luther's freedom was a freedom in and with the Scriptures and not a freedom from the Scriptures: he knew and felt himself to be a son, not a slave, in the house of revealed truth.⁹⁵

It goes without saying that the freedom of evangelical faith was incompatible with the normative authority of church fathers, ecclesiastical councils, or even papal decretals. This fact, as we have seen, had been settled for Luther by the time of the Leipzig Disputation (1519), and thereafter it was never for a moment considered debatable. The following is one of the clearest statements on this point: "By this [*i.e.*, the apostolic doctrine] you can now judge of all books and teachings, what is Gospel or not. For as to what is not preached or written on this wise, you may freely pass a verdict that it is wrong, no matter how good it seems. All Christians have this power to judge, not the

⁹⁴ "The Word of God, too, became a new thing to him. Revelation could not be merely the communication of so much truth not otherwise attainable, or the illumination of knowledge otherwise obscure. It must be something less abstract and remote, something more direct and personal. It was seen to be the manifestation of God Himself in deeds, institutions, and words of grace, the sight of God coming into personal action in history on our behalf, until in the Incarnation the whole riches of His nature were poured out, and His whole heart unveiled. The scholastic idea of the Bible as a scheme of truth or a code of laws fell away. The servile view of salvation had naturally induced this limited conception of Scripture, and the authority of the Word had been sought mainly outside itself. . . . But the free view of salvation taught Luther to see in the Bible the record of that historical process by which God in His grace had been training men and offering Himself to them. He found in it the Word of God that spoke to every sinner of God's love in Christ, and revealed Him personally. He discovered its authority, therefore, within itself, in its matter and message." (Prof. Salmond, "Martin Luther," in *The Evangelical Succession*, 1882, pp. 279 f.).

⁹⁵ Kunze, *op. cit.*, pp. 500, 503 ("Die Freiheit von allen menschlichen Autoritäten, zu der er sich selbst hindurchgedrungen hatte und nun alle Christen hinführen wollte, war nicht eine Freiheit von der Schrift, sondern eine Freiheit mit der Schrift"—with a reference to EA *Opp. var. arg.* 5, p. 213), 523 f.

pope or councils, who boast, how they alone have power to judge the teaching."⁹⁶ And the classic expression of his conviction in this matter may be found in the address *To the German Nobility*, where he argues at some length for the overthrow of what he calls "the second wall" reared by the Romanists "round themselves" for their protection, namely, "that they alone pretend to be considered masters of the Scriptures . . . saying that the pope cannot err in matters of faith."⁹⁷

But—not to dwell upon this negative consideration—Luther strongly insists that it is both the duty and the privilege of the individual believer to interpret the Word for himself. Only the spiritual man can discern its meaning. And though even for him there may be difficulties of interpretation, the Scriptures are "*satis apertae, quantum oportet pro salute*," however obscure they may be "*pro contemplatricibus animabus*" who wish to go beyond them.⁹⁸ Herein lies the competence of a Christian congregation to "judge all doctrine and call teachers."⁹⁹ Acquaintance with the original tongues of Scripture is useful, but the chief desideratum is knowledge of the contents of the Gospel.¹⁰⁰ And

⁹⁶ EA 51, p. 327. Cf. *ibid.*, 21, p. 288: "aus diesem allen und vielen anderen Spruchen sollen wir muthig und frei werden, und den Geist der Freiheit (wie ihn Paulus nennet 2 Cor. 3, 17.) nit lassen, mit erdichten Worten der Pāpst, abschrecken; sondern frisch hindurch alles, was sie thun or lassen, nach unserm gläubigen Vorstand der Schrift richten, und sie zwingen zu folgen dem bessern, und nit ihrem eigen Vorstand."

⁹⁷ Wace and Buchheim, *First Principles of the Reformation or the Ninety-five Theses and the Three Primary Works of Dr. Martin Luther*, pp. 25 f. Cf. the strong assertion in EA *Opp. var. arg.* 2, p. 391, on the impossibility of preserving the Word of God in its purity, if the pope is to be its supreme interpreter. On the unreliable character, according to Luther, of much traditional exegesis, see the passages in Holzhey, *Die Inspiration der hl. Schrift in der Anschauung des Mittelalters*, pp. 131 ff.

⁹⁸ WA viii, p. 99, ll. 20 ff. Cf. Thimme, as cited, p. 655, and Köstlin, *loc. cit.*, i, p. 379.

⁹⁹ EA 22, pp. 140 ff.

¹⁰⁰ EA *Opp. exeg.*, 4, p. 36.

there is no clearer book in the world than the Bible.¹⁰¹ Scripture is to be compared with Scripture, the obscure with the clear passages, and all to be taken in the light, as we have seen, of the central subject matter, Christ and His gratuitous salvation.¹⁰² Numberless formulas are used to denote "the sum of the Gospel," but they all mean the same thing: the evangelical message is to be interpreted *per analogiam fidei*,¹⁰³ for, as Luther says, "if I know what I believe, then I know what there is in the Scripture, for the Scripture has in it not more than Christ and Christian faith."¹⁰⁴

Closely connected with Luther's conviction concerning the clearness of the Scriptures is his growing opposition to the

¹⁰¹ EA 39, pp. 133 ff. Cf. Köstlin, as cited, and his résumé of Luther's discussion of the "*duplex claritas*" and "*duplex obscuritas scripturae*" in the *De Servo Arbitrio* (EA *Opp. var. arg.*, 7, pp. 127 f.).

¹⁰² Cf. especially WA ii, p. 361, ll. 19 f.: "*Oportet ergo theologum, si nolit errare, universam scripturam ob oculos ponere et contraria contrariis conferre*" (at Leipzig, July 1519); and Enders (as cited, i, p. 419, ll. 158 ff. (to Spalatin, February 1519): "*Vides, quam Evangelii verba se ipsa exponant suasque glossas secum habeant, ut nihil necesse sit aliena et humana misceri*"; and EA 63, p. 156 f. (Preface to James): "Und darinne stimmen alle rechtschaffene heilige Bücher ubereins, dass sie allesamt Christum predigen und treiben." Luther has the substance, if not the form, of the later dogmatic shibboleth against Rome: *Scriptura sacra interpres sui ipsius*. Cf. Grützmacher, *op. cit.*, p. 42, and Ladd, as cited, ii, p. 169. Preuss, as cited, p. 101, justly finds fault with Lommatzsch, *Luthers Lehre vom ethisch-relig. Standpunkt aus*, p. 181 ff., for asserting that this doctrine that Scripture interprets itself virtually destroys the Scripture principle itself. As Preuss shows, the authority of Scripture, rightly understood, includes the other idea that the Bible is an organically constituted revelation, and that as such its parts explain one another. Lommatzsch, like many others guilty of the same injustice to Luther, simply ignores one aspect of the case—the Reformer's dependence on Scripture—in the interest of his "freedom" with respect to Scripture.

¹⁰³ See Seeberg, as cited, ii, pp. 284 f. Cf. Köstlin, *op. cit.*, ii, p. 44, and Thimme, as cited, pp. 673 ff., both of whom instance the "strained use of the analogy in his commentary on Galatians (EA *Gal.* i, 387) in connection with Dan. iv: 27, "*redime peccata tua elemosynis*," which is to be understood "*in Christo et fide ejus*," lest otherwise the giving of alms become a sin.

¹⁰⁴ WA viii, p. 236, ll. 18 ff.

traditional allegorical method of interpreting them. His progress along this line was slow, but the influence of his example was epoch-making. His *Dictata Super Psalmos* (1513-1515) show that at that early date he had learned practically nothing from the philological methods of the Humanists. He is still content with the fourfold senses of the Schoolmen: the literal or historical sense, the tropological or moral sense (still called the primary sense of Scripture¹⁰⁵), the allegorical sense, and the anagogical sense; each of the four having, moreover, its spiritual and its literal or carnal sense.¹⁰⁶ Sometimes he is satisfied with a threefold meaning.¹⁰⁷ But taken as a whole, his allegorical tendencies seldom, if ever, betray him into the grotesque absurdities of some of the medieval victims of this method. For he lays down as a guiding principle that "there is in the Scriptures no valid allegory, tropology, anagogy, unless elsewhere the same meaning is expressly given in the historical sense; otherwise the Scripture would be made a plaything."¹⁰⁸ And early in the course of the year 1517, Luther in a sermon takes occasion to warn his hearers against the "*doctores Scholastici*" who "toy with the literal, allegorical, and tropological senses," but "who know neither what the letter nor the spirit is."¹⁰⁹ In his Commentary on Galatians (1519) there is, in connection with his discussion of chap-

¹⁰⁵ WA iii, p. 531, ll. 33 ff.: "*Cum autem frequenter dixerimus Tropologiam esse primum sensum Scripture, quo habito facile sequitur sua sponte Allegoria et Anagogia et applicationes particulares contingentium: utile est pro clariore intelligentia multorum amplius ista opera dei distinguere.*"

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, iii, p. 11, ll. 13 ff., where Luther gives a rather elaborate paradigm of the various meanings of "*Mons Zion*."

