



Luther at the Diet of Worms

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THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE
ACCORDING TO MARTIN LUTHER

by

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TO
MY WIFE, INEZ

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. THE SUBJECT STATED AND EXPLAINED

"There are few subjects that are more deeply involved in the religious discussions of the present day than is the authority of Holy Scripture. It matters little in what field the discussion may arise, whether in the dogmatical or the ethical, the apologetic or the practical, it is bound sooner or later, to touch upon this theme. It may be a discussion of the limits of non-resistance or of the Christian idea of God, but at some time in its course the question is certain to arise, 'What value is to be attached to the utterances of the Bible on this subject? Are they to be regarded as authoritative? If so, are there any limits to that authority, or if there are limits, where are they to be placed? What is the source of that authority, and how is it to be determined?'"¹

In these words, Jacobs clearly and strikingly brings one into the presence of the subject that is to engage the attention of this thesis. The question of the place of Scriptural authority for Christianity has been a vital issue that has engaged the concern and interest of the Christian Church at all times in its history.

Jesus, in His day, previous to the founding of the Christian Church, was faced with the same question: "By what authority doest thou these things? And who gave thee this authority?"² His questioners were doubting the

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1. Jacobs: Theological Studies, p. 195
2. Matthew 21:23

fact that Jesus was exercising His authority according to their Scriptures.

The great issue that formed the battle lines of the Reformation was that of Scriptural authority. That issue which remains as the fundamental contention between Catholicism and Protestantism today is the question of Scriptural authority for Christian faith and action.

"The objective principle¹ of Protestantism maintains that the Bible, as the inspired record of revelation, is the only infallible rule of faith and practice; in opposition to the Roman Catholic co-ordination of Scripture and ecclesiastical tradition, as the joint rules of faith."²

Furthermore, within Protestantism itself, the question of Scriptural authority has been a continuous issue. There has never been unanimity at any time as to what constitutes Scriptural authority for Protestant Christianity.

In the year 1932, a volume was published entitled: "Rethinking Missions". The whole question of Christian missions was reconsidered. There was doubt that Christian missions were established on a correct basis and carried out according to sound principles. So missions

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1. The Authority of the Scriptures is called the "Formal Principle" of the Reformation and Justification by Faith is known as the "Material Principle" of the Reformation.
2. Schaff: History of the Christian Church, p. 16

became the subject of a re-thinking and re-stating process.

Such has been the history of the matter of Scriptural authority in Protestantism. It has been the subject of continuous consideration. It has been stated and restated, established and rejected, affirmed and denied ever since the "formal principle" of the Reformation was established.

It is this question of the authority of Scripture in contradistinction to the Roman Catholic double authority or to any other authoritative claims which is to engage the attention in this investigation.

More specifically, the object is to determine the position of Luther¹, the great Reformer, respecting this fundamental question of the authority of Scripture. He wrestled with this problem. Through tribulation, anguish, and pitched battle, he came to clear-cut convictions regarding this question. By a developing process, rooted in experience and unfolded through a study of the Word itself, he progressed from the current Roman Catholic position to a conviction that has been

.

1. Luther's name has had variations in spelling: Luder, Luder, Ludher, Lutter, Luttherr, Luther. Luther himself has used some of these variations. In his preface to the Penitential Psalms, 1517, he signed his name Martinus Luder. Shortly afterwards he adopted the spelling Luther. In the University of Erfurt records, the signature, Ludher, appears. In the Wittenberg records, it appears as Luder and Luder.

fundamental in Protestantism ever since. What, then, was Luther's contribution in stating the authority of Scripture? It is this aspect, co-ordinated with that already mentioned, which will constitute the subject of investigation.

B. THE SUBJECT DELIMITED

It should be clearly evident that any investigation which has under consideration the authority of Scripture has to be delimited in scope. The necessity of limiting an investigation or a presentation often becomes imperative in order to avoid superficiality or the danger of becoming lost in the vast implications that would be unavoidable.

When the apostle John wrote the record of his witness to his Lord and Savior, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, he found that it was necessary to delimit his purpose. He first states the full scope of his subject:

"And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written."¹

In the preceding chapter, John states the principle of delimitation which directed him in penning the material that he recorded:

.

1. John 21:25

"But these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name."¹

In this study, the first delimitation to be set is that of considering the authority of Scripture. The second principle of limitation is to study the authority of Scripture in the light of those principles to which Luther was committed. Martin Luther has been chosen as the delimiting focus of this investigation because he was the instrument used, in God's hands, to break down the older principle of authority and to establish the new principle which has been the foundation ever since of the Protestant branch of Christianity.

C. THE STUDY JUSTIFIED

Let Emil Brunner of the University of Zürich in Switzerland, a modern and internationally recognized theologian, state the case concerning the justification for this study in its broadest scope:

"In a time like ours when all outward securities are shaken as perhaps never before, many are beginning to listen to truth which is not from man. A new hunger for the Word of God is passing through the world -- the English speaking world no less than Europe and the east. The Word of God is the one thing which is able to unite East and West, the whole dismembered mankind, and to reshape it into one big family of nations."²

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1. John 20:31
2. Brunner: Our Faith, pp. VII-VIII



Luther Translating the Bible

There is a growing realization of the importance of Scripture in the lives and affairs of men being evidenced in no uncertain way in these days. This realization is being evidenced by a phenomenal and growing distribution of the Scriptures. The following figures summarize the extent of this distribution for the year 1940 by the three Bible societies which are the largest producers and distributors -- The American Bible Society, the British and Foreign Bible Society, and the National Bible Society of Scotland.

	<u>BIBLES</u>	<u>TESTAMENTS</u>	<u>PORTIONS</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
A. B. S.	354,853	554,429	6,786,325	7,695,607
B.F.B.S.				11,017,334
N.B.S.S.	67,551	363,318	1,729,258	<u>2,160,127</u>
				20,873,068 ¹

The report states further that it may be assumed that commercial publishers and organizations in the world issue another five million Bibles, Testaments, and portions. These figures account for a distribution of about twenty-five million copies for the one year 1940. Another interesting and illuminating fact is that the Bible is now published in one thousand, fifty-one languages and dialects.

Furthermore, there is a growing interest in scientific study of Scripture which serves further to exalt the importance of the subject under consideration. An

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1. American Bible Society: Facts and Figures, p. 10

evidence of this growing interest and a striking illustration of it, is to be seen in the "Biblio-centric Curriculum" pioneered at The Biblical Seminary. The opening statement made in the Seminary catalogue when announcing distinguishing features reads: "The chief distinguishing feature of the training given at The Biblical Seminary in New York is the place accorded to the mastery of the Bible."¹ The influence of such an emphasis is traceable now in other seminaries, in the growing number of Bible schools and in the emphasis given to Bible study in Christian Education curricula.²

Let it also be said that this phenomenal, current Bible movement is not limited to Protestantism. It has its counterpart in the Roman Catholic Church. In a recent brochure prepared on this matter by the Roman Catholic Church, the announcement is made that a new, revised edition of the New Testament is now ready for dis-

.

1. The Biblical Seminary in New York: Catalogue, p. 12
2. In the Seminary Alma Mater of the author, English Bible study according to the Biblical Seminary method is being introduced. In the author's Synod, one Bible School is flourishing and two others have recently been opened. Approximately one hundred Bible camps, lasting a week, are conducted each summer. A new Sunday School series is replacing the one formerly used in the Lutheran Synod to which the author belongs. One of the main distinguishing features of the new series is the inclusion of Bible study materials. A new curriculum is just now being prepared for the High School department of the Sunday School which will feature a study of Bible books as organized wholes.

tribution.¹ The slogan of the movement reads: "The New Testament in every Catholic home. The teaching of Christ in every heart."²

It is gratifying, to say the least, to note the universal interest in, and enthusiasm for the message of the Bible. But, at the same time that the Bible is being distributed so widely and studied so extensively, there is a further consideration which needs to engage one's attention and which makes this investigation pertinent. There is a wide range of viewpoints current regarding the authority of Scripture. This evident disparity is confusing. One wonders where the variety of conclusions continually being presented will eventually lead. In the course of this investigation, several differing conclusions will be presented in order to indicate the fact that unanimity is lacking on this important question. The Christian world is greatly confused, and is groping for a positive and correct evaluation of Scriptural authority.

This investigation certainly does not presume to supply the final answer to the questionings current.

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1. The new edition is a revision of the Challoner-Rheims text based on the Latin Vulgate. The revision, just off the press, is the first revision of the English of the Roman Catholic New Testament, containing the imprimatur of the church, which has been published for 190 years.
2. Leaflet prepared by Confraternity Publications, N.Y.

But in the face of the many divergent viewpoints of the present day, and due to the questionings arising here and there, it should be of great value to go back to the man who again set up the beacon light of "Sola Scriptura" as authoritative, after the Christian Church had been wandering in the dark night of confused authority for centuries. It should be of value to investigate the foundational principles of authority established by the great Reformer -- principles which led to the most vigorous, vital, and rapid spread of evangelical Christianity in the history of the Christian Church, second only to that period following Pentecost Day when the Christian Church was first established. The desire to get back as nearly as possible to original sources should be justification enough for presenting Luther's view of the authority of Scripture. For it should be remembered that Luther was the spearhead, as well as the moving and moulding genius in the Reformation movement. His personality, his developed viewpoint, and his potent experiences with Scripture determined the fundamental basis on which the Reformation was established.

"The evangelical Reformation of the sixteenth century is unthinkable without Luther. As a religious movement it owed its origin directly to him and it bears the stamp of his personality and religious experience. . . . Without the religious genius, the personal faith, the dynamic of a potent personality, there would have been no far-reaching Reformation of the Church. The attempt to explain the Reformation without this cardinal element is like the attempt to explain the action of an electric machine without

the dynamo. As a religious movement the Reformation without Luther is unthinkable."¹

Further emphasis is added to the significant importance of the Reformation and to Luther as its human dynamic by these words of Kuiper:

"To understand our own present day world we must among other things understand the Reformation. To understand the Reformation we must know Luther."²

D. THE METHOD OF PROCEDURE

The approach to the stated subject of this investigation will be by way of four general avenues: The historical, the psychological, and philosophical, and the comparative. Such a procedure should insure a full-orbed presentation of the subject.

The attempt will be made at the outset to elucidate the Roman Catholic view respecting the authority of Scripture which was current at the time of the Reformation. It is necessary to do so because Luther was born into this heritage and was early influenced and later educated in this conception of authority. It was with this conception that he came into conflict and about which the Reformation struggle was waged. It was from this conflict that Luther emerged to discover a new basis of authority. In presenting the discussion of this

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1. Mackinnon: Luther and the Reformation, pp. III-IV
2. Kuiper: Martin Luther, the Formative Years, p. 3

chapter, the usual procedure will be reversed. Chronologically, the presentation will be developed in reverse. Starting with the post-Reformation formulated doctrine¹ respecting Roman Catholic authority, the investigation will move backwards into the pre-Reformation period to make clear the view then existing though not specifically formulated.

The following Chapter III will trace the historical development in Luther's life and experience that led finally to a changed and revolutionary viewpoint regarding the authority of Scripture. The transformation in Luther's convictions from the historic Roman Catholic position to the conviction of "Sola Scriptura" as authoritative was a process that was not completed until 1521 when the complete break with Roman Catholicism occurred at the Diet of Worms.

Chapter IV will offer a psychological approach to the question: "How did Luther come to his view of the authority of Scripture?" The study will seek to analyze the contribution of experience in unfolding the viewpoint at which Luther arrived. The three psychological factors

.

1. Previous to the Reformation the question of authority had not been a debated question to the extent that definitely formulated doctrine was necessary. The Council of Trent first faced the question, and in order to meet the Protestant convictions, formulated a doctrinal statement.

of personality, impression, and expression will be analyzed. Then conclusions will be presented to indicate the part that the psychological factors played in establishing Luther's mature conception of the authority of Scripture.

The study will reach its climax in a discussion of Luther's developed philosophy respecting the authority of Scripture. By a consideration of Luther's later and mature reflections upon his past life and experiences, by an analytical study of his writings, sermons, and doctrinal formulations, by a critical study of the way he interpreted Scripture, and by a presentation of his finding in Scripture the sole means of contact with God's grace, the philosophy of authority at which Luther arrived on the question of the authority of Scripture will be set forth.

Finally, in the sixth chapter, the illuminating method of comparison will be used in order to clarify the basic position on which Luther took his stand on the subject of the authority of Scripture. By comparing Luther's philosophy of authority with the widely divergent viewpoints of Orthodoxy, Rationalism, Schleiermacher, and the Dialectics, it will be possible ~~definitely to~~ postulate Luther's position in relation to several of the most significant developments on the subject of Scriptural authority. It will serve the added purpose

of bringing the investigation up to date. It will be possible to get a clearer understanding of Luther's conception of authority in relation to viewpoints which are current in the present day. In so doing, it might be possible that Luther may contribute anew to a re-discovery that may give Christianity the dynamic it possessed in its early history and which was re-discovered during the Reformation.

CHAPTER II

THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE ACCORDING TO THE HISTORIC ROMAN CATHOLIC POSITION

A. INTRODUCTION

The subject of this investigation is not an isolated one. This subject must be studied in all of its relationships to properly set it forth, to make a clear analysis of it, and to form correct conclusions about it.

The particular chapter now under consideration leads one to view the subject in its relation to the past. It is that past which created the conditions and brought about the circumstances which led the Great Reformer to experience his spiritual struggles, and which impelled him to search feverishly and tirelessly for legitimate and satisfying authority for his religious questions and problems. If it is true that Luther's discovery and contributions respecting authority of Scripture were revolutionary and epoch-making, then it is equally true that one can only fully appreciate the value of what has come as a heritage from him as one views it in relation to what had been before his time.

It becomes necessary then to lay a foundation in this chapter for the superstructure to follow in succeeding chapters. That foundation will consist in discovering just what the view of the authority of Scripture

was which was currently held in the Roman Catholic Church previous to the Reformation and which was the position held by Luther at the outset of his career as a Roman Catholic. Sabatier introduces his consideration of the Roman Catholic dogma of authority with this paragraph:

"The Roman Catholic dogma of authority took about sixteen centuries for its constitution and definition. The contemporaries of Irenaeus and Tertullian saw its birth; in our own day we have seen its completion at the Vatican Council. In this long labour is condensed and summed up the entire evolution of the Roman Catholic Church."¹

Sabatier's statement is essentially correct. The doctrine of authority moved through a slow process of evolution. This evolutionary process moved in harmony with other developments that took place in the Roman Catholic Church. What the main characteristics of that developing process respecting authority were will be set forth in the discussion of this chapter.

What the authority of Scripture in the Roman Catholic Church was, does not appear in an official doctrinal pronouncement until the Council of Trent. The Vatican Council re-affirmed the declaration of the Council of Trent and proceeded a step further in stating the developing process. The viewpoint previous to the time of these two councils is to be discerned by inference and

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1. Sabatier: Religions of Authority, p. 3

practice more than by official declaration. That such was the case is not so surprising in the light of the fact that previous to the Reformation, there was comparative unity in the church on the question of authority. When the Reformation made a fundamental issue of the question of authority, then the Roman Catholic Church found it necessary to declare itself officially.

This investigation will, therefore, follow the procedure of going from the known to the less clearly known in setting forth the viewpoint of authority that was current when Martin Luther entered upon the scene of history. The start will be made by a study of the decrees of the above named councils and of post-Reformation representative theologians and then move back into history to note the essential agreement of the pre-Reformation Roman Church with the post-Reformation Roman Catholic Church.

B. THE POSITION OF THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH AS EXPLICITLY DECLARED SINCE THE REFORMATION

1. By Councils

In his preface to the Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent, Waterworth asserts that "The Council of Trent was, perhaps, the most important of the modern General Councils of the Roman Catholic Church."¹

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1. Waterworth: The Canons and Decrees of the Sacred and Oecumenical Council of Trent, p. IV

Scheeben, a recognized modern theologian of the Roman Church, writes in the introduction to his "Manual of Catholic Theology":

"The history of theology may be divided into three epochs, which co-incide with the three great epochs of the history of the Church:-

- A. The Ancient or Patristic Epoch
- B. The Medieval or Scholastic Epoch
- C. The Modern Epoch

Each of these has as its centre one of the great councils of the Church, Patristic Theology being grouped around the Council of Nicaea, Medieval Theology around the Fourth Lateran Council, and Modern Theology around the Council of Trent."¹

This Council of Trent was convened December 13, 1545, and lasted, with interruptions, until December 4, 1563. It is to be noted that the Council followed directly upon the Reformation. One of the main subjects for consideration at this Council was the question of religious authority.

The text of the decree of the Council on the subject in question is very explicit. It is worthy of being quoted at some length because of its historically important place in stating the position of the Roman Church on religious authority at this period of its development.

"The Sacred and holy, oecumenical and general synod of Trent -- lawfully assembled in the Holy Ghost, the same three legates of the Apostolic See presiding therein -- keeping this always in view, that, errors being removed, the purity itself of the Gospel be preserved in the Church; which (Gospel), before promised through the prophets in the holy Scriptures, Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God,

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1. Scheeben: A Manual of Catholic Theology, p. XVIII

first promulgated with His own mouth, and then commanded to be preached by His apostles to every creature, as the fountain of all both saving truth and moral discipline; and seeing clearly that this truth and discipline are contained in the written books, and the unwritten traditions, which, received by the apostles from the mouth of Christ Himself, or from the apostles themselves, the Holy Ghost dictating, have come down even to us, transmitted as it were from hand to hand; (The Synod), following the example of the orthodox Fathers, receives and venerates with an equal affection of piety and reverence all the books both of the Old and of the New Testament, -- seeing that one God is the author of both, -- as also the said traditions, as well those appertaining to faith as to morals, as having been dictated either by Christ's own word of mouth or by the Holy Ghost, and preserved in the Catholic Church by a continuous succession. ... But if anyone receive not, as sacred and canonical, the said books entire with all their parts, as they have been used to be read in the Catholic Church, and as they are contained in the old Latin Vulgate edition; and knowingly and deliberately condemn the tradition aforesaid; let him be anathema."¹

It is clear from this decree that the Roman Catholic Church declares that Scripture is authoritative.² But it is asserted with at least equal force that such authority co-exists in the "unwritten tradition". It is asserted that God is the author of the "Old and New Testaments" and "Tradition" as well. Therefore, according to Roman Catholics, it is as serious to reject the traditions as it is to fail to receive the Scripture as

.

1. Waterworth, op. cit., pp. 7-10
2. A list of Canonical books is contained in the decree. In addition to the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament found in the standard versions of the Bible, the Council adds four apocryphal books. The New Testament list is identical with the twenty-seven listed in the versions in common use in Protestantism.

as canonical. Upon anyone who does not accept both as authoritative is pronounced the judgment: "Let him be anathema."¹

One step more may be taken, however, in evaluating the Roman position as set forth in the declarations of this Council. It may clearly be seen that the authority of Scripture is circumscribed by another declaration. For the church dictates, by its tradition,² that the "old Vulgate edition" is to be used.

Sabatier gives an acceptable summary analysis of the decision of the Council of Trent respecting the authority of Scripture:

"The Council of Trent placed in the same rank, as issuing from the same source of inspiration, apostolic Scriptures and tradition, beliefs and customs received by oral transmission from the apostles to our time; and that none may, as do the Protestants, set these authorities over against one another, and criticize tradition in the name of the Bible. It pronounced anathema those who warp the Scriptures according to their own sense, and in the last resort it gave the church alone the right

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1. Waterworth: op. cit., p. 10
2. The term "tradition" will be used frequently in this discussion. Note the following definition of tradition by the Catholic Theologian Devivier as found in his Christian Apologetics on page 367:
"In theological parlance, tradition is the attestation, otherwise than by Sacred Scripture, of a fact, a dogma, or a custom. ... The term tradition is applied by theologians at times to the body of truths and precepts communicated at first by the apostles by word of mouth. ... At other times it applies to the fact itself of the uninterrupted transmission of these truths or precepts. ... And finally, it applies in a comprehensive manner or sense, to these same truths and precepts as transmitted from age to age from the apostles to ourselves."

to judge of the texts and the interpretations to be put upon them."¹

Here, then, at the Council of Trent which just followed the Reformation is set forth a pronouncement for what is designated as "Double Authority". In actual application, however, the weight of authority rests with tradition. Scripture, actually, holds but a secondary position.

The Vatican Council, likewise, stands high in importance in the Catholic Church in setting forth fundamental dogmas of the church. Pope Pius IX, in convening the Council, writes about the

"abundant good results which Christendom has derived from oecumenical councils, and particularly from that of Trent. ... For, as a consequence, the sacred doctrines of the faith have been defined more closely and set forth more fully."²

Chapter II of the official decrees of this important council deals with the subject of "Revelation". This revelation is spoken of and emphasized as divine and supernatural. Because of the clarity of this declaration and the importance of it in stating the official view of the Roman Catholic Church, the following discussion deserves being quoted in full:

"Further, this supernatural revelation, according to the universal belief of the Church, declared by the sacred synod of Trent, is contained in the

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1. Sabatier: op. cit., p. 41
2. Waterworth: op. cit., p. 214

written books and unwritten traditions which, received by the apostles themselves, by the dictation of the Holy Spirit, transmitted as it were, from hand to hand, have come down even to us. And these books of the Old and New Testaments are to be received as sacred and canonical in their integrity, with all their parts, as they are enumerated in the decree of the said Council, and are contained in the ancient Latin edition of the Vulgate. These the church holds to be sacred and canonical; not because, having been carefully composed by mere human industry, they were afterward approved by her authority; not because they contain revelation, with no admixture of error; but because, having been written by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, they had God for their author, and have been delivered as such to the church itself.

"And as the things which, in order to curb rebellious spirits, the holy synod of Trent decreed for the good of souls concerning the interpretation of Divine Scripture have been wrongly explained by some, we, renewing the said decree, declare this to be its meaning: that in matters of faith and morals, appertaining to the building up of Christian doctrine, that is to be held as the true sense of Holy Scripture which our holy mother church hath held and holds, to whom it belongs to judge of the true sense and interpretation of the Holy Scriptures; and, therefore, that it is permitted no one to interpret the Sacred Scripture contrary to this sense or likewise contrary to the unanimous consent of the Fathers."¹

The Vatican Council goes further than the Council of Trent and is even more explicit concerning the question of authority. It re-emphasizes the decisions of Trent and makes additions and further explanations of its own. It maintains that the "written books" and "unwritten traditions" are equally God-inspired. They were, it is asserted: "Received by the apostles from the mouth of Christ Himself, or from the apostles themselves, by the

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1. Waterworth: op. cit., pp. 220-222

dictation of the Holy Spirit."¹ Furthermore, the accepted revelation in Scripture is declared to be the Latin edition of the Vulgate.

The distinctive contribution which definitely subordinates Scripture to tradition is to be noted in the closing portion of the above quotation. It is of such significance that it is quoted again in the present relationship:

"That is to be held as the true sense of Holy Scripture which our holy mother church hath held and holds, to whom it belongs to judge of the true sense and interpretation of the Holy Scriptures; and, therefore, that it is permitted no one to interpret the Sacred Scripture contrary to this sense or likewise contrary to the unanimous consent of the Fathers."²

The progression in development is complete. The final and absolute seat of authority is declared. The final appeal to authority in the Roman Catholic Church rests, not with Scripture but with tradition. Scripture is authoritative only as written in the Latin Vulgate. That Scripture again is authoritative only insofar as it is interpreted by tradition.

2. By Theologians

Now a further explanation and clarification of the developed post-Reformation view of the authority of Scripture as taught by the Roman Catholic Church will be given.

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1. Waterworth; op cit., p. 220
2. Ibid., p. 222

This developed viewpoint may be gleaned from representative theologians of the church. In studying the presentations of these theologians, a characteristic type of scholastic rationalization is apparent. Superficial generalizations and questionable reasoning are multiplied until the system stands complete.

Scheeben, in his dogmatic work, "The Manual of Catholic Theology", typifies the Roman Catholic method of attempting to establish the validity of their view of authority. A part of Scheeben's presented logic will be traced to indicate the method. In speaking of Revelation, he asserts:

"The only efficient mode of transmitting revelation with authority is that the Word of God, after having once been spoken, should be continually proposed to mankind by his authoritative envoys. ... These envoys are called the Teaching Body; their functions are called the Apostolate."¹

Scripture, then, according to Scheeben, is dependent in its transmission upon the accredited teachers and envoys of the Church. It is the Church system and organization that he attempts to vindicate. He then adds another link to his chain of argument when he says:

"The promulgation of revealed truths, being an act of God as sovereign Lord of all creatures, must be made in the name of His sovereign authority and by ambassadors invested with a share of that authority."²

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1. Scheeben: op. cit., p. 17
2. Ibid., p. 18

He quotes Scripture passages and statements from the Fathers to support the above contention. But when such passages as Matthew 28:18-19 and Acts 1:8 are used, it becomes evident that he is identifying the command to all believers with the external organization of the Roman Catholic Church. The logic then goes on to declare:

"A strong argument in favor of the divine origin of the Apostolate, stronger even than the proof from the Holy Scriptures and early Fathers, may be drawn from its actual existence and working in the Catholic Church."¹

The Apostolate is identified with the Roman Catholic Church. "The Apostolate belongs to the Hierarchy."² The Apostolate is invested in the papacy and is infallible. The infallibility which crowns the system is thus defined: "Infallibility means merely that what the church teaches cannot be false."²

It becomes clearly apparent even from such a brief consideration that the finally developed Roman Catholic seat of authority is first and foremost invested in tradition which also includes the Church organization. In fact, some of their theologians become polemical in making such a claim.

"It follows from what we have already said, that the Church could dispense with Holy Scripture, but

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1. Scheeben: op. cit., p. 31
2. Ibid., p. 32
3. Ibid., p. 45

but cannot dispense with tradition."¹

The same thought is asserted by Scheeben, too.

"Oral tradition could, absolutely speaking be the sole source of faith, because it could hold its own even if no other written Deposit existed, whereas, as we have shown, the inspiration and interpretation of Scripture cannot be known without the aid of Tradition."²

He finally goes on to summarize the exalted place accorded tradition by saying:

"On the whole, we may say that Oral Tradition is the living and authentic commentary upon the written document, yet, at the same time, not a mere commentary, but something self-subsistent, confirming, illustrating, completing and vivifying the text."³

Fenelon, also, adds his confirmation to the above contention. In defending the Roman Catholic practice of forbidding the reading of Scripture in certain periods of its history, he writes:

"After having considered these so frequent examples, can we be otherwise than convinced, that the faithful may attain perfection without reading the Scriptures, -- since thus the Church which teaches them by the Spirit of her divine spouse, becomes to them a living Scripture; and a Scripture, distributed amongst them, in a way, of all others, the best adapted and proportioned, to their capacities and wants?"⁴

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1. Hunter: Outlines of Dogmatic Theology, Vol. I, p. 153
2. Scheeben: op. cit., p. 68
3. Ibid., p. 69
4. Fenelon: Use of the Bible, pp. 7-8

3. By Footnotes in English Translations of the Latin Vulgate

The Douay English version of the Latin Vulgate is officially recognized by the Roman Catholic Church. That tradition dictates the proper understanding of many passages becomes evident when one examines the footnote explanations given in the Douay version. Scripture is not allowed to speak for itself. Tradition determines the interpretation to be given.

An illustration of the above stated fact may be noted in the footnote added to Matthew 6:11. The Scripture verse reads: "Give us this day our daily bread."¹ The footnote reads: "In St. Luke the same word is rendered daily bread. It is understood of the bread of life, which we receive in the Blessed Sacrament."² The explanation is chronologically wrong. The Lord's Supper was not known when Jesus taught His disciples the Lord's Prayer. The explanation is textually wrong, too. The original Greek does not indicate such an interpretation.

Another illustration of the way in which tradition dictates to Scripture may be seen in James 5:14-20.

The following footnote is added to verse 14:

"See here a plain warrant of Scripture for the Sacrament of Extreme Unction, that any controversy against its institution would be against the express

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1. Holy Bible: Douay Version, New Testament, p. 9
2. Ibid.

words of the sacred text in the plainest terms."¹
Luther gives a clear refutation of this interpretation.
Luther's refutation is quoted in a later treatment in
this same chapter.²

Again note the footnote that is added as an explanation of verse 16 from the same chapter in James:

"Confess your sins one to another." "That is, to the priests of the church, whom, verse 14, he had ordered to be called for, and brought in to the sick: moreover, to confess to persons who had no power to forgive sins would be useless. Hence the precept here means, that we must confess to men whom God hath appointed, and who, by their ordination and jurisdiction, have received the power of remitting sins in his name."³

It is plain that tradition is dictating the proper Roman Catholic understanding of the passage. When a member of the Roman church reads Scripture, he reads it in the light of the manner in which tradition explains it. In the above mentioned particular case, it is plain that the footnote is not an explanation or clarification of the text. Instead, a doctrine from tradition is superimposed on Scripture.

C. THE POSITION OF THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH PREVIOUS TO THE REFORMATION CLEARLY IDENTICAL WITH THE POST-REFORMATION POSITION

This investigation now moves from the realm of the

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1. Holy Bible: Douay Version, New Testament, p. 262
2. Post., Chapter II, p. 54
3. Holy Bible: op. cit., pp. 262-263

definitely known and officially postulated to the sphere of that which must be determined indirectly, by inference, by casual statements, and by deduction together with some explicit statements.

The fact that it has been stated that this study will now move from the era when there were official declarations by popes, and councils, to a period when there were no such definite pronouncements, should not lead to a hasty conclusion that this investigation is moving onto uncertain ground, or that the conclusions will consist mostly of speculations. The question of authority had long been in a static, and unquestioned state, officially. The voices that had been raised had not as yet made impact enough to cause Rome to speak officially. For centuries, the papacy had ruled with strong authority. Because the Roman Church had spoken authoritatively, the adherents had not seriously questioned the matter of the source of the authority exercised in matters pertaining to the Christian faith and life. Since the matter of authority was taken for granted, there existed no reason for formulating an official pronouncement. That fact is affirmed by the Catholic theologian, Hunter:

"The doctrine of the Catholic Church on the subject (of authority) is declared by the Council of Trent. The point had never been expressly de-

fined before the sixteenth century because it had never been called in question.^{#1}

It would be an unfounded conclusion to say that the view of authority officially decreed at Trent, and subsequently re-affirmed, was a new development within the Roman Church. This investigation will present evidence that there existed the same double authority principle previous to the Reformation, too. In fact, the evidence will very clearly demonstrate that the double authority standard, with Scriptural authority subservient to the authority of tradition, was a dominant situation previous to the Reformation. That accepted conclusion was the vital background and the determining and guiding principle for all faithful members of the Roman Catholic Church for some time before the Reformation. This contention will now be established.

1. The Use of the Bible before the Reformation

In the first chapter of his book, "Luther's German Bible", Reu calls attention to the fact that during the last century there have been erroneous but prevalent or dominant opinions regarding the pre-Reformation era. One of the erroneous opinions to which he refers is "that the Holy Scriptures were largely unknown among the

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1. Hunter: op. cit., p. 106

clergy and utterly unfamiliar to the laity."¹ That this erroneous but prevalent idea about the pre-Reformation era is wrong can be established.

a. The Bible in Latin

Reu states that "it would not be surprising if there were twenty thousand Latin Bible manuscripts in circulation in the fifteenth century."² Copinger is quoted by the same authority as estimating that a total of from twenty thousand to twenty-seven thousand Latin printed Bibles had been published before 1520. In addition, there were Latin History Bibles which contained the historical portions of the Scripture. There were also the Latin Plenaria which included the portions needed for the celebration of the mass. Furthermore, the Latin Psalters, too, were much used during the middle ages.³ With so many Latin Bibles in circulation, the Holy Scriptures certainly were known.

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1. Reu: Luther's German Bible, p. 1
2. Ibid., p. 7
3. It must be borne in mind that the Bible of the pre-Reformation period in the Roman Catholic Church was the Latin Vulgate. This version had been originally translated by Jerome who died in 420 A.D. While in many ways an excellent translation, yet there are mistranslations and, in transmission, corruptions have crept into the text in the years following. Another thing to be remembered is that the science of textual criticisms has progressed tremendously since that time and that fact makes the Vulgate far inferior to our modern Greek text and the resulting versions in other languages. The German translations, preceding that of Luther's translation, were made from this same Latin Vulgate.

b. The Bible in German

Another of the erroneous statements of the last century, referred to in the introduction of this discussion, was that Luther was the first to translate the Bible into the German language. This idea is as mistaken as the one already mentioned. The discussion to follow will serve to clarify both of the stated misconceptions.

The oldest German manuscript of the Bible dates from the eighth century. Fragments from this translation are now in the Vienna Hofbibliothek.

William Walther labored for many years in investigating the subject of early German translations of the Bible. He states that:

"In the period between 1325 and 1350 we find that four different translations of the entire Bible were produced and, in addition, three Old Testaments, two New Testaments, five books of the Gospels, twenty psalters, and several other books of the Bible."¹

Walther, too, is the authority for an estimate that thirty-six thousand manuscripts of the Bible in German were written in the Middle Ages.

The following table indicates the extent of printed editions of the German Bible previous to the Luther Bible of 1534:

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1. Walther: Testschrift, quoted by Reu: op. cit., p.23

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|-----|-------|----------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. | 1466. | At Strassburg. | Published by John Mentel |
| 2. | 1470. | At Strassburg. | Published by Heinrich Eggesteyn |
| 3. | 1473. | At Augsburg. | Published by Jodocus Pflanzmann |
| 4. | 1473. | At Augsburg. | Published by Guenther Zainer |
| 5. | 1474. | At Nuremberg. | Published by Sensenschind |
| 6. | 1477. | At Augsburg. | Published by Guenther Zainer |
| 7. | 1477. | At Augsburg. | Published by A. Sorg |
| 8. | 1480. | At Augsburg. | Published by A. Sorg |
| 9. | 1483. | At Nuremberg. | Published by A. Koburger |
| 10. | 1485. | At Strassburg. | Published by Johann Gruniger |
| 11. | 1487. | At Augsburg. | Published by H. Schoensperger |
| 12. | 1490. | At Augsburg. | Published by H. Schoensperger |
| 13. | 1507. | At Augsburg. | Published by H. Otmar |
| 14. | 1518. | At Augsburg. | Published by H. Otmar |

Besides the above, there were four printed Bibles in some Low German Dialects:

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|----|-------|-----------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. | 1480. | At Cologne. | Published by H. Quentell |
| 2. | 1480. | At Cologne. | Published by H. Quentell |
| 3. | 1494. | At Lubeck. | Published by Arndes |
| 4. | 1522. | At Halberstadt. | Published by Trutebul ¹ |

Just as in the Latin, so there were in the German, History Bibles, Plenaria, and Psalters.

It becomes plainly evident, even from this cursory analysis, that the Bible was decidedly available in Latin and in German, and was used in the pre-Reformation period. Later, in this chapter, the manner in which the Bible was used and the authority it held will be discussed.

c. The Bible a Part of the Theological Curriculum

Furthermore, it is a well known fact that the study of the Bible was a part of the theological education of a priest in the pre-Reformation period. Previous to the

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1. Norlie: The Translated Bible, pp. 75-76

Reformation, the University of Paris held the position of leadership among universities. There the theological curriculum began with lectures on the Scriptures. The theological curriculum was also concluded with exegetical lectures on the Bible.¹

The German universities used the same plan as the University of Paris. That the Bible was a part of the prescribed theological course for the priesthood is further demonstrated by the record of Luther's education for the priesthood.²

d. The Bible Extensively Quoted in Writings of Theologians

One could do no better than to use Thomas Aquinas as a typical example of how medieval theologians used the Scripture. In fact, one would then be using as an example the theologian who is looked upon by the Catholic Church as the prince among their theologians. In an encyclical, Leo XIII writes about Aquinas as follows: "Now far above all other Scholastic Doctors towers Thomas Aquinas, their master and prince."³

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1. The following quotation from the University of Paris statute established the above statements: "Primo quod scolares, qui noviter incipiunt audire theologiam (primis) quatuor annis portent vel partari faciant ad scholas biblici Bibliam, in qua lectiones Bibliae audiant." Quoted by Reu: op. cit., p. 312
2. Post, Chap. III, pp. 79-80
3. Aquinas: Summa Theologica, Introduction, Vol. I, p. xxiii

Urban V writes to the University of Toulouse:

"It is our will, and by the authority of these letters we enjoin you, that you follow the doctrine of the Blessed Thomas as true and Catholic, and strive to unfold it with your whole strength."¹

In dealing with the subject of God in his supreme work, the "Summa Theologica", Aquinas undergirds his presentation with abundant use of Bible passages. He uses one hundred five references from the Bible in that chapter alone. The same method is employed when he deals with other parts of his presentation of systematic theology. Of course, the proportion of Bible references used varies considerably. When Aquinas deals with subjects such as indulgences and purgatory, then his appeal is to other sources. But the point is that Scripture was used abundantly by this eminent theologian who still holds the highest esteem among the theologians of the Roman Catholic Church.

2. The Bible, in Theory, Made to Share Authority with Tradition

The fact that the Bible was used and that it held a position of authority in the Roman Catholic Church preceding the Reformation has been established. However, the most important consideration is not that the Bible was used but how it was used. The present day with its

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1. Aquinas: op. cit., p. XXVI

hundreds of sects, practically all of which make claims to use the Bible and yet arrive at such a wide divergence of views, bears evidence that the deciding issue is not that the Bible is used but how it is used. Theoretically, the pre-Reformation Roman Catholic Church gave tradition an equal place of authority with the Bible.

a. Demonstrated by Thomas Aquinas in His Summa Theologica

Aquinas was a voluminous writer. But, of his writings, the "Summa Theologica" is the greatest. In the introduction to this eighteen volume work, is an article on "The Scholastic Philosophy". The contributing writer makes this evaluation of the writings of Aquinas: "This famous work was the last and greatest written by St. Thomas Aquinas."¹ That one might properly appreciate the place accorded "The Angelic Doctor", this evaluation should be added, too:

"But we come now to the greatest glory of Thomas -- a glory which is altogether his own, and shared with no other Catholic Doctor. In the midst of the Council of Trent, the assembled Fathers so willing it, the Summa of Thomas Aquinas lay open on the altar, with the Holy Scriptures and the decrees of the Supreme Pontiffs, that from it might be sought counsel and reason and answers."²

Aquinas, honored and recognized to such an extent by the outstanding Council of the post-Reformation era,

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1. Aquinas: op. cit., p. LXIII
2. Ibid., p. XXVI

makes appeals to both Scripture and tradition. Evidence of that fact may be definitely noted in an analysis of portions of the "Summa Theologica". In dealing with the subject of God, Aquinas appeals to and quotes Scripture one hundred five times. But, it is also to be noted that he appeals to and quotes the Fathers ninety-three times.¹ The proportion is so even that it may be seen that his authority is a double authority -- Scripture and tradition alike.

