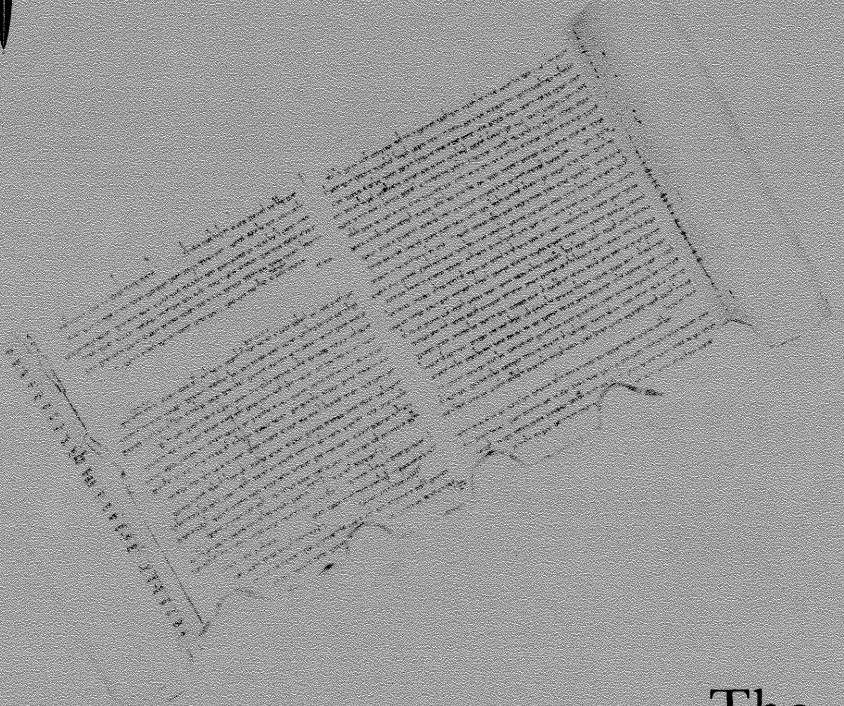


Volume VII, No. 4
August, 1967



The
Lutheran
Synod
Quarterly

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LUTHERAN SYNOD QUARTERLY

Theological Journal of the
Evangelical Lutheran Synod

Edited by the Theological Faculty of
Bethany Lutheran Seminary,
Mankato, Minnesota

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Bethany Lutheran Seminary
734 Marsh St.,
Mankato, Minn. 56001

Subscription price \$3.00 per annum payable to:

LUTHERAN SYNOD QUARTERLY
Bethany Lutheran Seminary
734 Marsh Street,
Mankato, Minnesota 56001

THE SCRIPTURE CANNOT BE BROKEN

By Vernon H. Harley

This essay begins with an assertion--The Scripture cannot be broken. You recognize this assertion as a statement attributed to Christ in Scripture in John 10:35. It was the request of your Program Committee that the essayist present an "exegetical-historical" exposition of our Savior's words in this passage. The request also included dealing with the doctrine of verbal inspiration and false methods of hermeneutics. This is a big assignment, but we believe the assertion of Christ covers the subject. Therefore we make it our own and the topic of this essay.

Our topic is a timely one. As we celebrate the 450 anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation we quite naturally focus our attention again on the sola scriptura principle which is the formal foundation of Luther's and Lutheran theology. This principle with its concomitants--verbal inspiration, inerrancy, unity, and authority of Scripture, Scripture as the revelation and word of God--are very much in the center of modern theological discussion. The question is: does the foundation still stand? This is what much of the debate in modern Biblical theology and hermeneutics is all about. Our assertion is that the foundation does stand, that it cannot be broken.

It is, of course, not enough to make assertions. They must be examined and substantiated. This we shall do under five major questions: 1) Is

the assertion relevant? 2) Is the assertion Scriptural? 3) Is the assertion tenable? 4) Is the assertion Lutheran? and 5) Is the assertion practical?

IS THE ASSERTION RELEVANT?

"Churches in Ferment: Doctrines on Line in Theology 'War'" is the title of a lengthy article by AP Religion Writer, George W. Cornell, appearing in the March 3, 1967 Corpus Christi Caller. This article pointed to the Vatican department's complaint which was circulated to all national episcopates that "'dangerous opinions' are abroad in the church, downgrading papal authority." A Presbyterian group charged official moves were undermining the Bible and humanizing it. Versions of this war, the article stated, have sprung up across the ecclesiastical scene. We need not be reminded that the theological war is also being carried on in Lutheranism with some devastating results.

Nevertheless, for some the whole theological debate still appears to be academic and of little practical importance. Particularly in as much as it has to do with hermeneutics and new Biblical theology, the statement is often made that it is all a matter of semantics, of saying the same thing with different words. Hermeneutics, as usually understood by us to be that theological discipline which deals with the rules of Biblical interpretation, takes the sola scriptura principle for granted. Thus we might believe that the current heremeneutical debate is concerned with complex problems of interpreting difficult texts, problems which always were troublesome. Why not leave this to the experts in the fields of exegesis and hermeneutics?

It may come as a surprise to some to hear that

the questions being asked in current theology, particularly also in the hermeneutical discussion, are epistemological in nature. They are of this type: What are the sources of Christian knowledge and faith? What place does the Bible have in relation to faith? What meaning has the Biblical language, or any language for existential self-understanding?

How this affects Lutheran theology, particularly the Scripture principle, will first be appreciated when we realize that both in its history and present form the modern revolution in theology is a reaction against verbal inspiration and the authority of Scripture implied by it. Orthodox theology of the 16th century is blamed for this doctrine, and the new approach a priori rejects any idea of a verbally inspired and hence divinely authoritative Bible.

Verbal inspiration, according to orthodox theology, has been defined as that process by which God the Holy Ghost gave His Word to men, inbreathing into certain holy men whom He called to be the writers of His holy Book, so that all Scripture is His inspired Word, without error and divinely authoritative as the absolute norm for faith and the only source of Christian doctrine.¹ This is the sola scriptura principle. But it is precisely this doctrine of verbal inspiration that modern theology rebels against. Dr. Robert W. Funk summarizes the historical development of this theology in this way:

Biblical theology began by having to challenge the very basis on which it rested, viz, the orthodox doctrine of verbal inspiration. The challenge was necessitated by the desire to break effective control of dogmatics over the interpretation of Scripture and thus to establish Biblical theology as a historical discipline. Having

abandoned its fundamental connection to dogmatics, it could now pursue its own course independently as Biblical criticism. Nevertheless, that course was determined with no small measure by its repeated need to justify itself by producing new and more devastating criticism of the orthodox view.²

In tracing this history further, Funk points out that "Biblical criticism has remained true to its initial thrust"³ and that "in the struggle against the doctrine of verbal inspiration of Scripture the question of the function of Scripture got misplaced and then lost in the equally dogmatic proposition that the past can have no normative function for the present."⁴ Prior to Barth, it was Wilhelm Dilthey who relativized traditional hermeneutics from rules of interpretation to a deeper role of understanding.⁵ When Barth and Bultmann arrived on the scene, they reopened the question of the function of Scripture, taking up the new meaning of hermeneutic and the question: How is understanding possible? In the ensuing debate from Barth to Bultmann to the Post-Bultmannians the matter of hermeneutics turned more and more to the matter of existential understanding of one's self. The difference between subject and object, between the Biblical text and the interpreter, was relativized and blurred until the text is actually no more really the object but serves only as an aid, among many others, to the existential interpretation of the hearer. James M. Robinson states:

The question with regard to the subject is not simply whether he can eliminate his subjectivity as a source of prejudice, but whether he "understands himself aright," i.e., whether he is grappling with what is "serious", or as we might say today, whether

he is asking the right questions, whether his concern is with the ultimate.⁶

This means that the interpreter is entitled to strip away everything from the text that he does not consider to be serious. "His own subjectivity provides access to the subject matter of the text, if it is really that subject matter, serious both then and now, ... (and) insures that the phenomena with which the text was grappling--if it is a serious text--are not overlooked or distorted into curiosities."⁷ Robinson continues:

Thus the flow of the traditional relation between subject and object, in which the subject interrogates the object, and, if he masters it, obtains from it his answer, has been significantly reversed. For it is now the object--which should henceforth be called the subject matter--that puts the subject in question. This is true not simply at the formal level, in inquiring as to whether he understands himself aright, i.e., is serious, but also at the material level, in inquiring as to whether the text's answers illumine him.⁸

If you understand this, you begin to see vaguely at least what is behind Barth's "Scripture becoming the Word of God," Bultmann's "demythologizing," Gerhard Ebeling's "Word-event", Ernst Fuchs' "language-event," and the statement "You're not asking the right questions of the text" when you try to hold a modern theologian to the factuality of a Biblical statement. The formal principle of theology, the sola scriptura, has been blurred out and substituted with a new form of Schleiermacher's "Ichtheologie." All objectivity is gradually erased by existential subjectivity so that the "saving event" is a "language event" or a "word event";

and "the 'historic Jesus' is heard not as 'objective factuality,' but as 'word of address'; ...the historic Jesus is the material point of departure for a recovery of valid hermeneutic."⁹

In effect this means that both the formal principle, sola scriptura, and the material principle, sola gratia, have been blurred into an "historic Jesus" stripped of metaphysical characteristics attributed to Him by the early Biblical community and witnesses, and He becomes merely the "point of departure" for some hazy existential understanding of one's self.