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, and compare Köstlin, as cited, i, p. 43, showing how Luther at that time still finds fault with Nicolas of Lyra for not interpreting Psalms 63 (64) and 111 (112) as directly Messianic, and agrees with Faber Stapulensis in his recently published notations on the Psalms. Hering, *loc. cit.*, p. 163, shows that the influence of mysticism only confirmed Luther in this artificial medieval method of interpreting the Bible. Cf. Loofs, *Leitfaden*, etc.,⁴ p. 692.

¹⁰⁸ WA iii, p. 11, ll. 34 f.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, i, p. 507, ll. 36 ff.

ter iv, verse 24, a virtual rejection of the ancient method,¹¹⁰ and by 1520 the repudiation, at least in principle, is complete.¹¹¹ Finally, in his Reply to Emser (1521), he gives the ground of his new style of exegesis: "The Holy Spirit is the very simplest writer and speaker there is in heaven and earth; therefore His words, too, cannot have more than one most simple sense, which we call the Scriptural or literal or tongue-sense."¹¹² Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that, though Luther more and more restricted the use of the allegorical method,—in his later years, he vindicated for it a place, albeit a constantly diminishing place, in the practical work of the pulpit,—he never altogether emancipated himself from these medieval trammels.¹¹³

His freedom with respect to the Scriptures as reflected in the use of the new exegetical methods led necessarily to some quite trenchant criticisms of the traditional technical terms used in theological literature. But this fact, important as it may be in the history of Christian doctrine, is signifi-

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, ii, p. 550, ll. 20 ff.: "*Nam ista quadriga (etsi non reprobem) non scripturae auctoritate nec patrum usu nec grammatica satis ratione iuvatur.*"

¹¹¹ WA vi, p. 509, ll. 8 ff. (*De Captiv. Babyl.*): "*Est autem meae sententiae ratio magna, imprimis illa, quod verbis divinis non est ulla facienda vis, neque per hominem neque per angelum, sed quantum fieri potest in simplicissima significatione servanda sunt, et nisi manifesta circumstantia cogat, extra grammaticam et propriam accipienda non sunt, ne detur adversariis occasio universam scripturam eludendi.*"

¹¹² WA vii, p. 650, ll. 21 ff.; *ibid.*, p. 652, ll. 24 f., where this sense is also called "*grammaticum, historicum sensum.*" Cf. *ibid.*, p. 710 ll. 38 f. (*Ad Librum eximii Magistri nostri Magistri Ambrosii Catharini . . . responsio [anno 1521]*): "*Non tibi permitto, ut scripturae plures quam unum sensum tribuas.*" And on the whole paragraph, cf. Thimme, as cited, pp. 657 ff.

¹¹³ Harnack, as cited, iii,⁴ p. 867, puts it rather too strongly: "Luther hat im Princip für eine gesunde geschichtliche Exegese die Bahn gebrochen: aber wie viel fehlte noch seinem Jahrhundert und ihm zu der wirklichen Ausführung. Im Einzelnen ist er fast überall noch ein mittelalterlicher Exeget, befangen in allen Vorurtheilen dieser Exegese, in der Typologie und selbst, trotz entgegenwirkender Grundsätze, in der Allegoristik." Cf. Ladd, as cited, ii, p. 640: "Luther both used the allegorical interpretation unwarrantably, and also unwarrantably decried it."

cant for us only as a further indication of the far-reaching influence of his vital grasp on fundamental biblical truth.¹¹⁴

Thus far we have considered Luther's views with reference to the Scriptures as a whole. We take up a supplementary line of evidence, when next we examine his statements in regard to individual books of the canon. His remarks here, too, lack systematic form, but their general import is plain enough.

It is a function of saving faith not only, as we have seen, to interpret and to apply the Word of God, but also to exercise a critical authority with reference to the canon of Scripture.¹¹⁵ In order, therefore, to determine more accurately the relation, according to Luther, of the testimony of the Spirit to such questions as the extent of the canon and the nature of its authority, we need to weigh those characteristic utterances that are commonly called "his free judgments concerning the Scriptures."

The whole Scripture, as we have seen, is called the Word of God, but there are several kinds of differences among the various elements constituting the collection of the sacred writings. The delivery of special revelation itself, requiring, as it did, a long period of time, led to the formation of two fundamental groups of books, those of the Old and those of the New Testament. But in each group there are some books that contain the revelation of truth and grace in richer measure than others, and even in the books that are of the highest spiritual worth there are grades of value among their several parts. God may properly be called the author of the whole and of every part of Scripture, but the discernment of faith is such that the believing reader will necessarily make distinctions among the sacred books themselves, and likewise among their constituent portions.¹¹⁶

Originally, as we have seen,¹¹⁷ the Old Testament, ac-

¹¹⁴ Cf. Harnack, as cited, pp. 858 ff.; Köstlin, as cited, i, p. 388 f.; Loofs, *Leitfaden*, p. 742.

¹¹⁵ Dorner, as cited, i, pp. 241 ff.

¹¹⁶ Köstlin, as cited, ii, pp. 14 ff.

¹¹⁷ Part I, pp. 566 f.

according to the unhistorical method of treating the Bible during the Middle Ages, was virtually equated by Luther with the New. Indeed, he further buttressed this view by his assertion that, whereas in his early convent days he had found the terrors of the Lord in every part of the Bible, and most of all in Paul's teaching on the righteousness of God, so after his conversion to evangelicalism he felt the divine grace streaming into his soul from every page of the sacred volume.¹¹⁸ But with growing spiritual judgment he subsequently laid much emphasis upon the distinction between the Old and the New Testaments.¹¹⁹ The fundamental contrast, indeed, is that between the Law and the Gospel; these two categories are constantly brought into antithetical relations with one another, and yet ever kept in closest connection with one another. The Law demands the performance of its behests; the Gospel is the offer of a free divine gift, in harmony with which, and by virtue of which, only that which is the fruit of faith is acceptable to God. On the other hand, the Gospel actually bestows what the Law requires.¹²⁰ "Therefore," writes Luther, "hold to this distinction, and whatever books come before you, whether the Old or the New Testament, read them with this distinction, that you note [this]: where there are promises, there the book is a gospel-book; where there are commandments, there is a law-book. But because in the New Testament the promises are abundant ["mit Haufen stehen"], and in the Old the laws, we call the one Gospel, the other a law-book."¹²¹ This is not to rob the Old Testament of its due

¹¹⁸ See Preuss, as cited, p. 10.

¹¹⁹ Melancthon said of Luther's early work on Romans and the Psalms (*Corpus Ref.*, vi, p. 160): "*hic monstravit legis et evangelii discrimen, hic refutavit errorem, qui tunc in scholis et concionibus regnabat, qui docet mereri homines remissionem peccatorum propriis operibus.*"

¹²⁰ Cf. Gottschick, "Gesetz und Evangelium," in *Realencyklopädie für prot. Theol. u. Kirche*,³ pp. 636 ff., and Loofs, *Leitfaden, etc.*⁴ pp. 721 ff., 771 ff.

¹²¹ EA 10,² p. 97. Luther also uses the equivalent distinction *lex literalis*, the law of the letter, which makes its characteristic demands

honor; Luther reminds us that originally it was the only sacred Scripture.¹²² "The books of the Old Testament are to be highly esteemed, because they are, as it were, a sort of foundation on which the New Testament leans, and from which certain proofs of the New Testament can be sought. And what, pray, is the New Testament other than a certain open proclamation of the sentences and promises of the Old Testament that have been fulfilled through Christ?"¹²³

Taking the Old Testament by itself, Luther describes its content as threefold. It is first of all a book of laws, "in which we are taught what is to be done and what is not to be done,"—"it has as its chief purpose to propose laws, reveal and convict of sins, and demand also good works of us." Then, too, there are "examples and accounts of the observance and the non-observance of the law." And lastly, "there are certain promises and sayings of Christ interwoven among the laws in the Old Testament."¹²⁴ But while the general principle holds, "*Lex autem spiritualiter intellecta est idem cum Evangelio*,"¹²⁵ nevertheless, "the whole Mosaic law and its promulgation pertained only to the Jewish people; nor are other nations bound by it, nor we ourselves who are called Christians."¹²⁶ Regard must always be paid to the circumstances attending the giving of the commandments to Israel, and judgment must be exercised in ascer-

upon the sinner—demands he cannot meet until he is regenerated—and the *lex moralis or spiritualis* (Rom. vii:14), which is needful even for the Christian to give guidance for his sanctification (WA ii, p. 498, ll. 22 ff.).

¹²² EA 52, p. 29.

¹²³ EA *Opp. var. arg.* 7, p. 76. Cf. Ladd, as cited, ii, p. 163: "We conclude, then, that the unity of the two Testaments, in the opinion of Luther, Melancthon, and Zwingli, is chiefly a unity of the manifestation of grace. This fact led Luther to emphasize the difference between the law and the gospel and also the existence of a true gospel in the Prophets."