Often Aquinas grounds his doctrinal system in Scripture. At other times when there is lack of Scriptural evidence, his appeal is equally strong to tradition. When, for instance, he writes of indulgences, he says:

"Further, the universal Church cannot err, since He who 'was heard for His reverence (Heb. 5:7)' said to Peter, on whose profession of faith the Church was founded: 'I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not (Luke 22:32)'. Now the universal Church approves and grants indulgences have some value. ... All admit that indulgences have some value; for it would be blasphemy to say that the Church does anything in vain."²

He then proceeds to further state the value of indulgences:

"For some maintain that indulgences have not the efficacy claimed for them, but that they simply avail each individual in proportion to his faith and devotion. ... But this seems a very dangerous assertion to make. For as Augustine says (Ep. ad Hieron. LXXVIII) 'If any error were discovered in Holy Writ, the authority of Holy Writ would perish.'

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1. Of the Fathers, Aquinas quotes Augustine the greatest number of times -- forty-seven in all.
2. Aquinas: op. cit., p. 308

In like manner, if any error were to be found in the Church's preaching, the doctrine would have not authority in settling questions of faith."¹

According to Aquinas, then, the Bible is authoritative; but if Scripture is declared authoritative, tradition is no less so.

b. Demonstrated by Controversial Declarations

Controversial debates tend to draw out participants to express themselves very frankly. In the heat of debate, deepest convictions are expressed without reservation. An excellent vantage point from which to see and learn what current Roman Catholic teaching and practice were respecting religious authority is to sit in on the controversial engagements between Luther and his Roman Catholic opponents, and to read letters written during the heat of the Reformation struggle. It will be plainly evident that Luther's opponents regarded tradition authoritative along with Scripture.

The most famous of the Reformation theological debates was that at Leipzig. The main contention between the disputants, Eck² and Luther, was concerning the ques-

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1. Aquinas, op. cit., p. 312
2. John Eck of Ingolstadt was probably Luther's most skillful and learned opponent in the Reformation struggle. He was the Roman Catholic chief spokesman at Leipzig. He was the chief author of the papal bull Exsurge Domine.

tion of authority. As the battle of words waged hot and furious, the disputants declared themselves unequivocally.

Luther asserts:

"It is not in the power of the Roman Pontiff or the inquisitor of heresy to establish new articles of faith, but only to judge according to those established. Nor can any believing Christian be compelled to believe whatever is beyond Scripture, which alone is of divine authority. ... Even the canonists declare that the opinion of a single private person is more valid than that of Pope or Council if it is supported by a better authority or reason."¹

Eck countered violently by charging Luther of defending the heresy of the Hussites. "It is an axiomatic truth," he declared, "that an opinion on which a Council or a Pope has pronounced, cannot be defended without suspicion of heresy." He further maintained that what a Council determines and defines in matters of faith is true. The disputation reached a climax as Eck declared:

"But this I say to you, that, if you believe that a Council lawfully assembled has erred or errs, you are to me a heathen and a publican."²

Correspondence carried on by John Eck during the controversy is available, and further substantiates the fact that the Roman Catholic Church held to the double authority principle. Eck wrote a letter to Elector Frederick of Saxony, dated July 22, 1519. He is writing of Luther and says:

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1. W. Ed.: Vol. II, p. 279
2. Ibid., p. 311

"Your grace may judge that he does not to this day in the least moderate his views, in that on a certain matter he denies and repudiates the opinion of the Holy Fathers Augustine, Ambrose, Jerome, Gregory, Leo, Cyprian, Chrysostom, and Bernard. It sounds evil for a Christian to presume to say that of his own wisdom he understands the sense of Holy Scripture better than the Holy Fathers."¹

Eck further writes to Elector Frederick on November 8, 1519:

"And as every Christian knows that the Holy Scripture is prized and honored before all else, I have written that no one should interpret Scripture according to his own reason, but should follow the doctrine of the Fathers. Then here comes Luther and calls it my own prating and sets up this goal, 'that if he has a clear text he will abide by it even if the exegesis of the doctors is against it.' May your grace note the impertinence that is concealed in his cowl! That is the same principle which led all heretics astray, namely their own self-conceit, so that they won't follow anyone else, but think they understand better than all the doctors. ... I trust much more in the dear saints than in my own blunt reason."²

Plainly Eck repudiated the sole authority of Scripture and held firmly to the double authority principle. In fact, there are arguments here used which will fit well into a later discussion in which attempts will be made to show that the Catholic principle of authority makes Scriptural authority subservient to that of tradition.

But there were others, too, in the midst of the controversy who expressed themselves equally forcefully and plainly. Emperor Maximilian wrote a letter to Pope Leo X,

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1. Smith: Luther's Correspondence, Vol. I, p. 203
2. Ibid., p. 247

dated on August 5, 1518. Remembering the background of Luther's insistence that Scripture alone is authoritative and that it was this insistence which was chiefly responsible for the disturbed state of the church in Germany, this letter becomes highly illuminating.

"If the authority of your Holiness and of the most reverend Fathers does not put an end to such doctrines, soon their authors will not only impose on the unlearned multitude, but will win the favor of princes, to their mutual destruction. If we shut our eyes and leave them the field open and free, it will happen, as they chiefly desire, that the whole world will be forced to look on their follies instead of on the best and most holy Doctors."¹

Certainly one may believe that Pope Leo X speaks authoritatively on the current Roman Catholic teaching concerning authority. Pope Leo wrote to Elector Frederick of Saxony on July 8, 1520:

"For the man (Luther) has been carried to such a height of pride and madness that he has dared openly to say and write that he will have faith neither in the writings of the holy doctors, nor in the decrees of the Roman Pontiffs, but only in himself and his own opinions, which is more than any heretic has hitherto presumed to do."²

A misrepresentation of that for which Luther contended is evident in the latter part of the quotation.

Finally, note the quotation from the correspondence of Jerome Aleander.³ Aleander was evidently commission-

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1. Smith: op. cit., pp. 99-100
2. Ibid., p. 335
3. Jerome Aleander (1480-1542) became papal Librarian in 1519. In 1520, Pope Leo sent him as a legate to Charles V to act against Luther. He played a very prominent part in the proceedings at the Diet of Worms.

ed to keep the authorities in Rome well informed about the state of affairs during the Reformation struggle and to report the developments. Aleander wrote to Cardinal Lawrence Pucci at Rome, December 17, 1520:

"Then to refute him (Luther) I cited many sayings of the Oecumenical Councils, and of the Greek and Latin Fathers. ... As the whole quarrel is about the authority of the Pope, I made thorough studies on the subject. In his new blasphemous book on the Babylonian Captivity, this mohammed says that there are no distinctions among men; that where the Pope can dispense, every simple layman has full freedom both for himself and for his neighbor, and other monstrosities which I fear to repeat."¹

Following is an excerpt from another letter by Aleander to Cardinal De' Medici at Rome, dated April 18-19, 1521. Referring to the Diet at Worms, he declares:

"But he would not recant one word of any of these three kinds of books unless he were convinced of error in a debate, and by the authority of Old or New Testament only. If he recanted on any other ground, to which, however, he would never consent, he would act against his own conscience and divine truth."²

When Luther was asked to recant what he had written against the holy Council of Constance, Aleander reports:

"He refused, and would only submit to the decrees of the Council in as far as they were founded on the authority of the Bible, for, he said, Councils had erred and contradicted one another."³

Finally, a letter under joint authorship by Caracciolo and Aleander to Cardinal De' Medici at Rome, dated

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1. Smith: op. cit., pp. 426-427
2. Ibid., p. 529
3. Ibid.

April 27, 1521 is valuable in proving Catholic double authority. The writers are referring to a meeting following the Diet at Worms.

"Present were the official of Trier and the Dean of the Church of our Lady at Frankfort, who was formerly at Rome and now with the best intentions as a strong Catholic theologian writes against Luther. Then in a Latin oration the official admonished Martin to recant his errors and recognize the councils, decrees, traditions and usages of the Church."¹

There is an abundance of other material available to establish the statement that the Bible, in theory, was made to share authority with tradition in the pre-Reformation era. The above should suffice, especially in the light of the fact that the Roman Catholic Church itself admits and asserts that such was her position at that time.

3. The Bible, in Practice, Considered Subservient to the Authority of Tradition

Before leaving the subject of the authority of Scripture according to the historic Roman Catholic position, it becomes necessary to establish another fact as true in the pre-Reformation period. The fact to be established is stated in the above title. Not only was the Catholic view of authority a divided or shared authority, but in actual practice, Scripture was decidedly placed in a subservient role, as in the post-Reformation

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1. Smith: op. cit., p. 543

era. That fact led to the gradual changing character of the Roman Catholic Church and to the flagrant abuses that arose within the church. There are several approaches that might be made to show that in practice the Roman Catholic Church made Scripture subservient to tradition.

a. By the Confused and Often Meaningless Method of Biblical Interpretation

Reu gives a lucid historical summary of the pre-Reformation method of interpreting Scripture.

"Since the time of Hippolytus and Origin it had been been customary in the Church to speak of a double meaning of Scripture; the literal meaning and the figurative meaning, though many names were given to the latter and it was variously subdivided. The principle of exegesis was adopted by the middle ages as a matter taken for granted. Thomas Aquinas supplied a theoretical basis and others followed him in practice. In actual use the figurative sense was further divided till finally it became usual to speak of a fourfold meaning of Scripture; the literal sense, the allegorical, the tropological and the anagogical."¹

Just what this fourfold method of interpretation was can best be explained by illustrating it. Using Jerusalem as an example:

according to the literal sense, Jerusalem is a city in Judaea;

according to the allegorical sense, Jerusalem is a designation for good men;

according to the tropological sense, Jerusalem signifies

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1. Reu: Op. cit., p. 124

virtues; and,
according to the anagogical sense, Jerusalem signifies
the rewards which come to good men.

Or, using Babylon in a similar way:
literally, it is a city;
allegorically, it refers to evil men;
tropologically, it signifies the vices of evil men; and,
anagogically, it refers to the punishments of evil men.

This method of interpretation offered the scholastic theologian a tremendous field in which to exercise his ingenuity in endless sophistry. It led to all kinds of meaningless, hairsplitting play on words, and imaginative presentations. By such a fourfold method, it was possible for the Church to prove anything it wished to foist upon the people.

One needs only to see the spiritual condition of the Church or to study the spiritual darkness in which Luther struggled, to understand that the current Scriptural interpretation and teaching of the day was impotent and confusing. It surely has to be admitted that Luther zealously sought for light. His teachers, using the current method of interpreting Scripture, could not and did not present the true and clear Scriptural sense and truth. When finally Luther let Scripture interpret Scripture, and the clear, literal meaning was allowed to speak for itself, then he found light.

The havoc raised by the current method of Scriptural interpretation may be seen as one notes the way in which Luther later attacked it after he had broken from it.

"The Holy Ghost is the most simple Author and Speaker in heaven and on earth, therefore His words cannot have more than the one most simple meaning."¹

"If one concedes that Scripture has more than one sense, then it loses its fighting force."²

b. By the Obvious Fact that Scripture Was but a Crutch Used to Support Church Traditions

Nothing can be more obvious than the fact that Scripture is used over and over again as merely a supporting prop for the Roman Church tradition. One of the most glaring evidences of that fact may be noted in the Roman Catholic misinterpretation of Matthew 16:16-19, especially the first half of verse 18: "And I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church."³ The Greek of this verse reads:

ΚΑΙ ΕΓΩ ΔΕ ΤΟΙΣ ΛΕΓΩ ΟΤΙ ΤΥ ΕΙ ΠΕΤΡΟΣ,
ΚΑΙ ΕΠΙ ΤΑΥΤΗ Τῇ ΠΕΤΡΑ ΟΙΚΟΔΟΜΗΣΩ
ΜΟΥ ΤΗΝ ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑΝ.

The Roman Catholic Church has used this Scripture passage as a basis for the doctrine that the Church was

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1. Luther: W. Ed., Vol. VII, p. 650
2. Ibid., Vol. X, p. 169
3. Matthew 16:18

established on Peter. He, they say, according to the authority of this passage, was the first pope, and that each succeeding pope has inherited that same exalted position.

An exegetical study will now be made of this crucial passage in order to establish the statement made that Scripture is often used as a crutch by the Roman Catholic Church to support Church tradition.¹

Jesus had completed His Galilean ministry. The development among the people of belief and unbelief had reached a climax. The lines between those who accepted Him, and those who rejected Him had been clearly drawn. Jesus realized that the time was approaching when He must suffer and die, thus leaving the world with His visible presence. His chief concern was about His disciples -- those who were to form the nucleus of His Church which was to carry His message of salvation to all the world. With the plan in view of giving special training to His

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1. In presenting this study, one is aware of the fact that there is no unanimity among Protestant theologians on the interpretation of this passage. However, it may be said that all the interpretations of Protestant exegetes agree that there is nothing in this passage which lends support to the Roman Catholic interpretation that Christ designated Peter as the first in a line of apostolic succession which has been carried on by the popes of the Roman Church to the present day. None of the interpretations by those who are out to discover, in an objective manner, what is in Scripture, have found support for the view that the Church is to be built on Peter, the man.

ambassadors, Jesus withdrew to the region of Caesarea Philippi.

At this "spiritual retreat", occurred a great climax in the training of the twelve. Step by step, Jesus had led these men on in their understanding of His person and His work. Now he confronted them with a crucial examination in which His purpose was to lead them to a clear understanding, a firm heart-conviction, and an open confession of Him -- their Messiah.

The approach to the question was psychologically perfect. Jesus used the method of contrast. "Who do men say that the Son of Man is?"¹ A variety of answers followed. Each answer was weighed by the serious-minded, thoughtful, concerned group. Each made a mental evaluation of the various answers that were given: "Some say John the Baptist; some Elijah; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets."² The above named men were great in their history and held a high place in their allegiance. Then, into that setting, Jesus projected the question about which they had to be clear as His representatives: "But who say ye that I am?"³

To the crucial question, Peter, who was so often the quick and ready spokesman, gave a classic answer: "Thou

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1. Matthew 16:13
2. Matthew 16:14
3. Matthew 16:15

art the Christ, the Son of the living God."¹ Mark records the answer as follows: "Thou art the Christ."² Luke's record is equally short and simple: "The Christ of God."³ But the record of each of the three evangelists is identical in thought.

The great purpose that Jesus had had in mind on this occasion and also throughout His ministry was now realized. His own had accepted and acclaimed Him to be who He was. The glimpses given of His relationship to His Father, the manifestation of His unique personality, the unusual works He had performed, and the messages He had delivered had all prepared the ground for just this confession by His disciples. Every preceding event, and the psychology of His approach on this particular occasion were driving to the end that such an acknowledgment might be given as Peter had voiced. All of this dramatic setting had a bearing on the answer given by Peter. The whole setting had placed the spotlight on "Christ, the Son of the living God".

The objective toward which Jesus had worked and for which he had hoped now was realized. He thoroughly approved of Peter's answer. He experienced one of the happiest moments of His ministry. In response, Jesus ad-

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1. Matthew 16:16
2. Mark 8:29
3. Luke 9:20

dressed Peter because he had been the spokesman in answering His question. Jesus' answer is a play on words but a hearty approval of the statement Peter had made. "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church."¹ The whole context clearly indicates that He is stating the fact that His Church is to be built on that great truth voiced by Peter.

A word study will throw further light on the passage. $\tau\upsilon \epsilon\acute{\iota} \pi\epsilon\tau\rho\omicron\varsigma$. It is to be noted that $\pi\epsilon\tau\rho\omicron\varsigma$ is masculine in form. The word has a very distinct meaning. According to Thayer, it signifies a detached fragment or a rock.² Robinson states that it means a rock or a stone.³ Liddell and Scott define the word as a stone in contrast to a rock or a crag.⁴

$\pi\epsilon\tau\rho\alpha$ is feminine in form. That fact sets it in sharp contrast to the masculine $\pi\epsilon\tau\rho\omicron\varsigma$. The contrast is apparent, not only because of the difference in form, but also because of a difference in meaning.

$\pi\epsilon\tau\rho\alpha$ is defined by Thayer as a massive rock.⁵ Robinson defines it as a projecting rock or a cliff.⁶

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1. Matthew 16:18
2. Thayer: A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, p. 507
3. Robinson: A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, p. 655
4. Liddell and Scott: Greek-English Lexicon, p. 557
5. Thayer: op. cit., p. 507
6. Robinson: op. cit., p. 655

Liddell and Scott speak of it as a crag.¹ πέτρα points to something greater, stronger, more massive, and solid than πέτρος.

There is evident purpose in the double contrast. Had Christ wanted to state what the Roman Catholic Church declares, He would certainly have made that fact clear by agreement in word usage instead of by presenting a contrast. Instead of ἐπὶ ταύτῃ τῇ πέτρᾳ, He could very clearly have said: ἐπὶ τοῦ. But He did not.

There must have been a reason in Jesus' mind for shifting from the one form to the other, and from the one word meaning to another. The contrast in word meaning would indicate that the πέτρος is a derivative, from πέτρα : a fragment from a crag; a smaller stone from a rock. The thought would then be: "Simon Bar-Jonah, you are πέτρος because of πέτρα.

Jesus' answer revealed a great truth to Peter. That truth was concerning the person of Christ. That truth was comprehensive in that it included both the office and the nature of Christ. He was Christ, the Messiah. He was also the living Son of God. That revelation, voiced by Peter, seems the most evident antecedent for πέτρα. The thought would then be as follows: "You are Peter --

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1. Liddell and Scott: op. cit., p. 557

ΠΈΤΡΟΣ (A grace-derived characteristic) and on this rock -- ΠΈΤΡΑ (the crag, or cliff, or bed-rock foundation of the nature and the work of Christ, revealed to you, and which you have declared) I will build my Church."

It is interesting to note that Jerome's translation of the Latin Vulgate is true to the Greek text: "Et ego dico tibi, quia tu es Petrus, et super hanc Petram aedificabo ecclesiam meam."¹ Jerome carries over the same distinction in gender between the two words. According to Jerome, Peter is a stone and the stone of his character is due to the bed-rock, Christ, on which the Church is built.

It has been stated that the context of the immediate occasion lends its support to the above interpretation of Matthew 16:18. Not only so, but the context of the whole Bible gives added support for the interpretation given.

There are numerous passages that carry the same imagery as Matthew 16:18 and specifically state that the foundation on which the Church or on which Christianity is to be built is none other than Jesus Christ. This approach follows the important Reformation principle of letting Scripture interpret Scripture.

An illustration may be seen in Peter's own writing

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1. The Hexaglott Bible, Vol. V, p. 94

-- His first Epistle. Peter is much older when he writes this Epistle than when he had spoken in Matthew 16:18. Years of labor, experiences, and sorrows had been his lot. His understanding of the Christian faith had ripened. He was giving a beautiful testimony of the Christian faith and hope to a people enduring severe trials, and persecutions. Peter was speaking from experience. In chapter II of the Epistle, he is speaking of the quality and character of the Christian life as it should be lived by his readers. He tells them that Christ is the living stone on which they are to be built. He adds confirmation to this truth by quoting twice from Isaiah¹, and once from the Psalmist². The quotations carry the same imagery. The import of the whole passage is so admirably stated by Maclaren that we add it:

"For we may surely take the text as the Apostle's own disclaimer of that which the Roman Catholic Church has founded on it, has blazoned it, in gigantic letters round the dome of St. Peter's, as meaning. It is surely legitimate to hear him saying in these words: 'Make no mistake, it is Jesus Himself on whom the Church is built. The confession of Him which the Father in heaven revealed to me, not I, the poor sinner who confess it -- the Christ whom that confession set forth, He is the foundation stone, and all of you are called and honoured to ring out the same confession. Jesus is the one foundation, and we all, apostles and humble believers, are but stones builded on Him'."³

There are other passages that carry the same imagery,

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1. Isaiah 28:16 and 8:14
2. Psalm 118:22
3. Maclaren: Expositions of Holy Scripture, Epistles of Peter, p. 86

such as Ephesians 2:19-20, and 1 Cor. 3:11. Wherever such imagery is used, the thought is that Christ is the foundation or the cornerstone.

Nowhere in the context of all Scripture is support to be found for the Roman Catholic Petrine interpretation. On the contrary, incidents occur in Peter's later life which indicate that he is far from holding the position of authority that the Roman Catholic Church assigns to him on the basis of this passage. The book of Acts relates the historical fact that while Peter is "primus inter pares" in the early Church, Paul later assumes the dominant leadership and Peter sinks into comparative obscurity.

It becomes plain that the Roman Church does not allow Scripture to interpret Scripture. Instead, tradition is the authoritative interpreter of individual passages without regard to the context of the whole Bible.

To show further that the Roman Catholic theory is a later fabricated view from other than Scriptural authority, one may even quote the early church fathers to indicate that they did not hold to this Petrine theory which the Roman Catholic Church has attempted to foist on Scripture from tradition.

Cyprian writes:

"The Lord, that He might set forth unity, arranged by this authority the origin of that unity, as beginning from one. Assuredly the rest of the apostles were also the same as Peter, endowed with

a like partnership embracing honor and power; but the beginning proceeds from unity."¹

Chrysostom writes likewise: "I say unto thee, Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church; that is, on the faith of his confession."²

Jerome and Origin give like support to the early conception that Christ was the rock.

Augustine, who has at all times been recognized as pre-eminent among the church fathers, writes:

"At the same time while I was a priest, I wrote a book against the letter of Donatus, in which book I said at a certain place of the apostle Peter that the Church was founded on him as a rock. ... But I know that afterward I have most frequently thus explained what the Lord said: 'Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church,' that it should be understood as bearing upon Him whom Peter confessed, saying, 'Thou are the Christ, the Son of the living God,' and that Peter, named from this rock, represented the person of the Church, which is built on the rock, and received the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. For it was not said to him, 'Thou art the rock,' ($\tau\epsilon\tau\alpha\rho\alpha$), but, 'Thou are Peter' ($\tau\epsilon\tau\alpha\rho\alpha\varsigma$), for Christ was the rock whom Simon confessed, as the whole Church confesses Him."³

Luther aims his strongest guns at this fortification of the Roman Catholic Church -- which fortification states that Peter is the rock and that later popes have followed him in order, as the rock on which the Church is built. Luther forcefully shows that such a doctrine is not from Scripture. On the contrary, Luther shows

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1. Quoted by Gohdes: Does the Modern Papacy Require a New Evaluation, p. 151
2. Ibid., pp. 151-152
3. Ibid., p. 152

that it is the Roman Catholic tradition which has so misinterpreted and dominated Scripture. Luther refers to Matthew 16:18 and writes:

"Here they interpret the rock to mean St. Peter, and pretend that it is the papal authority on which Christ builds His Church. ... To bring their lies and rascality to light, and to make them blush for shame, we will examine Christ's words. ... That the gates of hell prevail nothing against this building must mean that the devil has no power over it; and this takes place when the building stands in firm faith and without sin, for where faith is absent or sin is present, there the devil rules and prevails against the building. ... It follows then that this rock is Christ Himself, for so St. Paul calls Him in 1 Cor. X, and the building is the believing Church, in which there is no sin, and to build is nothing less than to become a believer and grow in holiness, as St. Peter also teaches in 1 Peter II, that we are to be built, a spiritual building on Christ the Rock. ... Hither, then, ye Papists, one and all! Crack this nut! This Scripture passage has gotten ahead of you; the citadel has been taken, the pope has fallen; he lies prostrate; he has no ground to stand on."¹

Instances could be multiplied to indicate that tradition was the mother of the Roman Catholic doctrines, and that Scripture was made to support the doctrines even if it had to be sadly misused and twisted. Much of the Roman Catholic sacramental system so came into being. Luther delivers a severe blow to the manner in which the Roman Catholic Church had used Scripture to support this sacramental system. Note the following statement made by Luther about Extreme Unction which the Roman Church had based on James 5:14f:

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1. Luther: H. Ed., Vol. III, pp. 82-84

"The apostle commands us to anoint the sick man and to pray, in order that he may be healed and raised up; that is, that he may not die, and that it may not be extreme unction."¹

Luther points out that the passage in question states the exact opposite of what the Roman Catholic theologians would have it prove.

It may be seen further that the Roman Catholic Church, in actual practice, makes tradition dominate Scripture in authority, and super-imposes on Scripture such dogmas as transubstantiation, withdrawal of the cup from the laity, celibacy of the clergy, the mass, the power of the priest, relics, veneration of saints, purgatory, the position of the pope as God's vice-gerent and many other doctrines that are included in the Roman Catholic system. Tradition dictates and dominates. Scripture is made to assent and support.

c. By the Use of a Faulty Vulgate Translation as a Basic Text

The official Bible of the Roman Catholic Church

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1. Luther: H. Ed., Vol. II, p. 286

is the Latin Vulgate.¹ In the decrees of the Vatican Council, the following declaration is contained:

"Of these books of the Old and New Testaments are to be received as sacred and canonical in their integrity, with all their parts, as they are enumerated in the decree of the said Council, and are contained in the ancient Latin edition of the Vulgate."²

The above statement makes it definite that the accepted version is the Latin Vulgate. The implication

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1. There was a Latin version of the Bible as early as the end of the second century. The Old Testament of it was based on the Septuagint. Other revisions of poor merit followed which led to considerable confusion. The best of the early Latin versions was known as the Itala.

The version known as the Latin Vulgate is a revision from these older Latin versions. The Vulgate is the monumental work of Jerome who died in 420 A.D. He attempted to bring order out of the confusion which existed in Latin versions. Westcott in his article in Smith's Dictionary of the Bible, quotes Jerome as saying: "There were almost as many forms of texts as copies." Mistakes had been introduced by "false transcriptions, by clumsy corrections, and by careless interpolation." Jerome revised the New Testament on the basis of existing Greek manuscripts. The Old Testament was revised from Hebrew sources.

In many respects, Jerome's work was extremely valuable. However, Jerome's version, as in the case of so many innovations, was not well received. The final result was that the accepted Latin Bible was a composite work which included portions of several versions. Westcott writes: "The simultaneous use of the old and new versions necessarily led to a great corruption of both texts. Mixed texts were formed according to the taste or judgment of scribes, and the confusion was further increased by the changes which were sometimes introduced by those who had some knowledge of Greek."

2. Waterworth: op. cit., p. 220

is made that other versions are not accepted. The Council of Trent, in its decrees, is still more specific. The decree speaks at length about Scripture and tradition. The concluding statement reads:

"But if anyone receive not, as sacred and canonical, the said books entire with all their parts, as they have been used to be read in the Catholic Church, and as they are contained in the old Latin Vulgate edition; and knowingly and deliberately contemn the traditions aforesaid; let him be anathema."¹

The anathema is pronounced upon those who do not accept Scripture as contained in the Vulgate, together with tradition. The implication is pretty plain that other versions are not acceptable.

In a folder which announces the publication of a new English version for use by Roman Catholics, the following statement is made: "The new book is a revision of the Challoner-Rheims text based on the Latin Vulgate, with the end in view of rendering the New Testament in our contemporary English language."²

It becomes apparent upon examination that the Vulgate has interpolations which have crept in because of the influence of tradition. Some of these interpolations entirely change the original meaning of Scripture. But it makes no difference to the Roman Church that her version contradicts the original languages of Greek and

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1. Waterworth: op. cit., p. 10
2. Leaflet prepared by Confraternity Publications, N.Y.

Hebrew. Tradition is her higher authority.

An excellent illustration to show how the Latin Vulgate contradicts the original Greek is found in the rendition of Matthew 3:1-2. In the Latin Vulgate, the text reads:

"In diebus autem illis venit Johannes Baptista praedicans in deserto Judaeae et dicens: Paenitentiam agite: ad propinquavit enim regnum caelorum."¹

The translation of "Paenitentiam agite" is "do penance." This expression does not only signify repentance and a change of life, but also includes the concept of punishing past sins by fasting and other forms of penitence. The original Greek reads: *μετανοείτε* TE which, according to Thayer, means "Repent ye" or "change your mind."² The American Standard version reads "Repent ye."³

The Vulgate translation here substantiates the Roman Catholic indulgence system. The indulgence system had its inception in tradition. Tradition, in turn, dictated the expression which carried the Roman Catholic meaning of repentance. Scripture, therefore, is made to conform to tradition.

Another illustration may be noted in Matthew 6:11 which contains the fourth petition of the Lord's Prayer.

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1. The Hexaglott Bible, Vol. V, p. 10
2. Thayer: op. cit., p. 405
3. The Standard Edition of the Bible, N.T., p. 2

The Vulgate reads: "Panem nostrum supersubstantialem da nobis hodie."¹ Translated literally, the Vulgate rendition reads: "Give us this day our supersubstantial bread." Thayer adds an interesting comment when he speaks of those who here follow the example of Origen and Jerome by using "the barbarous phrase 'panis supersubstantialis'."²

The original Greek again is very plain on this point:

Τὸν ἕστων ἡμεῶν τὸν ἐπλούτλον
δοῦς ἡμῖν τήμερον.³

The American Standard version reads: "Give us this day our daily bread."⁴ The "panem supersubstantialem" of the Latin Vulgate is interpreted in a footnote of a later Douay Bible as the bread of life, which is received in the Sacrament of the Altar.

Again one has an illustration of a flagrant misuse of Scripture. The Roman Church reads into Scripture what she wants there. In practice, therefore, tradition is a higher authority than the Bible for Roman Catholics.

It would be interesting to continue the study of instances where tradition dictates the wording, not to speak of the interpretation, of Scripture. The instances sighted, however, fit in with the whole picture presented

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1. The Hexaglott Bible, Vol. V, p. 26
2. Thayer: op. cit., p. 241
3. Nestle: Novum Testamentum Graece, p. 13
4. The Standard Edition of the Bible, p. 5 of the N.T.

and prove that Roman Catholic tradition is the supreme authority for the Church and that Scripture must yield to it.

D. SUMMARY

The purpose of the study in this chapter has been to supply a background for the chapters to follow. A full appreciation of Luther's monumental work of setting forth the authority of Scripture will necessarily depend on viewing it in contrast to what had been before.

In Analyzing the Roman Catholic position respecting the authority of Scripture, the officially formulated and publicly declared decrees of the two greatest post-Reformation councils have been investigated. The Council of Trent and the Vatican Council were emphatic in stating that tradition and Scripture, as contained in the Vulgate, are equally inspired by God and are authoritative. In addition, these councils declared that Scripture is to be understood as interpreted by tradition. On such a basis, the balance of power rests with tradition.

The investigation of this chapter presents also the stated position of representative Roman Catholic theologians. These theologians present in detail the logic by which the Roman Church arrives at its established position. In that logic is included the unfounded claim

of the divine origin of the apostolate which is identified with the Roman Church organization. Furthermore, their logic states that their church organization is invested with infallibility. These theologians agree in asserting that tradition which has come down through the infallible church is the one absolutely indispensable authority; that Scripture does not hold the high position of being absolutely indispensable; and, that Scripture has its authority because of tradition. In short, the post-Reformation era is definite and clear in declaring for double authority. However, in practice, the authority of tradition dominates the authority of Scripture.

The study presented in this chapter moved then from the clearly formulated post-Reformation period to the pre-Reformation period where the relation of the two authoritative sources is not so clearly or explicitly stated. From a study of that period, it becomes clear that the Bible was available and used. But the investigation also shows that while the Bible was used as an authoritative source for Christian faith and life, so was tradition. That fact is observable in theological writings and also in controversial declarations. Theoretically, then, the pre-Reformation period held to a shared authority principle.

However, when a more careful analysis is made of the use of authoritative sources, it becomes apparent that, in practice, the chief authority was that of tradition. The current fourfold method of interpretation, the unscientific method of forcing Scripture to support tradition, and the use of a corrupted version of Scripture served to undermine the authority of Scripture and to enthrone tradition to a position of absolute authority.

CHAPTER III

A HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF LUTHER'S CHANGING VIEWS REGARDING THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE

A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter will trace the historical unfolding of Luther's changing views regarding the authority of Scripture. At the outset of such a presentation, this fact should be kept clearly in mind -- that the starting point of such a history finds Luther a thorough-going Roman Catholic. The following quotation, though somewhat lengthy, will serve admirably to emphasize this point:

"Never, not for one moment even, should it be forgotten that in this story of Luther's evolution we are in the company of a Catholic youth. He was born of Catholic parents. He was baptized in the Catholic Church. He was brought up in a Catholic home and in Catholic schools. Regularly he attended the Catholic Church. As a choir boy he took active part in Catholic Church services. Saints, painted windows, sacred pictures and images, altars, candles, incense, rosaries, crucifixes, relics, sacerdotal vestments, mass, the confessional were commonplace to him. Priests, monks, pilgrims were not strange to him, but familiar and friendly associates. Everybody was a member of the Catholic Church. Barring the Jews, there were at that time in Western Europe no other people than Catholics. The world he lived in, the very atmosphere he breathed was Catholic. Everybody's views were Catholic. Everybody expressed himself in Catholic terminology."¹

It becomes clear, then, that the preceding chapter outlines the conception of religious authority which was

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1. Kuiper: Martin Luther, the Formative Years, p. 46



Luther's Birthplace

Luther's at the outset of his life and work. Every factor in his early training and development had served to establish him strongly in this traditional conception. The investigation now turns to a consideration of some of these factors which contributed to Luther's thorough indoctrination in the conception of authority of that day.

B. LUTHER TRAINED IN THE TRADITIONAL VIEW RESPECTING AUTHORITY

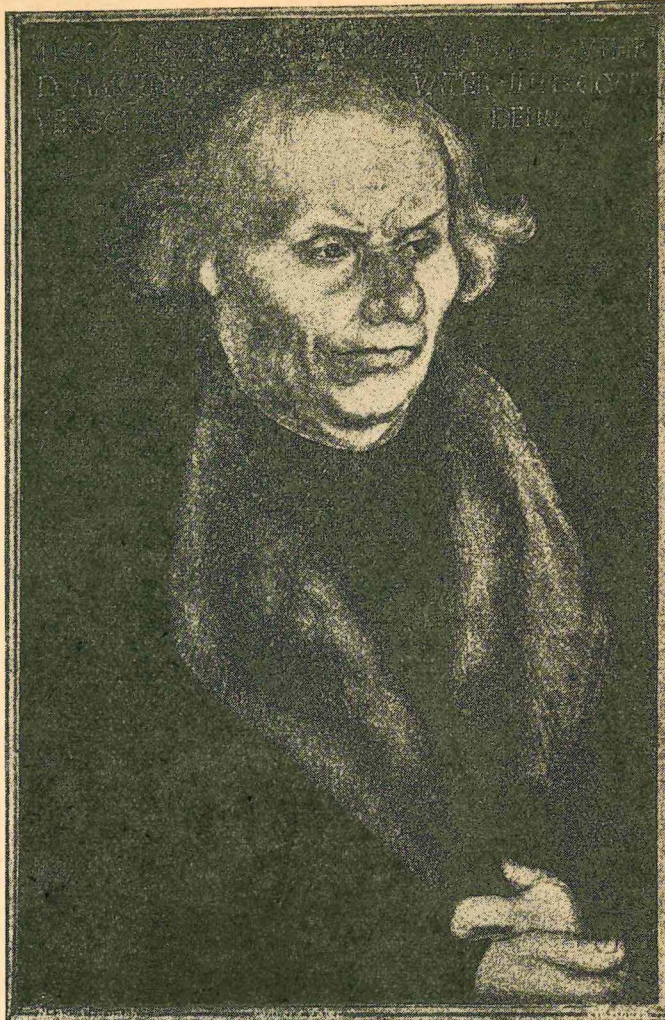
1. Home Training

Martin Luther was born into, and trained during his early years in a pious Roman Catholic home. There, by word and example, he was taught the traditional faith. In his early, formative years, his convictions and habits were cast in the mold of a typical Roman Catholic household. At an early age he was taught to pray. He also learned the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer. Other elements, too, entered into his childhood training which are thus summarized:

"The instructions of the mother abounded in superstitions current at that time among the German peasantry, while the pictures and legends of the saints, and the processions and other ceremonies of the Church, made a deep impression upon his youthful mind. St. George, the patron of the Counts of Mansfeld, and St. Anna, the patroness of miners, were peculiarly revered."¹

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1. Jacobs: Martin Luther, p. 9



Luther's Father

Mackinnon asserts that the municipal records of Mansfeld reveal the father, "Hans Luther, as a good churchman, who associates with the priest and other burgesses in observing and maintaining the ecclesiastical usages of the time."¹

2. School Education

Luther received his early school training at Mansfeld, Magdeburg, and Eisenach. He entered Mansfeld at the age of four or five years and continued there until 1497 when he was fourteen years of age. Aside from his training in the three liberal arts of grammar, logic, and rhetoric, regular attendance at all Sunday services, and participation in matins, and vespers were required of him. He was being trained at Mansfeld in the equivalent of a Roman Catholic Parochial School of today.

Luther's Roman indoctrination continued in the Magdeburg Cathedral School which was conducted by the Brethren of the Common Life. It is possible that it was at Magdeburg that Luther first saw a complete Bible -- that book which was later to play such a significant role in his life.

The four years spent at the Eisenach school were during the transition period of his life -- the time of

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1. Mackinnon: Luther and the Reformation, Vol. I, p. 5



Luther's Home at Eisenach

change from youth to young manhood. At Eisenach, he was introduced to monastic asceticism in that with a group he went from door to door singing in order to secure his living. The process of Catholic indoctrination thus advanced another step.

Luther matriculated at the University of Erfurt in April of 1501. A common saying of that day was that "Wer recht studieren will der Ziehe nach Erfurt."¹ Erfurt was known as "Little Rome". In it were two university chapter houses, twenty-three parish churches, thirty-six chapels, six hospitals and twenty-two convents and monasteries. While Luther's training at Erfurt was primarily secular, yet the Catholic religious training was also greatly emphasized. The Bible was available at the university and Luther read it. The Bible was also read at meals. The theological emphasis was that of the Occam school which will be discussed more fully later. May it pertinently be said here that this school, though somewhat revolutionary in its attitude and teachings, yet emphasized that the Church alone, and the pope, had the right to interpret Scripture authoritatively. By such emphasis, characteristic Roman Catholic consciousness was being further established in Luther.

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1. Reu: Life of Luther, p. 5

3. Monastery Indoctrination

This investigation leads on now to a very climactic portion in the life of Luther in relation to the Roman Catholic Church of his day. It is possible that objections might be raised about how definitely his home training or his formal education may have grounded him in the fundamental position of the Church concerning religious authority. But there can be no question, whatsoever, about it when one comes to the decision of Luther to enter the Augustinian Monastery at Erfurt. By so doing, Luther definitely committed himself to the Church -- to accept its teachings and to serve it as directed. In fact, monasticism itself was a result of the authority of tradition apart from Scripture. In a later chapter, the causes for Luther's decision to enter the monastery will be treated. Suffice it to say here that Luther now took a decisive step that established him in the doctrinal framework of the Church. This framework included the Roman Catholic doctrine of double authority.