The relevance of all this to our own situation can be seen by the fact that the hermeneutical question has been reopened also in our Synod. Questions regarding Biblical statements, such as six day creation and the fall being actual history, the authorship of certain books of the Bible, the physical resurrection, the inerrancy of Scripture, etc., have repeatedly been placed before our Synodical Conventions in recent years, and most of them still have not been finally decided upon but have been referred to the Commission on Theology and Church Relations. While there are probably very few within our own church body who are willing to accept all the implications of the "new hermeneutic", both form and content criticism (Form und SachKritik), are becoming increasingly popular in certain Lutheran journals.¹⁰ These are presuppositions of the new hermeneutical approach.

The renewed interest of the Roman Catholic Church both in the ecumenical movement and in Biblical theology today also attests to the relevancy of Lutherans being on guard regarding the sola scriptura principle. In a footnote of an article, Hermeneutics Today, Dr. John Warwick Montgomery writes:

Present-day Roman Catholic scholars, it is worth noting, are exceedingly pleased to see the Protestant move toward dialectic Scriptural interpretation, for such a move opens up the possibility that Protestants, in accepting as legitimate the dynamic force of church tradition in interpreting the Bible, will once again listen to the voice of Rome.¹¹

In view of the above, this writer is compelled to disagree strongly with a statement in a recent Report of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations, A Lutheran Stance Toward Contemporary Biblical Studies. The statement reads:

It is a matter of record that in recent decades there has been a shift away from the crass theological liberalism that was rampant earlier in this century in the direction of a more conservative, more Biblical theology. With this shift has come, on the part of many Biblical scholars, a more responsible use of the historical-critical method of Bible study. (p. 5)

Even a cursory review of some of the modern theological literature, such as that of the social action revolutionaries, the death of God school, the Barthians, Bultmannians, and Post-Bultmannians, would indicate that the opposite is true. Of course, not all follow the presuppositions of the historical-critical method to their logical conclusions. But even if they begin to operate with them, the first principle of orthodoxy that must give way is the sola scriptura principle. This accounts for the rash of articles appearing in Lutheran circles, now also from the pens of Missouri Synod theologians, which either attack Biblical inerrancy or presuppose factual errors, differing theologies, and pagan

influences in the Bible's teaching.¹²

But the statement is repeatedly made by those who reject verbal inspiration and Biblical inerrancy that this is not a teaching which can be substantiated from Scripture. This, allegedly, is an accretion to Christian theology brought in by 16th and 17th century orthodoxy, neither taught by the Scriptures nor held by Luther, and which must be attributed to the deductive method of dogmatic theology. In an article--Criticism of the Biblical Text--appearing in The American Lutheran, Robert H. Smith writes:

It is true, as many have indicated, that in Christianity the revelation is neither a law nor a technique nor a book but a Person.

Martin Luther insisted as loudly as Marshal McLuhan that the medium affects the communicators every bit as much as it expresses their intent. He declared the priority of the oral over the written word in calling the Church a house of the voice rather than a house of the pen. Personal and living communion rather than scholarly study is the thrust of the Christian revelation.

....Martin Luther called the Scriptures "the cradle in which Christ is laid." Those 300,000 variant readings in the N.T. Greek texts may help us to remember the vital distinction between the cradle and the Child, even while we honor the Book above all books for its cradling of the Child.

....And it should occasion neither surprise nor offense but only gratitude that Almighty God in His wise providence was pleased to offer us the Christ and recon-

ciliation in Christ through a book which is--humanly speaking--far from letter perfect.¹³

It would be easy to multiply this type of quotations in our essay from Lutheran authors, but this should suffice to show that as we make the assertion --SCRIPTURE CANNOT BE BROKEN--we need to ask:

IS THE ASSERTION BIBLICAL?

As we turn to the exegetical part of our study, namely of John 10:34-36, it is well to note that there is no dispute regarding the authenticity of the text itself. In grammatical-historical exegesis we take note of the fact that the autographs were written in a particular time in history in a particular language, that these autographs are no longer extant, but that they were copied and that thus the Scripture was transmitted to us down through the ages through thousands of copies. It is here that errors in transmission crept in, thus making a lower criticism perfectly legitimate whose work it is to study and compare the copies and determine the authentic text. (In passing we might state that of the 4000 some known manuscripts from about a thousand years prior to the invention of the printing press, there are between 150,000 to 300,000 variants in the New Testament, depending upon how they are compiled. In 95 percent of these instances the correct reading is not difficult to establish. In 95 percent of the remaining cases the sense is in no way affected; and in no case is a doctrine affected that cannot be sufficiently established by other Biblical texts.¹⁴ And if the autographs themselves had not been verbally inspired and represented only a human effort to transmit the faith of the Christian community of the first century, the whole work of lower criticism would make little sense.¹⁵) But

there are no variants listed as far as our assertion is concerned--The Scripture cannot be broken.

These words appear in the text almost as a parenthetical remark of Jesus and are so indicated in some Bibles. He inserts them into His main line of reasoning, because they form a basic premise acceptable both to Him and the Jews. His purpose in the argument in which He was involved was to refute the charge that He was guilty of blasphemy because He had made himself God, being only a man.

To grasp the line of thought, we look at the context. Jesus was in Jerusalem for the feast of dedication. As He walked in the temple in Solomon's porch, the Jews asked Him: "How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly." Thereupon Jesus reminds them that He had already told them and still they had not believed. Why should He tell them again? Since they wouldn't believe His words, He refers them to His works: "The works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me." He then goes back to a theme He had dwelled upon at some length a short time before--the Good Shepherd theme. He makes it plain that He is the Good Shepherd, in effect clearly answering their question. He says: "But ye believe me not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one." It could hardly be stated more clearly. The Jews get the point. His Father is God; His Father commissioned Him, sent Him, entrusted the sheep to Him; these sheep know Him and believe Him. There is no doubt in their mind regarding His words. But their unbelief stumbles at His words. To top it all off,

Jesus claims to be "one with the Father." The Jews now took up stones to kill Jesus, but Jesus again refers them to His works: "Many good works have I shewed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me?" But they refuse to enter into any discussion with Jesus on the basis of His works. Instead they merely state: "For a good work we stone thee not: but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God." Actually there is but one reason given here. The last clause shows wherein they considered the blasphemy to consist. Honesty on their part would have demanded that they accept His claim or show that His works were not of God, that they were evil and spurious, that they did not authenticate His claim. Instead they charge Him with blasphemy.

It is this charge that Jesus answers by quoting Psalm 82. "Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods? If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the Scripture cannot be broken; say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God? If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him."

Why is Jesus quoting Scripture? What is He trying to prove? Is His argument cogent? There are those who are convinced this is ad hominem, irrelevant argumentation. From the logic involved one can readily see that the major premise is really the parenthetical assertion: The Scripture cannot be broken. One of the problems in approaching any type of argumentation is that it is usually not set up in neat logical syllogisms as one finds in a logic text book. But it is important that we do accurately reproduce the line of reasoning if and

when we do try to set it up in this fashion. Careless observation in this respect can only result in faulty exegesis.

In the October 1964 issue of Concordia Theological Monthly there appeared an article by Richard Jungkuntz in which he provides an alternate exegesis to what he terms the "modern" and the "traditional" approaches to this text. He questions whether either adequately express the primary sense of our Lord's assertion. Jungkuntz then formulates into syllogisms the argumentation of both sides in this fashion:

The modern exegesis:

Major premise: What Scripture says cannot be broken (denied)!

Minor premise: What cannot be denied cannot be blasphemy.

Conclusion: What Scripture says cannot be blasphemy.

This conclusion then becomes the major premise of the second syllogism:

Major premise: What Scripture says cannot be blasphemy.

Minor Premise: Scripture says that some human beings are called gods.

Conclusion: It cannot be blasphemy for some human beings to be called gods.

Commenting on this, Jungkuntz points to two fallacies: 1) it is an ad hominem argument; 2) it is irrelevant and deceptive. It makes Jesus operate with a literalistic Jewish exegesis which he refuses to accept for Himself and it doesn't answer the point of their argument, namely, that He had claimed to be God in the highest sense, not merely one of

the "gods, to whom the Word of God came." After listing some of the moderns who hold this interpretation, Jungkuntz states that Bultmann, who also so understood the line of reasoning, felt that it was so "Alien to what one would expect of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel that the passage should be regarded as a redactor's interpolation." He indicates that others of this school regard this as a type of argumentation that took place after Pentecost between Jews and Jewish Christians, while still others accept the a fortiori, or a minori ad maius movement involved as fortifying the otherwise invalid ad hominem argument.