¹²⁴ EA *Opp. var. arg.* 7, p. 77 (*Praefatio . . . in vetus Testamentum* [anno 1524]).

¹²⁵ WA iii, p. 96, ll. 26 f. (Gloss on Psalm II (12), anno 1513-1515).

¹²⁶ EA *Opp. var. arg.* 7, p. 96 f. Cf. Köstlin, as cited i, p. 427 f.

taining what pertains to us of today.¹²⁷ A difference is to be made between political and moral laws: the former do not concern us; and even the latter are valid only because they are inscribed on the very nature of man, not because they were given by Moses.¹²⁸ But while the Mosaic law is not binding upon any except the Jews, still, like every other part of the Old Testament, it is worthy of honor as the Word of God, particularly for its promises and assurances concerning the coming Son of God, and for its many excellent examples of faith, prayer, love, and the like.¹²⁹ The promises and assurances concerning Christ are the best part of Moses, and especially of the Psalms and the Prophets.¹³⁰ Though we cannot hear God speak to us in the Old Testament after the manner He uses in the New,¹³¹ nevertheless even ceremonial ordinances, which no longer bind the Christian, are to be traced back directly to God.¹³² In the Pentateuch Genesis is particularly prized as "almost an evangelical book."¹³³ And "the noblest saying and of course the heart of all the Mosaic Books, which the Apostles also highly exalted and strongly used to confirm the Gospel and abrogate the law" is the

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 105 f. "*Hic ergo necesse est nosse discrimen inter ea, quae illi populo aut sanctis in illo coetu facienda fuerunt iuxta suam vocationem, et ea, quae ad nostram vocationem pertinent . . . Deus multi locutus est cum patribus, quae ad nos nihil pertinent.*"

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 101 ff.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 103 ff. Cf. Köstlin, as cited, pp. 16 ff.

¹³⁰ Cf. on the whole paragraph the German original (EA 63, pp. 7 ff., anno 1523) of the Latin translation (amplified) of the Preface to the Old Testament (1524).

¹³¹ EA 47, pp. 356 ff. Cf. Reuss, *History of the Sacred Scriptures of the N.T.*, ii, p. 345: "Yet Luther develops the thought of Jn. i. 17 greatly to the disparagement of Moses (*Deutsche Werke*, Erlangen, xlvii, 357)."

¹³² EA *Opp. exeg.* 6 p. 14: "*tamen est jus scriptum et promulgatum divinitus.*" Luther admits that Moses may have used written sources and adopted religious ceremonies from the early patriarchs and even from neighboring peoples, "*prout Dominus jubebat.*" Cf. EA *Opp. exeg.* 4, p. 259.

¹³³ EA 63, p. 9: "Also hat das erste Buch Mose fast eitel Exempel des Glaubens und Unglaubens, and was Glaube und Unglaube für Früchte tragen und ist fast ein evangelisch Buch." As to its authorship, that is of no material account; EA 57, p. 35.

verse Deut. xviii:15: The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him shall ye hearken."¹³⁴

As to the prophets, their general task is conceived as the announcement of the Gospel in the form of an authoritative interpretation of the law, considered primarily as a preaching of repentance, and in the form of the renewal and extension of the Messianic promises. A prophet, according to Luther, is one "who has his understanding from God without any media ["ohne Mittel"], into whose mouth the Holy Spirit puts the Word."¹³⁵ The merely predictive element as such,¹³⁶ however, is not the highest. The chief purpose is to bring the reader to Christ: for the prophets "one and all continue Moses' office. . . . Therefore, they bring out more clearly what Moses said of Christ. . . . Accordingly the prophets are nothing but administrators and witnesses of Moses and his office, that by means of the law they may bring everyone to Christ."¹³⁷ From this point of view Luther deservedly calls Isaiah "*maxime insignem et summe illuminatum prophetam*,"¹³⁸ and next to him comes Daniel, who not only prophesied concerning Christ, as did the others, but predicted with definiteness and precision the ages preceding the advent of Christ.¹³⁹ But Luther clearly recognizes the human factor in the prophetic writings. Even Isaiah does not "observe order," but confuses matters, and makes it impossible to know whether or not a redactor arranged the

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 20. Cf. EA *Opp. x. arg.* 7, pp. 110 f.: "*Hic liber [i.e. Mosi] in pretio habendus et asservandus est, tanquam totius Scripturae praecipuus, in quo sunt veri fontes omnis doctrinae coelestis, unde et prophetarum et apostolorum largissima flumina suae sapientiae derivarunt.*"

¹³⁵ WA xvi, p. 110, ll. 24 ff. Cf. EA 45, p. 59: "Propheten werden hie ausdrücklich genennet, die das Wort ohne alle Mittel vom Herrn haben."

¹³⁶ EA 8, p. 23: "die lehret, noch bessert den christlichen Glauben nicht. Darumb ist sie fast der geringsten Gaben Gottes eine und zuweilen auch vom Teufel kompt."

¹³⁷ EA 63, pp. 21 f.

¹³⁸ EA *Opp. exeg.* 22, p. 6.

¹³⁹ EA 41, p. 321.

passages as we now have them.¹⁴⁰ Moreover, "without doubt the prophets studied in Moses, and the last prophets in the first, and wrote in a book their good thoughts inspired by the Holy Spirit. . . . But if at times some hay, straw, wood, came to those same good teachers and investigators, and they did not build pure silver, gold and precious stones, still the foundation stands."¹⁴¹ And in prophesying of kings and secular affairs the prophets often missed the mark.¹⁴²

With respect to the Psalms, it is noticeable that in his later years Luther no longer interpreted as directly Messianic many that he had once so construed, though he highly prized the collection as a whole, not only because it offers a unique transcript of Christian experience, but also because in some cases—as in Psalm 110—the author is quite the equal of the Apostles in proclaiming the kingship and priesthood of Christ.¹⁴³ At the same time he questions some of the superscriptions of the Psalms and the order of their arrangement.¹⁴⁴ He judges that Psalm 127 was not composed by David but by Solomon, because it falls below the level of the former's chief theme,—Christ and justification through divine grace.¹⁴⁵ The books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Canticles, attributed to Solomon, evince much practical

¹⁴⁰ EA 63, p. 57. A similar remark is made about Jeremiah (*ibid.*, p. 61) and Hosea (p. 74).

¹⁴¹ Preface to Link's Annotations to the Pentateuch, 1543 (EA 63, p. 379). Köstlin, as cited, ii, p. 21, n., understands these disparaging remarks as applying, not to the prophets as inspired writers, but to them as "investigators" in Moses (and the early prophets). So too Rohnert, *Die Inspiration der heiligen Schrift und ihre Bestreiter*, p. 142. But Loofs, as cited, p. 746, n. 2, follows Thimme, as cited, p. 669, in ascribing the remarks to the prophets as sacred writers. The former seems the more natural interpretation, and what Rohnert says about the irrelevancy of the whole matter to the doctrine of inspiration is valid. Cf. Francis Pieper, "Luther's Doctrine of Inspiration," in *The Presbyterian and Reformed Review*, IV (1893), pp. 261 ff.

¹⁴² EA 8, p. 24.

¹⁴³ EA 40, p. 40. Cf. *ibid.*, 63, pp. 30 ff.

¹⁴⁴ EA *Opp. exeg.* 19, p. 271.

¹⁴⁵ EA *Opp. exeg.* 20, pp. 48 ff.

wisdom, according to Luther, but lack the deep spiritual insight of the best parts of the Old Testament.¹⁴⁶

As for Esther, it deserves no place in the canon, any more than does the apocryphal Second Maccabees, while First Maccabees would be worthy of canonization. Esther lacks the character and content of the true Word of God.¹⁴⁷ On the whole he regarded Kings as more trustworthy than Chronicles.¹⁴⁸ The historical books are to be valued chiefly for their examples and stories.¹⁴⁹ The Apocrypha as a group were embodied in his version of the Old Testament (1534) as an appendix to the canonical Scriptures, with the explanatory caption: "These are books which are not held to be equal to the sacred Scripture but are useful and good to read."

Luther's critical judgments concerning the New Testament books are so familiar that we may content ourselves with a brief summary of the most important of these deliverances. The most salient feature of his discussion of these writings is his strong emphasis on the differences in value existing even among those whose apostolic authorship is unquestioned. John among the Gospels, the Pauline Epistles, especially Romans, and First Peter are particularly commended as the true "kernel and marrow among all the books"; . . . "for in these you do not find much work and miracles of Christ described: but you find portrayed in a quite masterly way, how faith in Christ overcomes sin, death and hell, and gives life, righteousness and salvation,—which is the true nature of the Gospel, as you have heard. For if I ever had to do without one of these, the works or the preaching of Christ, I should sooner do without the

¹⁴⁶ EA 63, pp. 35 ff. Cf. Köstlin, ii, p. 25.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 63, pp. 104, 107. Cf. EA Opp. var, arg. 7, p. 195: "*Esther, quamvis hunc habeant in Canone, dignior omnibus me iudice, qui extra Canonem haberetur.*" And compare (Table Talk) EA 62, 131: "Ich bin dem Buch [i.e., II. Macc.] und Esther so feind, dass ich wollte sie wären gar nicht vorhanden; denn sie judenzen zu sehr, und haben viel heidnische Unart."