Furthermore, Luther's "Table-Talks", though not first-rate evidence, yet have great value in establishing Luther's convictions of this time. In preparation for his ordination, Luther zealously studied Biel's "Canon of the Mass", was gripped by it very strongly, and said of it in his later "Table Talks": "Qui liber

me iudicio tum optimus fuerat."¹ He also wrote:

"Wenn ich darinnen (Biel's Canon of the Mass) las,
da blutete mein hertz. Bibliae autoritas nulla fuit
erga Gabrielem. Ich behalte noch die bucher, die
mich also gemartert haben."²

The striking statement to be noted in Luther's assertion is that "Biblical authority is as nothing compared with the work of Gabriel Biel."

In successive order, at the Erfurt monastery, Luther was ordained subdeacon, deacon, and priest.

"He learned the profound reverence for the authority of the Church and the devotion to the papacy which the Augustinian Order in particular exemplified, and of which he himself in his earlier career as monk was the fervid champion."³

Therefore one can say that Luther has taken his place in the succession of those who have built up the double authority standard of the Roman Catholic Church.

C. LUTHER INFLUENCED BY PRE-CURSORS OF THE REFORMATION AND BY SCHOLASTICS TOWARD SCRIPTURAL AUTHORITY

Certainly many extravagant statements have been made about Martin Luther and his relationship to the Reformation. In the first sentence in his preface to the work "Luther and the Reformation", Mackinnon writes: "The Evangelical Reformation of the sixteenth century is unthinkable without Luther."⁴ Preserved Smith echoes the

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1. Luther: Tischreden, Vol. III, p. 564
2. Ibid.
3. Mackinnon: op. cit., Vol. I, p. 45
4. Mackinnon: op. cit., Vol. III, p. III

same when he writes in his preface:

"For the most important fact in modern history is undoubtedly the great schism of which he (Luther) was the author, the consequences of which are still unfolding and will continue to unfold for many a century to come."¹

Smith is likewise the author of this statement:

"Few have ever alike represented and dominated an age as did he. His heart was the most passionately earnest, his will the strongest, his brain one of the most capacious of his time; above all he had the gift of popular speech to stamp his ideas into the fibre of his countrymen."²

These writers give a fair evaluation of Luther and his epoch-making work. However, no informed or fair-minded person would ever assert that Luther stands alone as the cause of the Reformation. Long before he appeared on the scene, there were voices raised in the wilderness that prepared the way for his dramatic work. There were those who labored and even gave their lives in the attempt to break the shackles that had bound the Church and had brought about the terrible abuses that existed. There were prophetic utterances before the time of Luther which declared more or less explicitly that the true basis of religious authority was to be found in Scripture and in Scripture alone.

It is not surprising that the extreme centralization of ecclesiastical authority, which reached its peak

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1. Smith: Martin Luther, p. vii
2. Smith: The Age of the Reformation, p. 62

under Gregory VII and Innocent III, should occasion severe criticism and give rise to dissenting parties. Among these critics and dissenters were those who saw more or less clearly that this Roman Catholic power and religious authority were being built upon false foundations. Those who had courage enough dared, then, to voice their criticisms and to appeal for a return to the true basis.

1. The Waldenses

One of these dissenting groups was headed by Peter Waldo.¹ That which has special interest as relating to this thesis is to be found in some of the principles that Waldo and his followers held regarding Scripture and its authority.

The first distinguishing principle to which the Waldensians held was that which dealt with daily conduct, and which is stated in these words: "We ought to obey God rather than men."² The Roman Church construed this principle as a rebellion against the authority of popes and councils, and such it was. "The second distinguishing principle (of the Waldensians) was the authority and

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1. Peter Waldo was a prosperous merchant of Lyons. Not much is known of his life. He died in 1218. In the early part of the 14th century, there were at least forty-two communities of Waldensians in Austria alone. In the diocese of Passau, the sect had eighty thousand adherents.
2. Acts 5:29

popular use of the Scriptures."¹ To that principle was also added another, namely, that "the Church is not infallible."² The Waldensians were also extremely active in distributing the Bible.

It can readily be seen that this movement and Church with its stress on Scriptural authority and its denial of papal infallibility -- especially since it was a Church with a large following -- would be influential in paving the way for Luther's work.

2. John Wyclif

That John Wyclif belongs to the group of pre-cursors becomes evident when one notes the title which he has been given: "The Morning Star of the Reformation." He was an outspoken opponent of the papacy and the Church as it was constituted. So outspoken was he that he called the pope: "The anti-Christ, the proud, wordly priest of Rome, and the most cursed of clippers and cut-purses."³ Schaff gives such an admirable summary of Wyclif's great contribution as a pre-cursor that one can do no better than to quote him:

"Wyclif's chief service for his people ... was his assertion of the supreme authority of the Bible for clergy and laymen alike and his gift to them of the

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1. Schaff: History of the Christian Church, Vol. IV, p. 502
2. Qualben: A History of the Christian Church, p. 182
3. Schaff: Op. cit., Vol. V, p. 316

Bible in their own tongue. His statements, setting forth the Scriptures as the clear and sufficient manual of salvation and insisting that the literal sense gives their plain meaning, were as plain and unmistakable as any made by Luther. In his treatise on the value and authority of the Scriptures, with 1000 printed pages, more is said about the Bible as the Church's appointed guide book than was said by all the medieval theologians together."¹

It is remarkable to note the clear insight that Wyclif had of the later Reformation view of the Bible. His emphasis on literal interpretation, and on the right of the laity to the Scripture; his great work of translation which made the Bible available to the people in their own tongue; his fearless denunciation of existing evils; and, his proclamation of evangelical truth, give to Wyclif a high and important place among the pre-cursors of the Reformation. It is not surprising that he has been given the added cognomen of the "Evangelical Doctor." Wyclif helped to plough the field and prepare the ground which was destined to yield such abundant fruit after Luther had completed his work of sowing.

3. John Huss

John Huss was a follower of Wyclif and his views. "Huss died for his advocacy of Wyclifism. The sentence passed by the Council coupled the two names together."² His constant appeal was to the authority of Scripture.

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1. Schaff: op. cit., Vol. V, p. 38
2. Ibid., p. 383

When called upon to recant or go to the stake, he replied that before he would retract, he must be persuaded of his errors out of the Scriptures.

"He made the Scriptures the final source of appeal, and exalted the authority of the conscience above pope, council, and cannon law as an interpreter of truth."¹

Huss added his distinctive contribution in that he died for his convictions. The several events that make the whole treatment of Huss by the Catholic Church so repulsive contributed tremendously in making his convictions stand out like a beacon light in a world nearly "blacked out" spiritually. The Hussite movement, which in 1500 numbered two hundred thousand followers, served further to keep alive the contribution of John Huss in preparing the way for the re-establishment of the authority of Scripture.²

So far, this study has considered the views concerning the authority of Scripture of those condemned heretics who were pre-cursors of Luther's later developed

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1. Schaff: op. cit., p. 383
2. "Some Hussites continued as a separate body, calling themselves Bohemian Brethren. First met with in 1457, they continue to the present day as Moravians. ... It seems that their cardinal tenet was the supremacy of Scripture, without gloss, tradition, or interpretation by the Fathers of the Church. They rejected the primacy of the pope, and all ceremonies for which authority could not be found in the Bible." Smith: Age of the Reformation, p. 40

convictions. Many more could be added to the list. But those considered should suffice to indicate the tidal movements that later were to combine, and with added impetus, to become a swelling tide that would threaten the whole framework of the Roman Catholic Church.

It now becomes necessary to point out similar views and expressed opinions that were being held and taught by members of the Roman Catholic school of theologians known as Scholastics. There were two of these, especially, that had a great, important, and very direct influence on Luther. In addition to the work of the already considered pre-cursors, these Scholastics doubtlessly performed a notable service in further plowing the ground of Luther's mind and heart, and thus in helping make possible the Reformation harvest. This study will now proceed to a discussion of these Scholastic theologians who saw more clearly, than their Scholastic predecessors, that truth which reaches its climax in the declarations of Luther.

4. William of Occam

William of Occam was a Franciscan who taught at Oxford. He was a fearless and discerning critic of the Church though able to stay within the borders of propriety so as to escape the charge of heresy and subsequent persecution.

The strong emphasis enunciated by Occam and later Occamists was the authority of Scripture. They even went so far as to stress the sole authority of Scripture. Occam declares:

"What is not contained in the Scriptures, or can not with necessary and obvious consistency be deduced from the contents of the same, no Christian needs to believe."¹

This statement, standing by itself, is decidedly revolutionary. It would appear that Occam had emerged from the darkness which had descended as a result of the double authority standard of the Church. However, Occam's striking, stated convictions are vitiated by his view that the teaching of the Church and that of Scripture are identical. He states in the preface to one of his works:

"If I should have written something in this work which is contrary to Holy Writ, or the teachings of the saints, or the assertions of the most Holy Church, I submit myself and my works to correction by the Catholic Church."²

5. Gabriel Biel

Biel belonged to the Occamist school. His essential principles were like those of Occam. In an earlier section of this study,³ a quotation reflects Luther's strong

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1. Quoted by Reu in an article in Kirchliche Zeitschrift for 1939, p. 528
2. Ibid.
3. Ante., Chapter III, p. 69

affection for Biel and for his philosophy. But from Luther's own statement that "Biblical authority is as nothing compared to the work of Gabriel Biel",¹ it would seem that the statements of Biel about the authority of Scripture had not come through into Luther's consciousness in their real significance. Undoubtedly the qualifications that were added by the Occamists served to sidetrack the real force of these pre-cursors' statements. However, the point is that these revolutionary ideas were being thought and expressed, and that consciously or unconsciously they were preparing the way for Luther's great contribution.

D. LUTHER'S STUDIES LED HIM TOWARD THE VIEW OF THE
SOLE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE

1. Luther's Early Reading of the Bible

Attention has previously been called to the fact that the Bible was an available book during the pre-Reformation period.² The religious training given to the pupils in the elementary schools included instruction in the truths of Scripture.

"Everywhere the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, the Decalogue, the morning, evening and table prayers, the Hail Mary, and the confession of sins were the first religious materials that were given the scholars to study. When once they were promoted

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1. Luther: Tischreden, Vol. III, p. 564
2. Ante., Chapter II, pp. 28-32

into the class of the 'Donatists' they also learned the Hymns, Responsories, and versicles. Here they came into contact with biblical material as the Versicles and Responsories were mostly words of Scripture and frequently whole Psalms took the place of hymns."¹

It has now been pretty well established that Luther saw his first copy of the complete Bible at the Magdeburg school at the age of fifteen. The following story is given in connection with that event:

"Once as a boy he happened on a Bible where by chance he read the story concerning the mother of Samuel in the book of Kings. The book pleased him greatly and he thought that he would be very fortunate if he should ever be able to possess such a book."²

During the years spent at the University of Erfurt, Luther's acquaintance with the Bible grew. Bibles were available. It was the common rule that one or two chapters should be read each day from the Scripture. It should also be remembered that Luther's Erfurt teachers were Occamists.

"Luther's Erfurt teachers, as followers of Occam, maintained the position that the only reliable source of truth is the supernatural revelation which is recorded in Holy Scripture, and not the natural reason, though they also emphasized very strongly the idea that the Church, and more particularly the pope, could interpret the Scriptures authoritatively."³

But the fact remains that through a steady process, Luther was growing in familiarity with the Bible, though

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1. Reu: Luther's German Bible, pp. 76-77
2. Luther: Tischreden, Vol. I, p. 44
3. Reu: op. cit., p. 87

his understanding of it was grooved in the traditional rut.

The process unfolded still further upon Luther's entrance to the monastery. A deep impression was evidently left on the mind of Luther because of his having been given a copy of the Bible, bound in red leather, when he entered the monastery. He later said in his "Table-Talks" that:

"He made himself so familiar with the Bible and he knew so thoroughly what was contained on each page that when a certain passage was adduced, he knew where it was in Scripture."¹

Support to the above statement is given when one remembers that the rule of the Augustinian order was that each student or monk should "eagerly read, devoutly hear, and industriously learn" the Word.

During the years from 1508-09, Luther taught at the University of Wittenberg. In 1509 he began, for the first time, to lecture on the Bible. Some very interesting statements are made by Luther at this time which are suggestive of what was to come later.

"Whatever is added to revelation is certainly nothing but human invention."²

"Arguments based on reason determine nothing, but because the Holy Ghost says it is true, it is true."³

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1. Luther: Tischreden, Vol. I, p. 44
2. Luther: W. Ed. Vol. IX, p. 62
3. Ibid., p. 35

"Though many famous doctors hold this opinion, yet they do not have Scripture on their side but only arguments of reason. But I have the words of Scripture on my side, in this opinion that the soul is the image of God, and so I say with the Apostle, 'Though an angel from heaven, that is a doctor of the Church, teaches otherwise, let him be anathema.'"¹

Luther was a true Occamist. The statements are significant but they were not directed against any dogma of the Church. Nevertheless, here was a part of the fuel that was later to kindle such a great fire.

2. 1512 - The Elector Provided Funds for Doctorate Studies Which Gave Luther Opportunity to Lecture on the Bible

On October 19, 1512, the degree of Doctor was conferred upon Luther. The conferring of this degree gave to him the right to teach the Bible regularly. In receiving the degree, Luther was required to take an oath in which he promised that:

"by the help of God and the holy Evangelists, he would show obedience and respect to the dean and masters of the faculty ... that he would not teach vain or strange doctrines, that were condemned by the Church and were offensive to pious ears."²

A part of the ceremony was that Luther was handed a Bible which was first closed and then opened -- certainly a prophetic symbol of what he was actually to do. Luther now had the opportunity of digging deeply into the message of Scripture. During the succeeding years, up to

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1. Luther: W. Ed. Vol. IX, p. 46
2. Reu: op. cit., p. 98

1516, he mined for the pure gold of the Bible in the Psalms, and in Romans. What happened in so doing will be discussed later. The significant thing to be noted at this stage is the opportunity that confronted Luther. He had a chance to live in the Book of Books. Sooner or later, the Holy Spirit was going to "break through" to lead him to a new experience and understanding of the power resident in that Word and its basic relation to human need. But all of that was yet in the potential stage. Actually, Luther was as yet a Catholic priest with the critical tendency of a typical Occamist. Kuiper makes a significant statement concerning this stage of Luther's development that is well to emphasize again:

"At the time Luther took this oath as Doctor of Theology, he was a Catholic. He had been born and reared a Catholic. He was a monk and a priest. The University which conferred the Doctor's degree upon him was a Catholic institution, founded not only under imperial but also under papal sanctions. All those who took part in the ceremony were Catholics, in full communion with the Catholic Church. The entire transaction by which Luther was made a Doctor of Theology, a transaction throughout strictly official in the highest degree, took place within the framework of Catholicism."¹

3. 1513 - The "Great Illumination"

In Luther's life, the "Great Illumination" might be compared to the Damascus Road experience of Paul, or to Augustine's experience when he heard a voice say: "Tolle,

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1. Kuiper: op. cit., p. 193

Lege" and he read Romans 13:13-14, or to Wesley's experience as he listened to the reading of Luther's preface to Galatians. It was climactic. It marked, in reality, his conversion. Because of it, he moved out from the burdensome, humiliating, depressing, fear-ridden slavery of legalism to the joyous, peace-filling, love-reacting experience of evangelical freedom. The Word on which he had meditated, in which he had immersed himself, with which he had struggled, and about which he had prayed for at least eight years, finally yielded its treasure. The Holy Spirit had "rent the veil" and there was the clear revelation of God's way of saving man.

When Luther became a Doctor, he had not understood the Gospel as Paul presents it. "Iterum acquisivimus lucem. Sed ego, cum Doctor fierem, nescivi."¹

In the tower of the Black Cloister, some time later, Luther was working in preparation for his lectures on the Psalms. He studied Romans in conjunction with the Psalms. The haunting mystery for Luther was the repeated expression of the "righteousness of God." That expression found its most significant statement in Romans 1:17: "For therein (The Gospel) is revealed a righteousness of God." Of this statement, and his reaction to it, Luther said at a later date:

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1. Luther: W. Ed. Vol. XLV, p. 86

"For this idea of the righteousness of God was actually hateful to me because I was accustomed to understand it as the 'formal or active righteousness', by which God shows Himself righteous in punishing the unrighteous sinner. Though as a monk I had lived an irreproachable life, I felt myself in the sight of God as a sinner pursued by the pangs of conscience, and as I could not depend on my satisfactions for my own reconciliation, I did not love Him but actually hated that righteous, sin-avenging God, and if not with silent blasphemy, with a great murmuring. I was indignant with God, saying, it is not enough that the wretched sinner, who have already been delivered to the pangs of eternal damnation through the curse of original sin, have been visited with all kinds of earthly punishments, according to the law of the Old Covenant. Why is God adding torment to torment through the new Gospel, as through the tidings of the New Covenant He only announces to us his wrathful and avenging righteousness? So I tormented myself in the severity and confusion of my conscience, but, at the same time, I brooded continually on that statement of the apostle whose meaning I ardently desired to solve, till finally, after long reflection by night and day, God took pity on me, so that I perceived the inner connection of the two statements, 'The righteousness of God is revealed in the Gospel' and 'the just shall live by faith.' Then I began to comprehend the righteousness of God, by whose power the righteous is saved through the grace of God, namely through faith; that the righteousness of God, which is revealed through the Gospel is to be understood in the possessive sense, that God in His mercy justifies us through faith, as it is written: 'The just shall live by faith'. Now I felt as though I had been born anew and believed that through wide open doors I had entered Paradise."¹

This new understanding acted like a master key which opened to Luther the clear understanding of other similar passages. As he read Augustine, again, he discovered that Augustine had taught the same thing. The Scripture had revealed its most precious treasure. The Bible had es-

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1. Luther: W. Ed., Vol. LIV, pp. 179-187

established its authority, subjectively. Through this one experience, Luther made a tremendous leap in that direction in which he was being led by God -- to recognize "Sola Scriptura" as the only absolute authority for Christian faith and life.

4. 1513-15 - Luther's Lectures on the Psalms

It is understandable that Luther began his work as "Doctor of the Holy Scriptures" by lecturing on the Psalms. It was the book with which he was most familiar. It had been his prayer book for several years. Then, too, it was the book with which his students were most familiar. Here is the authority for the statement that:

"On the 16th day of August, 1513, at 6 A.M. in the lecture hall of the Black Cloister, Luther delivered his first lecture on the Psalms. His students were for the most part, or perhaps altogether, monks."¹

At the start of these lectures, Luther was still under the Roman bondage as to method, and explained the Scripture portions in a fourfold sense: the literal, the allegorical, the tropological, and the anagogical.

"The lectures show how hard it was for Luther to break away from the theology in which he was educated. He is still groping. But at the same time the new light, that had dawned for him, when he gained his new apprehension of the 'righteousness of God', ever and anon shines through the clouds of medieval scholastic Catholicism."²

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1. Reu: op. cit., pp. 32-33
2. Kuiper: op. cit., pp. 214-215

Luther began to break away from the fourfold method in the course of these lectures. He emphasized the primary importance of the literal or the grammatical sense. But it was not until 1517 that he made a complete break with this fourfold method. When he then lectured on the Psalms for the second time, speaking on the Penitential Psalms, he no longer used the fourfold method.

Three things are then to be noted in this stage of Luther's progress from the Roman Catholic double authority to the sole authority of Scripture in truth pertaining to the Christian life. His work was concentrated in studying and lecturing on the Scriptures. Through exhausting investigation of the expression "the righteousness of God" as found in the Psalms and particularly in Romans 1:17, he was led into a transforming experience. He made progress in advancing from the fourfold interpretation to a point where he placed primary emphasis on the literal or grammatical sense.

5. 1515-16 - Luther's Lectures on Romans

The first thing to be mentioned about this aspect of Luther's development is that, contrary to traditional practice, he began to lecture in the German language. He spoke as his students could best understand, and in a way that would bring his message to their very hearts. It was at this time, too, that Luther began to use the

Greek New Testament -- Erasmus' edition of the Greek New Testament which appeared in 1516. Luther saw in this Testament a valuable aid in getting at the accurate meaning of Scriptural statements and made use of it. At the outset, he was assisted in the Greek by a fellow monk by the name of Lang. Luther displayed a genuinely scientific mind in his independent mode of procedure. He was leaving no stone unturned in his diligent attempts to interpret and to exegete the Bible. Such persistent and intelligent procedure was certain to yield revolutionary results sooner or later. The direction in which his daring and independent research led Luther is well stated by Mackinnon:

"What differentiates the commentary from the works of his scholastic predecessors, and even from those of Erasmus is its independent, original note. Luther attacks the schoolmen in defiant, and at times passionate language; attacks even the theologians of his own school as well as the Thomists and Scotists. ... As against the schoolmen and even the humanists, his great authority, next to Paul, is Augustine, whom he now prefers as an exegete to Jerome, and with whose works he shows a more extensive acquaintance than in his earlier lectures."¹

Luther's power of discrimination was growing. He was bold in his criticism of all who in any way did violence to Scripture. In a letter to Spalatin, dated October 19, 1516, he forcefully directed his criticisms

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1. Mackinnon: op. cit., Vol. I, p. 172



The Burning of the Papal Bull

against Erasmus and Lefevre¹ as well as discriminatingly against the Fathers. This letter, from a date reference in it, would indicate that it was written while Luther was lecturing on Romans:

"I have no hesitation in disagreeing with Erasmus, because in interpreting the Scriptures I consider Jerome as much inferior to Augustine as Erasmus thinks he is superior. ... For even Lefevre d'Etaples¹ a man otherwise, heaven knows, spiritual and sincere, lacks this proper understanding of the Scriptures when he interprets them, although he has it abundantly in his own life and in exhorting others."²

So much should suffice to indicate clearly that Luther was moving rapidly in a direction that would result in a clash. Accepting as he did, more and more completely, the authority of the Bible and gaining a clearer understanding of its meaning, it could not be long before his critical insight would discern the glaring contradiction between the doctrine and practices of the Church and what he found in Scripture.

E. LUTHER'S CONTROVERSIES CONFIRMED HIM STEP BY STEP TO THE CONVICTION OF THE AUTHORITY OF "SOLA SCRIPTURA"

A new stage in Luther's experiences and his development then began. It was the period of conflict which was

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1. Lefevre (1455-1536) has been called the "Little Luther". In 1509, he published a Psalter in five languages. Luther used a copy of it. He published the first complete French Bible in 1530. His work had a strong influence on Luther.
2. Smith: Luther Correspondence and Other Contemporary Letters, Vol. I, pp. 43-44

to grow in intensity until a complete break resulted. Discerning increasingly the truth of the Bible, experiencing its authority, and becoming more and more convinced that it was the only absolute authority, Luther was destined to a head-on collision with the status quo. That collision he would not seek, diplomatically, to evade. He was not made that way. His convictions, when he gained them, were too positive. His character was too rugged and fearless. His passion for truth was too consuming.

1. 1517 - Ninety-seven Thesis against Scholasticism

Very little space is devoted in the various works on Luther to the ninety-seven theses against Scholasticism. This fact is very likely due to the small impact which they made on theological and public opinion. The ninety-seven theses fell flat. No controversy resulted from them. But they are important in this investigation because they are vocal in stating the break that finally occurred in Luther's relation to the Scholastic system. That break was an important factor in bringing about the clash with the whole Roman Catholic view on authority.

Luther had been educated in the Nominalist school of Scholastic theologians. He had, as we have previously established, become a devoted follower of Occam and

Biel. Trutvetter, who had been Luther's teacher, had further established him in this philosophy. This philosophy placed much emphasis on man's free will and included such principles as the following: man can remove those obstacles that stand in the way of his receiving grace; he is capable of keeping the commandments and of loving God above all else; if he strives mightily, he will receive grace; and, when man has done his best, God grants grace to him. The Scholastic philosophy was eclectic in that it sought to combine the philosophy of Aristotle, the beliefs of the Fathers, and the truth of Scripture into a harmonious system.

When Luther began to study Scripture intensively, and especially when he caught the significance of the great truth of "Justification by Faith" as he discovered it in Romans, it can readily be understood that the result would mean a break. Everything climaxed in a question of authority. Luther rapidly lost confidence in Scholasticism. In a letter written to John Lang at Erfurt in October of 1516, the result may be seen.

"Therefore, tell these wondering, or rather wonderful theologians, that they need not dispute with me what Gabriel said, or what Raphael said, or what Michael said. I know what Gabriel Biel says, and it is all very good except when he speaks of grace, charity, hope, faith, and virtue; I have no time to tell in these letters how much, with Scotus, he is a Pelagian."¹

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1. Smith: op. cit., p. 42

In another letter, dated the same month, Luther wrote to Spalatin. He was very plainly in conflict with the Scholastic system, as evidenced in this letter.

"For whatever good is done outside the faith of Christ, even if it makes Fabricii and Reguli, men who were righteous before men, yet it no more savors of justification than apples do of figs. For we are not, as Aristotle thinks, made righteous by doing right, except in appearance, but (if I so may express it) when we are righteous in essence we do right. It is necessary that the character be changed before the deeds. ... You would say that I am rash to bring such men under the rod of Aristarchus; did you not know that I do it for the sake of theology and the salvation of my brothers?"¹

Luther's convictions were taking more and more definite form. They were finally crystallized in the ninety-seven theses that appeared September 4, 1517. These theses were especially directed against the Scholastic theory of man's natural ability in spiritual matters. We present a few theses to illustrate. In the thirty-third one, Luther writes: "It is a falsehood to say that man can remove the hindrances for grace if he only does what is in him."² He affirms the same idea in the thirty-ninth: "We are not lords over our acts, we are slaves."³

Having had the great experience of the truth set forth by Paul of "Justification by Faith", Luther di-

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1. Smith: op. cit., pp. 43-44
2. Luther: W. Ed., Vol. I, p. 225
3. Ibid., p. 226

rects his theses against the contradictory Scholastic method of justification. In the fortieth of the theses, he writes: "We do not become just by doing what is just, but after we have become just we can do what is just."¹

In seven of the ninety-seven theses, Luther mentions Aristotle by name, and opposes his philosophy. Indirectly, too, Luther attacks the Scholastic adherence to Aristotle. In the forty-third and the forty-fourth of these theses, he writes: "It is an error to say that without Aristotle no one becomes a theologian; on the contrary, if one becomes a theologian he will only become one without Aristotle."²

One of the outstanding characteristics of the ninety-seven theses is Luther's stated opposition against the whole Scholastic system. Over and over again, he uses such expressions as : "Contra Scotus", "Contra Occam", "Contra Gab.", "Contra Scholast.", "Contra Philosophus", "Contra mul. doctor", etc. It is very evident that Luther had progressed a long way in discerning that there were glaring, irreconcilable contradictions between Scholastic philosophy and the authority of Scripture.

Another link for Luther had been forged to the chain of evidences that the Roman Catholic Church not only held to the double authority theory, but that she, funda-

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1. Luther; W. Ed., Vol. I, p. 226
2. Ibid.

mentally, was established in a theological position contradictory to that which was declared by the authority of Scripture.

2. 1517 - Ninety-five Theses a Challenge of Double Authority in Favor of Scriptural Authority

The posting of the ninety-five theses on October 31, 1517, was the crisis event or the "Great Divide" that marked the division between medieval and modern Church history. It represented the opening of the flood gates that released the truths of Apostolic Christianity so that they might flow unhindered into the lives of people who thirsted for saving truth.

There was a very direct connection between the ninety-five theses and the discovery that Luther made in Romans. On the authority of Scripture, Luther had come to believe that man is justified by faith in Jesus Christ. Then Luther looked about him. He saw the Church, what it taught, and what it practiced. There was a direct contradiction in the Church to the fundamental truth that he had learned and experienced through the Word. When, then, Tetzel came into Germany and preached and practiced, with the sanction of the Church, what was so flagrantly in violation of the great discovery, Luther could not keep quiet.

"His whole dearly-bought theory of justification and of man's attitude toward sin and grace demanded that he express himself. A man who had been 'attacked by



The Ninety-five Theses
Nailed to the Church Door at Wittenberg

God' and who had felt from the beginning the realism and actuality of sin could not pause in the face of a travesty on forgiveness."¹

Luther, then, did what was common practice in that day. He voiced his protest in ninety-five theses and posted them on the bulletin board -- the Church door -- and thus invited a public discussion of the learned on this matter which was so vital to him. It was in no wise the intention of Luther to start a revolt against the Church. This fact is clearly evident from the introduction with which his theses are prefaced.

"Out of love for the truth and the desire to bring it to light, the following propositions will be discussed at Wittenberg, under the presidency of the Reverend Father Martin Luther, Master of Arts and of Sacred Theology, and Lecturer in Ordinary on the same at that place. Wherefore he requests that those who are unable to be present and debate orally with us, may do so by letter."²

Here was a direct and open challenge of authority -- a type of authority that had promulgated certain current beliefs and practices. Here was a questioning of prevalent concepts. Here was a challenging of the authority of the Church to grant indulgences from its supposed treasury of merits. It was a challenge even of the doctrine of Purgatory which had come into being through some of the Fathers and had been established through later popes. In short, here was a "head-on" clash between the

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1. Fife: Young Luther, p. 227
2. Luther; H. Ed., Vol. I, p. 29

current Roman Catholic authority and Luther's newfound conviction that Scripture alone is authoritative.

Following are a few of the theses which deal with the question of authority:

No. 18: "It seems unproved, either by reason or Scripture, that they are outside the state of merit, that is to say, of increasing love."

No. 27: "They preach human doctrine who say that so soon as the penny jingles into the money box, the soul flies out of purgatory."

No. 55: "It must be the intention of the pope that if pardons, which are a very small thing, are celebrated with one bell, with single processions and ceremonies, then the Gospel, which is the very greatest thing, should be preached with a hundred bells, a hundred processions, a hundred ceremonies."

No. 62: "The true treasure of the Church is the most Holy Gospel of the glory and grace of God."

No. 76: "We say, on the contrary, that the papal pardons are not able to remove the very least of venial sins, so far as its guilt is concerned."¹

The appeal by Luther is to Scripture. Anything else is human doctrine. The Gospel is the all-important thing. The battle lines are being formed. There followed a general mobilization throughout Germany to one standard or the other.

Luther realized that such was the case for he wrote to Spalatin on February 15, 1518:

"For the sake of exposing this fraud, for the love of truth I entered this dangerous labyrinth, and

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1. Luther: H. Ed., Vol. I, pp. 29-38

aroused against myself six hundred minotaurs, not to say Radamauthotaurs and Aeacotaurs."¹

In another letter to John Lang at Erfurt, Luther further explained the situation which the ninety-five theses had brought about:

"The false preachers of indulgences are thundering against me in wonderful style from the pulpit, and as they cannot think of enough monsters with which to compare me, they add threats, and one man promises the people that I shall certainly be burned within a fortnight and another within a month."²

Of great interest in this connection is a letter that Luther wrote to his former confessor, John Staupitz. In this letter, Luther seeks to justify his actions. The letter is dated March 31, 1518.

"My adversaries excite hatred against me from the Scholastic Doctors, because I prefer the Fathers and the Bible to them. ... If Duns Scotus, Gabriel Biel, and others had the right to dissent from Aquinas, and if the Thomists had the right to contradict everybody ... why should they not allow me the same right against them as they use against each other."³

Luther also wrote to his former Scholastic teacher, Trutvetter, and asserts plainly:

"To explain myself farther, I simply believe that it is impossible to reform the Church unless the Canon Law, Scholastic theology, philosophy and logic, as they are now taught, are thoroughly rooted out and

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1. Smith: op. cit., p. 71
("Theseus slew the Bull of Minos (Minotaur) in the Labyrinth of Crete. Minos, Radamauthus, and Aecus were three judges of the infernal regions. Luther means that he had excited all the monsters of hell against himself.)
2. Ibid., p. 74
3. Ibid., p. 78

other studies put in their stead. I am so fixed in this opinion that I daily ask the Lord, as far as now may be, that the pure study of the Bible and the Fathers may be restored."¹

From these quoted statements and from later developments, it would appear that Luther felt that the main issue was to rid the Church of Scholastic influences and from certain abuses, in practice, that had arisen. It was against the Scholastics that he especially inveighed as yet. He indicated the viewpoint that the Church had been "taken for a ride" by Scholasticism and that she should now get rid of that influence with the abuses that had followed. It took later developments to clarify the issue so that Luther was to see plainly that the Church as such was fundamentally in opposition to his ideal of Scriptural authority. Luther goes so far as to say:

"I had hoped that the Pope would protect me. For I had grounded and armed my disputation with the Scriptures and papal decrees that I was certain the Pope would condemn Tetzel and bless me."²

3. 1518-The Year of Ripening Convictions

Events moved swiftly toward a climax in the year 1518. Tetzel, whose business had been seriously halted, went into action and, at Rome, denounced Luther as a heretic. He even presented theses against Luther's theses.

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1. Smith: op. cit., p. 84
2. Luther: W. Ed., Vol. LI, p. 543

During the winter of 1517-18, Luther worked out an exposition and defence of his ninety-five theses which he entitled "Resolutiones". On the 30th of May, he sent his "Resolutiones" to Staupitz with a letter and asked him to forward the exposition together with a letter to the pope. The letter to Staupitz is highly illuminating and touching in that it harks back to the days spent in the monastery.

"Your words on this subject pierced me like the sharp arrows of the mighty, so that I began to see what the Scriptures had to say about penitence, and behold the happy results: the texts all supported and favored your doctrine, in so much that, while there had formerly been no word in almost all the Bible more bitter to me than penitence, now no word sounds sweeter or more pleasant to me than that. ... When I was glowing with this thought, behold indulgences and remission of sins began to be trumpeted abroad with tremendous clangor, but these trumpets animated no one to real struggle. In short, the doctrine of true repentance was neglected, and only the cheapest part of it, that called penance was magnified. As I was not able to oppose the fury of these preachers, I determined modestly to take issue with them and to call their theories in doubt, relying as I did on the opinion of all the Doctors and of the whole church, who all say that it is better to perform the penance than to buy it, that is an indulgence."¹

In the "Resolutiones" proper, Luther still admits the teachings of the Fathers who are recognized by the Church and the canons and decrees of the popes as secondary sources of his teaching. In a positive way, he speaks of sin and saving faith, and grounds his views in Scrip-

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1. Smith: op. cit., pp. 91-92

ture. Forgiveness of sin, he declares, is the work of God alone and is the result of faith or trust in the Word of Christ.

"You have peace of conscience not because the pope gives it, but because you have received it in faith. You only have it in as far as you believe on account of Christ's promise."¹

Luther's status at this time is stated in these words by Mackinnon:

"So far it is Luther versus the Scholastic theologians and the indulgence preachers, from whom he appeals to the Scriptures and the Fathers. Not he but they are the real heretics who foist their dogmas on the Scriptures and the Fathers. He forgot that the Church had gone a long way in doctrine and usage beyond his supreme authorities, and he was already discovering that his antagonism to the Scholastics had, at the same time, involved him in antagonisms to the pope and the priesthood, though he had not yet clearly apprehended the fact."²

Sylvestro Prierias, who had been commissioned to examine the ninety-five theses, pronounced against them. He then summoned Luther to appear in Rome in sixty days. There Luther was to be tried on the charge of heresy. Cardinal Cajetan brought the summons which reached Luther August 1, 1518. Luther answered the summons. He defended his theses. He refused to accept the opinions of Aquinas which had been used by Prierias, without proof from Scripture, the Fathers, the Canons, and reason. "The authority of Augustine is greater in the Church than

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1. Luther! W. Ed., Vol. I, p. 543
2. Mackinnon: op. cit., Vol. II, p. 61

that of Thomas, and Paul especially is my main foundation."¹

The dispute with Cardinal Cajetan at Augsburg settled nothing. The expressed opinions of Luther on the authority of Scripture are stated in his "Acta Augustanae". In this work, he answers the arguments of Cajetan. It contains a report of his hearing at Augsburg with documentary evidence. In a nutshell, its substance may be stated in these words of Luther:

"Divine truth is Lord even of the Pope. I await not the judgment of men when I have already recognized the judgment of God. ... On this point depends the whole summa of salvation. You are not a bad Christian whether you acknowledge or ignore the Bull Unigenitus. But you are indeed a heretic if you refuse faith in the word of Christ."²

It is observable that Luther's statements on authority are becoming stronger and more discerning. This change is due to the fact that his opponents are more and more bringing the pope and councils into the picture as being against Luther's views as expressed in the ninety-five theses. The opponents are making it clear to Luther that the whole Roman Catholic system is basically against him on the question of authority.

In a letter to George Spalatin, following the debate with Cajetan, Luther clearly indicates his deepening conviction:

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1. Luther: W. Ed., Vol. I, p. 662
2. Ibid., Vol. II, p. 18

"But I act for my faith in Christ, that they may not treat his word as they please and contaminate it. Let the Roman decretals leave me the pure Gospel and take away all else, I will not move a hair."¹

4. 1519 - The Year of Delay

The high water mark in the year of delay was the Leipzig disputation. The trend of events was turning Luther more and more against the whole Church. He was seeing more clearly that the abuses which he had attacked were far more deeply rooted than he had anticipated. Having raised Scripture as his standard of authority, he was finding that such a standard would bring on an irreconcilable conflict with the whole Church as it was basically established.

In preparation for his debate with the skillful John Eck, Luther launched into a study of the decrees of the popes and of councils. His investigations were evidently eye-openers, for he writes on March 13, 1519, to Spalatin:

"I am studying the decrees of the popes for my debate (I speak it in your ear), I know not whether the pope is anti-Christ himself or his apostle, so terribly is Christ, that is, the truth, corrupted and crucified by him in the decretals. I am terribly distressed that the people of Christ should be thus deceived by the semblance of laws and of the Christian name. Sometime I will make a copy of my notes on the Canon Law, that you too may see what

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1. Smith: op. cit., p. 167

it is to make laws regardless of Scripture, simply from ambition and tyranny."¹

The debate at Leipzig with Eck was the most important occasion in Luther's life in leading Luther to declare himself on the question of authority. The two opponents were evenly matched. Both expressed themselves clearly. Each declared himself skillfully. Eck interpreted Scripture and the Church Fathers in the light of Roman Catholic doctrine as understood in the 16th century. Luther judged these doctrines by the criterion of Scripture. The following statement indicates Luther's maturing conviction:

"The Word of God is above all words of man. ... I venerate St. Bernard and do not condemn his opinion. But in this discussion the genuine and specific sense of Scripture is to be accepted and to decide the issue."²

Luther further declares:

"It is not in the power of the Roman pontiff or the Inquisitor of heresy to establish new articles of faith, but only to judge according to those established. Nor can any believing Christian be compelled to believe whatever is beyond Scripture, which alone is of divine authority, unless there may have supervened a new and proved revelation. Yea, we are debarred by divine authority from believing anything unless it is proved either by Scripture or a manifest revelation, as Gerson more recently asserted in many passages, and Augustine anciently laid down as a specific canon. ... Even the canonists declare that the opinion of a single private person is more valid than that of the Pope or Council if it is supported by a better authority or reason."³

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1. Smith: op. cit., p. 170
2. Luther: W. Ed., Vol. II, pp. 263-264
3. Ibid., p. 279

The intensity of the struggle is shown by the pointed and personal element that entered into the debate. But from the battle, Luther emerged with a clarified viewpoint of what he believed to be authoritative.