This, it seems, demonstrates how the modern approach immediately uses an apparent difficulty either to discredit the text or to support their hypothesis that the N. T. Scripture is only a witness of the Biblical writer to the faith of the early Christian community in a historic Jesus whom we cannot really know from the words of the Bible.

Regarding the traditional interpretation, Jungkuntz states that the most characteristic thing is that these interpreters also claim to find here an a fortiori argument. Among these he lists Calvin, Bengel, Hengstenberg, Godet, Stoeckhardt, Lightfoot, Tasker, and Lenski. He takes Lenski to be typical and sets up Lenski's syllogisms in this way:

- Major Premise: Scripture cannot be broken (denied).
- Minor Premise: Scripture calls men commissioned by God gods.
- Conclusion: Jesus, sanctified and sent by the Father, is rightly called God.

The second syllogism then is:

Major Premise: Whoever is commissioned
 (resp. sanctified and/or sent)
 by God is rightly called god.
 Minor Premise: Jesus is sanctified and sent
 by God.
 Conclusion: Jesus is rightly called god.

If this correctly presents Lenski's position, it is evident that the argument again is faulty. The conclusion of the first syllogism ought to be "gods" not "God." And in the second, the argument is not only invalid but it fails to argue to the point.

Jungkuntz therefore suggests another line of reasoning, and for this reason: "Piety, we think, finds a choice between such alternatives distasteful at least, if not completely unacceptable."¹⁶ He finds the solution primarily in the words "cannot be broken" ou dunatai luthenai he graphe. He attempts to demonstrate that Scripture, particularly John, uses the term luoo in connection with the Word of God not in the sense of "break" but "to loose, to undo." And on the basis of Matt. 5:17-18 he concludes that luoo, which is almost identical in meaning with katalusai and which is used in contrast to pleroosai, must be taken to mean "render incapable of fulfillment," "keep from being fulfilled." The statement then of Jesus would read: "Scripture cannot be kept from fulfillment."

To make this argument relevant to the major premise, Jungkuntz now proceeds to demonstrate that "in the Biblical view the entire history of Israel was prophetic in that through this particular history, both its occurrence and its narration, God was proclaiming for all time His saving Word. . . Jesus then is appealing to Old Testament prophetic history, advent history, which is always moving and tending toward the goal, the revelation of the

coming of God's kingdom in Christ Jesus."17

We are not satisfied with this interpretation either. Jungkuntz would have made it easier if he would have neatly phrased his own syllogisms as he did for the moderns and the traditionalists. If we follow his line of reasoning which he attributes to Jesus it would be this:

Major Premise: The Scripture cannot be broken (kept from being fulfilled)

Minor Premise: Prophetic history and narration point to me.

Conclusion: You can't keep this prophetic history and narration from being fulfilled.

This, too, is irrelevant argumentation. The minor premise is not identical in terms with the major premise. Scripture and "prophetic history and narration" are not the same thing; and we are not willing to accept them as equivalent. To do so would introduce another element, namely history, as a principium cognoscendi of theology, precisely one of the errors of modern theology. This interpretation also fails to meet the point of the accusation, i.e., that He was guilty of blasphemy. On top of this, it gives a limited sense to luoo in this text and makes it less than the sweeping assertion that Jesus makes regarding Scripture.

It is correct, of course, to understand the term luoo in the sense of "loosed" "undone." Lenski also understands it in this way, but in no way limiting it to mean "keep from being fulfilled" in a prophetic sense. Lenski says: "Christ did not say 'it is not lawful to break the Scripture'. This would be only a subjective Jewish valuation of the Scripture. . .binding only the Jews not necessarily

Jesus or us, who might hold a view of the Scripture differing from that of the Jews. The axiom in this parenthesis is objective and absolute: ou dunatai luthenai he graphe, 'the Scripture cannot possibly be broken,' no word of it be dissolved; compare 7: 23, Matt. 5:19. Every statement of Scripture stands immutably, indestructible, in its verity, unaffected by denial, human ignorance or criticism, charges of errancy or any other subjective attack."¹⁸

Our purpose here is not to pit one exegete against another. Rather, it is to make clear the implications of faulty exegesis. The very axiom of Jesus--the Scripture cannot be broken--seems to become uncertain, and all types of explanations need to be sought, including faulty and new kinds of hermeneutics. Lenski obviously does not completely clear himself of leaving Jesus with an ad hominem argument. Jungkuntz seems to open the door for a dangerous new principle, almost equivalent to some of the "new hermeneutic" methods. In his attempt to respect Jesus, in effect he weakens the major premise of Jesus' line of reasoning, so that if we accept it, we could not use this text as a basis for biblical inerrancy.

What then is Jesus' line of reasoning? Certainly He is not trying to prove that He is true God or the Son of the Father. He had directed the Jews to His WORKS for proof of this. But these they refuse to consider. Their charge of blasphemy was irrelevant and false because in denying His Deity they refused to consider any proof.

Let us now state again in syllogisms as carefully as possible the line of Jesus' argumentation:

Major Premise: The Scripture cannot be broken (loosed, undone).

Minor Premise: It is written in Scripture:

God said you are gods.

The Premise explained: God calls men to whom He gives the Word of God gods, namely, what He Himself authorizes them to be.

Conclusion: It cannot be blasphemy for God to call a man what God authorizes him to be.

Accepting this as a basis for further reasoning, Jesus says:

Minor Premise: My works show that the Father has sanctified and sent me into the world (made me to be the Son, i.e., God).

Conclusion: It cannot be blasphemy for one shown by God to be God to call Himself the Son of God, in effect God.

This line of reasoning sticks carefully with Jesus' words. It is cogent; it answers the charge: Thou being a man, makest thyself God; thou blasphemest. It forces the Jews back to His works, making them disprove these or drop their accusation. It leaves them charging God with blasphemy unless they can disprove His works.

This, then, is a most wonderful text to lay bare the full implications of paying lip service to the Scriptures, as Jesus' Jewish opponents did, but of refusing to be bound to every word of it. It shows the heavy responsibility which comes to those to whom "the Word of God comes" or is given. Refusal to be bound to it makes "gods" to whom the Word came set themselves as judges over Him "whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world." The statements of Jesus, also regarding the Scriptures, can only be met with two attitudes, as Calvin

D. Linton states: 'either 'Amen,' or 'Not so, Lord' --though Satan would like us to consider a third, one of hesitant, debilitating, Prufrockian doubt: 'Yea, hath God said. . .?''¹⁹

This is substantiated by several other observations from the text. Jesus asks: "Is it not written in your law?" Then He quotes from Psalm 82. The term "law" evidently is taken in the sense of the entire Old Testament, the Scripture, not merely the Ten Commandments. The point of saying "your law" is not to extricate Himself from the rule that Scripture cannot be broken, but that they claimed it as such and in teaching, at least, recognized that they were bound by the Scriptures. It was their law because it came to them, making them "gods" responsible under God for keeping it and teaching it. The whole impact of Psalm 82 is that of warning the unjust judges and rulers who blasphemously acted like God instead of gods. One cannot break the Scriptures without setting himself against the authority of God.

This is not a complete exegesis, but it does bring into focus both the attitude of Jesus toward Scripture and the reason why this verse is so often appealed to in support of verbal inspiration. What is stated in this text is what we mean when we speak of verbal inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible. Scripture is the Word of God come to men, given by God to them in such a way that it is inviolable, an unbroken and unbreakable unity with divine authority, a Word that not even He can or will break and which He will not permit men to break.

The question may be raised: Are we not placing too much weight on one text? In answer, let me say: If we had nothing more than this one text in Scripture, it would be sufficient to show a believer in Christ that Scripture is verbally inspired, inerrant,

authoritative and definitive for faith, God's revelation to man, and that it is to be dealt with as with words not of man but of God. It puts Christ in the center of Scripture as the God-Man and links rejection of Him to rejection of Scripture, and vice-versa. But we do not have only this word. Yet if we refuse to accept one section of Scripture, it will make little difference how many times the Bible may state the same truth. "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead."

With this let us proceed to the third question:

IS THE ASSERTION TENABLE?

Is it possible in the light of rational argumentation to assert with Scripture and Jesus "The Scripture cannot be broken"? We heard the claim that verbal inspiration is a construction of 17th century dogmaticians based upon deductive methods, but one that cannot stand up under the inductive, scientific methods of modern Biblical criticism. Would-be critics of the Bible spend much time assembling lists of so-called errors, incongruencies, variants, contradictions, trying to show that the Bible, far from being the unbroken Word of God, is broken in many ways. As they inductively search out what they call fragments and errors in the Bible, they decry the reasoning of any attempt to assert what Scripture asserts about itself.