¹⁴⁸ EA 62, p. 132 f.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 63, pp. 8 f., 21.

works than without the preaching. For the works do not help me, but his words give the life, as He Himself says (John v:51). Now because John writes little about the work of Christ, but much about his preaching, while the other three Gospels describe many of His works, and little of His words, John's Gospel is the one tender chief Gospel, and to be much preferred to the other three and to be held higher. Thus also St. Paul's and Peter's Epistles greatly excel the three Gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke. In fine, St. John's Gospel, and his First Epistle, St. Paul's Epistles, especially those to the Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, and St. Peter's First Epistle, these are the books that show you Christ, and teach you all that it is necessary and salutary for you to know, though you should never see or hear any other book or teaching. Therefore is St. James' Epistle a right strawy epistle as compared with them, inasmuch as it has no evangelical nature ["kein evangelisch Art an ihr hat"].¹⁵⁰ Acts is favorably introduced in the Preface of 1534 with the remark that Luke here "teach's all Christendom, to the end of the world, the true chief article of Christian doctrine, namely how we must all become righteous only through faith in Jesus Christ, without any addition of the law or help from our work. . . . Therefore, this book might well be called a gloss on the Epistles of St. Paul."¹⁵¹ Second Peter is regarded as a genuine work of the Apostle, but with respect to Ch. iii:9, Luther remarks that this passage "goes a little beneath the apostolic spirit," while verses 15 and 16 might also induce some to believe that the Epistle is not by Peter.¹⁵² First John is called "a truly apos-

¹⁵⁰ From the close of the Preface to the New Testament (EA 63, pp. 114 f., anno 1522), which was omitted in the last edition of 1545. On I Pet. cf. EA 51, p. 327: "Also ist diese Epistel S. Petri auch der edlsten Bücher eins im Neuen Testament, und das rechte lautere Evangelion. Denn er thut auch eben das, das S. Paulus und alle Evangelisten, dass er den rechtschaffenen Glauben lehret, wie Christus uns geschenket sei, der unser Sund hinwegnimpt, und uns selig macht; . . ."

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 116 f. Cf. EA Gal. i, p. 296 ff.

¹⁵² EA 52, p. 271.

toloc epistle" that "should justly follow closely after his Gospel," while Second and Third John are not "doctrinal epistles, but examples of love and faith, and have also a truly apostolic spirit."¹⁵³

Of special importance are the verdicts on the remaining four of the Eusebian Antilegomena,—James, Hebrews, Jude and the Apocalypse. Luther took the first two of these four books out of their customary place in the canon and put them, with Jude, at the close of the series of Epistles, just before the Apocalypse. And in the Preface to Hebrews—the first of the group—he says with reference to this and the other three books: "Up to here we have had the true certain chief books of the New Testament. The four following, however, had in the days of yore a different esteem."¹⁵⁴

We have already seen that in the original general Preface of 1522 the Epistle of James was called "strawy" as compared with the most evangelical of the New Testament books. This particular characterization, it is true, was dropped from the Preface of 1534; but while the criticism of the Epistle is softened, the original low estimate of it is not essentially modified. As early as the Resolutions for the Leipzig Debate he says: "the style of that Epistle is far below the apostolic majesty and not in any way to be compared with Paul's."¹⁵⁵ The next year, in the *De Captivitate Babylonica*, discussing the institution of the sacraments, Luther rejects James' alleged testimony in behalf of extreme unction with the statement that this Epistle is not by the Apostle James and is not worthy of the apostolic spirit.¹⁵⁶ And in the special Preface to James, of 1522, he repeats his judgment—without wishing to prejudice any one's opinion—that it is not an apostolic work, because it "ascribes righteousness to works, directly contrary to St. Paul and all other Scrip-

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 63, pp. 153 ff.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 154.

¹⁵⁵ WA ii, p. 425, ll. 11 f.

¹⁵⁶ WA vi, p. 568, ll. 9 f.

ture," and also because, while professing to teach Christian people, "it never once in such a long teaching mentions the passion, the resurrection, the Spirit of Christ." And then he gives his celebrated criterion for the proper estimating of the biblical books: "And in this all proper sacred books agree, that they one and all preach and deal with Christ ["Christum predigen und treiben"]. And this is the right touchstone to criticize all books, when one sees if they deal with Christ or not, inasmuch as all Scripture manifests Christ, Rom. iii:21, and Paul will know nothing but Christ, I Cor. ii:2. That which does not teach Christ is not apostolic, even if St. Peter or Paul taught it. Again, that which preaches Christ would be apostolic, even if Judas, Annas, Pilate and Herod did it."¹⁵⁷ In his Table Talk Luther is reported as saying that he would put his doctor's cap on any one who could harmonize the teachings of Paul and James, and would let himself be called a fool.¹⁵⁸ Even as late as 1543, he is satisfied that this book was not written by an apostle, and that it is not of the true apostolic stamp throughout, and in harmony with the pure teaching.¹⁵⁹

Hebrews is highly esteemed because of its teaching concerning Christ's priesthood,¹⁶⁰ but is regarded as coming from some one other than Paul; its apostolic origin is doubted.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁷ EA 63, pp. 156 f. Cf. EA 51, 337: "Darumb kann man wohl spüren, dass die Epistel Jakobi kein rechte apostolisch Epistel ist; denn es stehet schier kein Buchstab darinne von diesen Dingen [i.e., the resurrection, ascension, and intercession of Christ]."

¹⁵⁸ EA 62, p. 127. Cf. EA *Opp. exeg.* 5, p. 227: "Igitur male concludit Iacobus, . . . Non autem sequitur, ut Iacobus delirat."

¹⁵⁹ Cf. on the whole paragraph, Walther, "Luthers spätere Ansicht über den Jacobusbrief," in his *Zur Wertung der deutschen Reformation*, pp. 170-173. Reuss, *History of the Sacred Scriptures of the N. T.* ii, p. 346, significantly says: "Luther's prefaces should be sought for, by those who cannot gain access to a genuine ancient Bible, in Walch, vol. xiv., or *Deutsche WW.*, Erlangen, lxiii not in the superficial special editions mutilated by pious societies (e.g. Stuttg. 1841)."

¹⁶⁰ EA 40, p. 139.

¹⁶¹ EA *Opp. exeg.*, II, p. 130; 'auctor epistolae ad Hebraeos, quisquis est, sive Paulus, sive, ut ego arbitror, Apollo'; EA 22, p. 133; *ibid.* 63, pp. 154 ff. Cf. Köstlin, as cited, i, p. 384; ii, pp. 31 f.

Luther was quite certain that the Epistle of Jude is an excerpt from II Peter, and he further doubted the apostolic origin of the document because of the way in which the author (verse 17) refers to the Apostles and because of the allusions to sayings and events mentioned nowhere else in the Bible. Later his judgments were less severe, as he found the Epistle quite useful in his controversy with the Romanists.¹⁶²

In regard to the Apocalypse, too, Luther's judgments became more favorable. In the special Preface of 1522—suppressed in the later editions—he regards the book as non-apostolic, though he wishes each reader to form his own opinion. His main objections to its apostolicity were the fact that Apostles did not “go about with visions”; that no other biblical writers use such threats in regard to the improper treatment of their works; that many of the fathers rejected it; and above all, that his spirit could not accommodate itself to it, since Christ is neither taught nor recognized in it:¹⁶³ it is no better than IV Esdras, and he cannot see that it was ordered by the Holy Spirit. He never had a clear and satisfactory judgment of the book.¹⁶⁴

We see, then, that Luther had no hesitation in criticizing even generally recognized canonical books as containing statements that did not correspond to the highest revelation of God in Christ: Esther is a book that completely lacks such truths; and some sentences in James are incompatible with Paul's basal doctrine of justification by faith. But Luther

¹⁶² EA 63, p. 158. Cf. 52, p. 272, and p. 273: “Sie hat auch nichts Sonderliches in sich; denn dass sie weiset auf die ander Epistel S. Petri, daraus sie nahend alle Wort genommen hat, und ist ganz nicht Anders, denn ein Epistel wider unsere Geistlichen, Bischöffe, Pfaffen und Mönche.” Cf. WA vii, p. 755, ll. 4 ff.: “*Breviter Epistola Iudae, mihi quondam inutilis visa nunc [Ad Librum . . . Catharini . . . responsio (anno 1521)] agnita est e Petri Epistola sumpta, propter solum Papam esse scripta,*” and Kunze's note (*op. cit.* p. 508) on the syntax of this sentence. But in EA *Opp. exeg.* 2, p. 96, Jude is called “*apostolus Judas.*”

¹⁶³ EA 63, pp. 169 f. (anno 1522).