"The learned doctor, I grieve to say, penetrates the Scriptures as profoundly as a water spider does the water, yea he flees from the face of them as the devil flees the Cross. With all reverence for the Fathers, I prefer the authority of the Scriptures and commend them to the future judges of the debate."¹

Following the Leipzig disputation, Luther wrote the "Resolutiones Lutherianae". In this calmer moment, after he had time for reflection, Luther evaluates for us the result that followed in his thinking. The following quotation indicates the added progress made in Luther's convictions respecting authority:

"I know and confess that I learned nothing else from Scholastic theology than ignorance of sin, righteousness, baptism, and the whole Christian life, nor was I taught therein truly to understand the power, work, grace, and righteousness of God, nor what faith, hope, and charity really mean. Briefly, not only have I learned nothing but I have learned only in unlearning what was altogether contrary to the divine writings. I wonder whether others have learned more to the purpose in this study. If there are any I frankly congratulate them. I for my part lost Christ in the Labyrinth, and now I have found him in Paul."²

Luther became fully convinced that councils err and have erred. Such erring, he realized, shakes their authority. As an illustration, he cites the declaration made by the Councils of Constance and Basle that the pope is

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1. Luther: W. Ed., Vol. II, p. 382
2. Ibid., p. 414

inferior to a council. Then he calls attention to the fact that the recent Lateran Council at Rome, on the other hand, decided for papal supremacy over a council. Plainly, both cannot be correct.

There were many current practices, too, which Luther questioned. He began to examine current auricular confession, the canonization of Saints, the teaching on Purgatory, the withdrawal of the cup from the laity, and the assertion that there are seven Sacraments. (He doubts that there are more than three. Later he declares in favor of two.)

Luther became convinced that a general conflict was inevitable. He wrote a letter to Spalatin on February 12, in 1520 and says: "Suppose there is to be a new and great conflagration, who can resist the plan of God?"¹

In another letter, written a few days later, he again declares:

"If you think properly of the Gospel, please do not imagine that its cause can be advanced without tumult, offence, and sedition. You will not make a pen from a sword, nor peace of war."²

5. 1520 - The Year of the Three Great Writings

Luther had gone a long way when in 1520 he assumed a vigorous offensive in attacking the Church. There is no

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1. Smith: op. cit., p. 285
2. Ibid., p. 287

question any more now as to how he stands in relation to the whole system. In a letter which Luther wrote to Spalatin, dated June 8, 1520, he forcefully declares:

"I think that at Rome they have all become mad, silly, raging, insane fools, stocks, stones and devils of hell. See now what we have to hope from Rome who allows this infernal writing to go out against the Church. These portents overwhelm me with the greatness of the folly. ... I have the intention of publishing a broadside to Charles and the whole German nobility against the tyranny and wickedness of the Roman court."¹

In launching his attack against the Church, Luther wrote his three great treatises during this year:

"An Open Letter to the Christian Nobility"

"The Babylonian Captivity of the Church"

"A Treatise on Christian Liberty"

The treatise, "An Open Letter to the Christian Nobility", was written by Luther following his excommunication. This letter reflects Luther's attitude following the complete break of Rome with him. The treatise summarizes an impassioned plea by Luther to his countrymen. In the introduction to this letter as found in the Holman Edition, Jacobs writes:

"It (the letter) is a cry out of the heart of Germany, a nation whose bent is all religious, but which, from that very circumstance, is all the more open to the insults and wrongs and deceptions of the Roman Curia."²

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1. Smith: op. cit., p. 329
2. Luther: H. Ed., Vol. II, p. 59

In presenting the cause to the people of Germany, Luther summarizes the errors and corruptions of the Church under the figure of three walls with which the Church has surrounded itself.

"First, when pressed by the temporal power, they have made decrees and said that the temporal power has no jurisdiction over them, but, on the other hand, that the spiritual is above the temporal power. Second, when the attempt is made to reprove them out of Scripture, they raise the objection that the interpretation of the Scriptures belongs to no one except the pope. Third, if threatened with a council, they answer with the fable that no one can call a council but the pope."¹

The second of these three statements or accusations concerns this investigation. Luther presents a keen analysis of this deception of Rome and exposes it boldly.

"They wish to be the only masters of the Holy Scriptures, even though in all their lives they learn nothing from them. They assume for themselves sole authority, and with insolent juggling of words they would persuade us that the pope, whether he be a bad man or a good man, cannot err in matters of faith; and yet they cannot prove a single letter of it. Hence it comes that so many heretical and unchristian, nay, even unnatural ordinances have a place in the canon law, of which, however, there is no present need to speak. For since they think that the Holy Spirit never leaves them, be they never so unlearned and wicked, they make bold to decree whatever they will. And if it were true, where would be the need or use of the Holy Scriptures? Let us burn them, and be satisfied with the unlearned lords at Rome, who are possessed of the Holy Spirit -- although He can possess only pious hearts! Unless I had read it myself, I could not have believed that the devil would make such clumsy pretensions at Rome, and find a following."²

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1. Luther: H. Ed., Vol. II, p. 65
2. Ibid., pp. 73-74

Luther goes on to set before his readers his unanswerable and penetrating logic:

"Has not the pope erred many times? Who would help Christendom when the pope errs, if we were not to believe another, who had the Scriptures on his side, more than the pope? Therefore it is a wickedly invented fable, and they cannot produce a letter in defence of it, that the interpretation of Scripture or the confirmation of its interpretation belongs to the pope alone."¹

Luther recognizes but one absolute authority -- Scripture. All else that contradicts Scripture is to be discarded. He impatiently calls for a reformation that would completely eject the use of Aristotle in the theological curriculum.

"What else are the universities, if their present condition remains unchanged, than as the book of Maccabees says, *Gymnasia Epheborum et Graecae Glorae*, in which loose living prevails, the Holy Scriptures and the Christian faith are little taught, and the blind, heathen master Aristotle rules alone, even more than Christ. In this regard my advice would be that Aristotle's *Physics*, *Metaphysics*, *On the Soul*, *Ethics*, which have hitherto been thought his best books, should be altogether discarded."²

He singles out canon law for arraignment, and declares:

"The medical men I leave to reform their own faculties; the jurists and theologians I take as my share, and I say, in the first place, that it were well if the canon law, from the first letter to the last, and especially the decretals, were utterly blotted out. The Bible contains more than enough directions for all our living, and so the study of the canon law only stands in the way of the study of the Holy Scriptures; moreover, it smacks for the most part of mere avarice and pride."³

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1. Luther: H. Ed., Vol. II, pp. 74-75
2. Ibid., p. 146
3. Ibid., p. 148

In a positive tone, Luther adds:

"If we are called by the title of teachers of Holy Scripture, then we ought to be compelled, in accordance with our name, to teach the Holy Scriptures and nothing else."¹

It is very evident that Luther is clear in his position of "Sola Scriptura" as authoritative. He has set his face to see that truth vindicated that Scripture alone can be trusted as source and guide for the Christian life.

The second of the three great 1520 writings is entitled "The Babylonian Captivity of the Church". This letter represents, as Steinhaeuser puts it: "The culmination of Luther's reformatory thinking on the theological side."² The treatise is of such significant importance that the same writer states: "The captivity marks Luther's final and irreparable break with the Church of Rome."³ Theoretically, that statement is true though in the practical fulfillment of it, the break was complete following the Diet of Worms. This second letter written by Luther presents a critical examination of the sacramental system of the Church.

Luther critically analyzes, in order, the seven Roman Catholic sacraments. The criticisms which he

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1. Luther: H. Ed., Vol. II, p. 150
2. Ibid., p. 168
3. Ibid.,

launches are based on the authority of Scripture. On the basis of Scripture, he accuses either of misuse of the instituted sacrament or of making ordinances into sacraments which have no basis in Scripture.

In speaking of the misuse of the Sacrament of the Altar, he writes:

"I conclude, then, that it is wicked and despotic to deny both kinds to the laity, and that this is not in the power of any angel, much less of any pope or council. ... For what is asserted without Scripture or an approved revelation, may be held as an opinion, but need not be believed. ... They have this feeble retort (Wyclifite, Hussite, heretical) always on their tongue, and they have nothing else. If you demand a Scripture passage, they say, 'This is our opinion, and the decision of the Church -- that is, of ourselves!' Thus these men, 'reprobate concerning the faith' and untrustworthy, have the effrontery to set their own fancies before us in the name of the Church as articles of faith."¹

In speaking of rites and ordinances which the Roman Church had declared to be sacraments, Luther speaks as he does from the authority of Scripture:

"I wonder what could have possessed them to make a sacrament of confirmation out of the laying on of hands, which Christ employed when He blessed young children, and the apostles when they imparted the Holy Spirit, ordained elders, cured the sick. ... I do not say this because I condemn the seven sacraments, but because I deny that they can be proved from the Scriptures."²

"Not only is marriage regarded as a sacrament without the least warrant of Scripture, but the very traditions which extol it as a sacrament have turned it into a farce."³

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1. Luther: H. Ed., Vol. II, pp. 185-189
2. Ibid., p. 255
3. Ibid., p. 257

"Of this sacrament (Ordination) the Church of Christ knows nothing; it is the invention of the Church of the pope. Not only is there nowhere any promise of grace attached to it, but there is not the least mention of it in the whole New Testament. ... We ought to see to it that every article of faith of which we boast be certain, pure, and based on clear passages of Scripture. But that we are utterly unable to do in the case of the sacrament under consideration."¹

It is evident that Luther has come a long way in his development. He has become mature in his views. He stands foursquare on the principle of Scriptural authority. He recognizes fully that the Roman Catholic Church is built, to a great extent, on another foundation.

The third of the three famous treatises is that on "Christian Liberty". Of this treatise, Luther makes this evaluation: "Unless I am deceived, it is the whole of Christian living in a brief form."² W. A. Lambert, in his introduction to the treatise, quotes these evaluations of this splendid writing: "Perhaps the most beautiful of Luther's writings, the result of religious contemplation rather than of theological labor. ... It takes rank with the best books of Luther, and rises far above the angry controversies of his age, during which he composed it, in the full possession of the positive truth and peace of the religion of Christ."³ In this contemplative masterpiece, Luther gives expression to some of his most sacred

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1. Luther: H. Ed., Vol. II, p. 273
2. Ibid., p. 299
3. Ibid., p. 300

and potent experiences and convictions. Of the authority of the Bible, he writes positively and assuredly:

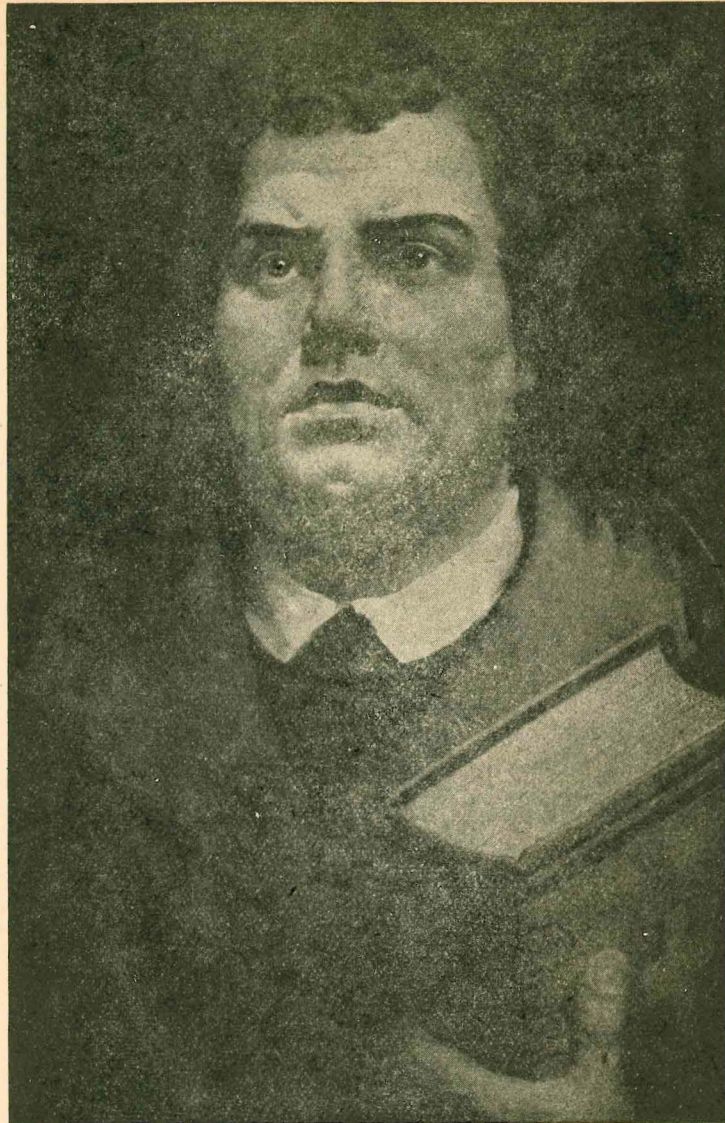
"One thing and one only is necessary for Christian life, righteousness and liberty. That one thing is the most holy Word of God, the Gospel of Christ. ... But if it (the soul) has the Word it is rich and lacks nothing, since this Word is the Word of life, of truth, of light, of peace, of righteousness, of salvation, of joy, of liberty, of wisdom, of power, of grace, of glory, and of every blessing beyond our power to estimate. ... Hence it is clear that, as the soul needs only the Word for its life and righteousness, so it is justified by faith alone and not by any works. ... Wherefore, we ought here to listen to the Scriptures, which teach that we should not go to the right nor to the left, but follow the statutes of the Lord which are right, rejoicing the heart."¹

Luther's convictions are strong. His tone is positive. Luther gives evidence of having made great progress during the year when he wrote these great treatises. The transition from the Roman Catholic principle of double authority to the great Protestant principle of "Sola Scriptura" seems complete. There remains but one more step to make the break complete. This final step, which was to divide the stream of the history of the Christian Church into two main channels is outlined in the final section.

This section will be concluded with another quotation. This quotation is significant in that it indicates that Luther now anticipates a complete break with Rome. His cause, built on the principle of the sole authority of Scripture in all that pertains to the Christian faith

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1. Luther: H. Ed., Vol. II, pp. 314, 315, 344



Luther at the Diet of Worms

and life, must go its own way which was to be a different one from that of the Roman Catholic Church.

"Farewell, unhappy, hopeless, blasphemous Rome! The wrath of God hath come upon thee, as thou hast deserved! We have cared for Babylon, and she is not healed; let us, then, leave her, that she may be the habitation of dragons, spectres and witches, and true to her name of Babel, an everlasting confusion, and pantheon of wickedness."¹

6. 1521 - The Year of the Diet of Worms

One event remains to be discussed in order to present a full-orbed, historical picture of the complete transition that had occurred in Luther's conception of authority -- from Catholic double authority to "Sola Scriptura". The event is that which brought about a final and complete rupture with Rome, which severed all ties with the corrupted Church, and which now opened the way for the re-establishment of the Church on its apostolic foundation of Scripture alone as authoritative in faith and practice. The event is the historic meeting of the Diet of Worms.

The setting for what occurred at the Diet serves to emphasize the significance of the statement that Luther made at the famous Diet. Schaff draws a word picture of the setting:

"There he stood, a poor monk of rustic manners, yet a genuine hero and confessor, with the fire of genius and enthusiasm flashing from his eyes and the expression of intense earnestness and thoughtfulness on his

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1. Luther: W. Ed., Vol. VI, p. 329

face, before a brilliant assembly such as he had never seen: the young Emperor, six electors, the Pope's legates, archbishops, bishops, dukes, margraves, princes, counts, deputies of the imperial cities, ambassadors of foreign courts, and a numerous array of dignitaries of every rank; in a word, a fair representation of the highest powers in Church and State."¹

Such was the august assembly which Luther faced. This occasion was not one for disputation. Here was to be a final showdown as to whether Luther was to stay by his proclaimed convictions or fall in line with the compelling power of the Church. A plain and direct answer was demanded. The answer was given in Latin. The answer was given in one sentence, but was an answer which "was to prove the most fateful in modern religious history."² It was an answer that was a "memorable declaration which marks an epoch in the history of religious liberty."³

"Unless I am convinced by proofs from Scripture or other obvious reasons⁴ (klare vernunftgruende) --

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1. Schaff: op. cit., Vol. VI, p. 300
2. Mackinnon: op. cit., Vol. II, p. 301
3. Schaff: op. cit., Vol. VI, p. 304
4. "In consequence of this (obvious reasons or "ratio") the conclusion has been drawn that Luther at this time during the climax of his activity, recognized entirely independent authorities or sources for the certainty of salvation, Holy Scriptures and natural reason. ... 'Ratio' not only represented to Luther, in general, the power to think, nor is it to him only a name for the method of thinking inherent to the natural man in contradiction to 'spiritus, gratia evangelium, etc.', but in reality also a name for logical conclusions, for logical deductions from acknowledged premises. In this last sense he used this word at Worms: -- He demands to be convinced through the words of Holy Scriptures or through such conclusions as necessarily must be deducted from what has been stated in Scripture, before he will retract." (Quoted from Reu: Thirty-five Years of Luther Research, pp. 69-70.)

for I do not believe only the pope or the councils, since it is obvious that they have ofttimes erred or contradicted themselves -- I stand convicted by the Scriptures which I conscientiously quoted (in my writings) and am bound in God's Word: I can and will revoke nothing, for it is neither sincere nor prudent to do ought against one's conscience."¹

The die was cast. Here was the final climax. In this answer issued the final and inevitable result of what had gone before. Luther now stood and was to continue to stand, in all things relating to the Christian faith and life, on "Sola Scriptura".

F. SUMMARY

This concludes the investigation of Luther's changing views regarding the authority of Scripture. There has been outlined, in succession, the changes that occurred in Luther's convictions: how his convictions changed from that of the typical, faithful Roman Catholic of that day, holding to the double authority position, to the hero of the Reformation who subscribed to and was guided by only one supreme authority in Christian faith and practice -- the authority of "Sola Scriptura".

The analysis of Luther's changing views regarding the question of religious authority has led on through a series of explorations. Luther was in childhood, youth, and young manhood a typical Roman Catholic trained in the traditional manner. At the climax of that development,

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1. Luther: E. Ed., Vol. LXIV, p. 382

Luther represented a Roman Catholic ideal because of his striving and achieving according to that system. Further investigation established the fact that, in the prevailing darkness, gleams of light came to Luther through the influence of the pre-cursors of the Reformation, through critical and searching tendencies within the Church in the Scholastic development, and through his own personal studies in the Bible. The logical result was that following Luther's spiritual experience in the "Great Illumination", discovery clashed with the "status quo". It has been indicated that Luther's controversies convinced him by degrees that, holding to Scriptural authority, he must oppose Scholasticism, current Church teaching, and practice; that, in contrast to Scripture, popes and councils had erred and had contradicted one another; and that Scripture was being misused, misinterpreted, and made the basis, as in the sacramental system, for teachings and practices which Scripture did not legitimately authorize.

Furthermore, evidence has been posited that Luther discovered finally that there was no chance to reform the Church from within, and that, therefore, a break would have to come. That complete break, which ushered in a new era in the history of the Church, came when Luther fearlessly and unequivocally declared that he would build his Christian convictions and practices on nothing else or less than the authority of Scripture alone.

CHAPTER IV

PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS THAT LED LUTHER TO HIS VIEWS CONCERNING THE AUTHORITY OF THE SCRIPTURES

A. INTRODUCTION

The presentation of the preceding chapter was historical. An attempt was made to trace the objective facts of history which outlined the change which occurred in Luther's conception of the authority of Scripture.

In this chapter, the aim is to analyze the change which took place in Luther's conception of that authority from the angle of the contribution of experience. Stated in question form, the problem confronting this approach is as follows: In what way did the experiential factors of personality, impression, and expression contribute to lead Luther to his final, stated convictions respecting the authority of Scripture? This approach, then, becomes a general psychological approach. No attempt will be made to present a scientific or technical psychological study, but merely to approach the problem by noting the contribution of experience in leading Luther to his established viewpoint respecting the authority of Scripture.

B. THE FACTOR OF PERSONALITY

Luther had a unique personality. It is not so difficult to discover the characteristics of that personal-



The Castle Church at Wittenberg

ity because Luther made no pretense of concealing anything. He was as open as a book. His convictions were voiced. His feelings were stated. His reactions were openly expressed. He was not given to subterfuge. He was as he appeared. Böhmer writes interestingly about Luther:

"The Reformer was a true Thuringian and hence by nature not silent, nor a 'step-easy', nor given to grand manners and smooth civilities. Without anxious concern about his dignity, he spoke before his friends and those who shared his home on absolutely everything that moved and occupied his mind. He freely talked even on matters which the cultured European of today only discusses with his physician. Ever since 1515, he stated his opinions without any consideration or precaution even about persons in high and exalted positions and felt no compunction after he had begun to feel at home in pulpit and cathedral, in sermons and lectures, if he saw fit, to speak very frankly of his own experiences, struggles, errors, and faults."¹

It becomes, then, interesting and worthwhile to study Luther's personality and to evaluate it. The question to be kept in mind is to what extent and in what way the factors of his personality contributed to the development of Luther's Reformation convictions and principles.

1. Inherited Characteristics

Luther's parents were of sturdy, peasant, Thuringian stock -- robust and rude. Luther spoke of this fact: "I am a farmer's son; my father, grandfather, and ancestors were all real farmers."²

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1. Böhmer: Luther in Light of Recent Research, p. 42
2. Quoted by Köstlin: The Life of Luther, p. 27

"My father was a poor hewer, the mother carried all her wood upon her back, so that she might warm and rear us; their life was one of severe toil and extreme privation; at the present day, people would not hold out long in the midst of such suffering."¹

From his parents Luther inherited:

"The vigorous peasant nature, the powerful physical and mental energies that helped him to survive the abuses of the monastic life and the titanic work connected with the Reformation. He also inherited that fearless, fighting spirit, that vigorous humor, and that rustic rudeness which marked his ancestors."²

Lucas Cranach has preserved the likeness of Luther's parents on canvas. He painted them with "the broad, low brow and the toil-hardened features that mark the half-rural townfolk of northwestern Thuringia to the present day."³ These characteristics of physical strength, and familiarity with severe poverty and hard labor gave to Luther a physical constitution that could stand up under the gigantic task which he later had to perform.

In addition, Luther's parents were morally and religiously earnest, mentally energetic, practical, steadfast, stern, and determined. Cranach's picture of them has been interpreted as showing that "the mouth and eyes of the father indicate an expression of active energy and firm decision."⁴

Luther had, then, an inheritance physically, mental-

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1. Quoted by Köstlin: The Life of Luther, p. 31
2. Qualben: A History of the Christian Church, p. 219
3. Fife: Young Luther, p. 22
4. Köstlin: op. cit., p. 33

ly, morally, and religiously which indicates a source of much of the steadfast strength, firm determination, and unshakeable conviction, when convinced of the right, that appeared in later life. By inheritance, Luther was notably equipped for the task to present itself later.

2. Acquired Characteristics of Early Life

It is improbable that there will ever be unanimity on the comparative importance of inheritance, and environment in forming life characteristics. However, everyone will probably agree on this assertion, that environment is a factor in the moulding of the character of any person. In every character development, there are traceable influences which have served to place an indelible stamp on it. A few of the sources responsible for certain acquired characteristics of Luther's early life will now be presented.

a. From Severe Discipline

Luther was brought up under extremely severe discipline. When Luther, later in life, thought back to his childhood days, he is quoted as saying: "My father once flogged me so severely that I fled from him and was bitterly estranged from him until he again accustomed me to himself."¹ At another time he wrote: "My

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1. Quoted by Mackinnon: Luther and The Reformation, Vol. I, p. 3



Luther's Mother

mother once flogged me on account of a nut, till the blood flowed."¹ Again he states:

"My parents dealt with me so severely that I was completely cowed. My mother once beat me for the sake of an insignificant nut until the blood came."²

This same type of inflexible discipline characterized his early school days. He tells of being chastised fifteen times in one morning. Luther commented later on this school discipline by saying:

"It is a miserable thing, when, on account of severe punishments, children learn to dislike their parents; or pupils their teachers. Many a clumsy schoolmaster, by blustering and storming and striking and beating, and by treating children precisely as though he were a hangman, completely ruins children of good disposition and excellent ability."³

Luther knew discipline and disciplined himself. Discipline gave a set to his character that is observable throughout his career. It gave strength. That fact is seen in his monastery experiences, and in the manner in which he drove himself in his later work. Was it this inculcated, rigorous, discipline factor that contributed to keep him at Romans 1:17 until that Word revealed its transforming message to him?⁴

b. From Current Piety

The home atmosphere in which Luther was reared was

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1. Mackinnon: op. cit., Vol. I, p. 3
2. Luther: E. Ed., Vol. LXI, p. 274
3. Ibid.
4. Ante., Chapter III, pp. 82-84

a pious one in a typical Roman Catholic way. In his home he learned the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and the Commandments. He participated in the services. He learned to sing hymns.

"In the Church he would join in the devotion which found expression in the Confiteor, the Magnificat, the Benedictus, the Gloria, the Psalms, and other liturgical compositions. He took part in the Church Festivals, in processions and pilgrimages, and shared in the invocation of saints, especially of the Virgin and her mother St. Anna, the patron saint of the miners."¹

The piety of Luther's day was deeply influenced by superstition of the most extreme type and made such a deep impression upon him that he often referred to it even in his later life. This superstition included witches and kobalds, good spirits and evil spirits, and demons. A typical illustration is this one told by Luther in his "Table-Talks":

"In my home neighborhood on a high mountain called the Poltersberg, there is a lake. If one throws a stone into it, there comes up a great storm and the whole country around is stirred and moved by it. Therein dwell devils who are held prisoners there."²

The twig of Luther's life was being nurtured to form the resultant tree of his manhood. Childhood influences are strong and lasting in effect. They were to prove to be such in directing Luther's life interest, and in determining his choice of life work.

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1. Mackinnon: op. cit., p. 5
2. Luther: Tischreden, Vol. III

c. From His Concept of God

Luther was brought up to conceive of God in the typical way -- as a stern judge whose anger must be placated, and whose favor must be won. He was taught that satisfaction must be rendered, and merits must be gained. Luther states:

"I was so accustomed from childhood up that I must turn pale and take fright when I heard the name of Christ called, for I was not otherwise instructed than to hold him for a severe and angry judge."¹

Mackinnon relates that Christ was depicted in the Church at Mansfeld as the stern judge, seated on the rainbow. Judgment sermons depicting Christ as judge were commonly preached. The result was that Luther turned from this fearsome, stern, and unapproachable judge to the Virgin Mary and other saints in order that they might intercede in his behalf. It is not surprising that this should be the result in a person of such a character as Luther. Heim gives a clearcut analysis of this result, an analysis which answers the accusation sometimes leveled at Luther that he was a pathological case.

"Luther's spiritual struggles in the monastery did not arise from a morbid inclination to over-scrupulousness or from repressed complexes, which could be explained from his inherited pathological disposition. They arose simply because he was so honest as not to try to avoid facing a reality which almost all other men evade, the reality of the righteous God who demands our whole life from us."²

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1. Luther: E. Ed., Vol. I, p. 261
2. Heim: The Church of Christ and the Problems of the Day, pp. 55-56

The reactions, already mentioned, were but logical, psychological results for a sincere soul facing the righteousness of God without an understanding or the experience of the grace of God in Christ.

d. From the Monastic Ideal

As a counterpart to the concept of God as a harsh and exacting judge, men sought by means of the monastic ideal to reach the ideal of holiness needed to satisfy the requirements of a just and righteous God. In the monastery was lived a separated life, a life in which all efforts and energy were devoted to fulfill external righteousness. The world was left behind and outside, it was assumed. Fasting, prayer, study, contemplation, pilgrimages, and everything conceived to win the favor of God were included in the ideal routine.

This ideal was constantly before Luther from his very early youth. It was a part of the environment in which he grew to manhood. The characteristic of that day was to exalt the monastic ideal. In remembrance of it, Luther wrote later:

"When, in my fourteenth year, I went to school at Magdeburg, I saw with my own eyes a prince of Anhalt. ... He went in a friar's cowl on the highways to beg bread, and carried a sack like a donkey, so heavy that he bent under it, but his companion walked by him without a burden; this prince alone might serve as an example of the grisly, shorn holiness of the world. They had so stunned him that he did all the works of the cloister like any other brother, and he had so fasted, watched, and mortified his flesh that

he looked like a death's head, mere skin and bones; indeed he soon after died, for he could not long bear such a severe life. In short, whoever looked at him had to gasp for pity and must needs be ashamed of his own wordly position."¹

e. From His Deep Consciousness of Sin

It is not surprising since Luther's youthful training included severe punishment for every transgression, a conception of God as an austere and punishing God, and the common view that every sin must be paid for by proper and adequate satisfaction, -- that such experiences and beliefs, together with his own introspective nature, should kindle in Luther a deep consciousness of sin. That consciousness developed early, haunted him, and filled him with foreboding and anguish.

3. Summary

From this brief consideration of the factors which contributed to Luther's personality, it can be said that there were certain characteristics which were to play an important role, subconsciously and consciously, in later developments. Most prominent of Luther's characteristics was that of fear. He was under the dominion of fear in his relationships at home, at school, to God, and to the

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1. Luther: E. Ed., Vol. XXXI, p. 239



Luther's Stotternheim Experience

imagined world of superstition with its variety of evil and vengeful beings.

Furthermore, there would naturally develop in such a conscientious, pious, and yet strong personality, sincere and energetic attempts to gain merit and favor, and so to placate those who were his judges. This was true at home and in school. It was still more true in his relationship to God. Hence the monastery ideal appealed to Luther early in life. He was driven by his unique, inherited, personality characteristics, and acquired characteristics to build the Babel Tower of his life to the highest limit possible according to the blue print set before him by the Roman Catholic Church. By that very fact, when the fallacy of such an attempt became apparent, the psychological reaction was all the more violent. The will to completely change this system and to establish it on a basis of fact and truth came as a psychological dynamic, reacting as strongly as it had formerly acted.

The climax of the logical development resulting from Luther's inherited and acquired personality characteristics occurred when, seemingly, Luther so suddenly decided to enter the monastery at Erfurt. There are many biographers who maintain that the decision was unpremeditated and impelled by the experience on the Stotternheim road when Luther was overtaken by a terrible thunderstorm; when lightning had struck so close that he was

thrown to the ground; and, when in his terror, he called on St. Anna and vowed he would become a monk.

True, this event undoubtedly had an "either-or" significance that drove him to his final decision. But it is to be remembered that Luther had lived his whole life in the fear of God, and in terror of Christ as a just and merciless judge whose demands were absolute. Luther, too, it must further be remembered, had the inward drive to want to satisfy all demands to win God's favor, to gain a moral perfection, and thus to gain salvation. And so it can be said that back of Luther's decision to enter the monastery -- a decision which seemed so sudden that it alienated his father¹ for a time, and sorely disappointed his companions, was the lifetime build-up already indicated.

C. THE FACTOR OF A SERIES OF IMPRESSIONABLE EXPERIENCES
CLIMAXED BY THE "GREAT ILLUMINATION"

1. Introduction

The period from 1505 to 1513, or the beginning of 1514, was one during which a series of strong impressionable experiences built up a potent psychological basis which contributed much, in an indirect way, to make pos-

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1. Luther writes: "When I became a monk my father almost went mad. He was bitterly chagrined and would not give his consent." W. Ed., Vol. VIII, p. 573

sible the launching of the Reformation. These experiences added to the sum total of what was contributed by the personality factors already considered. However, there is also observable in this period the beginnings of an internal conflict which grows to a climax. In reality, it can be said that the law of relationship¹ was, consciously or unconsciously, in operation in Luther's mind. Gradually this applied law would result in an evaluation of the relative worth of the observable contrasts or comparisons between the revelation of Scripture and current Roman Catholic emphasis.

2. Monastery Experiences

Luther had entered into that life which was the medieval ideal -- that life which he conceived to be a state where the perfect life could be lived; that life where he could gain the unconditional favor of God and work out his salvation to the state where perfect assurance would be his. He entered into that life with enthusiasm and energy. Böhrer describes this psychological state of Luther's mind as he entered into monastery life:

"The young monk had heard lectures at the University only with the Okkamists (Occamists) or philosophers

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1. The Law of Relationship: "Everything written or spoken sustains some specific relation to something else in contrast, or comparison, or repetition, or cause and effect, or means to an end, etc." (As given by Dr. H. T. Kuist in the course: Old Testament Book Studies.)

of the 'Modern' school, and thus when he entered into the monastery he had the firm conviction: Man can do all that he wills. He can, for instance, fulfill the Ten Commandments to the last letter, if only he wants to; he can love God with his whole heart, with his whole soul, and with all his powers, if only he wants to; he can even force his reason to believe that black is white, in fact, he can create in himself every imaginable concept, sensation, and feeling, moral and immoral passion, and do this at any time, unhampered and completely, if only he uses his will. For, because the will is the all-determining psychic force it is itself determined by nothing, never weakened or strengthened, increased or decreased at any time by any good or evil deed."¹

It can well be imagined what the response would be from a personality such as Luther's, with his powerful physical forces, together with his energetic, determined, and disciplined mind driven by fear, earnest zeal, and a deep conviction of the sinfulness of sin. He was encouraged

"to torment, torture, and train his soul in a manner in which otherwise only the body is trained, to the end that he might wrest from it the perfect love of God."²

He could win God's love, he was told, if only he wanted to do so. It is understandable why this dominant emphasis of salvation by works so completely overshadowed

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1. Böhmer: op. cit., p. 73
2. Ibid., p. 76



Luther in the Augustinian Monastery

the Gospel¹ to which he had access and which he studied, and also over-shadowed the admonition of Staupitz to believe in the forgiveness of sin.

The terrific struggle which Luther underwent, and the indelible imprint of this impressionable experience is clearly evidenced by a later explanation given by Luther in his commentary on Galatians:

"When I was a monk, I thought that I was utterly cast away if at any time I felt the lust of the flesh; that is to say, if I felt any evil emotion, fleshly lust, wrath, hatred, or envy against any brother. I assayed many ways to help to quiet my conscience, but it would not be; for the concupiscence and lust of my flesh did always return, so that I could not rest, but was continually vexed with these thoughts: This or that thought thou hast committed: thou are infected with envy, with impatience, and such other sins: therefore thou are entered into this holy order in vain, and all thy good works are unprofitable. But if I had rightly understood these sentences of Paul: 'The flesh lusteth contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit contrary to the flesh; and these two are one against another, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would do,' I should not have so miserably tormented myself, but should have thought and said to myself, as now commonly I do, 'Martin, thou shalt not utterly be without sin, for thou hast flesh; thou shalt therefore feel the battle thereof.'

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1. Luther tells in his "Table-Talks" that "there (in the monastery) the monks gave to him a Bible bound in red leather." Not only so but he had previously seen, studied, and come into contact with the Bible. Besides, Luther attended lectures on the Bible as a part of his monastery education. The novice in the Erfurt Cloister was expected to "eagerly read, devoutly hear, and industriously learn" Holy Scripture. Hence the condition in which Luther lived, at this time, was not due to lack of access to Scripture but to the interpretation given to it by the double authority principle. Scholastic schoolmen interpreted Scripture for him.

"I remember that Staupitz was wont to say, 'I have vowed unto God about a thousand times that I would become a better man: But I never performed that which I vowed. Hereafter I will make no such vow: For I have now learned by experience that I am not able to perform it. Unless, therefore, God be favorable and merciful unto me for Christ's sake, I shall not be able, with all my vows and all my good deed, to stand before him.' This (of Staupitz) was not only a true, but also a godly and a holy desperation; and this must they all confess, both with mouth and heart, who will be saved. For the godly trust not to their own righteousness. They look unto Christ their reconciler, who gave his life for their sins."¹

It becomes plain why Luther studied Biel with a "bleeding heart". Luther carried the dominant, current method of gaining salvation to the limit. The limit, in his case, was extreme. He had joined the company of the Rich Young Ruler, and Saul of Tarsus in attempting by sheer will and good works to work out his own salvation. The double authority principle was being applied. Numerous statements are made by Luther showing how zealously and even fanatically he attempted to win the favor of God, and to gain a peaceful conscience according to the advocated method:

"I was an earnest monk, lived strictly and chaste, prayed incessantly day and night."²

"I kept vigil night by night, fasted, prayed, chastised and mortified my body, kept obedience and lived chastely."³

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1. Luther: Commentary on Galatians, p. 575
2. Luther: W. Ed., Vol. XXXIII, p. 561
3. Ibid., p. 574

"For almost 15 years I wore myself out in self-sacrifice, tormenting myself with fastings, vigils, prayers and other very burdensome tasks, with the idea of attaining to righteousness by my works."¹

"Certain it is, I was a pious monk and observed the rule of my order so strictly that I venture to say that if ever a monk could have gained a heaven through monkery, I should certainly have got there. This all my fellow-monks who have known we will attest."³

"I was so deeply plunged in monkery, even to delirium and insanity. If righteousness was to be got by the law, I should certainly have attained it. I was a wonder in the sight of my brethren."⁵

3. The Disillusioning Trip to Rome

In September of 1510, Luther was sent on a mission to Rome in the company of Nathin, an older fellow-monk. The psychological reactions to what he saw are gleaned chiefly from statements in Luther's later life.

Luther looked forward to the visit with keen anticipation. At Rome was the opportunity of gaining the maximum of benefit from the application of his currently believed way of gaining merit in the sight of God. He visited church after church, and catacombs, and shrines to gain indulgences. He stated that "he was truly sorry that his father and mother still lived, for now he could have got them safely out of purgatory with his masses."⁴

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1. Luther: Documente, p. 38
2. Luther: W. Ed., Vol. XXVIII, p. 143
3. Ibid., Vol. XL, Part I, p. 134
4. Ibid., Vol. XXI, p. 226

On his knees, he climbed the Scala Sancta with its twenty-eight stone steps, and said a Paternoster on each step.¹ But when he arrived at the top, he questioned whether the promise connected with so doing was true.

Contrary to anticipation, the trip to Rome proved extremely disillusioning for Luther. In retrospect he says:

"I would not have missed being in Rome for any amount of money. Had I not seen it with my own eyes, I would not have believed it. For there is there so great and shocking impiety and wickedness. There neither God nor man, neither sin nor shame is regarded."²

The flippant manner in which the masses were conducted, the hypocrisy, the impiety, the pomp, the luxury, the simony, and the sensuality were shocking to Luther's zeal, sincerity, and piety. Questions and doubts must have resulted in Luther's mind. There must have been a decided psychological recoil in his consciousness to what he actually found in Rome. What a contrast to the surroundings in the Erfurt monastery! The disappointment would be even more extreme in the light of what he had expected to find which is indicated by the emotional response from his first view of the city: "Hail, holy Rome! ... the holy city rendered sacred by the

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1. Leo IV had granted a nine year indulgence for each step so climbed.
2. Luther: Tischreden, Vol. III, pp. 451-452

blood of the martyrs."¹ His disillusionment is further indicated by a later extreme statement: "Whoever went to Rome and brought money with him obtained the forgiveness of sins. I, like a fool, carried onions there and brought back garlic."² Unquestionably, this revealing trip to Rome became a strong psychological factor in directing the course of later events.