Dr. John Warwick Montgomery deals with this objection in a brief article in Christianity Today.²⁰ He points out that purely deductive procedures are logical or mathematical in nature and at best offer a scaffolding for the world of fact; they are not an account of any particular facts. "Independently of the Bible, no one has any right, on alleged 'deduc-

tive' grounds to pronounce on the nature of Scriptural authority." Then he proceeds to show that the theologian's craft is proper use of the inductive method. In effect this is what the dogmatists did. They recognized their field of research to be the Scripture, and that the proper application of the inductive method to the Scripture is "not a monolithic, simplicistic procedure in which one stares at one problematic fact at a time and then draws conclusions from these facts. Actually, one does not know how to treat particular factual problems until one has a gestalt or pattern in which to fit them. This gestalt is, of course, inductively derived from the material to be analyzed; but, since it provides the structure for understanding the particulars, its significance transcends that of the details. Unless it is properly induced, further induction will be fruitless."²¹

To illustrate this, Montgomery shows how easily a person can be misled in other literature to completely wrong conclusions if he applies the inductive method as the critics apply it to Scripture when they try to determine its authority, inerrancy, or inspiration by hunting for problem passages rather than listening first to its testimony and finding the pattern. Only after the pattern has been found can one know what to do with such problem passages.

To know how to treat biblical passages containing apparent errors or contradictions, we must determine what kind of book the Bible is. A doctrine of limited biblical authority derived from passages manifesting difficulties is as false an induction and as flagrant a denial of the analogy of Scripture as is a morally imperfect Christology derived from questionable acts on Jesus' part. In both cases, proper

induction requires that we go to the express biblical teaching on the subject (Jesus' deity; Scripture's authority) and allow this to create the pattern for treating particular problems.²²

And how do you find the pattern? Montgomery continues:

(You don't do this) by staring at genealogical difficulties or ancient king-lists. . .but by going directly to the Bible's central character, Jesus Christ, who declared himself to be God incarnate by manifold proofs, and observing His approach to the Scripture.²³

This is precisely what we did in our study of John 10:35 and its context. Our conclusions regarding Christ, His attitude toward Scripture, His methods of dealing with Scripture were based on what Christ and the text say. And whether we look to His word or example, to this passage or others, the findings are the same. Jesus quotes from Scripture, considering it authoritative and authentic; man is to live "by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4). Jesus does not let men use Him as an excuse for putting aside Scripture. "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill" (Matt. 5:17). Heaven and earth shall pass away, but not one jot or tittle of this word shall pass away till all be fulfilled. They who break one of these commandments, or teach differently, come under God's wrath (Matt. 5:18-19). He commends those who search the Scriptures and commands them to do so, for in them they have eternal life, and they testify of Him (John 5:39). He faults those who reject Him with having rejected the writings of Moses first (John 5:45f.). He accepts the data of the Scripture

as factually true (John 7:23). The Genesis account of creation--God at the beginning creating a man and a woman and speaking (Matt. 19:4f)--as well as Noah and the Flood (Matt. 24:37f), of Sodom and Gomorrah (Matt. 10:15f), of Jonah in the fish's belly (Matt. 12:39f), etc., are accepted as historically and factually true. He Himself acts because the Scriptures must be fulfilled in Him (John 18:8-10, John 13:18). He corrects false notions of His people telling them they did not know the Scripture (Matt. 22:29), and He draws proper inferences from them (v.32) to teach the resurrection; but instead of faulting them for considering Moses as author of the Pentateuch, He Himself designates Moses, David, Isaiah as the writers of documents ascribed to them (Luke 20:28-37, 42, Matt. 15:7, John 12:37-41). These authors of the Scripture speak by the Spirit of God (Matt. 22:43). He calls those foolish and slow of heart to believe when they do not accept "all that the prophets have spoken of Him." They are wise who build upon His sayings, foolish if they do not (Matt. 7:24f). He expounds the Scriptures so that men may see Him as its center and fulfillment (Luke 24:25-27, 44-46).

The Scripture cannot be broken. This assertion rings true in every act and word of Jesus regarding it. Here we see the gestalt. And to assure us that the same gestalt applies, or would apply, to the New Testament Scripture, Jesus tells His disciples: "The Holy Spirit shall bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14:26f). And He prays "not for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word" (John 17:17). None of this is deductive reasoning; it is "searching the Scriptures" and finding the pattern for the child of God. This is the sanctified use of reason that refuses to say: "Not so, Lord!"

But what about the methods of the moderns? It is to be noted that they operate with altogether different presuppositions. Ernst Fuchs says: "One cannot treasure too highly the empirical, the factually provable. Anyone who has flown in an airplane sees this point. . . .we should note facts even more carefully than we are accustomed to do in the practice of exegesis and preaching."²⁴

And what are the facts? The pre-existence of Jesus? His resurrection and ruling at the right hand of God? Walking on water like a spirit during his lifetime? His conception by the Holy Spirit without male participation? By no means! Of these Fuchs says that they are "mythical statements" which pose the "problem of hermeneutic," the problem Bultmann called the "problem of demythologizing the New Testament message."²⁵ These "mythical statements" are not to be eliminated, but viewed as "conceptualizations", which in turn must be interpreted in terms that interpret our own existence. This is the task of the new hermeneutic.

What then is the object of faith? "This faith does not believe directly in Jesus," Fuchs states. "Primitive Christianity after Jesus' crucifixion was the first to do this. . . .It was first in primitive Christianity that one began to embellish Jesus' person with honors and distinctions, in order to proclaim him as God's Son."²⁶ You don't ask the right question when you ask: What about the empty tomb? Fuchs says: "The question after all is quite a different one: What difference has the resurrection made?"²⁷ After several more pages of existential palaver he comes to this: "Everything comes to a head in this: If Jesus made the voice of love count, and thus made God himself count, then he wanted his hearers to do this too. . . .God's revelation consisted simply in God letting men state God's own problems in their language, in grace and judgment."

So one illuminates the other. Jesus illuminates the apostle's talk and their talk illuminates Jesus' task."²⁸ It is this existential gobbledy-gook which he makes out to be Jesus as God's word, "And that is what faith in Jesus believes, by believing in the historical Jesus. This alone is the true meaning of 'Easter faith.'"²⁹ (Underlining in place of italics in the text)

Do you see how the whole foundation is gone, both foundations--the formal and the material (Scripture and Christ)? It leaves nothing but the "hermeneutical circle" about which the debate goes round and around among them, no one quite understanding what the other is saying. This circle first lets the exegete sit in judgment upon the text, stripping it of all that does not measure up to his concept of historical possibility or fact, and then the emasculated text with whatever element of truth may have been found becomes subject and speaks to the interpreter.

Of course, traditional theology also operates with a "hermeneutical circle." It approaches the text with the conviction that it is the Word of God, that once the grammatical-historical sense has been properly determined, this message is what God is saying to us. But this conviction itself is a product of the Biblical message. From this word we have learned to know Jesus as our Savior, and this faith in Christ is what moves us to approach the Scripture in holy awe. There is a similarity in the two methods which Jesus points out in His parable of the wise and the foolish men who build houses either on rock or sand. The orthodox method is like a man, having been washed upon a rock and saved from the storms, confidently builds his house upon it. It is the kind of reasoning Jesus spoke of when He said: "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak

of myself." (John 7:17).

The "hermeneutical circle" of existentialist theology reminds us of a person who upon seeing the rock, begins to pick away at the beautiful and diverse formations. He sees it is made up of igneous rock, limestone, sandstone, etc.; he fears it will not hold together; so he builds on the loose sands of his own reason. They call it "unfaith" when we demand a verbally inspired Scripture upon which to build. Admittedly it takes a different kind of rationality to build on Scripture and Christ than upon the sands of human reason. Jesus calls the one wisdom, the other foolishness.

We recognize the fact that most theologians in our own church would refuse to adopt the "new hermeneutic" as their own. Yet one need not have read much in recent Lutheran journals to note what deep inroads some of this has made among some theologians and upon their thinking. Here are some of the claims that are being advanced among us:

1) That God can tell us only about things we have experienced or are able to experience with our five senses. Biblical statements describing the supernatural are therefore not to be taken as descriptions of actual beings and events, but as presentations or "theological insights."^{29A}

2) That Scripture is intended to make us wise unto salvation, and that in this sense and in serving this purpose only does it claim to be inerrant.³⁰

3) That Law and Gospel categories and the "justification by faith concept" provide adequate safeguards in determining whether one is correctly interpreting Scripture, even while the exegete proceeds to deny the historicity of Jonah, the Exodus account, the unity of Isaiah, etc.³¹

4) That if the "new hermeneutics" are followed, the Lutheran Confessions will provide adequate safeguards against losing Lutheran theology, therefore Lutherans need not fear the results now observable in other denominations where these principles have been in use.³²

5) That when differences arise between the "new theology" and teachings clearly spelled out in the Confessions on the basis of Scripture, or in Synodically adopted statements, these matters are to be relegated into the category of "exegetical problems."³³

6) That the term "inerrancy" is not properly applied to the Scripture and should not be used.³⁴

It would not be difficult to document other aberrations which have crept in and are now disturbing our church. But almost all of them accept elements of the "new theology" which operates upon the assumptions that higher criticism has disproved the inerrancy of Scripture and thus verbal inspiration. While they still pay lip homage to the term "inspiration", it should be evident to the careful scholar that they are employing a dialectic not acceptable to one who takes Jesus' words at their face value--The Scripture cannot be broken.³⁵

Historical Criticism

Since the new theology operates through and through with the critical method (both Form and Sachkritik) both as necessary for its hermeneutic and as having established the facts that the Bible is subject to distortion, that various books of it were written in a "form" of literature not intended to convey "propositional truth", and that Scriptures are a collection of old Israelitish traditions and

literature, edited and redacted by a post-exilic redactor who made use of literary forms of the Caananites and Near-Eastern peoples, that the New Testament is merely kerygmatic witness of the faith of the New Testament community, we need to know whether our assertion about Scriptural inviolability can face the critics.