¹⁶⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 158 ff. (Preface of 1545) for his latest views. Cf. Köstlin, as cited, ii, pp. 33 ff.

went even further. Although, so far as we have been able to ascertain, there are no general assertions bearing upon this point, yet in concrete cases he charges the sacred writers with having committed mistakes.¹⁶⁵ We have already instanced the prophets, who at times missed the mark in their predictions concerning secular affairs. True, Luther feels that in Christ all scriptural "contradictions" can be reconciled, but this principle can scarcely be made to apply to statements dealing only in a remote way, or not at all, with the truths of salvation. To be sure, he warns against undue haste in charging the biblical authors with errors.¹⁶⁶ Again, he virtually thrusts the knotty problems aside as being of no practical consequence, while yet admitting error as a possibility. Concerning the difference in the accounts given by John and the Synoptics in regard to the place of Peter's denial, he makes the characteristic statement: "One goes neither to heaven nor to hell, if one supposes that the whole denial took place in the house of Caiaphas. . . . We will not look sharply at such clever questions."¹⁶⁷ Much the same is said about the difference as to the time of the cleansing of the temple.¹⁶⁸ "For in this all the evangelists agree,

¹⁶⁵ Cf. Schenkel, *Das Wesen des Protestantismus*, i, pp. 56 f.; Dieckhoff, *Die Inspiration und Irrthumslosigkeit der heiligen Schrift*, p. 33: "So hat denn auch Luther keinen Grund, annehmen zu müssen, dass durch die Inspiration alles Unsichere und Unrichtige auch in Dingen, die für den Glauben bedeutungslos sind, gänzlich ausgeschlossen sei"; Köstlin, as cited, ii, p. 35: "Mit Bezug auf alle jene Bestandteile aber und gerade auch auf die höchststehenden unter ihnen, muss hier endlich noch die Frage aufgeworfen werden, wie weit in ihnen nach Luther das eigentliche Gebiet dieser Wahrheit und hiemit der aus Gottes Geist fliessenden Wahrheitszeugnisse reiche,—ob nicht vom göttlichen Wahrheitsinhalt immer religiös indifferente Momente, namentliche äussere geschichtliche Angaben zu unterscheiden seien, mit Bezug auf welche dann doch alle jene Organe des göttlichen Geists in ihren Äusserungen irren konnten und geirrt haben. Und diese Frage muss bei Luther bejaht werden. . . ."

¹⁶⁶ EA *Opp. exeg.* 3, p. 71; "*Absurdum autem est imitari audacia ingenia, quae, cum talis difficultas incidit, statim clamant, manifestum errorem commissum, et alienos libros sine pudore emendare audent.*"

¹⁶⁷ EA 50, pp. 308 ff., 325.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 46, pp. 173 ff.

that Christ died for our sins; but of his deeds and miracles they keep no order, for they often put before something that happened later."¹⁶⁹ On occasion, he tries to harmonize divergent statements by ascribing an error to a copyist, but if this and like expedients fail, he regards the matter as something quite negligible alongside of the central gospel truths.¹⁷⁰

Among his most striking statements—though its very boldness is suggestive alike of his dependence upon the Scripture and of his freedom toward the Scripture—is that in his Commentary on the Galatians: "Nevertheless, I would rather believe the one Christ, than be moved by all the passages which they could produce against the doctrine of faith in behalf of establishing the righteousness of works." If such a case should arise, one should say to his opponent: "You urge the servant, *i.e.* the Scripture, and that not entire, nor the better part of it, but only some passages on works. I leave you the servant; I urge the master, who is the king of the Scripture, who has been made for me the merit and the price of righteousness and salvation."¹⁷¹ With this is to be compared the similar paradox: "If the adversaries will have urged the Scripture against Christ, we urge Christ against the Scripture."¹⁷² And in a sermon on Luke

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁰ EA *Opp. exeg.* II, p. 19. No doubt many statements can be found in Luther's writings that seem to preclude his admitting any such thing as an error in the original Scriptures. Cf. Pieper, as cited, especially pp. 256 ff., and Rohnert, as cited, pp. 143 ff. It is evident that many writers, interested in magnifying his alleged "liberal" views forget that most of his radical utterances pertain to books which he felt it necessary to regard as of questionable canonicity; that many of the so-called "errors" in the record are, in his judgment, probably due to transcribers of the text; and that many of the difficulties, so far from being proved "mistakes," are capable of a satisfactory harmonization. See, *e.g.*, the inconclusive citations given by Dr. C. A. Briggs, *The Bible, the Church and the Reason*, pp. 217-219, to prove that Luther was one of those "who find errors in Holy Scripture." To us, however, it seems equally clear that the extreme views of some of the defenders of Luther's doctrine of inspiration are quite untenable. Cf. Seeberg, as cited, II, p. 289, and Scheel, as cited, pp. 43 f., 71 ff.

¹⁷¹ EA *Gal.* I, p. 388.

¹⁷² EA *Opp. var. arg.* 4, p. 381 (Thesis 49 in the series of 71, *De Fide* [anno 1535]).

xxiv: 13 ff., Luther not only represents "Moses, the Psalter, and Isaiah" as the heart of the Old Testament—the later organs of revelation drawing from the earlier ones, and the Apostles themselves being specially taught by Christ to interpret aright the sacred Scriptures—but goes on to say: "So would I take Moses, the Psalter and Isaiah, and also the same Spirit, and really make as good a New Testament as the Apostles wrote:"—an assertion which, however, ought never to be disconnected, as it often has been, from the remaining coordinate clause: "but because we do not have the Spirit so richly and powerfully, we must learn from them and drink from their fountain."¹⁷³

We have now cited quite enough passages to bring out with a fair measure of completeness the doublesidedness of Luther's view of the nature of the Scriptures as the final authority in the Christian religion: on the one hand, his unequivocal equating and identifying of the Scriptures with the Word of God; and, on the other, his relatively free and independent attitude toward some of the canonical books as a whole and even toward some elements in those books which he regarded as standing highest in the entire collection. How are we to estimate these utterances? Are they capable of a harmonious, unitary interpretation? If not, what is the extent of the insuperable divergencies?

The immediate purpose of our somewhat detailed examination of Luther's mode of treating the individual books of the Bible and the canon as a whole was, it may be recalled,¹⁷⁴ to ascertain the bearings of the doctrine of the testimony of the Spirit on the closely related questions of the canonicity, inspiration, and authority of the sacred Scriptures. We may now draw our conclusions from the evidence as cited.

It is plain, for one thing, that Luther does not invoke the

¹⁷³ EA II,² p. 274. It is interesting to learn that the "free" attitude toward the canon of Scripture continued at the Wittenberg University throughout the sixteenth century; see H. Schlosser, *Die Piscatorbibel, ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der deutschen Bibelübersetzung* (1908), p. 16.

¹⁷⁴ See page 524.

testimony of the Spirit to settle the problem as to the extent of the canon. We may not go the length of saying that this influence was altogether negligible for this purpose; but certainly it was not decisive. Herein he was simply taking the path in which all the early Reformers moved. According to their conception of the matter, the Holy Spirit gives the sin-darkened mind a discernment of the divine quality of the revelation contained in the Scriptures, thus authenticating, to the faith which He Himself creates as His organ for the reception of the truth, the heavenly origin and power of the Word of God. Luther, as little as any of his fellow Reformers, grounded the authority of the Bible on the testimony of the Church; but he, like them,—though with less skill and thoroughness than Calvin,—used historical evidence as the decisive factor in determining what books were given to the Church to serve as its authoritative guide. He, like them, based his full conviction and certitude as to the divine origin and contents of the historically given canon upon the witness of the Spirit: but that did not prevent him from employing the only adequate kind of testimony—that of history—to reveal what particular books from the first have had the right to be classed as sacred Scripture. By means of historical evidence—external and internal—Luther rejected II Maccabees from the canon: he based his conclusion largely on the usage of the Jewish Church and on the verdict of Jerome, but also on the content of the book as measured by other portions of Scripture, saying, “The Church cannot give a book more authority or strength than it has in itself.”¹⁷⁵

Nor can there be any doubt as to the criterion by which Luther (in common with the other Reformers) sifted and weighed the historical evidence that was the principal guide in the determination of the extent of the canon: they measured the Scriptures by themselves; the universally acknowledged books served to judge those of doubtful canonicity.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁵ WA ii, p. 324 f.