4. The Influence of Personalities

In outlining the experiential build-up which was preparing the ground for Luther's later established convictions concerning the authority of Scripture, due credit must be given to the influence of certain personalities. While Luther was in the throes of his spiritual struggles, there were those who partially pulled aside the veil and gave to him momentary glimpses of the Gospel truth which was later to set him completely free.

a. Staupitz³

In a letter dated September 17, 1523, Luther wrote

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1. Luther: Tischreden, Vol. III, p
2. Luther: W. Ed., Vol. XLVII, p. 392
3. Staupitz was the Vicar-General of the Augustinian convents in Germany. He might be described as a practical mystic or pietist much like Tauler and Thomas a Kempis. When Luther was in the throes of his spiritual struggles, he directed Luther "from his sins to the merits of Christ, from the law to the cross, from works to faith, from Scholasticism to the study of the Scriptures, of St. Augustine and Tauler."

to Staupitz and acknowledged a debt of gratitude which he owed to him:

"But even if I have lost your favor and goodwill, it would not be right for me to forget you and be grateful to you, for it was through you that the light of the Gospel first began to shine out the darkness in my heart."¹

Luther wrote in a similar reflective mood in a letter dated May 20, 1518:

"I remember, reverend Father, among those happy and wholesome stories of yours, by which the Lord used wonderfully to console me, that you often mentioned the word 'penitence' ... Your words on this subject pierced me like the sharp arrows of the mighty, so that I began to see what the Scriptures had to say about penitence, and behold the happy result."²

At the time that Staupitz exerted his influence on Luther, it can be said that the help given was only momentary and partial, but it became a psychological factor later, when the full illumination came to Luther. Possibly it could be stated that these glimpses of light were stored away in the subconscious areas, but later moved into the conscious realm to contribute to the sum total of that which led Luther to his Reformation convictions.

b. Augustine

Luther was profoundly influenced by the writings of Augustine. He quotes Augustine more than all the other

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1. Smith-Jacobs: Luther's Correspondence, Vol. II, p.202
2. Smith: Luther's Correspondence, Vol. I, p. 91

church fathers combined. Schaff quotes Luther as saying: "He pleased me better than all other doctors; he was a great teacher, and worthy of all praise."¹ Luther further states that "Augustine did more than all the bishops and popes who cannot hold a candle to him."²

The important question to be answered is: Just what was Augustine's contribution that might have helped to prepare the way, psychologically, for Luther's discovery of the absolute authority of Scripture? Certainly there was a mixture of contributions from Augustine. It is to be remembered that:

"Whilst he took a great deal from Paul, he assimilated not a little from Neo-Platonism, and something even from Manichaeism, in which, before his conversion, he sought the truth in philosophy and religion. It bears, in addition, the stamp of his own religious experience which he strove to accommodate to the teaching and practice of the Church. The result is an incongruous body of religious thought, in which the contradictions and inconsistencies are not really unified."³

But there are some illuminating gleams of truth shining out from Augustine which gave help and comfort to Luther, and which served to plough the ground and prepare him for what was to come. Augustine emphasized the fact of sin, including original sin. He taught that God's grace is made available through Christ for those

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1. Schaff: History of the Christian Church, Vol. VI, p. 534
2. Luther: E. Ed., Vol. XXI, p. 358
3. Mackinnon: op. cit., Vol. I, p. 56

whom God, according to His sovereign decree, elected to salvation. He varied the Pauline doctrine of "Justification by Faith" to a view which he stated as "Justification by faith working through love."¹ This view becomes almost equivalent to the method by which sanctification is achieved.

From just such an incomplete and summary statement, it may be seen that there was much evangelical truth in what Luther found in Augustine. At the same time, such ideas as penance, and the gaining of merit by an ascetic form of life (reaching its highest ideal in monasticism and kindred, typical, Roman ideas) served to becloud the truths presented by Augustine. But it is evident that Luther did see the kernel in the midst of the husk with which it was surrounded, and that this discernment contributed to his impressionable experiences.

c. Tauler

Tauler was a representative of the fourteenth century school of German mystics. Strong claims have been advanced about the influence especially of Tauler and the so-called "Frankfort Anonymous" upon Luther. It is claimed, even, that their influence changed Luther from a state of struggling despair to that of becoming a Re-

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1. Mackinnon: op. cit., Vol. I, p. 59

former. It is said that German mysticism is the cradle of the Reformation. These views are extreme and without foundation, but they do serve to indicate the potent influence which these men exercised in contributing impressionable experiences upon Luther.

In a letter to Spalatin, dated December 14, 1516, Luther wrote of Tauler. True, the letter is from a later period than that which is now being considered, but in the light of the knowledge that Tauler did exert an early influence, the statements in the letter are significant.

"If you delight in reading pure, sound theology, like that of the earliest age, and in German, read the sermons of John Tauler, the Dominican, of which I send you, as it were, the quintessence. I have never read either in Latin or in our own tongue theology more wholesome or more agreeable to the Gospel."¹

Tauler's sermons were evangelistic, and Christ-centered. The Bible was the primary source of his messages. At the same time, he used the allegorical method, and wove in philosophical and mystic speculation, and spoke as an obedient Roman Catholic. But, in harmony with Augustine, Tauler held to the reality of original sin. Because of sin, he writes:

"Man lost all the grace and all the powers and virtues that should lead him into the likeness and fellowship of God and the holy angels, and poisoned

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1. Smith: op. cit., Vol. I, p. 48

his originally pure and holy nature, inflicting deadly wounds on himself."¹

Salvation, he said, is the work of God, and is mediated through the incarnation, suffering, and death of Christ. He failed to bring out Paul's dominant emphasis of justification by faith. Instead, his idea was absorption in God by faith. In respect to works, he stated that they must be wrought in love to gain merit.

As in Augustine's works, it is clearly evident that Tauler presented gleams of evangelical truth. In addition, Tauler emphasized the subjective experience strongly. Insofar, then, Tauler added his contribution -- in pointing Luther out of his spiritual agony, and in projecting a background in Luther's experience to support what he discovered in Romans 1:17.

d. Occam and Biel

The presentation of impressionable experiences would not be complete without a consideration of the Scholastic theologians, Occam and Biel. It is true that Occam and Biel are not identical in their theology, but they are sufficiently alike to be considered together and especially so in indicating what they contributed by way of impressionable experiences to Luther.

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1. Mackinnon: op. cit., Vol. I, p. 223

Attention has previously been called to Luther's early devotion to Biel.¹ Luther relates that he read Biel with a "bleeding heart," that is, with the utmost of devotion and sympathy. Luther regarded Occam as "the most skilled and the most learned of all schoolmen."² Luther called the Occamist School, "my sect."³

One aspect of the contribution of the Occamist School has already been presented.⁴ This contribution to Luther's experiences was negative in that it directed him further on a religious quest that brought to him the experience of futility. Psychologically, this negative experience was valuable in bringing about later developments. But, at the same time, the Occamist School contributed to Luther's later discovery in a positive way, too.

Two things are to be said and to be stressed in this connection. In the first place, the Occamist School was severely critical of the papal system. Occam declared that popes and councils can err. He criticized the mixing of the people and the clergy in secular affairs. The criticism included certain tenets of the Church, such as penance. In the second place, Occam, followed by Biel, asserted that Scripture alone is infallible. However,

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1. Ante.: Chapter III, pp. 68-69
2. Luther: Tischreden, Vol. I, p. 137
3. Luther: W. Ed., Vol. VI, p. 195
4. Ante.: Chapter IV, pp. 126-130

this seemingly revolutionary assertion is vitiated by the method used of explaining the Bible -- that Scripture was authoritative but that the Church was the authoritative interpreter of Scripture.

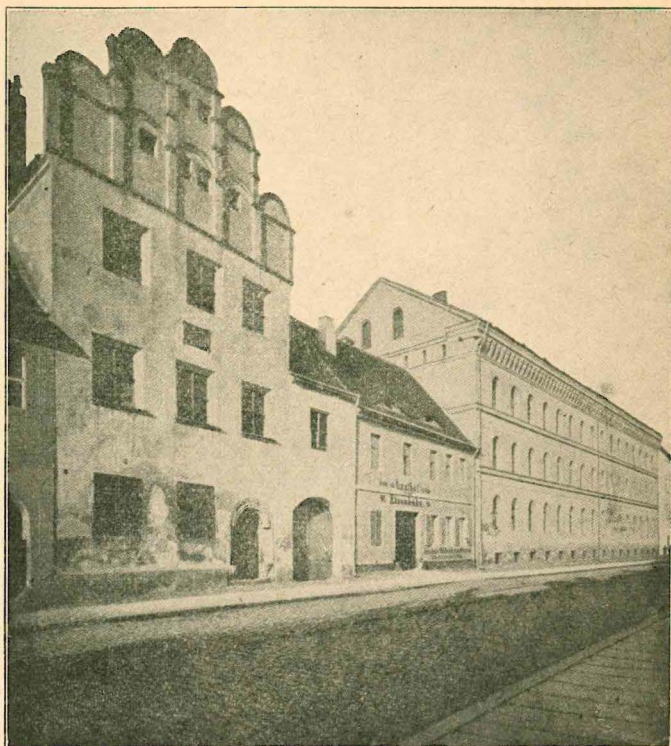
"In spite of the fact that in principle the Scriptures are acknowledged as the sole authority, positive interest in discovering Bible truth is almost entirely absent. In the last analysis, the real interest of Occam as well as of many of his contemporaries, in stressing the authority of the Bible, was to secure a means of criticism by which the authority of the Church's dogmas could be shaken, or the dialectics with which they are upheld at least be made more complicated."¹

It readily can be seen that Luther was finding himself in the throes of a mental and spiritual tug of war. The series of impressionable experiences were not allowing him to remain in a static condition. By reason of the whole contradictory maelstrom of conflicting opinions; because of the fearful, spiritual storms experienced; and, because of the positive, and negative winds that were blowing across the plain of his mind and soul, Luther was in a right psychological state to lay hold of that which could lead him to a heaven of security. He was ready and waiting, psychologically, for something that could speak to him authoritatively -- authoritatively in a way that would bring him to peace and assurance.

There are numerous other impressionable experiences

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1. Quoted from R. Seeberg by Reu: Luther's German Bible, p. 326



The University of Wittenberg

that, undoubtedly, were potent factors in preparing the way, psychologically, for the moment and the experience which was to launch the great Reformation movement. Possibly those cited may suffice to create a setting for the all-important event that has been given the name, "The Great Illumination." In this event may be found the climactic result for which the experiences delineated offered psychological preparation.

5. "The Great Illumination"

This investigation has now arrived at the climax of the series of impressionable experiences in the life of Luther that contributed as psychological factors in leading him to his view on the authority of Scripture. It will be necessary to give quite a complete exposition and analysis of this event in order to understand the relation of it to the preceding events already discussed in this portion of the chapter.

Luther had become a Doctor of Theology in October of 1512. The receiving of this degree meant that he was now a lecturer in Scripture. He became Professor in Theology at the University of Wittenberg in the place of Staupitz.

As Luther later looked back upon his spiritual state at this time, he said: "When I was made a Doctor, I did not yet know the light."¹ He began his lectures in the

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1. Luther: W. Ed., Vol. XLV, p. 86

Psalms in the summer of 1513. These lectures indicate that he found the light during the early course of his lectures on the Psalms. Reu,¹ who has been engaged in Luther research for sixty years, and whose judgment and critical insight may well be trusted, declares that the first indication of this newfound light are evident in his lecture on Psalm 71. There Luther comments on verse 15:

"In this verse the true difference between divine and human righteousness is described in that through the the former we attain to the highest, but through the latter to the lowest, because everyone that exalts himself shall be abased. And the entire divine righteousness, on the other hand, consists in abasing ourselves to the depths, for thus we attain to the highest. And that exactly describes Christ, for He is the righteousness of God in the deepest abasement."²

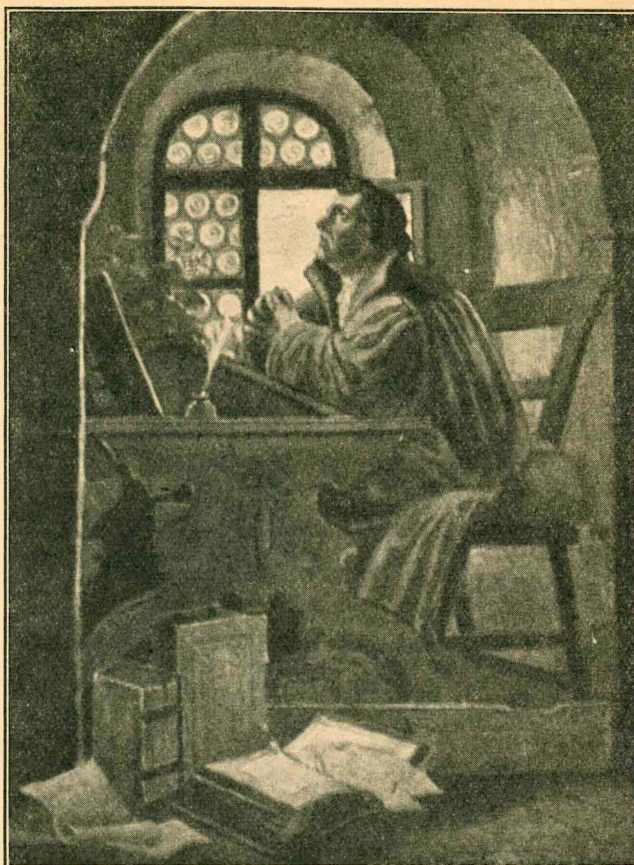
Psalm 72 clearly evidences the same evangelical understanding.

These lectures on the Psalms were given in the fall of 1514. Therefore, "The Great Illumination" occurred some time before the fall of 1514 and yet after October of 1512.

How did this great Illumination come about? If contributing causes should be spoken of, it would be neces-

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1. In 1917, Dr. Reu published a book entitled: "Thirty-five Years of Luther Research." His ability as a scholar is widely recognized both here and in Europe. He has just recently completed in manuscript form a life of Luther which has embodied in it the most recent discoveries and developments in Luther research.
2. Luther: W. Ed., Vol. III, p. 457



Luther in the Black Cloister Tower

sary to restate the preceding part of this chapter. It has been explained that the personality factor, and the factor of impressionable experiences contributed psychologically to this end. The concern now, however, is to discover the immediate cause and to see its relationship to the contributing causes.

"The Great Illumination" occurred in the tower of the Black Cloister. Luther was engaged in a private study of Romans and came to 1:17. He himself relates how the important event occurred:

"I was possessed with an unbelievable great desire to know the writer of the Epistle to the Romans. Not as though I was lacking in a bold determination to engage in thorough investigation, but I was startled only by the statement concerning the 'righteousness of God that was revealed in the Gospel.' For this idea of the righteousness of God was actually hateful to me because I was accustomed to understand it as the 'formal or active righteousness,' by which God shows Himself righteous in punishing the unrighteous sinner. Though as a monk I had lived an irreproachable life, I felt myself in the sight of God as a sinner pursued by the pangs of conscience, and, as I could not depend on my satisfactions for my own reconciliation, I did not love Him but actually hated that righteous, sin-avenging, God, and if not with silent blasphemy, with a great murmuring. I was indignant with God, saying, is it not enough that the wretched sinners, who have already been delivered to the pangs of eternal damnation through the curse of original sin, had been visited with all kinds of earthly punishments, according to the law of the Old Testament? Why is God adding torment to torment through the new Gospel, as through the tidings of the New Covenant he only announces to us his wrathful and avenging righteousness. So I tormented myself in the severity and confusion of my conscience, but, at the same time, I brooded continually on that statement of the apostle whose meaning I ardently desired to solve, till finally, after long reflection by night and by day, God took pity on me, so that I perceived the inner connection of the two statements, 'the righteousness of God is revealed

in the Gospel,' and 'the just shall live by faith.' Then I began to comprehend the righteousness of God, by whose power the righteous is saved through the grace of God, namely through faith; that the righteousness of God which is revealed through the Gospel is to be understood in the passive sense, that God in His mercy justifies us through faith, as it is written: 'The just shall live by faith.' Now I felt as though I had been born anew and believed that through wide open doors I had entered Paradise. Then in my mind I reviewed Holy Scripture, as my memory had retained it, and discovered in other connections a corresponding meaning. So the 'work of God' is that which God works in us, the 'wisdom of God' is that by which He makes us wise, and, in the same way, the 'power of God', the 'salvation of God,' the 'glory of God' are to be understood."¹

God had spoken to Luther through Scripture. The Gospel itself had become the "power of God unto salvation." Scripture had established its authoritativeness for Luther by what it had been the means to do for him. More will be said of this fact later.

What is now to be said about the previous psychological factors in relation to this event which was plainly mediated by God through the means of the Bible? Much has already been said to indicate the relationship. The word "preparatory" can probably best describe it. Luther had exhausted his own resources. Experientially, he had learned: "By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified in His sight."² He had also tested thoroughly the Roman Catholic method of gaining salvation -- that method which was based on the double authority theory.

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1. Luther: W. Ed., Vol. LIV, pp. 179-187
2. Romans 3:20

That method had only yielded deeper despair. Luther had found his answer to the perplexing problem of salvation in the authoritative message of Scripture. All else was preparatory -- a plowing of the field -- a psychological preparation that created a right setting to promote the sensational discovery. The authority of Scripture actually yielded the sought-for and longed-for result.

D. THE FACTOR OF A SERIES OF EXPRESSIONAL EXPERIENCES

If impressionable experiences are potent psychological factors in directing a person's development, that fact is not less true of expressional experiences. The expressional experiences, which were Luther's, hold approximately the same relative relationship to his observable religious development as his impressionable experiences. By no means is it intended that an attempt will be made to establish the fact that these psychological factors of expressional experiences account for all the results observable. They do not do so any more than was explained relative to the impressionable experiences.¹

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1. The psychological approach that is being used is not intended as a means of explaining all that happened. It is merely being used as an aid in throwing more light on the events that transpired and in setting forth indirect and contributing causes. In stating what might be the value of this approach, note Snowden's statement: "Psychology simply throws new light on the old facts of religion and thereby makes them more luminous and fruitful."
Snowden: The Psychology of Religion, p. 22

After his great illuminating experience, Luther had discovered a guiding star in the Bible. The experience which had been his in the "Great Illumination" had fixed his course. From now on he would follow as Scripture would direct. At the same time, it can be shown that the expressional experiences, which so strongly dominated the period following the "Great Illumination", played a vital psychological role and aided in further and more clearly establishing him on the fundamental basis of the absolute authority of Scripture.

1. The Ninety-seven Theses

Scholastic Theology¹ had gained a strangle hold on religious life preceding the Reformation. From the twelfth to the sixteenth centuries, the group called Scholastics dominated theology, and completely systematized and organized the faith and doctrine of the Church. The direction taken by their work is clearly and summarily stated in these words:

"The Schoolmen did not pay much attention to the Trinitarian and Christological problems of old, but rather addressed themselves to the analysis of

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1. Mackinnon, in a recent work, gives a splendid definition of Scholastic Theology: "What is characteristic of the Scholastic Theology is the application of reason to the elaboration of theological doctrines, under the influence of Greek philosophy, especially the dialectic and metaphysic of Aristotle, and within the limit of the authority of the Church." Mackinnon: The Origins of the Reformation, p. 342

grace as expressed in the Sacraments, and of merit as expressed in law and good works. In consequence, the Christian dogma, as formulated by the Schoolmen, took on a rather legalistic character; and their conclusions were formulated so well -- especially those of Thomas Aquinas -- that they have ever since been accepted as an authoritative statement of the Roman Catholic Church."¹

Luther had been thoroughly indoctrinated in the Scholastic system. It was this system with its double authority, its way of salvation, and its directed religious ideal that had caused Luther to experience the terrific struggle already described.² The events that followed, climaxed by the "Great Illumination", revealed to Luther that there were grave contradictions between the Scholastic system and the truth of Scripture. The negative and critical reaction concerning Scholasticism continued to grow in Luther's mind. In 1519, Luther made such a statement as:

"I know and confess that I learned nothing (from Scholasticism) but ignorance of sin, righteousness, baptism, and the whole Christian life. ... Briefly, I not only learned nothing, but I learned only what I had to unlearn, as contrary to the divine Scriptures."³

In a letter dated August, in 1522, Luther expressed himself equally forcefully:

"When I compare scholastic with sacred theology, that is with Holy Scripture, it seems full of impiety and vanity and dangerous in all ways to be

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1. Qualben: op. cit., p. 177
2. Ante.: Chapter IV, pp. 127-130
3. Luther: W. Ed., Vol. II, p. 414

put before Christian minds not forearmed with the armor of God."¹

Luther finally came to the point where he drastically referred to the Scholastics as "Sow Theologians." It is plainly evident that a radical change had occurred in Luther's relationship to the Scholastics when what his former relationship had been is recalled. There followed, then, his most complete and pronounced expressional experience concerning the Scholastic theologians as evidenced in the ninety-seven theses against Scholasticism. The psychological effect of that expressional experience was decided. It contributed greatly in setting Luther's course in relation to Scholasticism.

The writing of the ninety-seven theses involved a careful and critical study of all that Scholasticism stood for. It involved further a comparison of the whole Scholastic system with the discoveries that Luther had made in Scripture. Then Luther gave voice to his conclusions. It would be inevitable that as he did so he would veer definitely away from the Scholastic theories that had been drilled into his mind, and toward a greater appreciation of the great truths of Scripture that had worked such a transforming experience in his life by bringing peace, and real fellowship with God through Christ. The expressional factor played the same

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1. Smith-Jacobs: op. cit., Vol. II, p. 135

role in Luther's life as witnessing to one's faith in Christ brings to believers now.

The result was that Luther reacted away from Scholasticism and grounded himself more firmly in Scripture as he wrote: "It is true that man, who has become a corrupt tree, can will or do naught but evil"¹ (4th thesis). "It is false that the will, left to itself, can do good as well as evil; for it is not free, but in bondage"² (5th thesis). "It is a falsehood to say that man can remove the hindrances for grace if he only does what is in him"³ (33rd thesis). "We are not lords over our acts, we are slaves"⁴ (39th thesis).

Luther called a revolt against Aristotle who dominated Scholastic theology. "It is an error to say that without Aristotle no one becomes a theologian; on the contrary, if one becomes a theologian he will only become one without Aristotle"⁵ (43rd and 44th thesis). "In a word, Aristotle is to divinity as darkness to light"⁶ (50th thesis).

Likewise he renounced Scotus, Occam, Biel, the Doctors, the philosophers, and the common usage and understanding of Christianity based on Scholasticism.

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1. Luther: W. Ed., Vol. I, p. 224
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., p. 225
4. Ibid., p. 226
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.

D'Aubigne thus concludes the import of the ninety-seven theses:

"In those (ninety-seven theses) ... he assailed the schools and rationalism, which had taken away from the very gospel, the doctrine of the sovereignty of God, of His revelation, and of His grace. The Reformation attacked rationalism before it turned against superstition. It proclaimed the rights of God, before it cut off the excrescences of man. It was positive before it became negative."¹

By the study involved, the comparisons made, and the conclusions formulated -- all climaxed by the expressional experience involved in presenting the ninety-seven theses -- Luther had taken a definite step in the direction of rejecting all authority except the authority of Scripture. The expressional experience became a psychological factor in the direction of the great and final conclusion to which he arrived completely and decisively at the Diet of Worms.

2. The Ninety-five Theses

It is plainly evident that Luther, in the ninety-five theses, was seeking clarity and understanding through expression. The flagrant abuse of the indulgence system must have caused a strong psychological reaction in Luther's mind in at least a twofold way. In the first place, there was the terrific struggle that he had waged in the monastery to gain peace with God. The ordeals

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1. D'Aubigne: The History of the Reformation, p. 244

through which he had driven himself were severe. Sin was real and its results, as he felt them, were fearful. The indulgence method of gaining remission from the temporal punishment due sin, including purgatory, was so easy. A payment of money and one was free.

In addition, the "Great Illumination" had given him experiential assurance that a man is justified by faith in Christ. Sin is forgiven. The indulgence traffic did not fit in with his new-found experience and the truths which he saw in Scripture. Luther took up his pen. The ninety-five theses resulted. These theses were posted on the Church door at Wittenberg on October 31, 1517. Luther was but following normal procedure, for this was the designated place in Wittenberg where all matters calling for public disputation were posted. He was merely inviting a discussion among the theologians on the subject of indulgences.¹

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1. In his unpublished manuscript of The Life of Luther, Reu gives this account of Tetzel's procedure: "After the sermon in which he proclaimed the manifold blessings of the indulgences sold by him, he himself usually led the way to the indulgence booth, bought an indulgence certificate for his father or some other dead relative, and, when the money fell into the box, he cried aloud: 'Now I am sure of his salvation and don't need to pray for him any longer.' Prierias, who in 1518 at the command of the pope had to defend the doctrine of indulgences, recognized the saying: 'Sobald das Geld im Kasten klingt, die seele aus dem Fegfeuer springt,' as 'mere et catholica veritas.' Reu: The Life of Luther, p. 54

The introduction to the theses clearly indicates that the theses were an expressional means, prompted by experience and psychological reaction, to arrive at Scriptural truth. That fact was stated in the introduction to the theses.

"Out of love for the truth and the desire to bring it to light, the following propositions will be discussed at Wittenberg, under the presidency of the Reverend Father Martin Luther, Master of Arts and of Sacred Theology, and Lecturer in ordinary on the same at that place."¹

Luther's thoughts were being crystallized through an expressional experience. From such a series of statements and from the resulting discussion, psychological reactions would lead to firmer convictions. That fact is inescapable.

Luther wrote a letter to the Archbishop Albrecht of Mainz which is dated the same as the theses, October 31, 1517. He wrote passionately to his superior and thereby indicated his reaction to the indulgence traffic.

"O God, most good! Thus souls committed to your care, good father, are taught to their death, and the strict account, which you must render for all such, grows and increases. For this reason, I have no longer been able to keep quiet about this matter, for it is by no gift of a bishop that man becomes sure of salvation. ... How great is the horror, how great the peril of a bishop, if he permits the Gospel to be kept quiet, and nothing but the noise of indulgences to be spread among his people."²

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1. Luther: H. Ed., Vol. I, p. 29
2. Ibid., pp. 26-27

During the last days of November or the first days of December of the same year -- 1517 -- Luther preached the "Sermon von Ablass und Gnade." This sermon was really a summary of the ninety-five theses, more clearly stated in twenty theses, and indicates a development. Expressional experiences were bringing him more and more into the clear. We quote from this sermon:

"It is a great error to believe that man could perform satisfaction for his sins which God always forgives freely out of his indescribable grace without demanding anything else than this that in the future we live according to His will. If Christendom demands anything beyond this, then it also has the right to remit it, but it should impose nothing that is hard and unbearable. ... If some should call me a heretic, because such truth is dangerous to the indulgence chest, then I would not consider their crying very much, because this is done only by some dark and empty brains who have not read their Bible nor the Christian doctrine, who do not understand their own teachers, for if they had understood them, they would know that they are not to slander anyone without first having heard and conquered him. May God give them and us the right mind. Amen."¹

Definite progress is evident. In one short month, Luther had come a long way in his convictions respecting indulgences. The psychological factor of expressional experience is demonstrated. It is plain that it is leading him to stronger convictions regarding the authority of Scripture.

3. The Leipzig Disputation

Dr. Kuist, in his course in Old Testament Book

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1. Luther: H. Ed., Vol. I, pp. 45-46

Studies, would use the illustration: "Books have windows. ... Scan the whole and where you find a convergence of material, there you have a window. ... You see through them (the windows) to the light."¹ The illustration may very aptly be applied to the life of Luther in tracing the contribution of expressional experiences as a psychological factor in leading him to his final conviction respecting the authority of Scripture. The window which gives one of the clearest views of this development is that of the Leipzig disputation. That disputation centered primarily about the question of authority. The "give" and "take", and the statements made and the answers given as the theological battle surged back and forth, from July fourth to the fourteenth, were certainly instrumental in leading Luther more and more out into the open, and in clarifying his convictions about the question of authority.

While Luther was in the midst of his preparations for the debate in which he was to express his views on authority, he wrote a letter to Spalatin. The letter is dated March 13, 1519:

"I am studying the decrees of the popes for my debate, and (I speak it in your ear), I know not whether the pope is antiChrist himself or his apostle, so terribly is Christ, that is, the truth, corrupted and crucified in him in the decretals. I am terribly distressed that the people of Christ

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1. Dr. Kuist: Notes from the Course in O.T. Book Studies

should be thus deceived by the semblance of laws of the Christian name. Sometime I will make you a copy of my notes on the Canon Law, that you too may see what it is to make a law regardless of Scripture, simply from ambition and tyranny, not to mention the other works of the Roman curia, which are like those of AntiChrist. Daily there arises in me a greater and greater aid and defence of the sacred books."¹

What was happening in Luther's convictions is plainly evident. When Luther took the platform against Eck, following Carlstadt's unsatisfying attempt to refute him, the debate moved right into the question of authority. It can be seen clearly how the expressional experience of this debate was a strong factor in forming Luther's viewpoint on authority.

When Eck asserted the divine right of the papacy by appealing to Cyprian, Jerome, and St. Bernard, and advanced the typical misinterpretation of Matthew 16:18², Luther countered by declaring and presenting the supreme authority of Scripture.

"The Word of God is above all words of man. ... I venerate St. Bernard and do not condemn his opinion. But in this discussion the genuine and specific sense of Scripture is to be accepted and to decide the issue."³

In answering Eck's appeal to Matthew 16:18, Luther showed his grasp of Scripture and his exegetical ability

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1. Smith: op. cit., pp. 170-171
2. "And I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it."
3. Luther: W. Ed., Vol. II, pp. 263-264

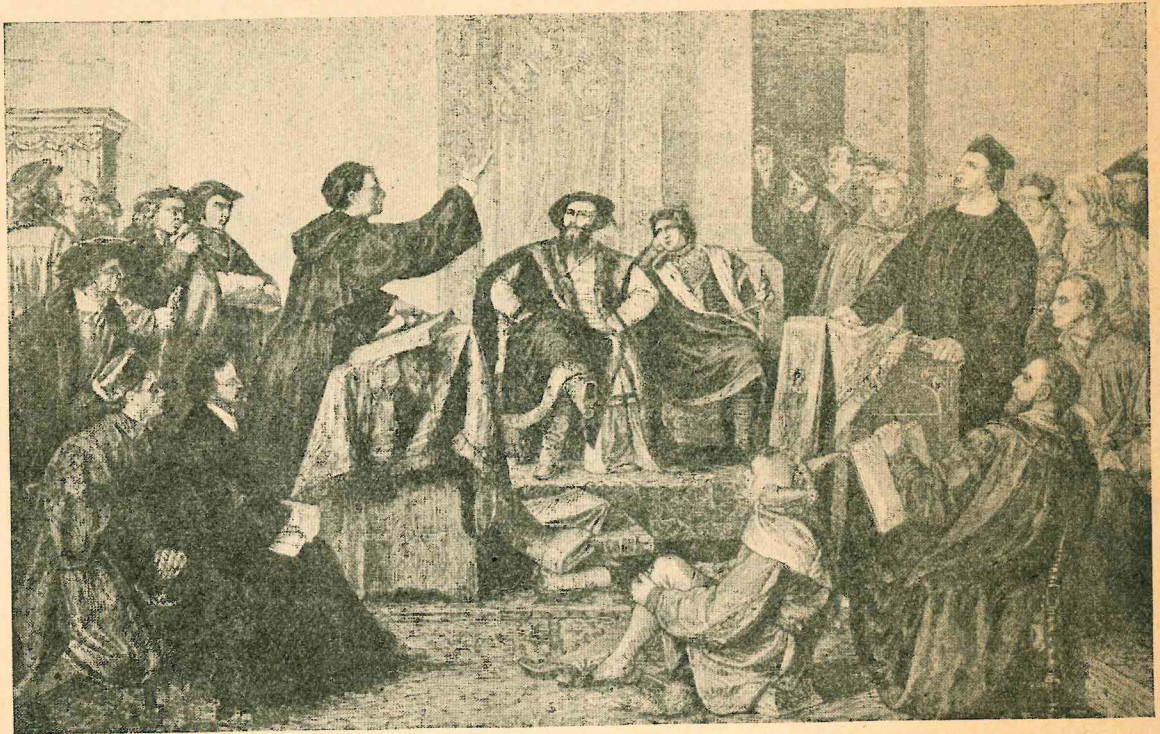
by declaring that Eck's exegesis was contradictory to the main teaching of Scripture that Christ is both foundation and head of the Church. Even though Augustine or any other Father did support Eck, their authority, Luther said, is inferior to that of Paul and Peter who teach that Christ is the foundation. He adduces 1 Cor. 3:11¹ and 1 Peter 2:4-5.²

On the second day of the debate, July fifth, the debate was steered by Eck to imply that Luther's position was similar to that of Marsiglio of Padua, Wyclif, and Huss. The answer which Luther then gave was unpremeditated. It was the crises and the compulsion of the moment which led Luther to respond, and which brought him out further into the clear respecting authority than he had gone before.

"I care not whether this is asserted by Wyclif or Huss. I know that Basil the Great, Gregory Nazianzus, Epiphanius of Cyprus, and innumerable other Greek bishops have been saved and nevertheless did not hold this article. It is not the power of the Roman pontiff or the Inquisitor of heresy to establish new articles of faith, but only to judge according to those established. Nor can any believing Christian be compelled to believe whatever is beyond Scripture, which alone is of divine authority, unless there may have supervened a new and proved

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1. "For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ."
2. "Unto whom coming, a living stone, rejected indeed of men, but with God elect, precious, ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."



The Leipzig Disputation

revelation. Yea, we are debarred by divine authority from believing anything unless it is proved either by Scripture or a manifest revelation, as Gerson more recently asserted in many passages, and Augustine anciently laid down as a specific canon. ... Even the canonists declare that the opinion of a single private person is more valid than that of Pope or Council if it is supported by a better authority or reason."¹

The above quoted answer is eloquent in its declaration. Luther speaks as though inspired by the exigency of the moment to set forth the fact and the sole validity of Scriptural authority. The drama of the moment, the psychological reaction to the critical setting, the complete abandonment of self to follow the leading of personal conviction -- all openly expressed -- certainly proved a factor in moulding Luther's conviction about Scriptural authority. The psychological factor was contributing positively in support of what Luther was more and more discovering and acquiring in the revelation of Scripture.

In fact, Luther reached his greatest clarity of expression respecting Scriptural authority when pressed most strongly by the crisis which arose during the Leipzig debate. During the crisis, the psychological factor in expressional experience is evident. Toward the close of the debate, there is a good example of this fact, when Luther in a sudden outburst of impatience declares:

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1. Luther: W. Ed., Vol. II, p. 279

"The learned doctor, I grieve to say, penetrates the Scriptures as profoundly as a water spider does the water, yea he flees from the cross. With all reverence for the Fathers, I prefer the authority of the Scriptures and commend them to the future judges of this debate."¹

Finally, one can best see the result of this expressional experience when the disputation was over and Luther sat down to write: "Contra Malignum Eccii Iudicium Defensio."

"I have learned to ascribe this honor (of inerrancy) solely to those books that are called canonical. I firmly believe that none of these authors have erred. All other writers, no matter by what great sanctity or doctrine they have distinguished themselves, I read in this manner. I do not accept what they say merely because they themselves believe it to be true, but only insofar as they are able to convince me with the testimony of the canonical books or by reasonable proof."²

4. The Diet of Worms

Any presentation of Luther's expressional experiences that influenced him toward a firmer conviction about the authority of Scripture would be incomplete without some attention to the epochal event at the Diet of Worms. No experience in his eventful, revolutionary, and epoch-making life was more dramatic than this one. At the Diet of Worms, Luther was faced with the probability of a martyr's death. He made mention several times, during his journey to Worms, that he fully expected such an end.

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1. Luther: W. Ed., Vol. II, p. 382
2. Ibid., Vol. IX, pp. 315-316

As he left for the Diet, Luther said to Melanchthon:

"My dear brother, if I do not come back, if my enemies put me to death, you will go on teaching and standing fast in the truth; if you live, my death will matter little."¹

In a letter dated January 14, 1521, Luther wrote
To Staupitz:

"All hitherto has been child's play; now it begins to be serious. ... Even if it (the papacy) excommunicates me and burns my books and if it should kill me, something portentous is at the door. ... God knows what will happen."²

When the Elector of Saxony, through Spalatin, tried to dissuade Luther from going to Worms, Luther answered: "I will go to Worms, even though there be as many devils there as roof tiles on the houses."³ When Luther was reminded of the fate of Huss, he added: "Indeed, Huss was burned, but the truth remained."⁴ With such an expected prospect, the psychological reaction on Luther can be imagined.

Then, too, the assembly which Luther faced at Worms was the most august body that could be assembled at the time. The following description gives a word picture:

"Few moments in history have been at once so dramatic and so decisive as that in which Luther appeared before the Emperor and Diet of Worms. In the greatness of the tribunal, of the accused, and of the issues involved, nothing is lacking to impress a

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1. Quoted by Lindsay: A History of the Reformation, p. 273
2. Smith: op. cit., pp. 440-444
3. Quoted by Reu: Life of Luther, p. 128
4. Ibid.

a thoughtful mind. In the foreground of the assembly sat the young Emperor, on whose brows were united the vast, if shadowy, pretensions to Roman dominion and the weight of actual sovereignty over a large congeries of powerful states. Around him were the great princes of the realm, spiritual and temporal, and the representatives of the Free Cities of Germany."¹

Luther was at the crossroads. This meeting was to be a showdown. The showdown centered in whether he would recant the expressed views he had because he accepted the authority of Scripture, or whether he would hold to them and thus reject finally and completely the Roman Catholic double authority position, which had given rise to the teachings and practices which he had attacked. It may plainly be seen that being backed up against the wall as Luther was at the Diet of Worms, and being commanded to give expression, finally and plainly, to what he now believed, that the psychological factor was potent. The very drama, the compulsion of the moment, and the forced, immediate self-expression played a part in driving Luther into a plain, unqualified declaration of his viewpoint. Had it not been for the pressure of this experience, Luther would undoubtedly have waited, and would probably have deliberated carefully for some time, before making the complete break that resulted at Worms.

At the same time, it must be kept clearly in mind that the primary drive in leading Luther to the decision

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1. Smith: Martin Luther, p. 112

declared at Worms, was what he found in Scripture itself. The fact is plainly evidenced by the statement which he made before the Diet.¹ It was the authority resident in Scripture that formed his convictions, steeled his will, and determined his action. The psychological factor, which has been delineated, played a part, though a secondary role, in bringing about the turn of events.

E. SUMMARY

The treatment of this chapter represents an attempt to analyze and discover the general psychological contribution that led Luther to his positive conviction regarding the authority of Scripture. Three main factors that contributed to this end were studied, and the results were stated.