Regarding the methods of the higher critics and the documentary hypothesis to which they submit the Old Testament, Professor U. Cassuto, a Jewish scholar of Hebrew University of Jerusalem, says:

The pillars supporting the entire structure of the documentary theory, are five, to wit:

- a) the use of different names for the Deity;
- b) variations of language and style;
- c) contradictions and divergences of view;
- d) duplications and repetitions;
- e) signs of composite structure in the sections.³⁶

Cassuto then examines the arguments on which each are based. The first pillar of the JEDP hypothesis he shatters, showing that Witter, Astruc, Wellhausen, and successors were not Jews with the fine feeling for Hebrew that a Hebrew speaking the language from childhood has. They missed the fact that Elohim and Jehovah are not just different names but carry different concepts, the first an abstract, general concept of the Deity, the other the specific form as thought of by the Jewish people. "Variations in the choice of the Divine Names did not come about accidentally but by design."³⁷ By careful documentation he shows that in each instance the material and Hebrew usage necessitated the choice of one or the other, also that the Documentary Hypothesis

is not consistent in assigning the name Jehovah to J, nor Elohim to so-called E material. He sets down the rules of Hebrew usage according to which the Pentateuch consistently uses the divine names.

Proceeding step by step carefully to analyze the other pillars, Dr. Casutto blasts away one after another, demonstrating the shabby scholarship and inconsistencies, as well as the illogical rules according to which the critics operate. Regarding pillar two, he states:

. . .we found that these linguistic disparities, in so far as they really existed, could be explained with the utmost simplicity by reference to the general rules of the language, its grammatical structure, its lexical usages, and its literary conventions--general rules that applied equally to every Hebrew writer and every Hebrew book.

Thereafter, we probed the third pillar, the differences in subject matter of the sections. . .and learnt that where there were actual discrepancies between the sections, they were not of a kind that could be found in a homogeneous work. On the contrary, such incongruities were inevitable in a multifaceted book like the one before us. . .which presents its themes from different viewpoints.

. . .we proceeded to the fourth pillar. . . .as a result of our study (we saw that) underlying both of them (illustrations of duplications and repetitions) was a specific intention. . . .

. . .we turned our attention to the fifth pillar, the composite sections. . . .and realized that this hypothesis relied on evidence that in truth did not

point to a composite text; on the contrary, exact study revealed unmistakable and conclusive indications of a close connection between the parts of the section that were considered to belong to different sources.³⁸

The Documentary Hypothesis, then, is without substance. Even in the light of scholarship and scrutiny of both the form and the content of the Old Testament, Christ's assertion stands: The Scripture cannot be broken.

And as for the New Testament we have already seen what happened to the trump card of the critics, namely, the one about the 300,000 variants. This turned out to be a Joker that will pass for neither trump nor suit. It has nothing to do with the original autographs and does not impair the unity, authority, or reliability of the Bible as it has come down to us. Neither will it do to argue as some do that since the originals are no longer extant, the idea of verbal inspiration is completely irrelevant. Dr. R. Preus summarizing Quenstedt on this point writes:

Inspiration and divine authority which inhered originally in the autographic texts pertain also to the apographa by virtue of derivation (radicaliter), just as a copy of a constitution is as valid and authentic as the original. The apographa are authentic because they retain not merely the content but also the very words of the original inspired Scriptures; translations have preserved only the divine meaning of Scripture.³⁹

We need to answer another question yet: What about modern theology's Quest for the historical

Jesus which presupposes that we must look beyond the New Testament written documents rather than in them?⁴⁰ The claim here is, of course, that the New Testament is not God's Word, that we cannot have actual records here of what happened, nor the real words of Jesus, but only witness to Jesus. The New Testament, supposedly, is a compilation of various strands of tradition representing the faith of the early Christian community and is therefore the church's kerygma (her proclamation) intended to call men to faith but not to recount history?

Edward J. Young points out that the real heart of the matter with this reasoning which will not accept the New Testament as the Word of God is that it is based upon the philosophy of Kant. "Kant made a distinction between what he called the phenomenal and the noumenal, and it is this distinction which has exerted tremendous influence upon modern thought."⁴¹

By phenomena Kant meant objects which we may possibly experience; by noumenal he meant anything that we cannot possibly experience, what we conceive only with our mind but which does not belong to the world of reality. Young states: "Insofar as modern thought is in harmony with its Kantian foundation, it is diametrically opposed to supernatural Christianity. This is true, despite the constant usage of orthodox terminology."^{41A} The point is that the objection of the moderns is not really based on any proof against the Scripture being God's Word. It rests purely upon their a priori rejection of that which is beyond the realm of natural reality and which cannot be substantiated by empirical data. The goddess of natural science reigns here. Any idea of supernatural revelation is rejected.

The only answer to this reasoning is that it has nothing in common with Christian faith.

According to Scripture, "faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1). Through faith we do know and understand things which we have not grasped and cannot grasp with our ordinary five senses. Because God has revealed heavenly, spiritual, supernatural things to us, the Christian does know and believe everything that is part of that revelation. This is not a matter of rational proof at all. It is all a matter of faith in Jesus Christ as Son of God and Savior of mankind, or the unbelief which stumbles at the cross of Christ and the wisdom of God. Faith receives the revelation of God, also that which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard" because it has received "not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God." (1 Cor. 2:12f). It does not take offense at Scripture, but recognizes the words of the New Testament writers to be "not the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth." When people balk at divine revelation, verbal inspiration, a Jesus conceived by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, who did miracles, who rose from the dead, who demands faith in Himself for eternal salvation, it is because, "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither indeed can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." (1 Cor. 2:14ff). They simply don't have the "mind of Christ" who must break Christ's assertion--The Scripture cannot be broken.

A somewhat different question arises, particularly also in our own synod, when we are met with the problem of tolerating divergent views on Old Testament authorship, on use of the JEDP theory, on evolution, on new hermeneutical approaches, etc. It is held by some that this should be permissible as long as these people properly separate Law and Gospel, teach justification by faith, and hold to the

sola gratia. The argument usually runs: What difference does it make whether God created the world in six ordinary days or in billions of years, whether there were one, two, or three Isaiahs, whether Jonah was swallowed by a fish or not. These matters really have very little to do with our salvation. And, indeed, it might be granted, on the one hand, that salvation is not necessarily dependent upon how these questions are answered. On the other hand, it ought to be realized that this is irrelevant argumentation. The point is: This is not what the Scripture teaches. Why don't they want to be bound by Scripture? Why will they not be bound by the sola scriptura principle? And if the Scripture may be broken on these points, how can we still speak of an inerrant, infallible Scripture? So it is not a matter of whether God could have created His world or given His Bible some different way. It is a matter of taking Scripture from us. If the Scripture cannot be trusted when it speaks on such matters, how can we trust it when it speaks upon matters of faith directly related to our salvation? As Jesus Himself showed, it is not a long jump from the story of Jonah to the reality of the resurrection, or from the story of creation to a proper understanding of the nature of sin and its consequences. Christ's assertion--the Scripture cannot be broken--can and must stand, also in the face of this irrational and irrelevant argumentation. The assertion is not only tenable in the light of faith and sanctified reason; it must be maintained.

Our next concern is:

IS THE ASSERTION LUTHERAN?

To answer this, we need to examine to some extent both what Luther and the Lutheran Confessions

say. We shall do this as briefly as possible so as to still get a rather complete picture.

Repeatedly the moderns claim Luther for their position which rejects the literal accuracy of Scripture and which accepts an inerrancy and infallibility only in as far as the Scripture works to accomplish men's salvation. Because Luther's theology was Christ centered and he referred to Scripture as the cradle for Christ, and because he rightly insisted that the church was a "Mundhaus" (place for oral preaching) rather than a "Federhaus" (house for the pen), somehow certain Lutherans are trying to say that the Scripture in Luther's view was a "rude, rough, manger. . . .far from letter perfect," and that the accuracy of Scripture was of little concern to him.⁴² Or stated in another way: "The truth of the Word does not come in the imparting of insights, but in the personal fellowship with God for which man was originally created and to which he is now restored in Christ."⁴³ These men want the right to claim Luther for themselves and their theology simply because they still hold to Christ as the center of the Christian faith and the burden of Biblical writing. This idea runs through much of modern theology. One more quote, this time from John Dillenberger (San Francisco Theological Seminary):

. . .although Luther and Calvin believed the Bible was true from cover to cover, it would never have occurred to them to defend the authority of Scripture in the light of its literal accuracy. This temptation occurred only in the Protestant orthodox development, and then for understandable historical reasons. It is a wrong hermeneutical procedure when the Reformers and all periods prior to them are viewed as regrettably believing in the literal accuracy of the Bible. While

they accepted a literal accuracy for Scripture, it was not a theological axiom.⁴⁴

It is at least an honest admission when Dillenberger says, "they accepted a literal accuracy for Scripture." But after such an admission, how shall one understand the rest of what he says. What he grants, he immediately takes away again.