¹⁷⁶ Cf. Cramer, *De Roomsche-Katholieke en de Oud-protestantsche*

In this connection, however, a question has been raised that requires a passing reference. In his Preface of 1522 to the Epistle of James, Luther, as we have seen, declared: "And this is the true touchstone to criticize all books, if one sees whether they urge Christ [*"Christum treiben"*] or not, since all Scripture shows Christ." The question has been considerably discussed, whether this is primarily and essentially a *historical* or a *religious* criterion. Kunze, in the work to which we have already referred,¹⁷⁷ in a double polemic against Harnack's treatment of the dogmatic issues of the Reformation, seeks to show that for Luther the de-

Schriftbeschouwing, pp. 31 f.: "In the determining of the extent of Scripture, he [Calvin], like Luther, took his departure from those writings which more than the others gave the knowledge of Christ in His kingdom, and at all times had been recognized by the Church as genuine and trustworthy." Cf. Paterson, *The Rule of Faith*, p. 75; Seeberg, *op. cit.*, ii, p. 287; and Dorner, *op. cit.*, i, p. 253: "a canonical writing in contradiction with faith would be also in contradiction with the Scriptures, namely, with other portions of the canon, which have in themselves something which that wants, namely, the power of serving to beget faith and the accordance with what is for faith divinely sure. It is thus evident that *Luther's criticism of the canon by faith becomes properly criticism of the holy Scriptures by themselves*, and is only a measuring of them by themselves through the medium of the believing individual, who does not stand above the Scriptures, but may only declare the actual fact, purify the canon from what is heterogeneous, and restore it to equality with itself, to harmony in the richness of its component parts." Less satisfactory, either as a statement of Luther's view or as an expression of the facts themselves, is, as we shall see, Dorner's next sentence: "Luther thus obtains a *canon in the canon by means of the material principle: The centre of the holy Scriptures, Christ, is the standard of canonicity; corresponding to the self-interpretation of the holy Scriptures is their self-criticism.*" Holzhey, as cited, p. 130, goes quite too far in saying: "Thus in the end he [Luther] without any hesitation could undertake to select out of the totality of Scripture the parts suitable for the establishment of the doctrine of *sola fides*, and exclude the others as unusable, through the triple means of accommodating the scriptural sense and text, revising the canon, and making a classification, going into minutest details, of the still accepted portions of Scripture."

¹⁷⁷ *Glaubensregel, Heilige Schrift und Taufbekenntnis*, 1899; compare the whole concluding chapter, entitled "Gesamtübersicht über die Entwicklung der regula fidei und ihre Ausgänge in der Reformation," pp. 465-548.

cisive factor in his attitude alike to the Apostles' Creed and to the Scriptures,—Kunze virtually confines himself, for the sake of brevity of discussion, to the New Testament,—is his recognition of that which is apostolic, as normative for faith. He claims that Luther's view of the Scripture—we shall look at only this phase of his argument—is uniform and thoroughly self-consistent, and determined by essentially historical considerations;¹⁷⁸ that Luther never placed the Scriptures of whose canonicity he was convinced among the authorities to be repudiated;¹⁷⁹ that for him "Gospel" and "Apostolic" are correlative and mutually supplementary terms;¹⁸⁰ that "the concrete New Testament which the Church has collected, whose compass she has determined, and which Luther in this form had received from the

¹⁷⁸ Kunze, p. 511, acknowledges his indebtedness to Thieme (see the latter's article, "Erkenntnisprinzip, theologisches," in *Realencyk f. prot. Theol. u. Kirche*,³ v, p. 452): "Ich bemerke dabei, das Luthers Massstab 'Christum treiben' ihm in erster Linie ein rein geschichtlicher ist, den er vom geschichtlichen Amt der Apostel, gerade jenen Glauben zu predigen, abstrahiert hat."

¹⁷⁹ Harnack is certainly in error in saying (*Lehrbuch, etc.*, iii,⁴ p. 858): "Aber dennoch liess sich Luther—gerade in der schwersten Zeit, in der er die formelle Autorität des Buchstabens am nöthigsten zu haben schien—selbst durch das Apostolische nicht imponieren und den Mund stopfen." As Kunze conclusively shows, Harnack simply ignores in this statement the distinction which Luther makes between the fact and the size of an accepted canon of authoritative Scripture. And just as obviously Harnack is inaccurate in saying (*ibid.*), "Luther opponierte aber in derselben Zeit, in der er den Kampf gegen die Autorität der Concilien so tapfer führte, auch gegen die Unfehlbarkeit der Schrift. . . ." At least, some sort of distinction must be made between the kind of fallibility Luther ascribed to the fathers, Schoolmen, popes, and councils, and that which in some sense he may be said to have attributed to the historically given canon as such. Scheel, as cited, p. 51, tries to defend this "pointed" word of Harnack; but Scheel misconceives the issue, as is plain from his making Harnack say Luther "protested against the infallible Catholic canon," whereas Harnack really makes Luther attack "the infallible Scripture,"—a charge which is true enough, if it means that Luther attacked the compass of the historically given canon of Scripture, but untrue, if it means that he repudiated the very idea of an authoritative canon. Harnack has a simular ambiguity, i³, p. 8, n. 1.

¹⁸⁰ Cf. Cramer, as cited, p. 22; Pieper, as cited, p. 265.

Catholic Church, is valid only because and in so far as it is the Gospel of the Apostles, by which the Church, the *creatura evangelii*, was once founded"¹⁸¹; that he never so much as tried to free himself from a truly apostolic word; and that whenever he questioned any book of the New Testament, he did so because he held it to be non-apostolic (or not written by an Apostle), and that in every case he sought to ground these judgments on historical, *i.e.*, scientific considerations.¹⁸²

In our judgment Kunze has established his main contention. The criterion as to whether a book "deals with Christ" is capable of a practical application in a concrete case on the one condition that the term "Christ" is interpreted in the light of its historic significance, and this can be done only by the aid of the apostolic documents of the New Testament.¹⁸³ The "religious" implications of this touchstone, therefore, are to be determined in the final analysis by historic science.¹⁸⁴

The claim has, however, been made that the historical criterion was not made the decisive factor by Luther in the case of four of the Eusebian Antilegomena which, as we have seen, he placed in a group by themselves as being of doubtful canonicity, while he unhesitatingly accepted the

¹⁸¹ P. 526.

¹⁸² P. 507. Cf. how Cramer emphasizes the significance of apostolicity for Calvin (*Nieuwe Bijdragen op het Gebied van Godgeleerheid en Wijsbegeerte*, iii, p. 155). Cramer shows that Calvin, like Luther, was in this respect a primitive, not, as Harnack would claim, a medieval Catholic. Kunze (p. 527) not without reason charges Luther's modern critics as being "stuck in the Catholic dogma of Scripture" for not seeing the distinction between the fact and the compass of the scriptural canon, and thus failing to differentiate what Luther abolished and what by means of the "apostolic" he established.

¹⁸³ Cf. Haug. *Die Autorität der hlg. Schrift und die Kritik. Nach der Schrift und den Grundsätzen Luthers dargestellt*, pp. 22 ff.

¹⁸⁴ What Dr. Warfield, *loc. cit.*, p. 285, n. 60, says of the double confusion into which Reuss falls (*History of the Canon of the Holy Scriptures*, Chap. xvi) in representing Calvin as determining the canon solely on the basis of the testimony of the Spirit, applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to the familiar similar misrepresentations of Luther's relation to the canon. Cf. Reuss, as cited, p. 341.

other three—II and III John and II Peter—which many of the ancient Church had placed in the same class with Hebrews, James, Jude and Revelation.¹⁸⁵ The fact is, however, that the internal considerations by which the three were raised to, or rather kept in, canonical rank by Luther, are really of the nature of historical evidence: as for II and III John, they have “a truly apostolic spirit,” a characterization that could not be made unless there were a historically given criterion of what is “apostolic”; and as for II Peter, though here and there it may “fall below the apostolic spirit,” it nevertheless may be apostolic, a consideration which again can be finally determined only by historical evidence.¹⁸⁶ But, it is insisted,¹⁸⁷ that at least in his remarks concerning James and Jude, Luther arrogates to himself a place of supremacy over the Apostles, inasmuch as on one occasion he calls Jude an Apostle,¹⁸⁸ and yet challenges the canonicity of his Epistle, and in his Preface to James makes the striking remark which we have already quoted: “That which does not teach Christ is not apostolic,

¹⁸⁵ Cf. Köstlin, as cited, i, pp. 386 f.; Loofs, *Leitfaden*, etc.,⁴ pp. 745, 747; and especially Scheel, *loc. cit.*, pp. 48 f. Scheel is hardly fair in saying that in this case Luther “takes no notice whatever of the fact that they were debatable, [that] their apostolicity was not certain.” Köstlin is more accurate: he refers to Luther’s statement, put at the very head of the Preface to the Hebrews, the first of the four books introduced to the reader: “These four following ones, however, were in ancient times held in a different esteem.”