The factor of personality in leading Luther to the unchangeable conviction so dramatically stated at the Diet of Worms was analyzed. Inheritance and environment were definitely postulated as being contributing factors in giving Luther a personality that could be the human instrument in bringing about the epoch-making, revolutionary Reformation which marks a turning point in history. All that entered into the makeup of his personality -- the psychological factor -- seemed necessary

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1. Ante., Chap. III, pp. 112-113

that God might use Luther as He did to carry out the work to be done.

It has also been set forth that the psychological factor of impressionable experiences played an important role in making possible Luther's work. Certainly the Christian view is that God's work in this world is done because of His might and grace. Yet it is also true that God can use some people to perform a greater work than others. This fact is, in no small measure, due to personality factors and impressionable experiences. Some of the impressionable experiences through which God led Luther in order that he might be made ready for what he was to do by God's grace have been set forth. An attempt also has been made to show that the psychological factor of impressionable experiences worked in harmony with what God, by His grace, directly wrought through Luther. These experiences contributed, though in a secondary way, to the result brought about by the Reformation.

Two things were necessary in order that Luther might be led by God to become His instrument. Luther had to throw out or tear down the accumulation of the ages which had become a part of the Roman Catholic Church system. It has been established that this aspect of his work evoked the expressional factor which undoubtedly played a psychological role in the final results. Luther as-

sailed Scholasticism, Indulgences, Double Authority, and the current misuse of Scripture. The result of Luther's so doing clarified his thinking, caused him to recoil from what was, to seek what must be, in the Church of his God who so richly manifested His grace to him. That psychological factor of his expressionable experiences crystallized Luther's convictions.

Furthermore, Luther had to build positively. However, that positive aspect of his work becomes more evident in the period following the Diet of Worms. Yet, it has been shown that Luther declared himself, more and more positively, for the absolute authority of Scripture. As he did so, that psychological factor was a co-operating servant in forming his resulting, unshakeable convictions.

CHAPTER V

LUTHER'S PHILOSOPHY OF THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE

A. INTRODUCTION

This investigation has arrived now at the crucial chapter in presenting the subject of -- The Authority of Scripture according to Martin Luther. The problem now is that of discovering Luther's final, developed philosophy regarding Scriptural authority. In this study so far, development and change have been presented. There has been traced, in Luther's philosophy, the transition that occurred from one established religious position and conviction to another which differed radically from the first. Up to the present, the general principles at which Luther arrived about the authority of Scripture have been only enunciated. It is necessary to go further now, and clearly indicate what that authority was. For there were others who declared themselves in favor of Scriptural authority but meant something different from what Luther did.¹

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1. Occam declared: "What is not contained in the Scriptures, or cannot with necessary and obvious consistency be deduced from the contents of the same, no Christian needs to believe."
D'Ailly too stated: "A declaration of the canonical Scripture is of greater authority than an assertion of the Christian Church."
But declarations such as the above were qualified in

The present purpose, therefore, is to analyze and formulate what Luther's convictions actually were after he had fully arrived at the position that Scripture alone was authoritative for the Christian faith. In seeking to analyze and to discover the philosophy of Luther on the subject of Scriptural authority, it is necessary to completely disassociate oneself from all the developments that have followed the Reformation up to the present time. One must forget about the extreme systematization of later Orthodoxy which carried Luther's views into channels and doctrines which are not found in Luther, and into forms which he never intended. It is important to leave out of one's thinking later, formulated theories of inspiration and revelation, and attempt to discover what Luther actually believed and taught. In short, one must put out of his mind the mixed good and bad heritages and developments that have accumulated in the centuries since the Reformation, and make an open-minded, unprejudiced, objective, and fresh approach to what Luther believed and taught. One needs to project himself into

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this way that the Church was the interpreter of Scripture. Occam, for instance, wrote this qualifying statement: "If I should have written something in this work which is contrary to Holy Writ, or the teachings of the saints, or the assertions of the most Holy Church, I submit myself and my words to correction by the Church." (Quotations from *Reu in Kirchliche Zeitschrift* for September, 1939, p. 528)

the Reformation setting, and work out from this setting into Luther's writings in order to discover the real philosophy of authority to which Luther was committed following his arrival (climaxed at the Diet of Worms) at the position that Scripture alone was authoritative for Christian faith and life.

B. ESTABLISHED BY REFLECTION ON HIS EXPERIENCES

In attempting to analyze and set forth Luther's philosophy of Scriptural authority, it must be constantly remembered that Luther's personal experiences served mightily in projecting his resultant philosophy.

Lindsay voiced this fact well in his interpretation of Luther when he wrote:

"Its driving power was a great religious experience, old, for it has come to the people of God in all generations, and yet new and fresh as it is the nature of all such experiences to be. He knew that his life was hid with Christ in God in spite of all evil, in spite of sin and sense of guilt. His old dread of God had vanished, and instead of it there had arisen in his heart a love of God in answer to the love which came from the Father revealing Himself. He had experienced this, and he had proclaimed what he had gone through; and the experience and its proclamation were the foundation on which the Reformation was built. Its beginnings were not doctrinal, but experimental."¹

The philosophy of authority to which Luther was committed, and which he declared, had the strong dynamic

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1. Lindsay: A History of the Reformation, p. 434

of negative, and positive experiences. Luther's reflection upon his experiences was a potent factor in evolving his philosophy of authority. An attempt will be made to review briefly the process of reflection which served to establish Luther in his philosophy of authority.

1. Negatively Considered

As one reflects upon them, it is always true that negative experiences play an important role in determining a person's convictions. "A burned child fears the fire." Later the child evolves a philosophy based on the experience with the fire. The process is negative. The conclusion is a recoil. A recent, interesting news item in Life would seem to indicate that this law of negative experiences is operative, in its own distinctive way, even in the animal kingdom. "If a mule has fallen on slippery pavement, it will not walk on slippery pavement again."¹ Intuitively or instinctively, the mule adopts a philosophy based on experience. There is a recoil conduct resulting.

From reflections upon his past experiences, Luther was influenced toward his philosophy of authority by what might be called a recoil from the unfounded and ineffective theory of authority existing in the Roman

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1. Life: The issue of February 2, 1942, p. 55

Catholic Church. One could probably speak of this process of reflection as a backdoor entrance to his objective. Luther viewed the system of authority to which he had previously given blind allegiance. As he reflected upon what that religious authority was, and on the spiritual distress and struggles to which he had been subjected as a result, he can, figuratively speaking, be seen to shake his head at it, or to recoil from it. An analysis of the effect of these reflections from this negative point of view will be given.

a. Roman Catholic Double Authority Unfounded

Luther discovered that tradition contradicted Scripture. Hence, in the light of his spiritual experiences, he was led to reject tradition. The contradictory character of tradition was observable in the indulgence system, and in the traffic that resulted from it, and was based on it.

In the ninety-five theses, there was a comparatively early recoil apparent, as Luther saw the contradiction of this tradition-impelled practice to Scripture. Even at this early stage of his developing convictions, Luther was reflecting upon, studying, and stating his convictions about the practice which he could not reconcile with Scriptural revelation. Several of the resulting theses in which he gave expression to his developing

philosophical views will be quoted:

No. 5: "The Pope does not intend to remit, and cannot remit any penalties other than those which he has imposed either by his own authority or by that of his canons.

No. 27: "They preach men who say that so soon as the penny jingles into the money-box, the soul flies out (of Purgatory).

No. 35: "They preach no Christian doctrine who teach that contrition is not necessary in those who intend to buy souls out of Purgatory or to buy confessionalia.

No. 53: "They are enemies of Christ and of the pope, who bid the Word of God be altogether silent in some churches, in order that pardons may be preached in others.

No. 56: "The treasures of the church, out of which the pope grants indulgences, are not sufficiently named or known among the people of Christ.

No. 62: "The true treasure of the church is the most Holy Gospel of the glory and grace of God."¹

In 1520, Luther wrote "An Open Letter to the Christian Nobility". In this later treatise, Luther forcefully arraigned some of the contradictions of the Roman Church traditions with what he saw in Scripture.

"Yea, would to God that all things which we must buy at Rome to free ourselves from that money-snare, the canon law, -- such things as indulgences, letters of indulgence, 'butter-letters,' 'mass-letters,' and all the rest of the confessionalia and knaveries for sale at Rome, with which poor folk are deceived and robbed of their money; would to God, I say, that any priest could, without payment, do and omit all these things! For it the pope has the authority to sell his snares for money and his spiritual nets (I should say laws), surely any priest has much more authority to rend his

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1. Luther: Holman Ed., Vol. I, pp. 30-34

nets and for God's sake to tread them under foot. But if he has not this right, neither has the pope the right to sell them at his shameful fair.

"This is the place to say too that the fasts should be matters of liberty, and all sorts of food made free, as the Gospel makes them. For at Rome they themselves laugh at the fasts, making us foreigners eat the oil with which they would not grease their shoes, and afterwards selling us liberty to eat butter and all sorts of other things; yet the holy Apostle says that in all these things we already have liberty through the Gospel."¹

Luther saw the existing contradiction between the traditions and the Gospel. These contradictions caused him to turn from the traditions to a more complete reliance on Scripture. In the same treatise quoted above, Luther presented his proposals for reform. He was speaking of indulgences, licenses, privileges, and the like, and concluded:

"My advice is this: If such fool's-work cannot be abolished, then every pious Christian should open his eyes, and not be misled by the hypocritical Roman bulls and seals, stay at home in his own church and be content with his baptism, his Gospel, his faith, his Christ and with God, Who is everywhere the same; and the pope remain a blind leader of the blind. Neither angel nor pope can give you as much as God gives you in your parish-church. ... Let this be your fixed rule: What you must buy from the pope is neither good nor of God; for what is from God, to wit, the Gospel and the works of God, is not only given without money, but the whole world is punished and damned because it has not been willing to receive it as a free gift. We have deserved of God that we should be so deceived, because we have despised His Holy Word and the grace of baptism, as St. Paul says: 'God shall send a strong delusion upon all those who have not received the truth to their salvation, to the end that they may believe and follow after lies and knavery,' which serves them right."²

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1. Ibid., Vol. II, pp. 128-129
2. Ibid., pp. 133-134

Also, in this treatise, Luther summarily stated his conclusions:

"The Bible contains more than enough directions for all our living, and so the study of the canon law only stands in the way of the study of Holy Scripture; moreover, it smacks for the most part of mere avarice and pride."¹

In the preface to his famous treatise, "The Babylonian Captivity of the Church," written in the same year of 1520, Luther wrote indignantly: "Indulgences are a knavish trick of the Roman sycophants."² Furthermore, in replying to Catharinus in the treatise, "The Pope Confounded", he stated:

"Away with all your shifting distinctions: Meet me with the Scriptures: Or, if you make a distinction, prove that distinction by the Word of God, and I'll give you a hearing. ... And here do not call in long established use, nor a multitude of those who hold the same opinion with yourself. The word of Christ is what I abide by. We are to believe this only; rather than all the saints put together, yea, than all the angels. For, concerning which of the angels was it said at any time, 'hear ye him.' I do no injury either to you or to your saints in standing by Christ alone, who was ordained by the voice of the Father, and by the testimony of the Holy Spirit, an authority incontrovertible."³

"But, as I said before, the opinions of the Fathers, speaking without the Scriptures, are nothing to me."⁴

There can be no question, then, as to what Luther concluded about the whole system and practice of the

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1. Ibid., p. 148
2. Ibid., p. 171
3. Luther: The Pope Confounded, pp. 18-20
4. Ibid., p. 26

Roman Catholic Church. By observing what was being practiced, its vicious influence, its corrupting effect, and its groundless basis, he was convinced that Scripture alone was authoritative. Reflection upon the negative influence outlined gave a strong impulse to the establishment of Luther's philosophy on religious authority.

In the period following the "Great Illumination", Luther, more and more, began to reflect upon the papal claims. As he continued to grow in knowledge and understanding of Scripture, he became more fully convinced that these papal claims were groundless and false.

In the Leipzig disputation, especially, Luther had been forced to face all the extravagant papal claims, such as the claim that Peter had been invested as pope, and that likewise each succeeding pope in turn had been invested with such a headship.

In 1520, Luther wrote in "An Open Letter to the Christian Nobility":

"Therefore it is a wickedly invented fable, and they cannot produce a letter in defence of it, that the interpretation of Scripture or the confirmation of its interpretation belongs to the pope alone. They have themselves usurped this power; and although they allege that this power was given to Peter when the keys were given to him, it is plain enough that the keys were not given to Peter alone, but to the whole community."¹

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1. Luther: H. Ed., Vol. II, p. 74

Luther was still more forceful and outspoken when he wrote his treatise, "The Babylonian Captivity of the Church":

"From what has been said we learn that the Roman pontiff is guilty of two glaring errors. In the first place, he grants dispensations from vows, and does it as though he alone of all Christians possessed this authority; such is the temerity and audacity of wicked men. If it be possible to grant a dispensation from a vow, then any brother may grant one to his neighbor or even to himself. But if one's neighbor cannot grant a dispensation, neither can the pope by any right. For whence has he his authority? From the power of the keys? But the keys belong to all, and avail only for sins (Matthew XVIII). Now they themselves claim that vows are of divine right. Why then does the pope deceive and destroy the poor souls of men by granting dispensations in matters of divine right, in which no dispensations can be granted? He babbles indeed, in the section 'Of vows and their redemption,' of having the power to change vows, just as in the law the firstborn of an ass was changed for a sheep -- as if the firstborn of an ass, and the vow he commands to be everywhere and always offered, were one and the same thing, or as if when God decrees in His law that a sheep shall be changed for an ass, the pope, a mere man, may straightway claim the same power, not in his own law but in God's! It was not a pope, but an ass changed for a pope, that made this decretal; so egregiously senseless and godless is it."¹

Note the statements made by Luther in 1521. He wrote a treatise entitled "An Argument in Defence of All the Articles of Dr. Martin Luther Wrongly Condemned in the Roman Bull".

"The sacraments, which in olden times could not be bound to holiness, are now bound to authority and hung upon red hats and golden crowns and bishop's mitres, like scallop-shells on the hats and cloaks of the pilgrims to St. James. ... The power of the

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1. Ibid., pp. 242-243

keys extends only as far as your faith extends; not as far as the pope and his followers choose."¹

The convictions of Luther became more and more definite in respect to papal claims. Those claims became extremely irritating to him. His philosophy of authority had been helped in its formation in reverse, or by recoil, or by negative reaction because of what he had observed in the Roman system. It is as though Luther was saying, as he observed the papal claims: "It cannot be that, for it is patently false and groundless." In backing away from it, he turned to that source of authority which had proven its worth and truth.

In the late year of 1539, Luther came out forcefully in his analyzation of the papal claims which had been rejected from his philosophy of authority. In his treatise on the "Councils and the Churches", he wrote:

"You must not think of these keys, however, as the pope's two keys which he has turned into tools with which he picks the locks to the treasure-chests and crowns of all kings. ... The keys belong, not to the pope, as he lyingly says, but to the church, that is, to Christ's people, God's people, the holy Christian people throughout the world, or wherever there are Christians. They cannot all be at Rome, unless the whole world were at Rome, and that has not happened yet. As baptism, the sacrament, and God's Word do not belong to the pope but to the Church, so with the keys, they are *claves Ecclesiae*, not *claves papae* (The Church's keys, not the pope's keys)."²

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1. Luther: H. Ed., Vol.III, pp. 50-51
2. Ibid., Vol. V, p. 275

There are other considerations that might be added to indicate that Luther found the Roman Catholic theory of double authority unfounded in fact. The two discussed will serve to indicate that as Luther reflected upon what he had discovered to be contradictory to Scripture, he recoiled from it. His reactions were negative. Upon reflection, he concluded that his philosophy of authority was not the Roman Catholic philosophy of authority.

b. Roman Catholic Double Authority Ineffective

It has been shown that Luther came to the conviction that the Roman Catholic double authority theory was without foundation in fact. In addition, it clearly may be substantiated that Luther found the Roman Catholic double authority ineffective. Previously the terrific struggles through which Luther passed in his search for a gracious God have been traced.¹ Now it is necessary only to call attention to one statement made by Luther, later in life, to make plain that he found the Roman Catholic double authority ineffective in giving to him what he yearned and sought for -- peace with God.

"If a monk ever reached heaven by monkery, I would have found my way there also; all my convent comrades will bear witness to that."²

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1. Ante., Chapter IV, pp. 126-130
2. Luther: Er. Ed., Vol. XXXI, p. 273

This longer statement from Luther further reveals how ineffective he found the Roman Catholic authority to be as basic for the Christian life and as a guide to peace with God.

"After I had made the profession, I was congratulated by the prior, the convent, and the father-confessor, because I was now an innocent child coming pure from baptism. Assuredly, I would willingly have delighted in the glorious fact that I was such a good man, who by his own deeds and without the merits of Christ's blood had made himself so fair and holy, and so easily too, and in so short a time. But although I listened readily to the sweet praise and glowing language about myself and my doings, and allowed myself to be described as a wonder-worker, who could make himself holy in such an easy way, and could swallow up death, and the devil also, yet there was no power in it all to maintain me. When even a small temptation came from sin or death I fell at once, and found neither baptism nor monkery could assist me; I felt that I had long lost Christ and His baptism. I was the most miserable man on earth; day and night there was only wailing and despair, and no one could restrain me."¹

Certainly it becomes plain that as Luther reflected upon this background of former experiences, he became firmly convinced that the Roman Catholic way was not the way of peace with God, or the source of joy in that fellowship. The ineffectiveness of the way on which he had attempted so faithfully and earnestly to walk caused him to recoil from it. His developed philosophy, as a result, completely rejected the authority which had proven so ineffective.

Luther found further evidence of the ineffective-

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1. Luther: Er. Ed., Vol. XXXI, pp. 278-279

ness of the Roman Catholic authority in the chaos that existed in the Church itself. What the conditions were that Luther found in Rome have been related previously.¹

In a letter dated 1520, Luther wrote to Spalatin:

"I have at hand, by the kindness of Schlemper, Lorenzo Valla's proof (Edited by Hutten), that the Donation of Constantine is a forgery. Good heavens! What darkness and wickedness is at Rome! You wonder at the judgment of God, that such unauthentic, crass, impudent lies not only lived, but prevailed for so many centuries and were incorporated into the Canon Law, and (that no degree of horror might be wanting) became as articles of faith."²

In the same year, Luther gave vent to a violent outburst, as a reaction to the writings of some of the representatives of the Roman Church. "I think that at Rome they have all become mad, silly, raging, insane fools, stocks, stones and devils of hell."³

Attention has already been called to the indulgence system. It is also to be remembered that conditions in the Church were so bad that even many Romanists lamented the situation. Councils had attempted to change the condition, but had failed to carry through a real reformation. In his treatise, "The Babylonian Captivity of the Church", Luther gave vent to his impatience at the situation in the Church in such expressions as these: "Indulgences are a knavish trick of the Roman sychophants,"⁴ and

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1. Ante., Chapter IV, p. 131
2. Smith: Luther's Correspondence, Vol. I, p. 291
3. Ibid., p. 329
4. Luther: H. Ed. Vol. II, p. 171

again, "The papacy is the mighty hunting of the Roman bishop."¹

It is plain that Luther was disgustingly turning away from the chaotic condition that existed because of the ineffective double authority principle which failed to guide the Church on the path of God's will, and which also was impotent to change the existing chaos. The traditions allowed and abetted what was causing the mischief.

All of these negative considerations played a part in forming Luther's philosophy respecting the authority of Scripture. In his reflections, he resolved against the philosophy that was held and proclaimed in the Roman Catholic Church. That ineffective philosophy could not be his. His philosophy, as a result, was established on principles discovered in and based on Scripture, and seconded by the working of those principles in experience.

2. Positively Stated

Just as there were negative reactions in Luther's life and thought to the unfounded and ineffective Roman Catholic system, so there were also strong positive reactions that served to establish for Luther a philosophy of authority. Luther could never forget the experience

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1. Luther: H. Ed. Vol. II, p. 171

that had led him from darkness to light. In his "Table-Talks" which are stenographic reports of his conversations in the latter part of his life, he reflected: "The meaning of these words (Iustitia Dei) the Holy Spirit imparted to me in this tower."¹ So potent and powerful was the memory of the effect of this experience that Luther never forgot it. It directed his whole thought process from then on. Whenever he stopped to reflect positively on Scriptural authority, he would reiterate the power of that Word. He would speak affectionately of its power in life. He knew that authoritative Word to be his guiding star, and the hope for the future Church.

In 1538, Luther wrote his treatise "On the Councils and the Churches". Following is an excerpt:

"This is the main point. It (The Word) is the high, chief, holy possession from which the Christian people take the name 'holy', for God's Word is holy and sanctifies everything it touches; nay, it is the very holiness of God. Romans I says, 'It is God's power which saves all who believe thereon;' and 2 Tim. IV, 'It is all made holy by the Word of God and prayer'; for the Holy Ghost Himself administers it, and anoints and sanctifies the Church, that is, the Christian, holy people, with it. ... Wherefore, therefore, you hear or see this Word preached, believed, confessed, and acted on, there do not doubt that there must be a true Ecclesia Sancta Catholica, a Christian, holy people, even though it be small in numbers; for God's Word does not go away empty (Is. 55), but must have at least a fourth part, or a piece of the field. If there were no other mark than this one alone, it would still be enough to show

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1. Luther: Tischreden, Vol. III, p. 228

that there must be a Christian Church there; for God's Word cannot be present without God's people, and God's people cannot be without God's Word. Who would preach or listen to preaching, if no people of God were there? And what could or would God's people believe, if God's Word were not there.

"This is the thing that does all miracles, sets everything to rights, upholds everything, accomplishes everything, does everything, drives out all devils, -- pilgrimage-devils, indulgence-devils, bull-devils, brotherhood devils, saints' devils, mass-devils, purgatory-devils, monastery-devils, priest-devils, devils of turbulence, devils of sedition, heretic devils, pope devils, even antinomian devils."¹

Luther, in this treatise, declared himself positively for the authority of Scripture. In it he voiced the general principles of his philosophy of authority. That philosophy of authority he grounded in Scripture.

In 1523, Luther was writing about divine worship in the congregation in a treatise entitled "Concerning the Ordering of Divine Worship in the Congregation". The same positive note was sounded as in the quotation already given:

"But the important thing is this, that everything be done so that the Word prevails and does not once more become a clamor or whine, and rattled off mechanically as it has been heretofore. It is better to abandon everything else except the Word. And there is no better practice or exercise than the Word; and the whole Scriptures show that this should have free course among the Christians; and Christ Himself, also, says, Luke 10:42: 'One thing is needful, namely that Mary sit at the feet of Christ and hear His Word daily. This is the best part, which she has chosen, and will never be taken away.' It is an eternal Word; all the rest must pass away no matter how much work it gives Martha to do."²

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1. Luther: H. Ed. Vol. V, pp. 270-271
2. Ibid., Vol. VI, pp. 63-64

In his liturgical writings, Luther spoke about the Roman method of putting words to music. Luther wrote of his contrasting practice:

"Therefore, we have removed such idolatrous, dead and dumb texts, separating them from the noble music, and in their stead we have set the living, holy Word of God to sing, to praise, to glorify with the same, so that this beautiful ornament, music, may, in proper use, serve her dear Creator and His Christians so that He be praised and honored thereby, and we, through the Holy Word united with sweet song, may be incited and confirmed and strengthened in faith."¹

Viewed positively, Luther found the most potent basis for his conviction of the authority of Scripture, in contrast to tradition, in the fact that his experiences had shown him that Scripture was true. Scripture had evidenced its own power. God had spoken to him out of it. Through his experiences with Scripture, Luther arrived at an intuitive conviction that God spoke to him there. It is this fact that Luther underscores when he wrote:

"You must by yourself feel Christ in your heart and unshakeably experience that it is God's Word, though all the world should fight against it."²

In his stated convictions thus voiced, Luther set forth the beginnings of the doctrine known as "Testimonium Spiritus Sancti".

The discussion so far as declared the general phil-

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1. Luther: H. Ed. Vol. VI, p. 290
2. Luther: Er. Ed. Vol. XXVIII, p. 298

osophical conviction of Luther regarding Scriptural authority. The discussion has attempted to tie up his philosophy with the presentation of the preceding chapters. Now a more specific analysis of Luther's philosophy of Scriptural authority will be given.

C. CONDITIONED ON A CORRECT UNDERSTANDING OF HIS VIEW
 OF THE CANON

There are statements in Luther's writings about Scriptures which are often interpreted to indicate that Luther was very liberal in his attitude toward Scripture. At first sight, it seems as though Luther wades through Scripture indiscriminately, throws out what he does not like, and accepts and stresses what suits his own theories. Luther is often regarded as illogical, and inconsistent in the way he handles that book which he, at the same time, regards as being the one and only authoritative source of Christianity. However, there are certain considerations that must be kept in mind in evaluating Luther's philosophy of authority.

1. His Distinctions Respecting the Canon

It seems very plain that Luther did not include in the canon all of the books that are regarded as canonical today. If this fact can be established, then one must evaluate Luther's statements with discrimination. Any statements that he made about books that he did not con-

sider canonical cannot be used to describe his attitude toward Scripture generally.

In the Old Testament, Luther rejected Esther as a canonical book. He plainly stated that the book of Esther lacked the characteristics of the Word of God. "Esther, quamvis hunc habeant in Canone, dignior omnibus me iudice, qui extra Canonem haberetur."¹ He placed it in a class with the Apocrypha which, though he included them as an appendix in his Old Testament version of 1534, yet he stated about them that they are books which are not held to be equal to the sacred Scripture but are useful and good to read.

There are four books in the New Testament which Luther plainly did not consider canonical -- Hebrews, James, Jude, and Revelation. Luther wrote:

"Hitherto we have had the right certain chief books of the New Testament. The four following (Hebrews, James, Jude, Revelation) had, in ancient times, a different reputation."²

In his preface to the New Testament, Luther made a statement which has been quoted a great deal, and often indiscriminately, so as to make it appear that he had a view of the Bible that was radical. He misused the Bible, Luther's critics imply, to suit his fancy. "There-

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1. Luther: Er. Ed. Vol. LXIII, p. 104
2. Luther: H. Ed. Vol. VI, p. 476

fore St. James' Epistle is really an epistle of straw."¹

In his preface to the Epistle of James, Luther wrote:

"But to state my opinion about it, though without injury to anyone, I consider it is not the writing of any apostle. My reasons are as follows:

"First: flatly against St. Paul and all the rest of Scripture, it ascribes righteousness to works.

...

"Second: Its purpose is to teach Christians, and in all this long teaching it does not once mention the passion, the resurrection, or the spirit of Christ. He names Christ several times, but he teaches nothing about Him, and only speaks of common faith in God.

... That is the true test, by which to judge all books, when we see whether they deal with Christ or not, since all the Scriptures show us Christ (Romans III), and St. Paul will know nothing but Christ (I Cor. XV). What does not teach Christ is not apostolic, even though St. Peter or Paul taught it; again, what preaches Christ would be apostolic, even though Judas, Annas, Pilate and Herod did it.

"But this James does nothing more than drive to the law and its works; and he mixes the two up in such disorderly fashion that it seems to me he must have been some good, pious man, who took some sayings of the apostle's disciples and threw them thus on paper."²

Similar statements were made by Luther about the other three books of the New Testament which, the author believes, he did not consider canonical. He wrote as follows about Hebrews:

"Hitherto we have had the right certain chief books of the New Testament. The four following (Hebrews, James, Jude, Revelation) had, in ancient times, a different reputation. In the first place, that this epistle is not St. Paul's, nor any other apostle's. ... My opinion is that it is an epistle of many pieces put together, and it does not deal with any

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1. Luther: H. Ed. Vol. VI, p. 444
2. Ibid., pp. 477-478

one subject in an orderly way. ... We cannot put it on the same level with the apostolic epistles."¹

Of Jude, he wrote:

"Concerning the Epistle of St. Jude, no one can deny that it is an extract or copy from St. Peter's second Epistle, so very like it are all the words. He also speaks of the apostles as a disciple coming long after them, and quotes sayings and stories that are found nowhere in the Scriptures. This moved the ancient Fathers to throw this Epistle out of the main body of the Scriptures. ... Therefore, although I praise the book, it is an Epistle that need not be counted among the chief books, which are to lay the foundation of faith."²

Then, too, Luther evaluated Revelation thus:

"This is the way it has been with this book heretofore. Many have tried their hands at it, but until this very day they have reached no certainty; and some have brewed into it many stupid things out of their own heads. Because its interpretation is uncertain and its meaning hidden, we, too, have let it alone hitherto, especially since some of the ancient Fathers held the opinion that it was not the work of St. John, the Apostle."³

The quotations from Luther's writings plainly state that Luther evaluated these books as being in a different category from the rest. Why he should so daringly presume to go as far as he did is explainable by the potent experience which had been his through the message of "Justification by Faith". Everything was judged by that criterion.

That these books were not considered canonical by Luther is also proved by the fact that in the New Testa-

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1. Luther: H. Ed. Vol. VI, pp. 476-477
2. Ibid., p. 479
3. Ibid., p. 480

ment of 1522, he separated them from the rest of the New Testament, and arranged them so that they were the last four books in the Bible. They were not numbered either as the rest were. In his complete Bible of 1534, Luther dealt with these books in his index as he did with the Old Testament Apocrypha.

It is self-evident, then, that any statements which Luther made about these four books cannot be judged in the same way as the books which he believed to be canonical.

2. Relative Differences within the Canon

Attention might be called to the fact that Luther also made relative distinctions between others of the New Testament books. In his preface to the New Testament, he wrote as follows:

"John's Gospel is the one, tender, true, chief Gospel, far, far to be preferred to the other three and placed high above them. So, too, the Epistles of St. Paul and St. Peter far surpass the other three Gospels, -- Matthew, Mark and Luke.

"In a word, St. John's Gospel and his first Epistle, St. Paul's Epistles, especially Romans, Galatians, and Ephesians, and St. Peter's first Epistle are the books that show you Christ and teach you all that is necessary and good for you to know, even though you were never to see or hear any other book or doctrine."¹

However, the distinction in this case was not of canonical and non-canonical books. It was a qualitative

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1. Luther: H. Ed. Vol. VI, pp. 443-444

differentiation in which he found that certain books more clearly set forth the core of the Gospel. Of the above named books which Luther especially preferred, he wrote that they are 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, that 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."¹

It is noteworthy, however, that this evaluation was included only in the edition of 1522. It was omitted in the edition of 1545.

It is not surprising that Luther in the above quotation placed such high value on the books named in the preface. He had just broken from Rome. These books, as far as he understood them, emphasized more than the others, the central message which had wrought his great spiritual experience. He had a special affection for those New Testament writings which emphasized his distinctive religious thought and experience. He clung to that central truth. Everything was evaluated according to it. His conviction concerning it led him to break from the position of the Roman Catholic Church. But he did not place any of these books, which seem to suffer by comparison somewhat, in the same category as Hebrews,

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1. Luther: Er. Ed., Vol. LXIII, p. 114

James, Jude, and Revelation. He merely indicated which of the remaining stress most strongly the central theme.

3. The Determining Criterion of the Canon

For Luther, the determining criterion of what was to be deemed canonical Scripture was Christ. He believed that what presents and proclaims Christ is truly Scripture. He held this criterion to be true of the Old Testament as well as of the New Testament. In his preface to the Old Testament, Luther wrote:

"There are some who have a small opinion of the Old Testament, thinking of it as a book that was given to the Jewish people only, and is out of date, containing only stories of past times. They think that they have enough in the New Testament and pretend to seek in the Old Testament only a spiritual sense. Origin, Jerome, and many persons of high standing have held this view, but Christ says, 'Search in the Scriptures, for they give testimony of me,' and St. Paul bids Timothy continue in the reading of the Scriptures, and declares in Romans I, that the Gospel was promised by God in the Scriptures, and in I Cor. 15, he says that Christ came out of the seed of David, died, and rose from the dead, according to the Scriptures; and St. Peter too, points us back, more than once to the Scriptures."¹

The most exalted statement of all, in which Luther declared that the identifying mark of Scripture is its Christ-centered characteristic, is as follows:

"Think of the Scriptures as the loftiest and noblest of holy things, as the richest of mines, which can never be worked out, so that you may find the wisdom of God that He lays before you in such foolish and simple guise, in order that he may quench all pride.

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1. Luther: H. Ed. Vol. VI, p. 367

Here you will find the swaddling-clothes and the mangers in which Christ lies, and to which the angel points the shepherds. Simple and little are the swaddling clothes, but dear is the treasure, Christ, that lies in them."¹

In these portions, there is a mature estimate by Luther. The preface, first written in 1523, was rewritten and published in 1545.

In the concluding portion of his "Introduction to the Old Testament", when speaking of the Levitical law and the Mosaic priesthood, Luther said clearly: "If, then, you would interpret well and surely, set Christ before you; for He is the man to whom it all applies."²

In his preface to the prophets, Luther consistently maintained the same principle:

"Therefore we Christians ought not be such shameful, sated, ungrateful wiseacres, but should read and use the prophets with earnestness and profit. For, first of all, they proclaim and bear witness to the kingdom of Christ, in which we now live, and in which all believers in Christ have heretofore lived and will live until the end of the world."³

Christ is the "Meridian Sun" that illuminates the darkness, and through Him the Bible becomes clear.

One realizes that on the basis of the above quoted portions, particularly the one which states that Scripture is the "swaddling-clothes and the mangers in which Christ lies," there are those who maintain that Luther

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1. Luther: H. Ed. Vol. VI, p. 368
2. Ibid., p. 379
3. Ibid., p. 395

made a distinction between the terms, Scripture, and the Word of God. Barth is one of them. It does not seem that Luther here had that thought in mind at all. He, instead, was speaking of the identifying characteristic of that which constitutes revelation. An illustration might be clarifying to show the meaning of Luther -- that he was but speaking of a fundamental characteristic of Scripture.

It is said that the rope used by the British navy has as its identifying characteristic a red strand woven into it. The red strand is that identifying mark which indicates to all that this rope is distinctively the property of the British navy. It serves no other purpose. It is but a fundamental characteristic.

Another illustration might be used. An identifying characteristic of a loaf of bread is that yeast has permeated its whole structure. Throughout the loaf, can be seen the evidence of the power of the yeast. Without the yeast, the bread would be but a doughy lump of paste. But the yeast has transformed the whole and made it all edible, tasty, and nourishing. Such is the place and effect of Christ in Scripture, according to Luther -- Christ is the identifying characteristic of the canonical Scripture.

D. ESTABLISHED BY HIS VIEW OF INSPIRATION

Specific theories of inspiration have been worked out since Luther's day. Luther did not present any systematic views about inspiration himself.

"Lutheran confessions are content to assert the divine inspiration and the supreme authority of the Holy Scriptures, without setting forth any theory of inspiration, and without attempting to explain its nature."¹

Luther's allusions were incidental. The modern problem concerning inspiration and revelation did not agitate him as it often does the modern theologian. However, there are certain definite viewpoints, attitudes, and statements which can be interpreted to give his conviction or philosophy on certain phases of the subject. Some of these will be presented to indicate what his philosophy was, for it is certainly true that the authority of Scripture, according to Luther, hinges on the answers that result from an investigation of the question of what he believed about inspiration.

1. Scripture and the Word of God Synonymous

A distinction between Scripture and the Word of God is frequently asserted today. The illustration is sometimes used that Scripture might be illustrated as the husk or the shell, while the Word of God is the nut or

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1. Stump: The Christian Faith, p. 314

the kernel contained within Scripture.

One proposition which can clearly be postulated is that Luther did not make a distinction between Scripture, and the Word of God. As one approach to this matter, the following analysis was made of Luther's use of the terms, Scripture, and the Word of God. The examples used cover a period from 1520 to 1539. The following table presents the comparative findings:

<u>Treatise</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Scripture</u>	<u>Word of God</u>
A Treatise on Christian Liberty	1520	7	25
Luther's Reply to Emser	1521	184	43
Doctrines of Men Are to Be Rejected	1522	16	7
The Burning of Friar Henry	1525	6	17
On Translating: An Open Letter	1530	4	8
On the Councils and the Churches	1539	85	38
Total		302	138

In none of these writings is there any indication that Luther drew distinctions between Scripture, and the Word of God. The only thing that can be deduced is that in these writings the word, Scripture, was the more popular term in Luther's usage. It is to be noted that he used the terms interchangeably as is clearly evidenced from the following quotations:

"A Christian congregation, however, should not and cannot be without the Word of God. It follows, therefore, logically enough from the foregoing, that it must have teachers and preachers to administer this Word. ... Therefore, we must do as the Scriptures say, and call and appoint etc."¹

"The soul of man is eternal and above everything that

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1. Luther: H. Ed. Vol. IV, p. 79

is temporal; therefore it must be ruled and equipped with an eternal word alone. It is most absurd to rule conscience, in God's stead, by means of human law and long established custom. We must be guided, therefore, in this matter by the Scriptures and the Word of God."¹

"He (Emser) has the effrontery to say that the Holy Spirit and Christ did not teach us enough, the Scriptures are not sufficient, God's Word must have additions, and he who has not more than God's Word, God's Scripture, and God's teaching is venomous, a heretic, an apostate, the worst man on earth, and all who live according to such words and teachings of God and do not also accept the teachings of men are damned, cursed, and should be burned at the stake."²

"We have but one Word, which is spear, sword, dagger, and every other weapon with which we can give battle to the adversaries, even the Holy Word of God. I hope this will make you see your tomfoolery with your three weapons. Next time take up a matter which you can prove by Scripture or by reason, and you will be in less danger of exciting ridicule with your buffoonery."³

In the treatise which contained Luther's answer to Emser, Luther had been speaking of the use of Scripture. He was contending against the manifold sense of Scripture. He stated:

"But we are not on that account to say that the Scriptures or the Word of God has more than one meaning."⁴

Luther spoke equally convincingly on this matter in his work, "On the Councils and the Churches", written in 1539: "Custom is not Scriptura sacra, however,

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1. Luther: H. Ed. Vol. IV, p. 76
2. Ibid., Vol. III, p. 373
3. Ibid., p. 338
4. Ibid., p. 350

or God's Word."¹

More convincing still is the fact that Luther made specific statements in which Scripture is identified with the Word of God. He wrote: "The Holy Spirit has embodied His wisdom and counsel and all mysteries in the Word and revealed them in the Scriptures."² He stated at another time: "Every Word of God must accord with our Scriptures."³

Luther wrote as though there can be no question but when Scripture speaks, that speaking is identical with God speaking. Loetscher puts it thus: "For Luther 'Scriptura loquitur' is synonymous with 'Deus loquitur'."⁴ In his "glossa" which were written for his lectures on the Psalms during 1513-15, Luther assumed that it is God who speaks in the Psalms. The following statement will illustrate: "Ex isto patet manifeste, quod deus est, qui hic loquitur in Psalmo."⁵ In a sermon preached sometime between 1514-1520, Luther referred to Psalm 45:5 and stated: "The Words are the Holy Spirit's through David."⁶ Elsewhere Luther wrote:

"Holy Scripture is spoken through the Holy Ghost, according to the declaration of David, 'The Spirit

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1. Luther: H. Ed. Vol. V, p. 163
2. Luther: Er. Ed. Vol. LI, p. 98
3. Ibid., Vol. XXV, p. 119
4. Loetscher: The Problem of Authority in Religion, p.550
5. Luther: W. Ed., Vol. III, p. 315
6. Ibid., Vol. IV, p. 642

of the Lord spake through me.' Likewise, He speaks through all the prophets."¹

In his "glossa" on Psalm V, it was "Christ speaking."² His "glossa" on Psalm IX referred to the "Spirit speaking."³ Writing on Psalm XV, he referred to the "Lord speaking."⁴ Luther distinguished between Scripture and all other books by calling it "The Holy Ghost's book."⁵

A clear part of Luther's philosophy of the authority of Scripture, based on his view of inspiration, is that the terms, Scripture, and the Word of God, are synonymous.