So Luther must speak for himself. Probably one of the booklets from Luther's pen which lets his attitude toward Scripture shine forth most clearly is his Bondage of the Will. Luther's debate with Erasmus, although focused upon the freedom of the will, was essentially a hermeneutical debate, involving the proper use of and interpretation of Scripture. Therefore we have chosen to show how almost every problem now being debated regarding Scripture was dealt with effectively already by Luther.

The sola scriptura principle was fundamental to Luther. He permitted only the written words of Scripture to determine doctrine. He asks:

What do you mean, Erasmus? Is it not enough to have submitted your judgment to Scripture? Do you submit to the Church as well?--why, what can the Church settle that Scripture did not settle first? . . .What is this new-fangled religion of yours, this novel sort of humility, that, by your own example you would take from us power to judge men's decisions and make us defer uncritically to human authority? Where does God's written Word tell us to do that?
(p. 69)⁴⁵

Luther refused to let men determine the truth and the usefulness of Scripture.

Here, I see, you are taking the view that the truth and usefulness of Scripture should be measured and decided according to the feeling of men. . . .What else do you here plead for, but that the words of God may thus depend on, and stand or fall by, the will and authority of men? But the Scripture says the opposite, that all things stand or fall by the will and authority of God, . . . (p. 98)

Christ was indeed the center of Scripture for Luther; and Christ gives Scripture its essential clarity. But this does not mean that the rest of Scripture is dark or unclear. Any unclarity is in our ignorance of language and understanding. Luther distinguishes between external and internal clarity. In the first case it has to do with the words themselves; in the second, with the spiritual understanding which comes by the Holy Ghost by enlightenment of the reader. The first is a result of God's activity at inspiration in giving Scripture, the second a result of the Spirit's activity in the Word when it is used.

God and His Scripture are two things, just as the Creator and His creation are two things. . . .I certainly grant that many passages in the Scripture are obscure and hard to elucidate, but that is due, not to the exalted nature of their subject, but to our own linguistic and grammatical ignorance; and it does not in any way prevent our knowing all the contents of Scripture. For what solemn truth can the Scriptures still be concealing, now that the seals are broken, the stone rolled away from the door of the tomb, and that greatest of all mysteries brought to light-- . . .Christ? . . .Take Christ from the

Scriptures--and what more will you find in them. . . If the words are obscure in one place, they are clear in another. . . Who will maintain that the town fountain does not stand in the light because the people down some alley cannot see it. . . ? . . . I know that to many people a great deal remains obscure; but that is due, not to any lack of clarity in Scripture, but to their own blindness and dullness, in that they make no effort to see the truth, which of itself, could not be plainer. (pp. 71, 72)

The perspicuity of Scripture is twofold, just as there is a double lack of light. The first is external, and relates to the ministry of the Word; the second concerns the knowledge of the heart. If you speak of internal perspicuity, the truth is that nobody who has not the Spirit of God sees a jot of what is in the Scriptures. (p. 73)

For Luther the Scriptures speak categorically; they do speak propositional truth. To deny this was to take Christ out of the Scriptures and make havoc out of them.

Now choose which you will have. If you grant that the Scriptures speak categorically, you can say nothing of "free will" but that which is the opposite of Christ: that is, that error, death, Satan and all evils reign in it. If you do not grant that the Scriptures speak categorically, you so weaken them, that they establish nothing and fail to prove that men need Christ; and thus, in setting up "free will", you set aside Christ, and have made havoc of the entire Scripture. (p. 307)

Luther was not to be deceived by the various hermeneutical tricks Erasmus used to bring Scripture to his side. Luther complained that "the Diatribe regularly parries the thrust of every Scripture." (p. 313) In one section he points to three major contrivances--so he called them--with which the Diatribe wrested Scripture:

The Diatribe contrives three distinct methods of wresting it: The first is this: (He evades the point of the passage and shifts its intended meaning) p. 225. The second: (It casts) aspersions on Paul, as though he did violence to the Scriptures. So utterly lacking are we in reverence for the majesty of the Holy Ghost, if only we can establish our own cause! But we will bear with this slander for a moment and see what it achieves. (p. 226)

The third: (It takes the words in a figurative sense) I'll be hanged if the Diatribe itself knows what it is talking about! Perhaps we have here the rhetorical trick of obscuring your meaning when danger is at hand, lest you be trapped in your words! I do not see in this passage the figurative language of which the Diatribe groundlessly dreams. (p. 228)

Luther also accuses the Diatribe of taking passages away from him. Erasmus did this by claiming that certain "passages have more force in Paul than they have in the prophets from which they are taken." (p. 229). Erasmus also "teaches us to modify Scriptures testimonies by 'convenient explanations' as we see fit." He "catches hold of this little word 'nothing', cuts its throat with many words and examples, and by means of a 'convenient explanation'

brings it to this: that 'nothing' may mean the same as 'a little imperfect something.'" (p. 260)

Erasmus was not too happy that Luther was so fond of proving his arguments with Scripture. He had written: "Luther presses his case very strongly with Scripture texts, but they can be annulled by a single little word." To this Luther answers:

Who is unaware that all the Scriptures can be annulled by a single little word? I knew it well enough before I ever heard the name of Erasmus! But the question is, whether it is satisfactory for a Scripture to be annulled by a single little word. Is it rightly annulled? Should it be annulled? These are the issues. (p. 262f)

Another trick in which Luther caught Erasmus was that of "inventing the usage" of Scriptural words, instead of regarding them in "the light of the subject matter and the speaker's intention." (p. 264) Luther would not permit Erasmus to change the sense of a single little word. "Nothing" could not mean "a little something." He says:

The usual and natural sense of terms must be retained, unless proof is given to the contrary; which the Diatribe neither has done, nor can do. We evince it first from the nature of the case, as follows: It is plainly proved by Scriptures that are neither ambiguous nor obscure. . . (p. 263)

Erasmus had apparently tried to find all the Scripture passages he could and muster them to his cause. He wrote: "If the matter is assessed by the number of testimonies, the victory is mine." Luther laughed at this folly. He answered:

Do you think the Diatribe was quite sober, or in its right mind, when it wrote this? For I will not put it down to wickedness and villainy--unless perhaps its intention is to bore me to death by its characteristic habit of always dealing with something other than its stated theme. (p. 269)

Neither was Luther impressed by the Diatribe's levity in dealing with Scripture passages. In commenting on this, Luther shows that he regarded the statements of Scripture as "God's facts and God's Word" and that he considered it a serious offense and outright blasphemy when men trifled like this with Scripture. He says:

But I wanted to make you realize what appalling sentiments the champion of a bad cause finds himself constrained unguardedly to blurt out; and also what it means to go against God's facts and God's Word when we dissemble to oblige others, and defy conscience by acting a part at their bidding. It is no game and no joke to teach the holy Scriptures and godliness, for it is so very easy to fall here in the way that James described: 'he that offends in one point becomes guilty of all' (2:10). For when we show ourselves disposed to trifle even a little and cease to hold the sacred Scriptures in sufficient reverence, we are soon involved in impieties and overwhelmed with blasphemies--as you are here, Erasmus. May the Lord have mercy on you! (p. 85)

The idea that Scripture was made up of myths and fables was not unknown to Luther. He caught Erasmus operating with this so-called presupposition

of our 'new hermeneutic' already then:

Away with these fooleries of the Diatribe, which everywhere evince that it regards the Scripture as fables! . . . he can produce no single passage of Scripture in which "the Spirit of God" may be taken to mean His indignation. . . . what wonder is it that the Scriptures are obscure to you, or that you can establish from them a will that is not only free, but divine, if you are allowed to play with them as you do, as if you were making patchwork out of them! This, I suppose, is what you mean by 'cutting the knots', and settling questions by means of an 'explanation'! Jerome and his friend Origen filled the world with that kind of nonsense; they were the inventors of this pestilent practice of paying no heed to the simple sense of Scripture. (pp. 239, 240)

While Luther was willing at many places to give Erasmus the benefit of the doubt, especially when it came to motives, he could not entirely clear Erasmus of deceit when he operated with the Scriptures only to prove his point. To Luther this was not legitimate "exploratory theology." It was heretical stubbornness which cast slurs upon Scripture. And Luther makes his statement plainly for all to read:

It is hard at this point to acquit you of deceit and double-dealing. One who handles the Scriptures with such hypocritical artfulness as you do may safely say of himself that he is not yet instructed in the Scriptures, and wants to be instructed, when in fact he wants nothing less, and is merely rattling on like this to cast a slur on the clear light that there is

in the Scriptures, and to whitewash his own stubbornness! Thus the Jews, even to this day, say that what Christ and the Apostles and the whole church have taught is not proved by the Scriptures. Heretics can be taught nothing by the Scriptures. . . . Nowhere do you fail to invent something with which to contradict the Scriptures. . . . Your only aim is to avoid being held fast by the passage of Scripture that is in hand." (pp. 249, 250)

Luther, as we have already seen, had irritated Erasmus by pressing so hard with Scripture proof. But Luther insisted that Scripture proof had to be to the point. This he considered a common failing--to quote Scripture passages which had nothing to do with the matter under consideration. He asked:

Is it sufficient merely to cite a second passage, with no regard as to whether it is making the same or a different point? There is, as I have often shown, no easier or commoner failing in dealing with the Scriptures than to bring together diverse passages as if they were alike. (p. 230f)

When the author of a particular book of the Bible was known by virtue of Scripture's testimony, Luther used the name in quoting from the book. He points out that this was Paul's habit when he quoted from the Old Testament, to mention the name of the writer, to declare that he is taking something from the Scriptures. (p. 229)

This should be more than enough from Luther to convince any honest scholar that Luther cannot be legitimately mustered to the side of the opponents of verbal inspiration. Luther asserted what Christ and the Scriptures assert about Scripture--that it

cannot be broken.