¹⁸⁶ On the limits of this historical criticism, cf. Dorner, as cited, p. 257: “The question especially remains, however, still undisposed of: whether, if criticism may without limitation doubt all the holy Scriptures, the significance of the holy Scriptures for the origin and maintenance of faith is not again placed in question, so that it cannot form an integrally constitutive factor for the life of faith itself? This and similar points could only come to be disposed of through the formation of a scientific criticism, inasmuch as it must thus be made evident that there are inner laws and limits by which historical criticism is bound, as it could not itself any longer subsist without historical sources.”

¹⁸⁷ Scheel, as cited, p. 49.

¹⁸⁸ See note 162. Kunze, as Scheel (*ibid.*) reminds us, conveniently ignores this fact.

even if St. Peter or Paul taught it.”¹⁸⁹ The facts may be freely acknowledged without seriously invalidating the argument as a whole. As regards the Epistle of Jude, Luther seems to have wavered between accepting and rejecting its apostolicity and therefore its canonicity—a thing by no means unintelligible or surprising, when one thinks of the difficulties of his position as a pioneer biblical critic. And as regards the rejecting of even a Pauline writing as a possibly non-apostolic document, the hypothetical nature of the assertion and the whole drift of his argument in regard to the supreme normative authority of the unquestioned apostolic books should put us on our guard against allowing undue weight to an occasional ill-conceived and altogether exceptional sentence.¹⁹⁰

This will become the more apparent, when, finally, we ascertain Luther’s views of the inspiration of the Scriptures.

Here again we must take account of the fact that he has given us no systematic or comprehensive treatment of our general theme. And in particular, though, as we shall see, he constantly presupposes and often explicitly teaches the inspiration of the (canonical) Scriptures, he nowhere reflects on the mode or manner of their inspiration.¹⁹¹ Moreover, so far as we have been able to learn, there is no

¹⁸⁹ EA 63, p. 157. Scheel, *ibid.*, p. 51, claims that Kunze must deprive these statements of their value.

¹⁹⁰ Cf. Kunze, pp. 523 ff., and Pieper as cited, p. 266 (263), who pointedly refers to an equally bold declaration on the opposite side of the question, dating from about the same time (*De Captiv. Bab.*, EA *Opp. var. arg.* 5, p. 27): “*Absit, absit, ut ullus apex in toto Paulo sit, quem non debeat imitari et servare tota universalis ecclesia.*”

¹⁹¹ Cf. Gennrich, as cited, pp. 6 and 8; Holzhey, *op. cit.*, p. 129; Dieckhoff, *Die Inspiration der heiligen Schrift*, p. 38 (“Eine bestimmtere Definition der Art der Inspiration, des Verhältnisses zwischen dem inspirirenden Wirken des H. Geistes und der Gottesthätigkeit der h. Schriftsteller findet sich bei ihm nicht.”); Köstlin, *op. cit.*, ii, p. 15 (“Auf eine nähere Erörterung der Idee der Schriftinspiration überhaupt und ihres Verhältnisses theils zum allgemeinen, natürlichen menschlichen Vorstellen und Denken, theils auch zu den allgemeinen Wirkungen des göttlichen Geists in den von ihm durchdrungenen Subjekten abgesehen von jenem Schrifttum hat Luther nie, so weit wir wissen, sich eingelassen.”).

mention of a graphic inspiration as distinguished from the spiritual illumination of the men who were divinely influenced as the organs and heralds of special revelation.¹⁹² Nor does he include scriptural inspiration among the objects certified by the testimony of the Holy Spirit to the Christian believer,¹⁹³ but rightly limits the work of the Spirit in this function to the authentication of the divine origin, contents, and power of the Word of God, whereupon faith by a process of inferential reasoning ascribes a divine inspiration first of all to the Word itself, and then to the Scripture as the record of the Word.¹⁹⁴

But the fact itself, we repeat, is for Luther beyond all dispute: the canonical Scriptures are divinely inspired. God is Himself "*divinorum verborum magister*," because He is "*verbi sui auctor*."¹⁹⁵ For Luther "*Scriptura loquitur*" is synonymous with "*Deus loquitur*."¹⁹⁶ The whole Scripture is produced by the highest divine causality as the work of the Holy Spirit.¹⁹⁷ A few of his more striking statements may be

¹⁹² Cf. Köstlin, *ibid.*, p. 36. The difference between the inspired witnesses to the revealed truth of God considered as oral preachers and as sacred writers was not apologetically exploited by Luther as it was by his successors alike in the Lutheran and the Reformed Churches. It is for this reason that we feel compelled to take a mediating position in regard to his views concerning an "errorless" Bible: his oft-repeated statement that Scripture cannot err does not harmonize with what he says concerning the imperfections and the fallibility of the men who *spoke* as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. Cf. note 170.

¹⁹³ Cf. A. Kuyper, *Encyclopedia of Sacred Theology: Its Principles*, E. T. by H. DeVries (1898), p. 561: "By itself it [the witness of the Spirit] tends no further than to bear spiritual testimony to our personal, regenerated ego concerning the Divine character of everything the Holy Scripture teaches and reveals; and without more, the truth, for instance, of *graphic inspiration* can never be derived from it."

¹⁹⁴ Cf. Dorner, as cited, i, p. 254.

¹⁹⁵ Enders, as cited, i, p. 142 (letter to Spalatin, Jan. 18, 1518). Cf. Cramer, *De Roomsche-Katholieke en de Oud-prot. Schriftbeschouwing*, p. 19.

¹⁹⁶ Preuss, as cited, p. 14, with references to WA iii, p. 315, ll. 16 f., pp. 41, 64, 68, 89, 102; iv, p. 642, ll. 27 f.

¹⁹⁷ Rudelbach, "Die Lehre von der Inspiration der heiligen Schrift, mit Berücksichtigung der neuesten Untersuchungen darüber, . . ." in *Zeitschrift für die gesamte Lutherische Theologie und Kirche*, I Jahrg., 1840, Zweites Quartalheft, p. 5. Cf. Schenkel, as cited, i, p. 52.

given as specimens of his habitual method of viewing the Scriptures.¹⁹⁸ His well known insistence upon the literal meaning of the verb "*est*" in the words of the institution of the Lord's Supper will afford any unprejudiced observer a sufficient proof that he held a theory of the inspiration of the Bible that extended to the *ipsissima verba*.¹⁹⁹ The Scripture is God's witness of Himself.²⁰⁰ "Here stand text and Scripture," he says on another occasion, "they do not thus suffer themselves to be thrown over by any conceits of men."²⁰¹ Again, "Holy Scripture is spoken through the Holy Ghost, according to the declaration of David, 'The Spirit of the Lord spake through me.' Likewise, He speaks through all the prophets."²⁰² Luther calls Scripture, in distinction from all other writings, "the Holy Ghost's book."²⁰³ The Scriptures are the letters of God, that ought to be read over and over again, just as one would read the letters of a prince three or four times.²⁰⁴ Not only the New Testament, but the Old as well, is given by inspiration of

¹⁹⁸ We avail ourselves in what immediately follows of some of the many passages referred to by Scheel (*op. cit.*, pp. 56 ff.) for the purpose of proving Luther's "reactionary" dependence on the Scriptures; likewise of the excellent article, already referred to, by Pieper, and the work of Rohnert, already cited, both of whom worthily commend Luther for the very things for which so many modern historians of doctrine blame him.

¹⁹⁹ "Verbal inspiration," it need scarcely be remarked, need not be identified with that "mechanical" view of the process which destroys or ignores the personal peculiarities of the inspired writers. As regards the reference to the words of the institution of the Supper, Thimme (as cited, p. 670) and Gennrich (as cited, p. 8),—the latter of whom, however, denies "verbal" inspiration to Luther,—claim that his insistence on a literal rendering of the verb "*est*" was due to his conviction that here the Lord Himself speaks, and that the sentence gives His summary of all saving truth. Cf. Köstlin, as cited, ii, p. 282. But as Scheel (*op. cit.*, p. 60) says, the characteristic thing is the manner, not the fact, of emphasizing the "*est*"; cf. EA 30, p. 307.

²⁰⁰ EA 23, p. 279.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 278.

²⁰² EA 37, p. 17; cf. p. 31.

²⁰³ EA 52, p. 305, and p. 321.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 341.

God, including those passages that are of a more trivial character.²⁰⁵ "Not even one letter in holy Scripture stands in vain."²⁰⁶ Scripture cannot err; it does not lie.²⁰⁷ Luther often labors to harmonize Scripture and science, Scripture and history.²⁰⁸ The Holy Spirit is not at variance with Himself.²⁰⁹ "We must let the Prophets and Apostles sit in their seats of instruction, and we must hear at their feet, and not say what they must hear."²¹⁰ And Luther grounds their normative authority in a "sure decree," by which they are specially set apart to be infallible teachers: "For we are not all Apostles, who by a sure decree are sent to us as infallible teachers. Therefore they cannot err and waver in the faith, but we, because we have no such decree, can."²¹¹

These are but types of a large number of statements to be found in Luther. They prove in the main the four propositions that Rohnert advances and defends in regard to Luther's teaching concerning inspiration: (1) "the real author of the Scripture is God (or the Holy Spirit), and the biblical writers are His instruments"; (2) "from the Spirit these biblical writers received both the impulse to write and also that which they were to write, and that according to content as well as form"; (3) "the Scripture is therefore God's trustworthy Word, and that not merely in the chief things, but also in incidentals, and is free from all mistakes, contradictions, and defects"; (4) "as God's Word the Bible claims divine authority; it is the fountain of knowledge, and the ground, rule, and norm of faith, and a means of salvation."²¹²

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 34, pp. 259 f.