2. Scripture Inerrant

Repeated statements were made by Luther in which he asserted that Scripture, according to its original text, is without error. He held that whatever errors might exist have come about in transmission, or are but seeming errors or contradictions which are quite unimportant alongside of the central Gospel truths. It is self-evident that such a conviction would exalt tremendously the authority of Scripture for Luther.

In 1521, Luther wrote a treatise entitled "An Argument in Defence of All the Articles of Dr. Martin Luther

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1. Luther: Er. Ed. Vol. XXXVII, p. 17
2. Luther: W. Ed. Vol. III, p. 64
3. Ibid., p. 89
4. Ibid., p. 102
5. Luther: Er. Ed. Vol. LII, p. 305

Wrongly Condemned in the Roman Bull". In the preface, Luther wrote:

"This is my answer to those also who accuse me of rejecting all the teachers of the Church. I do not reject them; but because everyone knows that they have erred at times, as men will, I am willing to put confidence in them only so far as they give me proofs for their opinions out of the Scriptures, which never yet have erred."¹

By implication, the same thought was expressed by Luther in his reply to Emser of Leipzig:

"I must have proof from the Holy Scriptures, since I also contend against you with the Scriptures. Then, too, the fathers give you no help against me, unless you first prove that they never erred."²

In his forceful polemic against Henry VIII, Luther declared:

"The Word is above all. The divine majesty makes me care not at all though a thousand Augustines, a thousand Cyprians, or a thousand of Henry's churches should stand against me. God cannot err, or be deceived. Augustine and Cyprian and all the elect could err and have erred."³

The same emphasis is to be found in the treatise, "Arguments in Defence of Articles of Martin Luther":

"It does not help the case to refer to some of the holy fathers who called St. Peter the rock and foundation of the church. First, because Christ's words take precedence of the words of all saints; they have erred often, Christ never erred."⁴

In the year 1528, Luther published his "Vom Abendmahl Christi Bekenntnis". Forcefully and positively,

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1. Luther: H. Ed. Vol. III, p. 16
2. Ibid., p. 324
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., p. 85

he declared for the inerrancy of Scripture. He was speaking of the contempt, as he calls it, shown toward the words of institution of the Lord's Supper.

"For if they believed they were God's Words they would not call them poor miserable words but would regard each word and tittle as greater than the whole world and would fear and tremble before them as before God Himself. For whoever despises a single Word of God does not regard any as important. ... We have to insist and unalterably maintain that these are nothing less than the clearest, most certain, sweet words of God that cannot deceive us nor fail us."¹

Luther's philosophy of the authority of Scripture clearly contained the supporting pillar of the inerrancy of Scripture as originally revealed and written by the authors.

3. Scripture and the Human Element

While it is true that Luther regarded the terms, Scripture, and the Word of God, as synonymous, and Scripture as originally revealed to be without error, yet he did not hold to a mechanical view of inspiration such as came to the force in later Orthodoxy or such as is found in some fundamentalist circles today.

Scripture existed, Luther said, because of the work of the Holy Spirit. But, he added, this operation did not make machines or secretaries of the men who wrote. Their personalities, their wills, and their temperaments

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1. Luther: W. Ed. Vol. XXVI, pp. 449-450

entered into their writing.

In his preface to Joel, Luther called attention to Joel's personal characteristics shown in his book:

"He (Joel) is a kindly and gentle man and does not denounce and rebuke as do the other prophets, but beseeches and laments, and would make people righteous with good, friendly words and protect them against harm and misfortune."¹

In his preface to Amos, Luther presented a contrast in human personality responding to the Holy Spirit.

"He is violent, too, and denounces the people of Israel throughout the whole book, until the end of the last chapter where he foretells Christ and His kingdom and closes his book with that. No prophet, I think, does so little promising and so much denouncing and threatening, so that he may be well named Amos, that is, 'a burden', or 'one who is hard to get along with and irritating.'"²

In speaking about Isaiah's prophecies, Luther called attention to what Isaiah contributed as a personality. In referring to the order of his prophecies, he said:

"He (Isaiah) does not treat them in order, however, and give each of these subjects its own place and put it into its own chapters and pages; but they are so mixed together that much of the first is brought in along with the second and third, and the third subject is discussed somewhat earlier than the second. But whether this was done by those who collected and wrote down the prophecies, or whether he himself arranged it this way according to time, occasion, and persons suggested, and these times and occasions were not always alike, and had no order, -- this I do not know."³

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1. Luther: H. Ed. Vol. VI, p. 425
2. Ibid., p. 426
3. Ibid., pp. 406-407

In his introduction to the book of Romans, Luther further said of the human element in inspiration:

"Thus in his Epistle (Romans), we find most richly the things that a Christian ought to know; namely, what is law, Gospel, sin, punishment, grace, faith, righteousness, Christ, God, good works, love, hope, the cross, and also how we are to conduct ourselves toward everyone, whether righteous or sinner, strong or weak, friend or foe. All this is ably founded on Scripture and proved by his own example and that of the prophets. Therefore it appears that St. Paul wanted to comprise briefly in this one Epistle the whole Christian and evangelical doctrine and to prepare an introduction to the entire Old Testament; for without doubt, he who has this Epistle well in his heart, has the light and power of the Old Testament with him."¹

Luther, likewise, called attention to individual differences among the authors of the Gospels:

"Now John writes very little about the works of Christ, but very much about His preaching, while the other evangelists write much of His works and little of His preaching; therefore John's Gospel is the one, tender, true, chief Gospel, far, far to be preferred to the other three and placed high above them."²

Luther's philosophy did not contain any explanation or theory of the method by which the co-operation between the Holy Spirit and the human authors was carried out. That problem had not arisen as yet. But he plainly asserted the work of the Holy Spirit. He also emphasized the contribution of the human authors.

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1. Luther: H. Ed. Vol. VI, pp. 461-462
2. Ibid., pp. 443-444

4. Scripture Inspired in a Literal Sense

There are statements in Luther which border on a declaration for what has since been given the name of verbal inspiration in a plenary sense. It has already been stated clearly that Luther gave full recognition to the human element in the writing of the Bible books. Certainly that evidence would remove Luther far from the mechanistic, verbal-inspiration theory. However, a name will not be given to Luther's theory of inspiration since he himself did not give one. Instead, certain passages from his writings will be allowed to speak for themselves. These passages indicate that Luther insisted on a literal view of the inspiration of Scripture or the Word of God.

Luther presented a brief and general summary of his belief that Scripture is the Word of God when he stated: "Not even one letter in Holy Scripture stands in vain."¹ Certainly Luther's insistence on the meaning of the word, "est", in the words of the institution of the Lord's Supper clearly indicates his insistence upon a literal view of Scripture as the very Word of God.

In 1524, Luther wrote his exposition of the second Epistle of Peter. In it, he made the statement:

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1. Luther: Walch Ed., Vol. X, p. 1018

"What has been written and proclaimed in the prophets, has not been imagined nor invented by men but holy and devout men have spoken it through the Holy Ghost."¹

He became more explicit in 1526 in his exegesis of the prophet Joel:

"The prophets do not state what they imagined and thought good, but what they have heard from God Himself, and what He, who had created all things, disclosed to them, either through dreams or visions; this they reveal and display to us. Consequently they are true hearers of God's Word, for the eternal, almighty God, the Spirit of God, governs their hearts and tongues."²

In 1544, Luther wrote his "Kurzes Bekenntniss Vom Heiligen Sakrament". In it, he became very specific in his insistence that Scripture is to be viewed literally as God's Word:

"It is certain that he who does not or will not believe one article correctly does not believe any sincerely and with right faith. And whoever is so bold that he ventures to accuse God of fraud and deception in a single word, and does so wilfully again and again, after he has been warned and instructed once or twice, he will likewise certainly venture to accuse God of fraud and deception in all of His words. Therefore it is true, absolutely and without exception, that everything is believed or nothing is believed. The Holy Ghost does not suffer Himself to be separated or divided so that He should teach and cause to be believed one doctrine rightly and another falsely."³

Luther's philosophy of the authority of God's Word was built upon a definite conception that Scripture had been inspired to a literal degree. Whether a person

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1. Luther: W. Ed. Vol. XIV, p. 31
2. Ibid., Vol. XIII, p. 110
3. Ibid., Vol. LIV, p. 158

agrees with Luther or not, it must readily be admitted that his insistence gives Scripture a higher authority than it would, or could otherwise hold with a more liberal view on inspiration.

E. STRENGTHENED BY THE METHOD OF INTERPRETATION USED

Luther's philosophy of the authority of Scripture is to be evaluated by the views which he held as to how Scripture is to be interpreted. On the basis of method of interpretation, and the resultant authority placed in Scripture, may be seen the extent of his departure from the Roman Catholic authority based on its method of interpretation. It has already been shown how meaningless Scriptural interpretation had become in the Roman Catholic Church. Scripture was to be understood as the Church interpreted it through its fathers, councils, popes, and traditions. Scriptural interpretation was further vitiated by the current, fourfold method used. The fallacies into which such a mode of interpretation led have already been indicated. Scripture, according to these methods, could be made to support anything which the Church might wish to teach or practice.

Luther used the fourfold method of Scriptural interpretation in his earlier lectures. He greatly emphasized the allegorical method, and continued to use that method to some extent later for illustrative pur-

poses or rhetorical ornament.

In his "Table-Talks", Luther wrote reflectively:

"When I was a monk, I was an adept in allegory. I allegorised everything. But after lecturing on the Epistle to the Romans I came to have some knowledge of Christ. For therein I saw that Christ is no allegory, and learned to know what Christ actually was."¹

Luther broke with this traditional method, and established fundamental principles of his own. In this presentation of Luther's philosophy of authority, his method of interpretation will now be outlined.

1. Literal Insistence

In his treatise, "The Babylonian Captivity of the Church", Luther gave an admirable summary statement of his literal insistence in interpreting Scripture.

"No violence is to be done to the words of God, whether by man or angel; but they are to be retained in their simplest meaning wherever possible, and to be understood in their grammatical and literal sense unless the context plainly forbids."²

Luther's literal insistence is most clearly evident in his extensive writings on the Lord's Supper. That subject, especially, became the battle ground for the carrying through of this principle -- that Scripture is to be interpreted in its plain and literal meaning unless the context dictates otherwise, or unless other more clear portions of Scripture, dealing with the same sub-

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1. Luther: Tischreden, Vol. I, p. 136
2. Luther: H. Ed., Vol. II, pp. 189-190

ject, call for another interpretation.

A series of quotations which illustrate Luther's insistence on this principle being carried out in Scriptural interpretation will be submitted. In writing to Emser, in 1521, Luther stated:

"The Holy Spirit is the plainest writer and speaker in heaven and earth, and therefore His words cannot have more than one, and that the very simplest, sense, which we call the literal, ordinary, natural sense."¹

In 1523, Luther wrote "Vom Anbeten des Sakraments" in which is expressed this interpretative principle very clearly:

"We must not wickedly trifle with God's words like those who, without any clearly expressed warrant, want to give another meaning to some word differing from its natural meaning, as those do who sacrilegiously try to twist the word 'is' into meaning 'it signifies', and so distort this statement of Christ, 'This is my Body,' that it is to mean, 'this signifies my Body.' But we shall and will simply stand by Christ's words; He will not betray us and we will repel such error with no other sword than the fact that Christ does not say, this signifies my Body, but this is my body. For if such evil frivolity be permitted in one place so that we could say, without any foundation in Scripture, that 'is' means 'signifies' there would be no protection against a similar interpretation in any other case and all Scripture would be nullified because there would be no reason why such wicked trifling could be permitted in one case and denied in another."²

In 1544, Luther wrote 'Kurzes Bekenntnis Vom Heiligen Sakrament'. He declared:

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1. Luther: H. Ed., Vol. III, p. 350
2. Luther: W. Ed., Vol. XI, p. 434

"It is certain that he who does not or will not believe one article correctly does not believe any sincerely and with the right faith. And whoever is so bold that he ventures to accuse God of fraud and deception in a single word, and does so willfully again and again, after he has been warned and instructed once or twice, he will likewise certainly venture to accuse God of fraud and deception in all of His words. Therefore it is true, absolutely and without exception, that everything is believed or nothing is believed. The Holy Ghost does not suffer Himself to be separated or divided so that He should teach and cause to be believed one doctrine rightly and another falsely."¹

Luther consistently maintained this principle of literal insistence in interpreting Scripture. That insistence led to serious results as may be seen in the controversy with Zwingli which led to a division within Protestantism. But the principle does indicate an exalted position assigned to, and a jealous regard for the authority of Scripture.

2. Scripture Its Own Interpreter

Untold confusion and great spiritual havoc have resulted in the Christian Church from the practice of failing to study texts in their context; and of failing to observe the fundamental rules of Scriptural interpretation -- that Scripture should be used to interpret Scripture; that clear passages should be used to interpret the obscure; and, that all interpreting should be done in the light of Christ and His salvation

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1. Luther: W. Ed., Vol. LIV, p. 158

bestowed through grace. It is violation of these principles that has brought into being innumerable sects.

The principle of Scriptural interpretation -- that Scripture is to interpret Scripture -- was the sword that cut the "Gordian knot", or was the "Open Sesame" that brought to Luther that understanding which resulted in the "Great Illumination". The "righteousness of God" as it appeared in Scripture, as he found it in the Psalms and in Romans 1:17, kept him in darkness and in despair.¹ When he saw the great truth, that the righteousness of God is revealed in the Gospel, then he saw the heavens open and a gracious God smiling upon him. That revealed truth in the right understanding of Romans 1:17 became the key to open every other passage which spoke of the righteousness of God.

Another illustration of how Luther used Scripture to interpret Scripture is to be noted in his exegesis of Matthew 16:18.

"But let us see how they torture and insult the holy words of God to establish their falsely alleged authority. Christ says to St. Peter in Matthew 16: 'Thou art Peter -- that is a rock -- and on this rock I will build My Church, and to thee will I give the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven'. ... But we pass that by and take up the true meaning of these words. That the gates of hell prevail nothing against this building must mean that the devil has no power over it; and this takes place

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1. Ante., Chapter III, p. 83

when the building stands in firm faith and without sin, for where faith is absent or sin is present, there the devil rules and prevails against the building. ... It follows, then, that this rock is Christ Himself, for so St. Paul calls him in 1 Cor. X and the building is the believing Church, in which there is no sin, and to build is nothing else than to become a believer and to grow in holiness, as St. Peter also teaches in 1 Peter II, that we are to be built, a spiritual building, on Christ the Rock."¹

To be sure, Luther clearly showed that the Roman Catholics were misinterpreting the Matthew passage. Their exegesis was false. But then he clinched his point by using 1 Cor. X and 1 Peter II to support his interpretation and to clarify it. Luther used Scripture to interpret Scripture.

In his treatise, "The Babylonian Captivity of the Church," Luther treated the subject of Extreme Unction as interpreted by the Roman Catholics on the basis of James 5:14-15. First he dealt with the passage itself.

"In the first place, then, if they believe the Apostle's words to be true and binding, by what right do they change and contradict them? Why do they make an extreme and a particular kind of unction of that which the Apostle wished to be general? For he did not desire it to be an extreme unction or administered only to the dying; but he says quite generally: 'If any man be sick' -- not, 'if any man be dying.' ... But what follows is still better. The Apostle's promise expressly declares that the prayer of faith shall save the sick man, and the Lord shall raise him up. The Apostle commands us to anoint the sick man and to pray, in order that he may be healed and raised up; that is, that he may not die, and that it may not be an extreme unction."²

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1. Luther: H. Ed., Vol. III, pp. 82-83
2. Ibid., Vol. II, pp. 285-286

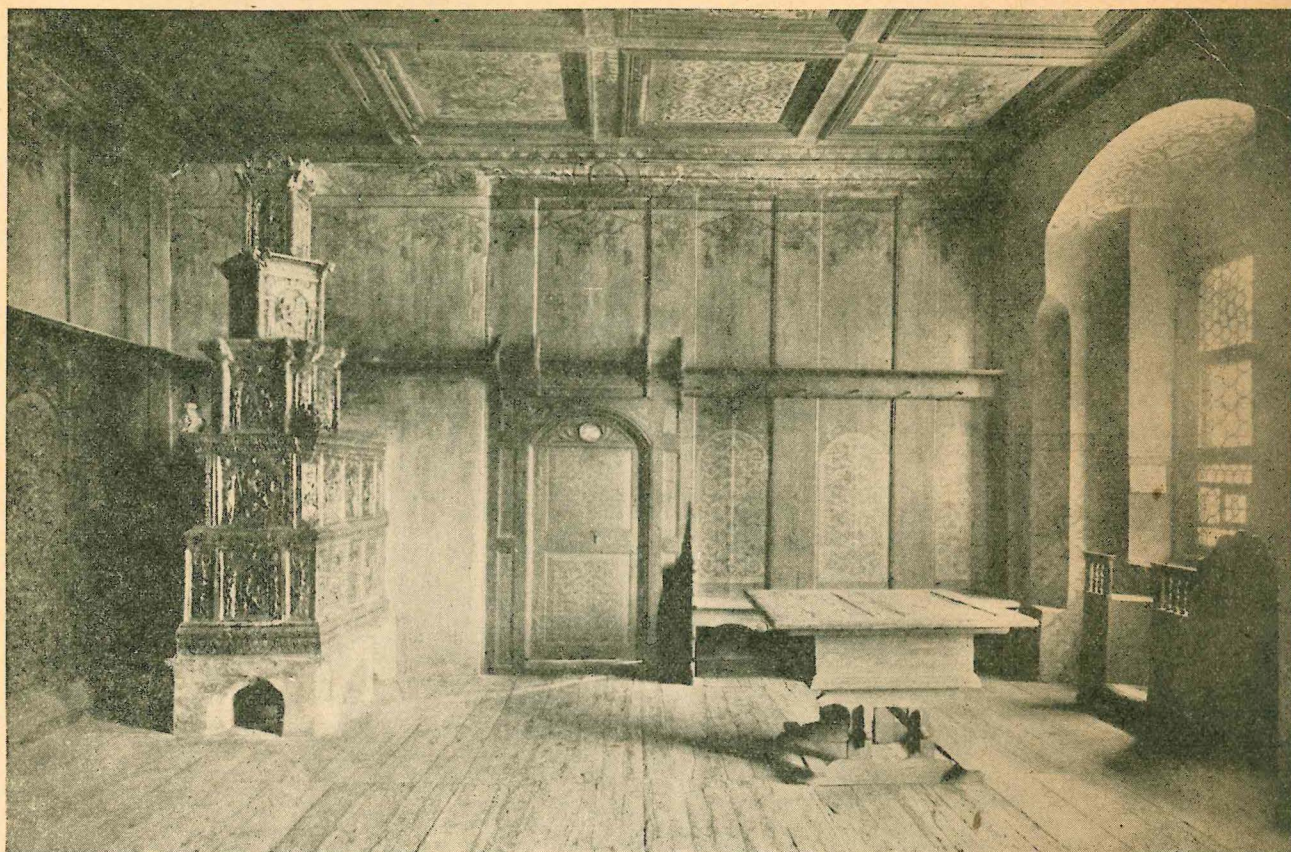
When Luther had corrected the false exegesis of the passage, he turned to Matthew 6:13, and allowed it to throw light on the passage in James. Then he also turned to 1 Tim. 4:4ff. By such a mode of Scriptural interpretation, Scripture became a safe authority and a unified authority. Furthermore, such interpretation unified the Old Testament and the New Testament. Following this principle brought about the concept that the Old Testament was unfolded in the New Testament. This practice is clearly and summarily stated in these words:

"If then, you would interpret well and surely, set Christ before you; for He is the man to whom it all applies. Make nothing else of the high priest Aaron than Christ alone, as is done by the Epistle to the Hebrews, which is almost enough, all by itself, to interpret all the figures of Moses. Likewise it is certain that Christ Himself is both the sacrifice and the altar, for He sacrificed Himself, with His own blood, as the same Epistle announces. Now, as the Levitical high priest, by his sacrifice, took away only the artificial sins, which were in their nature no sins, so our High Priest, Christ by His own sacrifice and blood, has taken away the true sin, which is in its nature sin, and He has gone in once through the veil to God to make atonement for us. Thus you should apply to Christ personally and to no one else, all that is written about the High Priest."¹

Luther established a principle of Scriptural interpretation that remains today a fundamental requisite for sound interpretation. In so doing, his philosophy of the authority of Scripture progressed as a sound and constructive philosophy for future generations to adopt.

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1. Luther: H. Ed., Vol. IV, p. 379



Luther's Room in the Wartburg

3. Use of Original Languages

In 1509, Luther began his work as a lecturer in theology at Erfurt. During the course of these lectures, he began the use of the original Hebrew text for the explanation of certain Old Testament words and passages. He consulted Reuchlin's "Hebrew Grammar and Dictionary" and his exposition of the penitential Psalms. Luther was beginning to show indications of being a careful and exact scholar in trying to get the correct and original meaning of Scripture.

At about the same time, Luther also began to study Greek. Lang, who was a fellow monk and colleague, assisted Luther in this study. Erasmus' edition of the Greek New Testament was used. Through this study, Luther was now gaining proficiency in the use of those tools which would open the way for discovering the exact and original meaning of Scripture. He was beginning to see the mistakes and contradictions that existed in the Vulgate when contrasted with the Hebrew and the Greek. By so doing, the authority of Scripture was becoming more definite and binding for him. He was throwing out the accumulated errors of the Vulgate and working back into the Scripture as originally revealed.

F. CONSIDERED ABSOLUTE BECAUSE A MEANS OF GRACE

Now the final and most important consideration in

presenting Luther's philosophy of the authority of Scripture will be considered. Thinking of, and presenting Scripture, or the Word of God as a means of grace represent the highest exaltation of its authority. That fact will be made clear when Luther's conception of the Word of God as a means of grace is outlined.

In the Smalcald Articles, of which Luther is the main author, is found this summary definition:

"And in those things which concern the spoken, outward Word, we must firmly hold that God grants His Spirit or grace to no one, except through or with the preceding outward Word. ... Therefore in regard to this we ought and must constantly maintain that God does not wish to deal with us otherwise than through the spoken Word and the sacraments, and that whatever without the Word and sacraments is extolled as spirit is the devil himself."¹

The position of Luther, in a general way, is made plain by that definition. Scripture, or the Word of God, is exalted to the highest possible position of authority, in that through it -- the written, and also the sacramental Word -- and through it alone, is God's grace made available to mankind.

To further clarify the general consideration, there is the excellent statement, written in popular form, of a recent writer and interpreter of Luther's position:

"It (the Word of God) not only tells about sin and salvation, but delivers from sin and confers salvation. It not only points out the way of life, but it leads, nay more, we might say, it carries us into

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1. The Book of Concord: The Smalcald Articles, pp. 332-333

and along that way. It not only instructs concerning the need of the Holy Spirit, but it conveys that spirit to the very mind and heart. It is indeed a precious truth, that this Word not only tells me what I must do to be saved, but it also enables me to do it. ... It is the vehicle and instrument of the Holy Spirit. Through it the Holy Spirit works repentance and faith. Through it He regenerates, converts and sanctifies."¹

The next step will be to treat in detail Luther's philosophy of the authority of Scripture in presenting the Word as a means of grace.

1. The Written Word So Viewed

Luther's small Catechism is a classic work. It was written to meet a crying need of his day -- the need of plain Christian instruction in the fundamentals of Christianity. That little compendium of Christian doctrine remains today a basic work in Christian instruction in the Lutheran Church. Luther, in his explanation of the third commandment (The fourth, according to the division used in the Reformed churches), made this simple statement about the Word. "We should fear and love God so as not to despise His Word and the preaching of the same, but deem it holy, and willingly hear and learn it."² He warned against the neglect of the Word, and he stressed the importance of the use of it.

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1. Gerberding: The Way of Salvation, pp. 143-144
2. The Book of Concord: The Small Catechism, p. 354

In the large Catechism, Luther gave a more complete statement of his views of the Word as a means of grace:

"For the Word of God is the sanctuary above all sanctuaries, yea, the only one which we Christians know and have. For though we had the bones of all the saints or all holy and consecrated garments upon a heap, still that would help us nothing; for all that is a dead thing which can sanctify nobody. But God's Word is the treasure which sanctifies everything, and by which even all the saints themselves were sanctified. At whatever hour, then, God's Word is taught, preached, heard, read or meditated upon, there the person, day and work are sanctified thereby, not because of the external work, but because of the Word which makes saints of us all. ... Therefore you must always have God's Word in your heart, upon your lips, and in your ears. But where the heart is idle, and the Word does not sound, he breaks in and has done the damage before we are aware. On the other hand, such is the efficacy of the Word, whenever it is seriously contemplated, heard, and used, that it is bound never to be without fruit, but always awakens new understanding, pleasure and devoutness, and produces a pure heart and pure thoughts. For these words are not inoperative or dead, but creative, living words."¹

It is plain from these statements that Luther assigned a supreme place to the efficacy of Scripture.

From the small Catechism, the classic statement of Luther's philosophy concerning Scripture as a means of grace is to be found in his explanation of the third article of the Apostle's Creed:

"I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ my Lord, or come to him; but the Holy Ghost has called me through the Gospel, enlightened me by His gifts, and sanctified and preserved me in the true faith; in like manner as he calls, gathers, enlightens and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth, and preserves it in union

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1. The Book of Concord: The Small Catechism, pp. 607-609

with Jesus Christ in the true faith."¹

The explanation is very interesting and complete. Luther stated the case negatively first by declaring how he personally could not be led to faith in Christ -- "I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ my Lord." Then he stated his Scripturally grounded view positively -- the Holy Spirit through the Gospel. Luther further amplified this statement in the large Catechism:

"For neither you nor I could ever know anything of Christ, or believe on Him and have Him for our Lord, except as it is offered to us and granted to our hearts by the Holy Ghost through the preaching of the Gospel. The work is finished and accomplished; for Christ, by his suffering, death, resurrection etc., has acquired and gained the treasure for us. But if the work remained concealed, so that no one knew of it, then it were in vain and lost. That this treasure might not lie buried, but be appropriated and enjoyed, God has caused the Word to go forth and be proclaimed, in which he gives the Holy Ghost to bring this treasure home and apply it to us."²

There are frequent statements by Luther that support the above stated philosophy about the Word as a means of grace. Luther preached his eight notable Wittenberg sermons in 1522, in which he spoke of what had resulted from his Reformation work, by stating:

"I did nothing; the Word did it all. . . . I did nothing; I left it to the Word. What do you suppose is Satan's thought, when an effort is made to do things

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1. The Book of Concord: The Small Catechism, p. 367
2. Ibid., p. 444

by violence? He sits back in hell and thinks: How fine a game these fools will make for me! But it brings him distress when we only spread the Word, and let it alone do the work. For it is almighty and takes captive the hearts, and if the hearts are captured the evil work will fall of itself."¹

A few other conclusive and definite statements are added to make the case clear that Luther regarded Scripture or the Word of God as a means of grace -- a means or the means through which the Holy Spirit functions to lead men to faith in Christ and to preserve them in that faith.

"The Word is the bridge, the narrow way by which the Holy Spirit comes to us."²

"It is in and through the Word that the Spirit comes and gives faith to whomsoever He will."³

"The Spirit is not given except only in, with, and through the faith in Jesus Christ, and faith comes not without God's Word, or the Gospel, which proclaims Christ."⁴

"For God has determined that no one shall and can believe or receive the Holy Spirit without the Gospel as it is orally preached or taught, as experience with the Jews and heathens proves."⁵

"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

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1. Luther: H. Ed., Vol. II, p. 400
2. Luther: W. Ed., Vol. XVII, pp. 125-126
3. Ibid., Vol. XVIII, p. 139
4. Ibid., p. 122
5. Luther: Er. Ed., Vol. XLV, p. 358

elements 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."¹

2. The Sacramental Word So Taught

Luther's philosophy of authority which presents the Word of God as a means of grace includes the sacramental Word, or as it is sometimes called the "visible Word," in the same category. In declaring this truth, Luther was not contradicting himself as might be thought after studying the exclusive statements quoted in the preceding discussion. It is still the efficacy of the Word of which he was speaking, though it is that Word as it operates through the visible means used in the two sacraments. Now will be set forth Luther's view, that the Word in the sacraments, or the Word through the sacraments is a means by which the Holy Spirit leads to faith in Christ, or strengthens a person in that faith.

a. In Baptism

In the small Catechism, Luther gave a clear, and pointed definition of baptism, as he believed it to be: "Baptism is not simply water, but it is the water comprehended in God's command, and connected with God's

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1. Luther: Er. Ed., Vol. XLV, p. 208

Word."¹ He further explained the efficacy of baptism as he conceived it and stated: "It worketh forgiveness of sins, delivers from death, and the devil, and confers salvation on all who believe as the Word and promise of God declare."²

Luther's position has been the object of serious attacks ever since. His philosophy has been the cause of much controversy. This controversy has been carried on within Protestantism itself. In his small Catechism, it appears as though he had as his aim, in one of his confessional statements, to answer those who disagreed with him. He declares himself very clearly in a way that reveals splendidly, for this discussion, his philosophy as to why he believed that baptism was so efficacious.

"It is not the water indeed that produces these effects, but the Word of God which accompanies and is connected with the water. For the water, without the Word of God, is simple water and no baptism. But when connected with the Word of God, it is a baptism; that is, a gracious water of life and a 'washing of regeneration' in the Holy Ghost."³

Luther was exalting the Word -- its power, and its authority. It is the Word of God in baptism, he explained, which is the potent factor, and which produces the regenerative results. Luther expressed himself still more forcefully in the large Catechism:

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1. The Book of Concord: The Small Catechism, p. 370
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., p. 371

"It is pure wickedness and blasphemy of the devil that now our new spirits mock at baptism, separate it from God's Word and institution, and regard nothing but the water which is taken from the well; and then they prate and say: How is a handful of water to save souls? Yes indeed, my friend, who does not know as much as that, that if they be separated from one another water is water? But how dare you thus interfere with God's order, and tear out the most precious jewel with which God has connected it and set it, and which he will not have separated? For the germ in the water is God's Word and commandment and the name of God, which is a treasure greater and nobler than heaven and earth. ... We must honor baptism, and esteem it glorious, on account of the Word, as being honored both in word and deed by God Himself, and confirmed with miracles from heaven. ... If the Word be taken away, the water is the same as that with which the servant cooks, and may indeed be called a bath-keepers baptism. But when the Word is added, as God has ordained, it is a sacrament, and is called Christian baptism."¹

Luther spoke identically in the Smalcald Articles:

"Baptism is nothing else than the Word of God in the water, commanded by His institution, or as St. Paul says: 'A washing in the Word'."²

b. In the Lord's Supper

Luther presented an identical philosophy of the authority of the Word in his teaching concerning the Lord's Supper. His philosophy of the efficacious Word in the Lord's Supper will now be presented.

A summary statement from the small Catechism will present his doctrine of the Lord's Supper:

"It is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, under the bread and wine, given unto us

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1. The Book of Concord: The Small Catechism, pp. 467-468
2. Ibid., p. 330

Christians to eat and drink, as it was instituted by Christ Himself."¹

How this can be, he stated in a subsequent explanation:

"The eating and drinking, indeed, do not produce them, but the words which stand here, namely: 'Given and shed for you, for the remission of sins.' These words are, besides the bodily eating and drinking, the chief things in the sacrament; and he who believes these words has that which they declare and set forth, namely, the remission of sins."²

Luther explained further his point of view in the large Catechism:

"It is the Word (I say) which makes and distinguishes this sacrament, so that it is not mere bread and wine, but is and is properly called the body and blood of Christ. For it is said: 'Accedat cerbum ad elementum, et fit sacramentum' (If the Word be joined to the element it becomes a sacrament). This saying of St. Augustine is so explicitly and so well put that he has scarcely said anything better. The Word must make a sacrament of the element, else it remains a mere element. Now it is not the word or institution of a prince or emperor, but of the exalted Majesty, at whose feet all creatures should fall and say: 'Amen, it is as He says,' and accept it with all reverence, fear and humility."³

As in the case of baptism, Luther's view of the efficacy of the Word in the Lord's Supper is one that demands faith. It is not a doctrine that can be rationalized. However, the fact that Luther, with his reason, could not clearly grasp a truth, which to him was clearly taught in Scripture, did not deter him from accepting it as true. His philosophy on that score was:

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1. The Book of Concord: The Small Catechism, p. 373
2. Ibid., p. 374
3. Ibid., p. 477

"If I cannot fathom how the bread is the body of Christ, I will take my reason captive to the obedience of Christ, and cling simply to His Word. ... Even though philosophy cannot grasp this, faith grasps it, and the authority of God's Word is greater than the grasp of one's intellect."¹

Luther went the whole way in declaring the authority of Scripture. He believed that its authority is absolute; that it operates effectively as the written or preached Word; and that it operates equally effectively as the sacramental Word in baptism, and in the Lord's Supper. It is plain that Luther completely rejected all else as authoritative, and efficacious for Christian faith and life. On the other hand, it is plain that Luther adopted an "all out" faith in the absolute, and efficacious authority of God's Word. It is that philosophy of the authority of God's Word that led Luther to write:

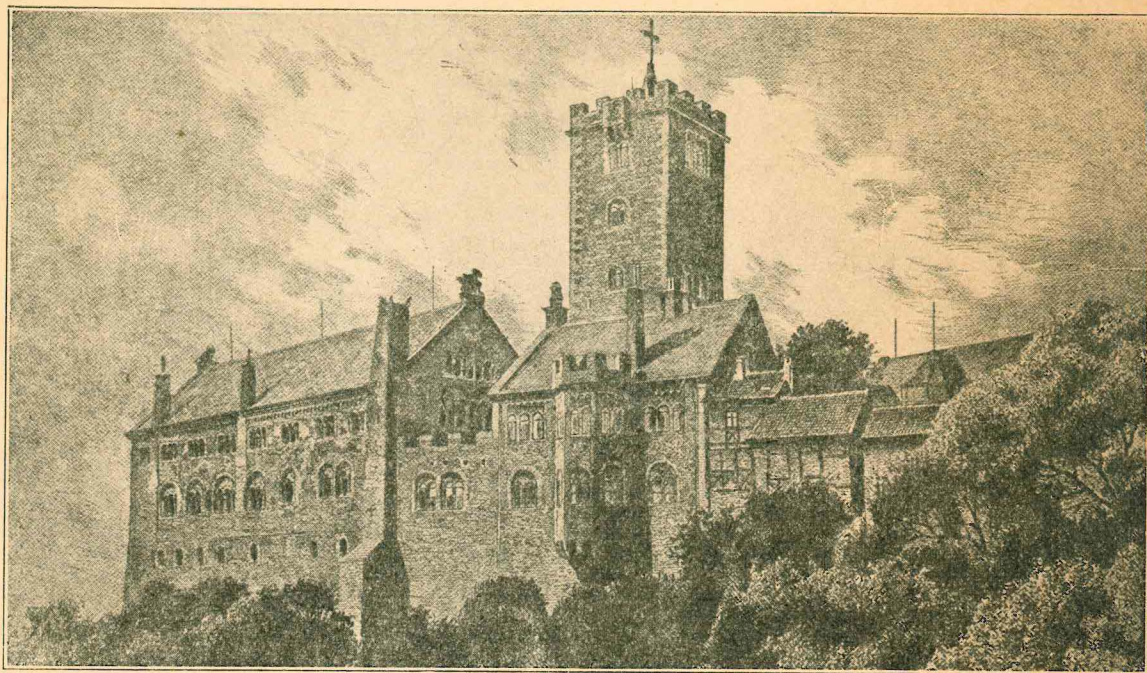
"God's Word is our great heritage,
And shall be ours forever;
To spread its light from age to age
Shall be our chief endeavor;
Through life it guides our way,
In death it is our stay;
Lord grant, while worlds endure,
We keep its teachings pure,
Throughout all generations."²

G. SUMMARY AND EVALUATION

Chapter V has brought this investigation to a climax. Using the figure of a mountain peak, the other chapters

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1. Luther: H. Ed., Vol. II, pp. 193-194
2. The Lutheran Hymnary, p. 137



The Wartburg Castle

are as foothills in relation to it. While the preceding chapters have been preparatory in furnishing context and perspective, this chapter is analytical in setting forth the real import of the thesis subject. In its analysis, this chapter outlines the systematic conclusions, or the philosophical concepts at which Luther arrived in his reflections upon the authority of Scripture. In the light of Luther's philosophy of the authority of Scripture, it becomes possible to arrive at a clear evaluation and presentation of the general subject under consideration -- The Authority of Scripture According to Martin Luther.

In stating the philosophy of authority which was Luther's as the dominating genius of the Reformation movement, the fact was postulated that his philosophy was irrevocably tied up with the great, spiritual experiences which had been his. A series of negative, and positive experiences vitalized his philosophy. His philosophy was not impersonal, cold, or conjured up from purely mental exercise. A part of the dynamic of Luther's philosophy came because it was the result of real experiences. Luther could never disassociate himself from the negative recoil from the Roman Catholic teaching and practice, or from a positive and enthusiastic response to the discovery of what became the "formal" and "material" principles of the Reformation. His es-

tablished philosophy was conditioned upon and directed by that background.

Luther's philosophy had the added, and greater dynamic also of what has been designated as "Testimonium Spiritus Sancti." Luther knew that in the crisis moment in the cloister tower, God had spoken to him. That fact was as real to him as Paul's experience on the Damascus road. In the light of such an experience, Luther's philosophy was grounded in God's own revelation to him through the Holy Spirit. That type of experience was a continuing process for Luther. He stressed that fact by stating:

"You must by yourself feel Christ in your heart and unshakeably experience that it is God's Word, though all the world should fight against it."¹

It may be that some might conclude that Luther was directed by a dangerous over-emphasis on subjectivism. That pit into which Carlstadt stumbled, and that fallacy which characterized the Zwickau prophets, however, does not hold for Luther. His subjectivism assumed a healthy aspect because his philosophy of authority was solidly grounded in Scripture. Luther's emphasis was continually on the objective revelation of Scripture. That fact has been well established by the evidence already contained in this chapter.