Now let us examine a few testimonies from the Lutheran Confessions.

Both the Augsburg Confession and the Apology make it clear that the Holy Scripture is the only source of faith and doctrine. The Holy Scriptures are the pure Word of God by which they want all their statements and teachings judged. In the Preface of the Augsburg Confession we read:

We would submit the Articles of our Confession. . . showing what manner of doctrine from the Holy Scriptures and the pure Word of God has been to this time set forth in our lands. (Trig. p. 39)⁴⁶

The Apology states:

Truly it is amazing that the adversaries are in no way moved by so many passages of Scripture which clearly ascribe justification to faith, and, indeed, deny it to works. Do they think that the same is repeated so often for no purpose? Do they think that these words fell inconsiderately from the Holy Ghost? (Art. IV, Trig. p. 153)

It is evident that the writers of the Apology believed that the very words of Scripture were given by the Holy Ghost so that the words could be studied, heard, and taken at their face value.

The Apology considers the doctrine of justification not only as the chief topic of Christian doctrine, but also as essential for the true and proper understanding of Scripture. It says:

This doctrine illumines and amplifies the honor of Christ (which is of especial service for the clear, correct understanding of the entire Holy Scriptures, and alone shows the way to the unspeakable treasure and right knowledge of Christ, and alone opens the door to the entire Bible.) (Art. IV, Trig. p. 121)

In the same way it viewed the distinction between Law and Gospel as necessary for grasping the correct understanding of the Bible's teaching. "All Scriptures ought to be distributed into these two principal topics, the Law and the promises." (Art. IV, Trig. p. 121)

This does not mean that either of these--justification or Law and Gospel--were considered hermeneutical rules for understanding of the words, or that a correct understanding of these doctrines automatically legitimized any and every exegesis of a passage. These were presuppositions with which the confessors worked, presuppositions taken from the Scriptures themselves, actually the presupposition of faith, without which no true understanding of Scripture is possible. This has to do with the internal clarity of Scripture primarily and likewise, though worked by the Holy Ghost, is dependent upon the proper use of grammatical understanding.

The Confessions distinguish clearly between the writings of Scripture and all other writings. Scripture alone is normative; all other writings are good and wholesome for faith only if normed after the Scriptures. The Introduction to the Formula of Concord says:

. . .the sole rule and standard according to which all dogmas together with (all) teachers should be estimated and judged

are the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures of the Old and of the New Testament alone. (Ps. 119, Gal. 1:8)

Other writings, however, of ancient or modern teachers, whatever name they bear, must not be regarded as equal to the Holy Scriptures, but all of them together be subjected to them, and should not be received otherwise or further than as witnesses (which are to show) in what manner after the time of the apostles, and at what places, this (pure) doctrine of the prophets and apostles was preserved. (Trig. p. 777)

In this way the distinction between the Holy Scriptures of the Old and of the New Testament and all other writings is preserved, and the Holy Scriptures alone remain the only judge, rule, and standard, according to which, as the only test-stone, all dogmas shall and must be discerned and judged, as to whether they are good or evil, right or wrong.

But the other symbols and writings cited are not judges, as are the Holy Scriptures, but only a testimony and declaration of the faith, as to how at any time the Holy Scriptures have been understood and explained in the articles in controversy in the Church of God by those then living, and how the opposite dogma was rejected and condemned (by what arguments the dogmas conflicting with the Holy Scriptures were rejected and condemned). (Intro. of FC, Trig. p. 779)

According to the above, it is plain that even though there is no specific article on Scripture in the confessions, nevertheless, they are not silent on Scripture. Verbal inspiration is a concept that is taken for granted, worked with and used as necessary for the whole basis of Christian teaching. Without believing that every word fell from the Holy Ghost with purpose, it makes little or no sense to place Scripture as the norm and rule for all other teaching. If the words are uncertain and mistaken, what is there normative about Scripture?

And there was no vacillation among the Confessors regarding the purity and certainty of Scripture. In the Comprehensive Summary of the Thorough Declaration of the FC they state:

We then receive and embrace with our whole heart the Prophetic and Apostolic Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the pure and clear fountain of Israel, which is the only true standard by which all teachers and doctrines are to be judged." (Trig. p. 851)

What differs from Scripture is false, therefore on the basis of Scripture "all heresies and errors . . . (are) rejected." (Trig. p. 857)

It is remarkable how often the Confessions appeal to Scripture and how many Scripture proofs are adduced in them. Approximately 900 different Scripture passages are either cited or dealt with, some of them many times. They are used as source and fountain of doctrine, as judge and rule, as demonstration that the doctrine expounded is that of Scripture and therefore God's Word. When Scripture speaks on any given subject, that settles it for the writers of the Confessions. (Trig. p. 885)

This, we believe, ought to silence completely the modern Lutherans who so bitterly oppose the use of Scriptural proof texts. Let these people be Lutheran, behave like Lutherans, use Scripture like Lutherans, or let them move to other grounds.

But we still haven't finished with the Confessions' testimony regarding Scripture. We notice how they base arguments upon single words of Scripture, e.g., "Thus also in the Holy Scriptures themselves the words necessity, needful, and necessary, likewise ought and must, are used concerning what we are bound to do because of God's ordinance, command, and will, as Rom. 13:5, 1 Cor. 9:9, Acts 5:29, John 15:12, 1 John 4:21." (Trig. p. 943)

Under Article VII of the FC the Sacramentarians are faulted for refusing to take the word "is" in its proper sense. Not a word of Scripture could be broken, twisted or misused. (Trig. p. 973) We also notice how the Lutheran Confessors refused to let the Scripture be beclouded by hermeneutical chicanery. They say:

We are certainly in duty bound not to interpret and explain these words of the eternal, true, and almighty Son of God, our Lord, Creator and Redeemer, Jesus Christ, differently as allegorical, figurative, tropical expressions, according as it seems agreeable to our reason, but with simple faith and due obedience to receive the words as they read in their proper and plain sense. . . . (Trig. p. 987)

They illustrate the pious attitude of the Christian toward the words of God by referring to Abraham. Listen to this testimony:

. . .(Abraham) understands and believes

God's Word and command plainly and simply as they read according to the letter, and commits the matter to God's omnipotence and wisdom. . . .

This we, too, are simply to believe with all humility and obedience the plain, firm, clear and solemn words and command of our Creator and Redeemer. (Trig. p. 989)

Later they also deal with Zwingli's alloeosis on the same basis. Zwingli had introduced this into the doctrine of Christ, substituting one word for another. But the Formula of Concord will not allow this tampering with words. It rejects Zwingli's attempts as blasphemous: "Here Zwingly juggles, asserting that the word Christ is understood of the human nature." (Trig. p. 1029) Zwingli's reading of new meanings into the words of Scripture is called "a devil's mask."

In dealing with the doctrine of eternal election, the Formula of Concord again stresses the words and directs the readers to the Verbum Dei revelatum. (Trig. p. 1067f) We are not to speculate "concerning the bare, secret, inscrutable foreknowledge of God," but seek "how the counsel, purpose, and ordination of God in Christ Jesus, who is the true Book of Life, is revealed to us through the Word, namely the entire doctrine concerning this as it is presented in the Scriptures." (Trig. p. 1069) And "when our thoughts concerning this article are thus formed according to the Scriptures, we can by God's grace simply (and correctly) adapt ourselves to it (and advantageously treat of it)." (Trig. p. 1071)

A Catalog of Testimonies is attached to the Confessions. In the conclusion it is stated that these testimonies of the ancient teachers is adduced, not that men should build their faith upon them

instead of upon the Scriptures, for "the true saving faith is to be founded upon no church-teachers, old or new, but only and alone upon God's Word, which is comprised in the Scriptures of the holy prophets and apostles, as unquestionable witnesses of divine truth." (Trig. p. 1149) The confessors wanted to demonstrate how these ancients spoke in accord with Scripture and were being appealed to falsely by the opponents, just as these had also perverted "the simple, plain, and clear words of Christ's testament and the pure testimonies of Holy Scriptures. On this account the Book of Concord directs every one to the Holy Scriptures and the simple Catechism; for he who clings to this simple form with true, simple faith provides best for his soul and conscience, since it is built upon a firm and immovable Rock. Matt. 7 and 17; Gal. 1; Ps. 119." (Trig. p. 1149)

So ends the Book of Concord. Need more be said? The Scripture cannot be broken. This is truly a Lutheran assertion.