²⁰⁶ *Sämmtliche Schiften*, St. Louis ed., x, p. 1018.

²⁰⁷ EA 28, p. 33; *Opp. exeg.*, 3, p. 60.

²⁰⁸ Cf. Romberg, as cited, p. 27, and Scheel, as cited, p. 64; Pieper as cited, pp. 257 f.; Rohnert, as cited, p. 149.

²⁰⁹ EA 37, p. 57.

²¹⁰ EA 63, p. 402.

²¹¹ EA *Opp. var. arg.*, 4, p. 382. Scheel admits that the passage virtually grounds the normative authority of the Apostles in their inspiration; cf. Kunze, as cited, p. 525.

²¹² As cited, pp. 143 ff. These propositions can be maintained with a

There can be little doubt that Luther simply took over the idea of the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures from the medieval theology.²¹³ The common view in the declining days of Scholasticism was that the Scriptures were "dictated" by the Holy Spirit,²¹⁴ and Luther himself applies to the "tongue of the preacher" the figure of "the pencil of a good Writer."²¹⁵ Kunze, indeed, feels called upon to deny Harnack's contention in regard to Luther's acceptance of the traditional view.²¹⁶ But the fact is that there was

fair show of proof, and undoubtedly they reflect the general tenor of Luther's remarks on this subject—his habitual attitude toward the Bible. But they do not express the whole truth. Luther is inconsistent with himself, especially so far as the third of Rohnert's theses is concerned. But Schenkel (as cited, i, p. 58) is wrong in claiming that, with Luther the inspiration of the Scriptures extends only to their "purely theologically content."

²¹³ So Harnack, as cited, iii,⁴ p. 868; but we cannot accept his assertion that Luther took the idea "untested." The Reformer's confession, e.g., in regard to the troublesome eucharistic text, "aber ich bin gefangen, kann nicht heraus, der Text ist zu gewaltig" (*Werke*, ed. Walch, xv, p. 2448, as quoted in Rohnert, *op. cit.*, p. 146), shows that he was "testing" the view with all his might and skill. On the main point, cf. also Loofs, *Leitfaden*, etc.,⁴ pp. 741, 747; Scheel, as cited, p. 65; Seeberg, as cited, ii, p. 286 (but compare p. 289).

²¹⁴ Cf. Seeberg, *op. cit.*, ii, pp. 176 ff. For example, Biel (*ibid.*, p. 177) says: "*scriptura autem canonica, utrumque videl. testamentum spiritu sancto dictante et inspirante scripta creditur.*" And see the passages in Holzhey, as cited, pp. 94 ff. The term "dictation" was probably used, as Dr. Warfield suggests (*op. cit.*, p. 255), in a figurative way "to express rather the effects than the mode of inspiration." Certainly, there is no suggestion of the suspension of the personal activity of the author or of his being reduced to the function of a mere piece of mechanism.

²¹⁵ EA 57, p. 39, where the figure is applied to himself as a preacher but also to "the prophets and men of God." For Calvin, cf. Warfield, as cited, pp. 254 ff. Gennrich, *op. cit.*, p. 8, denies that Luther's view is that of verbal inspiration, and says that this was a creation of the later dogmatists. But certainly the outlines of the doctrine are present in Luther.

²¹⁶ As cited, p. 497. But after all, he is constrained to admit 'Nachwirkungen jener Lehre' (p. 504, n. 1), though he gives no specific references. Scheel (p. 65) rightly criticizes the tucking away of this sort of admission into a footnote, and regards it as designed "to cover uncertainties in his own position."

practically no question of the inspiration and infallibility of the Scriptures in the early days of the Reformation.²¹⁷ Luther accepted this view, and though it was not this particular theory as to the origin of the divine power of Scripture, but rather his experience of that power itself, that was the decisive factor in his religious life and his reformatory career, his masterful defence of the special office and function of the Apostles in the establishment of Christianity largely contributed to the maintenance and development of the historic teaching of the Church concerning the divine origin, the complete trustworthiness, and the normative authority of the sacred Scriptures.

We cannot say that his solution of the problem is altogether satisfactory.²¹⁸ His remarks often lack thorough con-

²¹⁷ Cf. Köstlin, as cited, i, p. 244, and Cremer, *Realencyk. f. prot. Theol. u. Kirche*,³ ix, p. 190: "Never since the time of the Apostles had such great use been made of holy Scripture, never yet had its authority been so decisively and thoroughly established, never yet had its divine power been so mightily experienced, as now [in the days of the Reformation]. But the less was there any reflection on the way Scripture came to be. It was enough that it was here. No one thought of disputing its authority. There was controversy as to the application only. This explains why among the Reformers themselves and among their contemporaries, and in the time immediately following the Reformation, we find precisely the hitherto existing conception of inspiration without any further discussion of the relation of the two factors that work together in the making of holy Scripture, and without any definition of the extent to which inspiration attaches to the Scripture." This last clause, as we have seen, requires some restriction. Nor is Cremer's next sentence accurate: "Without definition of the extent,—for on the one hand, holy Scripture for Luther is a book, in which 'more than heaven and earth pertains to one letter, yea, to a single title,' while on the other hand he can speak of hay, straw and stubble, which entered in among the prophets' own good thoughts, [and] of an inadequate proof of the Apostle Paul, Gal. iv, pp. 21 ff. ('too weak for proof' ['zum Stich zu schwach'])." Cremer is here evidently following the beaten—and the wrong—path in the interpretation of these two remarks of Luther; see Pieper, *op. cit.*, pp. 261-263, especially the note on the last page.

²¹⁸ Romberg, as cited, p. 19, claims that Luther's views are unified, not, indeed, in a way that is scientifically wrought out, but rather by a sort of intuitive overcoming of the contrasts of the understanding ("diese blossen Verstandesgegensätze"). But it is hard to know just

sistency. This is especially the case as regards the relation of the Spirit to the Word, the identity of the Word and the Scripture, and the finality and permanent authority of the Old Testament, while many of the assertions pertaining to the testimony of the Spirit and the inspiration of the Scriptures are so indefinite and ambiguous that both orthodox confessionalists and out-and-out rationalists have had some show of propriety in appealing to him for support. We deem it impossible to gather up his views into a harmonious and unitary system. But neither, in our judgment, do the divergencies in his statements concerning our theme amount to the "flagrant contradictions" which Harnack and Scheel attribute to him. We are content to let the different lines of thought keep their native hues, and feel no need of softening some of the more vivid colors in the hope of securing a dull monotone that might be safely commended as a fair blend of his views in their totality. His exaggerations and extravagances, no less than the fragmentary and hazy character of some of his discussions, must be freely admitted. But, on the other hand, it must be acknowledged that Luther deeply experienced the grace of God revealed to him in the Christ of the sacred Scriptures, and in his bold attack upon all the other traditional authorities of the Church, he by means of the Gospel that had made him free won the battle of evangelical liberty for his generation and for the modern world. He has taught us, as Kunze well says,²¹⁹ that "the Church can get beyond the Christianity of any preceding generation, even that of the first; but it can get beyond the apostolic Gospel as little as it can get beyond itself." However unsatisfactory some of the details of his treatment may be, Luther saw with hawk-like clearness the main point in the solution of the problem of authority in the Christian religion: the inspired Scriptures carry themselves;

what Romberg means by this statement. Is it after all only another form of Scheel's verdict (*op. cit.*, p. 76), "Fast möchte man das Paradoxon auszusprechen wagen, das in den Widersprüchen die Einheitlichkeit zu erblicken sei"?

²¹⁹ P. 534.

they do not depend for their power on the testimony of the Church or any human authority, but only on the witness of the Holy Spirit who creates in the believing heart the conviction of their divine origin and contents; and in determining the compass of the canon, the Church of every age may, and indeed must, employ its best critical skill to ascertain what books the authoritative leaders of the primitive Church—the Apostles—themselves wrote or sanctioned to be the supreme and exclusive rule of faith and life.²²⁰ The authority of Scripture is in the final analysis the authority of Christ to whom the whole Scripture as an organic body of revealed truth bears testimony; but it is only through the inspired Apostles that we can know Christ as Luther knew and proclaimed Him in the great evangelical revival of the sixteenth century.

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²²⁰ Cf. Haug, as cited, pp. 25 ff., with special reference to the inadequacy of the anti-historical treatment of the problem by the Ritschlian school of theologians.