IS THE ASSERTION PRACTICAL?

The last words of the Book of Concord, it seems, answers the question. If we want to "provide best for our soul and conscience", there can be no thought of breaking the Scriptures and building upon the sinking sands of modern theology. We have already seen how Christ Himself is lost when men lose hold on Scripture. If Scripture can be broken, the Christ presented in Scripture cannot be trusted. Then we are turned loose on a "quest for an historical Christ" whom we are to find aside from the words of Scripture. This destroys all objectivity of faith and makes each person's imagination about Christ or Jesus the "point of departure" for any theology he may wish to accept or proclaim. The practicality of Jesus' assertion is clearly stated

in His own words: "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (John 8: 31,32)

Whether this doctrine is practical or not to a theologian will depend entirely upon the kind of theologian he wishes to be. If he wants to be a "blind leader of the blind" who imagines that his theology must keep moving, and who thinks the theologians' task is to develop new and different theologies, then, of course, there will be nothing practical in asserting "The Scripture cannot be broken." Such theology must break Scripture. It has no use for a theology that repristinates the words and teachings of Holy Scripture. But if we wish to be theologians who lead people from sin and darkness to the light of faith and joy in Christ Jesus unto eternal salvation, then this Word of God, the Holy Scriptures will ever be our own light. We will continue in them and in their doctrine: "for in doing this thou shalt both save theysself, and them that hear thee." (1 Tim. 4:16)

If we are also not to be swept away by the flood of modern literature and by the fads of each generation's "thinker" theologians, our assertion must remain a practical one. It does little good to speak highly of Scripture but to spend most of our time working with the writings of heretical men. Yes, we need to read some of this, too, as theologians so as to know what is going on in our world, how to face the issues our people must face, and how to apply Scripture properly to uphold our people, ourselves, and teachings against the attacks that come from such sources. And we ought not to kid ourselves, as though these passing fads had no effect upon modern life and thinking. But we need to keep in mind what Calvin D. Linton so well states:

Insofar as the almost insurmountable body of scholarly writing may form a barrier between the seeker of truth and the Bible itself, it may be more productive of shadow than of light. This is the real danger, not that modern scholarship has in any way discredited the Bible. Indeed, the more one immerses himself in the writings that attempt to do so, the more one realizes the validity, on intellectual and all other grounds, of the traditional view of the Bible as unique, unlike all other books, precisely because it is God's Word and not man's. . . .⁴⁷

After listing a number of books of modernists of various shades of opinion, he then warns:

Nowhere in Scripture is it promised that "Ye shall be guided in all things by the books scholars shall produce"; rather, Scripture promises that "the Comfortor, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my Name, he shall teach you all things. . . .(John 14:26)⁴⁸

It seems to me, Christ's assertion--the Scripture cannot be broken--is also of tremendous practical value if we are to meet adequately the problems of each troubled generation. Our own is going through a process of rebellion and revolution. There is revolution and rebellion on almost every front, theological no less than in social, political, economic, and moral fronts. As this takes place, crime, despair, fear, mental disorders, suicides are increasing. And let us not think that theologies that have become dialectic, existential, pragmatic, which have rejected absolutes in divine truths and moral standards, and which are more engaged in social action, civil rights, peace and war

demonstrations than in preaching Christ crucified, have had nothing to do with the rapid deterioration of our society. Church attendance and church contributions are dropping off; crime costs our nation more than twenty billion dollars a year. Religion is being separated from more and more activities of life, while atheistic, evolutionistic, and communistic philosophies are making inroads into the minds of our generation. What have we to offer if we cannot point to God's infallible truth? If the Scriptures are broken and we need to devise our own theology, dare we complain if men go all the way and proclaim God dead and man God? Ours is a practical choice: Either we accept the assertion of Christ regarding the inviolability of Scripture or we have nothing to offer this world lost in sin, except to fall into the destructive whirlpool and die with it in our sins.

We do not believe that the practicality of Christ's assertion must be judged by its popularity. Because men do not accept it and do not work with it, they quite easily blame Christianity, orthodox dogmatics, and us for throwing a Book at people when they need saving from the physical, mental, and temporal problems in which they find themselves. Jesus said: "If any man will do his will, he shall know the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." (John 7:17) The practicality of operating with Scripture as God's infallible Word can only be known when one begins to do it. Jesus, speaking of the popularity of His own message and of the blessings which nevertheless come to those who accept it, said: "I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; But unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus

the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian." (Luke 4:25f) The ability to judge the practicality of the Christian faith, also as far as it pertains to this life, remains with those who are on the "inside." This applies also to those who do or do not believe that the Scripture cannot be broken.

Let me bring this essay to a close with two quotes from Luther:

(Now lest we be misled by words, let me say here that by "assertion" I mean staunchly holding your ground, stating your position, confessing it, defending it and persevering in it unvanquished. I do not think that the term has any other meaning, . . . And I am talking about the assertion of what has been delivered to us from above in the Sacred Scriptures. . .

. . . Take away assertions, and you take away Christianity. Why, the Holy Spirit is given to Christians from heaven in order that he may glorify Christ in them and confess Him even unto death--and is this not assertion, to die for what you confess and assert? (p. 66f)⁴⁵

The Word they still shall let remain
Nor any thanks have for it;
He's by our side upon the plain
With His good gifts and Spirit.
And take they our life,
Goods, fame, child, and wife,
Let these all be gone,
They yet have nothing won;
The Kingdom ours remaineth. Amen.

SOL DEO GLORIA!

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(Essay for the Minnesota Pastoral Conference, April 3-4, 1967, at Waseca, Minnesota, by the Rev. Vernon H. Harley, Corpus Christi, Texas.)

BOOK REVIEWS

Gerhard Kittel, ed. Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol. IV. Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967, 1126 pp. \$22.50.

This volume includes all of the studies of the words from "lambda" to "nu". We here repeat what was said of a previous volume: "While Kittel's books are no Bible commentary in the true sense of the term, and while the word studies may reflect the theological thought of the various writers of those

word studies, it is still very difficult to see how anyone can do any serious study in the New Testament in the original and ignore Kittel." (Cf. LSQ, Sept. 1966)

Robert P. Lightner. The Savior and the Scriptures. Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1966, 170 pp., \$3.75.

Dr. Lightner is to be complimented for this doubly fine book. In the first part of his book he shows how Christ Himself used the Scriptures, what He thought of the Scriptures, and how the Scriptures were normative in Christ's preaching. In a day when some would separate Christ from the Scriptures in many ways, this book was certainly refreshing. In the second part of the book Dr. Lightner deals with the current errors regarding the Scriptures: neo-orthodoxy, neo-liberalism, and other movements. In the latter area he discusses at length neo-evangelism, a movement where some seem to be becoming soft on inspiration, though conservative in theology. The treatment is reasonably complete and yet simply presented. The pastor who wants enlightenment for himself or material that could be used in Bible classes or for topics in church groups would find this book most helpful. Dr. Lightner, a D. Th., is a professor at Baptist Bible Seminary, Johnson City, N. Y.

Stephen Neill. A History of Christian Missions. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1964, 622 pp., \$7.50.

The author has compressed into 577 pages of text a very complete history of the growth of the Christian Church from the days of the apostles to date.

His book is volume VI of the Pelican History of the Church. Other volumes of this series have been favorably reviewed in this journal. The author was an Anglican bishop in India and helped form the Church of South India. At present, according to the jacket, he is professor of missions and ecumenical theology at the University of Hamburg. He also has a less than conservative attitude toward the Scriptures. He is, as an Englishman, also interested especially in the mission activities of the Anglican Church and in areas where that body worked. On the other hand, other groups and areas are not neglected. As one reads the book, one can understand why he was asked to write this volume on missions in this set. What he does is to see more than just events, but also the issues and problems facing Christian missions. The book is very worth while for its history and treatment of missions.

F. Bente. Historical Introductions to the Book of Concord. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1965, 266 pp., \$3.00.

This is a reprint of the 1921 forward to the Concordia Triglotta. Those who have one of the more recent translations of the Book of Concord which lacks a complete introduction will find this book an excellent introduction.

John B. Grimley and Gordon E. Robinson. Church Growth in Central and Southern Nigeria. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1966, 386 pp., \$3.25.

Those interested in Christian work in Nigeria will enjoy reading this book on the history and

development of Christian missions in that country, a land where we once supported the mission work of the Synodical Conference. Reading about what others are doing also reminds us of what we should be doing.

Helen Stuart Griffith. The Sign Language of Our Faith. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1966, 96 pp., \$1.95.

This book is a collection of the symbols of the Christian Church, together with rather simple explanations.

Glenn E. Reichwald