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1. Luther: Er. Ed., Vol. XXVIII, p. 298

In order to arrive at a clear understanding of Luther's philosophy of authority, it became necessary in the presentation of the thesis to digress long enough to untangle seeming contradictions caused by drastic statements he made about certain books of the Bible. These seeming contradictions vanish when one realizes that Luther did not accept the same canon as Protestants do now. The vividness of Luther's spiritual experiences, the clarity with which he held to the principle that Christ in the Scripture is the decisive criterion of revelation, and the tenacity with which he held to the "material" principle of "Justification by Faith," as a further determining guide, led him to judge books accordingly. The result was that certain books were considered outside of the canon. On that basis, too, he made a qualitative distinction between canonical books.

It has been found difficult to postulate Luther's view of inspiration. The difficulty probably arises from at least two causes. It is not so easy to make an absolutely objective approach to the question because of the continuous struggle about that problem that has followed Luther's time. There is an involuntary temptation to want to project Luther into the later conflicts. The second difficulty arises from the fact that Luther did not formulate a systematized and complete theory of inspiration. However, he did set forth certain sound and

basic principles which have proven acceptable to much of Protestantism ever since his time. The analysis presented has shown that he identified the Word of God with Scripture; that he considered Scripture inerrant; that he considered Scripture the Word of God in a literal sense; but also, that he gave full recognition to the human element and to differences on the part of the authors in presenting the revelation of God in Scripture.

On the question of the method of interpreting Scripture, it has been shown that Luther used sound and scientific principles of interpretation that differed radically from the current method of the Roman Catholic Church. He turned his back upon all tradition as the norm by which Scripture is to be interpreted. Luther discarded the current fourfold method of interpreting Scripture. Luther, as has been set forth, insisted on a literal mode of interpretation. That method he followed consistently unless other portions of Scripture clearly indicated that a passage was to be interpreted otherwise. Luther's philosophy of authority was further grounded on the interpretative principle that Scripture is its own interpreter, and that no part of the Bible is to be viewed independently but must be interpreted in relation to the context of all of Scripture. Confidence in Luther's philosophy of authority is further strengthened by noting the scientific method which he

used in interpreting Scripture. He sought continually to discover the original meaning as revealed in the languages in which the Bible originally was written. He was a pioneer in that respect. It was as originally written that Scripture was for him the inerrant, literal Word of God.

Finally, Luther's philosophy of the authority of Scripture may best be evaluated by what he conceived the relation of Scripture to be to the grace of God or, as it might be stated, to the working of the Spirit of God. Scripture received its highest recognition of authority in that Luther ascribed to it the position of being the means of grace -- the means through which the Holy Spirit operates; and, the means through which God's grace becomes accessible to man. By that philosophical concept, Luther declared the authority of Scripture to be absolute. It was in Scripture, Luther believed, that man, lost in sin, found God's regenerating, justifying, and sanctifying grace; that in Scripture, God spoke; and that through Scripture, God worked. Such a concept which sets forth Scripture as a means of grace and, therefore, as the meeting place between God and man, led Luther, in his philosophy, to give to Scripture an absolute place of authority for all that pertains to the Christian faith and life.

In giving a personal evaluation of Luther's philos-

ophy of the authority of Scripture, there are certain admissions which must be made. Much as a person may be enthused about the epochal work which Luther performed, yet intellectual honesty, and objective evaluation must make one recognize facts as they appear.

It is clear that Luther does not present a complete, or full-orbed philosophy respecting the authority of Scripture. It is to be remembered that Luther was a pioneer. As a pioneer engaged in clearing the field of the accumulated debris of Catholicism on the matter of authority for the Christian faith, it is not surprising that he did not present a completely-developed, positive philosophy. An illustration of what is meant by that may be seen in the fact that he did not present a well-defined or fully-developed theory of inspiration of Scripture. He enunciated general principles which were sound and basic. Or again, Luther did not come to a clear decision on the question of the canon. That problem was settled subsequent to his work.

It is also to be admitted that Luther was not always fully consistent. He was not a systematic theologian such as Melancthon or Calvin. He did not formulate a dogmatic system. But, again, it is to be remembered that Luther's life was one of continued and dramatic activity. He worked and wrote in the heat of battle. He was engaged in offensive warfare throughout life, first against

the Roman Catholic system, and then against other tendencies and extremes which came as an aftermath of the Reformation movement. In the face of such an existence, and in the midst of such experiences, he often expressed himself in extreme ways. He spoke and wrote passionately -- a fact which will often lead to over-statement and even contradiction.

Yet it is surprising what great and permanent results were wrought by the "Great Reformer". He was the instrument, under God, who restored a philosophy of authority for the Christian life which will doubtlessly always remain basic. The author has the conviction that Luther's philosophy of authority is more acceptable than any contrasting philosophy so far examined, because it is vital, dynamic, sound, reasonable, scientific and, above all, rooted unshakeably in a view of the Scriptures which has about it a Gibraltar-like character.

In presenting a personal evaluation of Luther's philosophy of Scriptural authority, let the following quotation from a former teacher present the final summation of it:

"Luther deeply experienced the grace of God revealed to him in the Christ of the sacred Scriptures, and in his bold attack upon all other traditional authorities of the church, he by means of the Gospel that had made him free won the battle for evangelical liberty for his generation and for the modern world. ... 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; 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. ... 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."¹

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1. Loetscher: The Problem of Authority in Religion, from the Princeton Theological Review, Vol. XVI, 1918, pp. 555-556

CHAPTER VI

THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE ACCORDING TO LUTHER COMPARED WITH SUBSEQUENT REPRESENTATIVE VIEWPOINTS

A. INTRODUCTION

It has been established that one of the major contributions of Luther's reformatory work was to restore Scripture as authoritative in all things pertaining to Christian faith and life. What he conceived the essence of that authority to be has likewise been stated.

Contrast, and comparison constitute one of the best means of further clarifying an issue. Therefore, this chapter will be devoted to a study in which the conception of the authority of Scripture, according to four major representative schools, will be stated, and compared with Luther's view.

The history of a fundamental truth such as the authority of the Word of God can be compared to a great pendulum swinging back and forth. Not that the truth itself is variable to that degree, but man's understanding and interpretation of such a vital truth moves from one extreme to another. This comparative study will serve to trace the movements of this pendulum through the centuries that have followed the Reformation.

B. ORTHODOXY

The Reformation had established the principle of "Sola Scriptura" as authoritative, in the absolute sense, for Christian faith and life. During the period immediately following the Reformation, this principle of authority had been forceful, and effective. Luther had established it. Calvin had seconded it. It is possibly not surprising that, following the time of Luther, and Calvin, this principle was vitiated. Such a claim is made, and well stated by Mackintosh:

"Great ideas too often are vulgarized in the second generation. 'The original impulse weakens as it spreads; the living passion petrifies in codes and creeds; the revelation becomes a commonplace; and so the religion that began in vision ends in orthodoxy.' Thus it was with the profound doctrines put forth in the Reformation."¹

In other words, the pendulum was beginning to move. The swing of the pendulum will now be followed to the point where the movement known in history as Orthodoxy will be introduced.

1. Its Development

Orthodoxy developed slowly. It can be said that it was a natural development as theologians continued to grapple with, and contend for the Reformation principles.

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1. Mackintosh: Types of Modern Theology, pp. 7-8

An analysis of the development of Orthodoxy will be given from a twofold point of view.

a. Influenced by Forces from Within

Within the Protestant Church, the age following the Reformation became a didactic age. It became the age of formulation and systematization. Theologians went to work to define doctrinally the principles established by Luther, and his contemporaries. In doing so, they had the example of medieval Scholasticism, and the Council of Trent. Post-Reformation theologians were not content to state, or define general principles, but proceeded to work out, in detail, definitions of every phase of the Christian faith. Confessional writings, which were intended to state specifically what previously had been established in general terms only, were produced. The doctrine of Scriptural authority was included in this program of systematization.

It is not surprising that the above mentioned procedures were the result of the post-Reformation period. Theologians, and people as well, wanted to know what the differences were between Protestantism, and the Roman Catholic faith from which they had broken. They wanted clear, doctrinal statements in order that they might meet the problems arising because of divisions that were resulting within the Reformation group. They wanted spe-

cific statements on matters of the Christian faith and life with which to meet the extreme sectist movements that were rampant.

b. Influenced by Forces from Without

The systematization of theology resulting in Orthodoxy was, no doubt, a defence measure. Leckie, in referring to the post-Reformation period, and the conflicts that resulted, said:

"In the stress of this tremendous conflict against the combined forces of absolutism and anarchy, the Reformed theologians were compelled to establish a more objective form of Scriptural authority."¹

Leckie further suggested that it did not work to set individual testimony against Catholic tradition; and, that it was not enough to set Luther's consciousness against the Church at Rome, with its claim of being founded on Peter. Then, too, the historic Council of Trent had permanently established the Roman Catholic position respecting the authority of Scripture, and tradition.

The result was a theological checker game. For every move on one side, there was a counter move on the other side. The Council of Trent issued its decrees. Protestantism responded, or countered with its own formal decisions, and declarations. In short, circumstances compelled the movement.

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1. Leckie: Authority in Religion, p. 40

2. Its Formulation

Now the main characteristics of the formulation of Orthodoxy concerning the authority of Scripture will be presented.

a. The Conception of Scripture

Luther's philosophy of authority has been stated. He had come to his conclusions because of living, vital, transforming experiences with Scripture. Certain, great, fundamental principles had been established, and had been based on what he had discovered in the inspired Word. These principles had been substantiated in his experience. Luther's declarations, therefore, were the dynamic overflow of a living faith, and were the fruit resulting from his thrilling discoveries as he applied his principles of interpretation to the living and authoritative Word.

Orthodoxy, as it developed, viewed the Word in a decidedly objective manner -- that the Bible was composed of sixty-six books; and, that this book of sixty-six books was inspired in the sense stated by Quenstedt who is regarded as one of the outstanding exponents of Orthodoxy:

"The Holy Spirit inspired and dictated ... the very sentences and all the words severally."¹

"God therefore alone, if we wish to speak accurately, is to be called the Author of the sacred Scriptures;

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1. Quenstedt: Quoted by Brunner: The Philosophy of Religion, p. 35

the prophets and apostles cannot be called the authors except by a kind of catachresis. They are properly called amanuenses because they wrote nothing of their own accord, but everything at the dictation of the Holy Ghost."¹

Hollaz, an outstanding representative of Orthodoxy, wrote in the same tone:

"Divine inspiration, by which the subject-matter and the words, those to be spoken as well as those to be written, were immediately suggested to the prophets and apostles by the Holy Spirit, preserved them free from all error in the preaching as well as in the writing of the divine Word."²

"Scripture contains matters of history, chronology, genealogy, astronomy, physics, and politics, and although the knowledge of these may not be directly necessary to salvation, none the less they are matters of divine revelation, ... not merely the meaning, or the thing signified, but the words, too, as signs of the things are divinely inspired."³

Stump quoted Quenstedt as speaking of the Biblical writers, as amanuenses "to whom the very words are dictated to the pen, and who contributed nothing beyond writing or the making of the letters."⁴ Gerhard declared that the Hebrew vowel points were inspired. Mueller, though a modern theologian, echoed the view of Orthodoxy:

"Hence the inspiration includes the whole Scripture, no matter whether it was ascertained through study and research. For this reason the historical, geographical and scientific matters are its foremost doctrines."⁵

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1. Quenstedt: Quoted by Meuller: Christian Dogmatics, pp. 103-104
2. Hollaz: Quoted by Meuller: *ibid.*, p. 105
3. Hollaz: Quoted by Brunner, *op. cit.*, p. 35
4. Quenstedt: Quoted by Stump: The Christian Faith, p. 315
5. Mueller: Christian Dogmatics, p. 104

A doctrine of mechanical, verbal inspiration was formulated. It is not surprising that Orthodoxy came to be called Protestant Scholasticism. The theological formulations respecting Scripture were carried to the greatest extremes, and delved into the minutest details.

b. The Misuse of Scripture

Given such a premise as the Orthodox view of inspiration, flagrant misuse of Scripture naturally followed. The Bible became "an arsenal from which doctrines were to be proved."¹ The Word was systematized and dogmatized to the extreme. It was viewed as doctrine instead of the power of God unto salvation, or instead of a living organism in the way Luther had viewed it.

Scripture was being understood on the basis of writings which might be compared with Roman Catholic tradition. The Reformation movement which had emerged from the rut of double authority with tradition dominating Scripture was now seriously in danger of returning to that rut again.

c. The Relation of Creeds

It was intended that creeds should be expressional in interpreting the truth of Scripture. In reality, the creeds came more and more to occupy the position of Roman

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1. Qualben: A History of the Christian Church, p. 357

Catholic tradition, and thus came to hold such a high position that the Bible was interpreted in terms of the confessional books.

"In this process, traditional Orthodoxy emerged -- a distinct historical phenomena, characterized by the fatal tendency to attach an absolute value to dogmatic formulas, to consider faith, and assent to creed as virtually one and the same thing, to harp upon the language of confession or catechism without at each point getting back behind the form of sound words to truth as truth is in Jesus."¹

3. Critical Estimate

There were good features in the movement known as Orthodoxy. The movement resulted in intense concentration, and extensive study in attempting to expound fully, and base firmly the great and important principles enunciated by the Reformation. The movement also systematized carefully, and elaborated more fully the Reformation truths. Orthodoxy created a body of literature which, on all theological points, stood ready to meet the claims, and attacks of the Roman Catholic system. Furthermore, to all adherents of the Reformation, Orthodoxy gave specific knowledge as to just what the Protestant Church believed and taught.

Yet, it is plainly evident that for Orthodoxy, Scripture was not the fountain of living water from which to draw and drink as it had been for Luther. As a result of Orthodoxy, theologians, and lay people were getting their water

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1. Mackintosh: op. cit., p. 9

after it had run through the channels, or after it had been thoroughly flavored by the channels of formulated statements, or confessions. By this arraignment, the implication is not intended that creeds, or confessional statements are unnecessary. They are. The Christian Church can profit greatly by the stated discoveries of theologians of the past who have studied Scripture, and have penned their discoveries. But there is always the danger of people being satisfied to let these credal statements and confessions dictate their thinking. There is the danger, too, of people believing according to the formulas framed. There is the temptation of making of the Christian faith a purely objective, factual assent to credal declarations. Such was the pitfall into which Orthodoxy, as a movement, stumbled. As a general trend, the adherents of the Orthodox movement surrendered the absolute authority of Scripture for which Luther had contended so valiantly.

In place of the authority of "Sola Scriptura", confessions, and creeds came to rule jointly with Scripture. Protestantism, as a result, fell into the same kind of trap as the Roman Catholic Church had.

In contrast to Luther's dynamic, experiential, spirit-witnessed faith, Orthodoxy was characterized generally by a cold, formalistic, intellectual, and creed-bounded faith. Whereas Luther had freed himself from the subverting effect of Roman Catholic tradition, Orthodoxy accumulated an

authoritative tradition of its own which gradually increased in sharing the place of power with Scripture. In place of Luther's evangelical, sound, basic, though general principles concerning the inspiration of Scripture, Orthodoxy went far beyond Luther, and elaborated a theory of extreme, and mechanical inspiration.

Another serious error of Orthodoxy was that its representatives used Scripture as a sort of storehouse from which evidence, and proof might be secured to establish points of view which they held, or which they wanted to advance. This method is that which is so commonly used by dogmaticians. This manner of using Scripture can easily disregard the context of the selected passages. It also disregards the importance of studying, and seeing the import of books as organized wholes.

Orthodoxy caused the Reformation movement to veer sharply from that excellent way on which it had begun to travel under the leadership of Luther. Orthodoxy remains with us to this day as a tendency which constantly threatens to destroy, and mummify the evangelical spirit of that faith which is established by Scriptural authority, and which was so well enunciated by Luther. The extreme views on some questions which were taught, the cold and arid spirit exhibited, the extreme and objective methods used, and the ineffective-in-life results which followed in Orthodoxy caused that movement to bring into existence still other

schools of thought. Most of these resultant schools of thought have contributed in vitiating the great results which had come through the epochal work of Luther.

C. RATIONALISM

One would expect to find a violent counter swing of the pendulum resulting from Orthodoxy. The spiritual aridness of the Orthodox movement, the resulting coldness of its effect, the quarrelsomeness of its theologians, and the credulous position often taken were certain to drive people to an opposite extreme.

The reaction soon appeared. It took form in several different ways. Mysticism and Pietism were two of the main reacting movements which sought to recover what Orthodoxy had buried in its Scholastic manifestations. Another extreme swing of the pendulum was the movement known as Rationalism. Viewed in relation to the question of the authority of the Word of God, Rationalism represented the extreme swing of the pendulum from Orthodoxy. This movement

"is marked by an effort of human reason, guided by philosophical reflection and scientific knowledge, to free itself from the dogmatism imposed upon it by revelation, to obtain its discharge from the authoritarianism of Orthodoxy, to cast the light which nature places at our disposal upon religious feeling and sentiment."¹

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1. Guignebert: Christianity, Past and Present, p. 417

This investigation seeks now to analyze the viewpoint of Rationalism concerning the authority of Scripture, and to analyze it in relation to Luther's conception of its authority.

1. Cause

Objectively, and rationally considered, it is not surprising that strong reactions set in during the eighteenth century. Preceding it, there had been epoch-making discoveries, and movements which were certain to confuse, and revolutionize men's conceptions even in the field of religion. There was too much of that which was new for man to understand, and too much for man to place in proper relationships. Hence, mental indigestion followed. Rationalism was one of the results.

The great discoveries in science by men like Copernicus, Kepler, Galileo, and Newton entirely upset current ideas about the cosmos, man's place in it, and God's relationship to it. These discoveries brought into the open innumerable questions that had not been considered before. What were the answers? How was one to reconcile some of these answers with the many statements of Orthodoxy?

The influence of Humanism, too, conflicted with the status quo. Human reason was made the final test of all things in the movement. It, therefore, raised questions when it was compared with the emphasis put on faith in

Christianity, and with the paradoxical element present.

The rising, scientific spirit ventured into every field of human interest. Therefore, it naturally followed that the viewpoints of Christianity were weighed in the scales of such science, too. Truth was based on observance of known facts. Biblical criticism, and historical criticism came to the fore.

Philosophers such as Descartes, Spinoza, Locke, Bacon, and Hume formulated their doctrines. The effect was in the direction of Rationalism. Such philosophers believed that in order to be acceptable, a concept must be capable of proof.

All of this, aside from the inherent weakness of Orthodoxy, formed the causal background which led to religious Rationalism.

"The thrill of the new discoveries gave rise to a spirit which was less conscious of God and more conscious of man and his inherent powers and possibilities. Man became the measure of all things, and human reason, 'ratio', was enthroned as the only religious authority. This gave rise to Rationalism. A system of 'natural religion' replaced the traditional religion."¹

2. Effect

The effects of a movement which had the dynamic of such revolutionary changes in all spheres of life, as undergirded Rationalism, were certain to be far-reaching,

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1. Qualben: The Lutheran Church in America, p. 101

and extreme. "Rationalism exerted a paralyzing influence upon Protestantism and Roman Catholic Church life during the latter half of the eighteenth century."¹ In direct relation to the subject of this investigation, those effects might be outlined as follows in the next two points.

a. Scriptural Authority Utterly Rejected

Rationalism was guided by this stated principle:

"I will believe nothing I cannot understand, and I understand only what conforms to the acknowledged rules of logic and can be explained to anyone of normal intelligence."²

It can be seen that this principle takes no cognizance of Scriptural authority. Even if Rationalists could have accepted much of Scripture as truth, yet it would not have been because Scripture was authoritative per se, but because reason, having examined it, had accepted it as true.

"The doctrine of Scriptural inspiration was reduced by accepting only the historical material or limiting its function to that of an auxiliary of the divine spirit."³

Actually, however, when Scripture was placed before the bar of the judgment throne of Rationalism, it was declared to be unacceptable.

"The cosmology of the Bible was shattered by Copernicus, Galileo, and Newton; its chronology was rendered obso-

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1. Qualben: A History of the Christian Church, p. 372
2. Mackintosh: op. cit., pp. 14-15
3. The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge, p. 395

lete by a critical science of history and the imposing results of Palaeontology. Literary criticism of the Bible brought to light the thousands of contradictions and human characteristics with which the Old and New Testaments abound."¹

Such was the verdict of Rationalism. Scripture was mutilated until there remained but a shell of its real self. The divinity of Christ, original sin, forgiveness through the atonement of Christ, sacraments, miracles, and prophecies were all rejected. Only the teachings of Jesus were left intact in the New Testament.

"Yet not even this corpus of doctrine could be accepted just as it stood; some alien accretions and obscurities, due indirectly to Rabbinism and Greek philosophy, must be eliminated. St. Paul was the real culprit. In his mind the simple, ethical precepts of Jesus had to an unfortunate extent become adulterated with Jewish theologumena. At a later point Platonism had come in with the Gnostics; Neo-Platonism, too, through the unconscious influence of thinkers to whom Gnosticism was anathema. Thus by degrees the teaching of Jesus had been lost to sight behind a defensive screen of metaphysics gathered around it by the Church."²

Upon a person who would follow the stated opinions of the Rationalists, and observe the results as they outlined them, such an impression is left as is outlined by Thomas Paine:

"I have gone through the Bible as a man would go through a forest with an axe to fell trees. I have cut down tree after tree; here they lie; they will never grow again."³

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1. Brunner: The Philosophy of Religion, p. 36
2. Mackintosh: op. cit., p. 15
3. The Bible Champion: Issue of November, 1929, p. 586

b. Human Reason Substituted as Authoritative

It is plainly evident that Rationalism made a nearly complete substitution of reason as authoritative in the place of Scriptural authority. This stated principle already quoted, asserts this fact:

"I will believe nothing I cannot understand, and I understand only what conforms to the acknowledged rules of logic and can be explained to anyone of normal intelligence."¹

Natural religion took the place of revealed religion in the Rationalist's mind. Rationalists spoke of the eternal truths of reason. The application of this criterion of authority left only three ideas of Scripture standing: God, Freedom, and Immortality. But these, too, were attacked, and restated to suit the dictates of reason.

3. Critical Estimate

The passing of two centuries from the time of the Reformation brought into existence a movement which, in nearly all respects, might be classified as a direct antithesis to all that for which Luther had stood. Attention was called to circumstances which contributed in bringing about such a movement as Rationalism. Attention was further drawn to the havoc Rationalism wrought in the Church from the eighteenth century and on. It was shown how Rationalism threatened to destroy the great principle for

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1. Mackintosh: op. cit., pp. 14-15

which Luther had contended and which he had established. That principle which Rationalists threatened to destroy was that Scripture is the sole authority for Christian faith and life.

Such a result threatened not because of Luther's presented view but because of the fact that Rationalism could not accept the vitiated presentation of the authority of Scripture which Orthodoxy had formulated.

Rationalism exhibited typical characteristics often found in a movement which suddenly comes into power, and which is propelled by man. Rationalism was revolutionary, and extreme. It embarked on a program of throwing out everything, and starting anew to build according to its own basic principles.

In the place of the authority of Scripture, Rationalism enthroned "Ratio", or reason as the supreme authority. In the place of a revealed religion, a natural religion was substituted. It can readily be seen that Rationalism in its principle of authority represented the opposite extreme from the principle which Luther had established.

At the same time that Rationalism was disastrous in its results, and raised havoc in the evangelical Christian Church, yet there were some benefits derived from this movement. It emphasized the scientific approach. Christianity has nothing to fear from the application of true science, and critical thinking. There is a potent lesson,

too, to be learned from the rise of Rationalism. It resulted, to a great extent, because Luther's spiritual children had failed to build their Christian faith on the authority of Scripture in a vital, positive way such as Luther had done.

D. SCHLEIERMACHER

In Schleiermacher, "The Father of Modern Scientific Theology,"¹ the pendulum of theological thought took a decided swing in a direction which was the opposite extreme, in most respects, from Orthodoxy, and Rationalism. True, there are strong contrasts observable between Orthodoxy, and Rationalism, as previously outlined, and yet they combined characteristics, too, such as cold intellectualism, and rationalization. Both attempted to reduce Christianity to an intellectual operation. The one arrived at it from a supernatural source, and the other from reason. It was from these common characteristics that Schleiermacher caused the pendulum to swing to the opposite extreme, in that he grounded religion on feeling.

"He gave up the attempt to ground Christian experience in objective facts, whether of history or revelation. But there was an internal element which criticism could not destroy. It was the element of emotion. He defined religion, therefore, as the feeling of absolute dependence."²

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1. Brown: The Essence of Christianity, p. 155
2. Strong: Miscellanies, p. 16

As the new position of authority which he unfolded is observed, it will be of interest to compare it with the stated standard of comparison -- The Authority of Scripture according to Martin Luther.

1. Preparatory Influences

It has rightly been observed that "the thought of Schleiermacher is luminous only when read in the light of his biography."¹ With this necessity in mind, a brief discussion of preparatory influences, or life experiences will be presented.

a. His Home

Schleiermacher was born November 21, 1768, in Breslau in Silesia. His father was an army chaplain, and being absent from home a great deal of the time, exerted a minor influence on his son. But the mother who was both pious and intelligent nurtured her son in a high type of devout, spiritual life.

b. His Moravian Contact

In 1783, Schleiermacher became a student in a Moravian school at Niesky. The pietistic influence of these followers of Zinzendorf was strong and lasting. This type of

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1. Mackintosh: op. cit., p. 32

pietism strongly emphasized the joy of the Christian to be experienced in the love of Christ. To these people, Christ was living and real in contrast to the usual temper of that day. In a letter to his sister at this time, Schleiermacher wrote:

"The heart may, nevertheless, feel the peace and the love of Jesus, as I can assert from my own experience, thanks to His mercy. ... As often as we draw near to Him, feeling ourselves sinners who can only be saved through His mercy, as often as we pray to Him for a look of grace, we never go away from Him empty. He never abandons us, however much we may deserve it; yet the more undisturbed our minds, the better, the more consistent, the more tranquil, the nearer to heaven -- happiest would it be, were we there altogether. But His will be done; it is the best."¹

The full significance of this early influence is better understood in the light of later developments. Suffice it to say now that it was lasting in its effect.

c. His Philosophical Training

The year 1787 found Schleiermacher at the University of Halle. He plunged into an exhausting study of Spinoza, Kant, Fichte, and Schelling. In these studies was laid the foundation for the extraordinary mental acumen which soon exhibited itself in Schleiermacher. Strong gave a good summary of how extensive that learning became.

"To study Schleiermacher is to study a great man and a great life. Few men in history have so united intellectual acumen with tenderness of heart. He had

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1. Strong: op. cit., pp. 6-7

extraordinary breadth of learning. But he had also an independent mind and the courage to stand for his convictions. He taught New Testament Introduction and Interpretation, Church History and the History of Philosophy, Dogmatic and Practical Theology, Logic, Psychology and Metaphysics, Philosophical and Christian Ethics, Aesthetics, Pedagogics and Politics and his published works on these subjects fill a score of volumes."¹

In Schleiermacher, then, appeared a man with a rare combination of gifts, and training to make a tremendous impact on the world of his day. The two contributing factors were:

"The religion of the heart considered as an irreducible fact of experience anterior to any religious theory, and an intellectual strength of extraordinary rigour and force."²

"It was Schleiermacher's peculiar gift to unite in an exceptional degree the most passionate religion with the unbending rigour of a scientific thinker."³

This unusual combination was strikingly stated by Strong in this way: "The Moravian Brotherhood was his mother, though Greece was his nurse."⁴

d. His Confused World

It is often true that a great leader is the product of the times in which he lives. That fact contributed largely to the great impact made by Schleiermacher. The sections dealing with Orthodoxy, and Rationalism have por-

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1. Strong: op. cit., p. 56
2. Sabatier: Religions of Authority, p. 209
3. Mackintosh: op. cit., p. 35
4. Strong: op. cit., p. 56

trayed the situation that existed in the theological world before Schleiermacher. Orthodoxy had made of Christianity a barren, scholastic, lifeless, intellectual system. Rationalism had analyzed that system scientifically and had concluded, with a similar, unsympathetic, intellectual, prejudiced rationalization, that there was nothing in Christianity acceptable to the educated mind.

Schleiermacher seemed equally unsympathetic to the position of Orthodoxy as to that of the Rationalists. He lived as a contemporary of many Rationalists. His approach to them was to declare himself basically one with them.

That fact may be seen from this quotation:

"You are doubtless acquainted with the histories of human follies, and have reviewed the various structures of religious doctrine, from the senseless fables of wanton peoples to the most refined deism, from the rude superstition of human sacrifice to the ill-put-together fragments of metaphysics and ethics, now called purified Christianity, and you have found them all without rhyme or reason: I am far from wishing to contradict you."¹

Admitting some exaggeration, yet the picture is fairly accurate of the theological situation into which Schleiermacher was projected as he began his work. It might be of value to outline Schleiermacher's general, religious, and Christian position, but that which characterized his general conceptions is also observable in his particular views on the phase of his theology which will now be considered.

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1. Schleiermacher: Reden, p. 14

2. His Concept of Authority

From the background presented, psychologically considered, it might now be expected that the new leadership in theology would set forth a decidedly contrasting emphasis, especially to Orthodoxy, but also to Rationalism. History records that type of reaction as the usual thing. In fact, the emphasis would have had to be different in order to gain a hearing from those who had turned away disappointedly, and disgustedly from what had been, and what was in Orthodoxy, and Rationalism.

Schleiermacher, as the leader of the new revival of interest, ran true to that pattern. Having seen the aridness of Christianity based upon intellect, and Scholastic rationalization alone, he posited the concept that religion is basically rooted in the emotions.

The investigation proceeds now to outline in detail what happened, and how Schleiermacher built up his system of authority for the Christian faith. What his reaction was to Scriptural authority will also be noted.

a. The Rejection of the Authority of Scripture

There can be no doubt what Schleiermacher's attitude was toward Scripture as authoritative. "The authority of Holy Scripture cannot be the foundation of faith in Christ."¹

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1. Schleiermacher: The Christian Faith, p. 591

Schleiermacher proceeded to discuss this dogmatic negation, and declared, in the first place, that this polemical statement is made because there are those who assert it to be true that Scripture is the source of Christian faith and therefore is authoritative. This cannot be, Schleiermacher declared, for to admit it as true would mean that this authority was in the first place established by reason.

"Now if we have no point of departure but ordinary reason, the divine authority of Scripture to begin with must admit of being proved on grounds of reason alone; and as against this two points must be kept in mind. First, this always involves a critical and scientific use of the understanding of which not all are capable. ... Secondly, if such proof could be given and if faith could be established in this fashion ... then on such terms faith might exist in people who feel absolutely no need of redemption."¹

Still continuing the discussion of his polemical negation, Schleiermacher asserted that no such doctrine of Scripture is needed in order to attain to faith. Such was not the case with the first Christians, he declared. With them it was direct impression which awakened faith in their souls. Schleiermacher continued:

"In our case, too, faith must pre-exist before, by reading the New Testament, we are led to postulate a special condition of the apostolic mind in which its books were written, and a resulting special character of the books themselves."²

Finally, Schleiermacher stated that instead of a doctrine belonging to Christianity because it is contained

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1. Schleiermacher: The Christian Faith, pp. 591-592
2. Ibid., p. 593

in Scripture, the reverse is true. Instead, he continued, it is found in Scripture because it originally was a part of the Christian faith. Scripture, Schleiermacher said, is but a record of a previous experience or reality.

Schleiermacher then proceeded one step further in establishing the place which the New Testament should hold in the Christian faith in contrast to the past position in which it was given an authoritative one.

"The Holy Scriptures of the New Testament are, on the one hand, the first member in the series, ever since continued, of presentations of the Christian faith; on the other hand, they are the norm for all succeeding presentations."¹

From this statement, it can readily be seen that the New Testament Scripture, in Schleiermacher's view, was relegated to an entirely opposite status from that which Luther assigned to it. Schleiermacher stated that the New Testament Scripture is but one, though the first member of a series of expressional writings. "The succeeding members (of the series) are homogeneous with the first. This holds true alike of form and content."²

McGiffert made a pointed summarization when he said concerning Schleiermacher's views of the Bible:

"They (The Bible and creeds) are not authoritative codes, intended to bind the minds and consciences of men. They are simply records of religious experiences enjoyed in other days by other men, many of them great

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1. Schleiermacher: The Christian Faith, p. 594
2. Ibid.

religious geniuses and particularly by Jesus Christ, the greatest of them all, and the one by whom consciousness of God has been mediated to us. The Scriptures, particularly of the New Testament, have value for the light they throw upon what such men have felt and thought."¹

So it may be concluded that the New Testament, in Schleiermacher's conception of authority, belonged not in the foundation, but, by reason of having been written under the influence of the person of Christ, it belonged at the top. Sabatier used this descriptive illustration in stating Schleiermacher's view:

"The water of the stream is always purer near the spring than in its later current. Thence comes the peculiar dignity and historic authority of the New Testament books. They remain the norm of Christian tradition because they are its oldest and most authentic documents."²

Naturally, as might be expected from the preceding, the Old Testament suffered badly at the hands of Schleiermacher.

"The Old Testament Scriptures owe their place in our Bible partly to the appeals the New Testament Scriptures make to them, partly to the historical connection of Christian worship with the Jewish synagogue; but the Old Testament Scriptures do not on that account share the normative dignity or the inspiration of the New."³

Schleiermacher went on to discuss the fact that Christ and the apostles appealed to and preached on the Old Testa-

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1. McGiffert: The Rise of Modern Religious Ideas, pp. 292-293
2. Sabatier: op. cit., p. 211
3. Schleiermacher: The Christian Faith, p. 608

ment. But, he concluded that it does not follow that one is to do the same. He added further that the ecclesiastical status of the Old Testament was due to its historical connections, and hence should naturally recede in importance; and, that furthermore, one does not need the earlier Old Testament writings since one has actual experience. The following quotation pretty well reveals Schleiermacher's attitude toward the Old Testament:

"Even the noblest psalms always contain something which Christian piety is unable to appropriate as a perfectly pure expression of itself, so that it is only after deluding ourselves by unconscious additions and subtractions that we can suppose we are able to gather a Christian doctrine out of the Prophets and the Psalms. On the other hand, a strong inclination to the use of Old Testament texts in expressing feeling is almost invariably accompanied by a legalistic style of thought or a slavish worship of letter."¹

When Schleiermacher finished with the Scriptures, the pendulum had certainly swung to the opposite extreme from the position postulated by the Reformers, and elaborated by the theologians of Orthodoxy. As already observed, Scripture had been shifted, in authority, from foundation to capstone.

b. The Establishment of a Unique Source of Authority

When Schleiermacher set out to build, positively, his system of theology, he faced a cynical, and scoffing

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1. Schleiermacher: The Christian Faith, p. 609

world in its attitude toward Christianity. Strong described the world view of religion which Schleiermacher faced as "a false intellectualism, a dry Orthodoxy, an unbelieving Rationalism, a frivolous aestheticism."¹

Schleiermacher's approach to this situation was disarming, and psychologically clever, even if fundamentally false.

Strong paraphrased Schleiermacher's approach thus:

"Do you doubt the miraculous stories of Scripture, and the inspiration of Scripture itself? But these are not essential to Christian faith -- the Kingdom of God is within you. You do not need to go back to the past or to believe in a book; Christ is present here and now in the Christian soul; he transforms character today; the light of kindness and compassion, of humility and hope and joy, that shines forth from the Christian's face, proceeds from Him who is the true and only light of the world."²

It may be said, at the outset, that Schleiermacher's conception of religious authority was entirely subjective. He made no attempt to ground the Christian faith in anything objective, either in history, or revelation. Consequently, when Schleiermacher defined the basis of faith, he postulated the statement:

"The piety which forms the basis of all ecclesiastical communions is, considered purely in itself, neither a Knowing nor a Doing, but a modification of Feeling or of immediate self-consciousness."³

In this quotation, one comes into touch with that word which recurs so often in Schleiermacher -- "Feeling".

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1. Strong: op. cit., p. 17
2. Ibid., p. 23
3. Schleiermacher: The Christian Faith, p. 5

To guard against misunderstanding of what that "Feeling" consists, he added the descriptive phrase: "Immediate self-consciousness". He guarded that expression very carefully -- "Immediate", guarding against an objective consciousness; "Self-consciousness", not including unconscious states.

Schleiermacher then used contrast to further elucidate his meaning. He brought "Knowing" and "Doing" into the discussion in order to set forth the fact that piety, or religious faith belongs not to "Knowing" or "Doing", but specifically to "Feeling". Should it belong to "Knowing", then

"the amount of such knowledge in a man must be the measure of his piety. ... Accordingly, ... the most perfect master of Christian Dogmatics would always be likewise the most pious Christian."¹

Again, piety cannot consist in "Doing" for

"experience teaches that not only the most admirable but also the most abominable, not only the most useful but also the most inane and meaningless things, are done as pious and out of piety."²

He finally concluded that

"Piety in its diverse expressions remains essentially a state of feeling. This state is subsequently caught up into the region of thinking, but only in so far as each religious man is at the same time inclined towards thinking and exercised therein; and only in the same way and according to the same measure does this inner piety emerge a living movement and representative action."³

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1. Schleiermacher: The Christian Faith, p. 19
2. Ibid., p. 10
3. Ibid., p. 11

Schleiermacher had now cleared the field in guarding against misconceptions of how this "Feeling" is not to be understood. The distinction is clear -- not "Knowing", not "Doing", but back of them and deeper than these -- "Feeling". There followed a further statement of what this "Feeling" is: "The consciousness of being absolutely dependent, or, which is the same thing, of being in relation with God."¹ This expression of "being absolutely dependent" recurred again and again in Schleiermacher. To him, this feeling of absolute dependence was the essence of religion. It expressed a possible relationship in all types of religions.

The general facts of what constitutes religion, and what is its basic source holds true likewise for the specifically Christian element. However, when Schleiermacher discussed Christianity, he defined it as follows:

"Christianity is a monotheistic faith, belonging to the teleological type of religion, and is essentially distinguished from other such faiths by the fact that in it everything is related to the redemption by Jesus of Nazareth."²

Schleiermacher had narrowed his consideration decidedly. Christianity, he said, is "monotheistic". Further than that, "in it everything is related to the redemption by Jesus of Nazareth."

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1. Schleiermacher: The Christian Faith, p. 12
2. Ibid., p. 52

But that which is to be noted now is how that Christian faith, which is thus "related to the redemption by Jesus of Nazareth," is mediated to us. What is its authoritative source or basis, if not Scripture? Schleiermacher answered characteristically:

"The immediate feeling of absolute dependence is presupposed and actually contained in every religious and Christian self-consciousness as the only way in which, in general, our own being and the infinite being of God can be one in self-consciousness."¹

It is to be remembered that Schleiermacher did not conceive of Jesus Christ as "God revealed in the flesh," but only as an ideal, sinless man, unique in His God-consciousness. At the same time, his concept of that in which the redemption consisted would be determined by his view of the person of Christ. Schleiermacher defined that redemption thus:

"In this corporate life which goes back to the influence of Jesus, redemption is effected by Him through the communication of His sinless perfection. ... The Redeemer assumes believers into the power of His God-consciousness, and this is His redemptive activity."²

The observation of Qualben is probably pertinent in reviewing Schleiermacher's stated concept of authority:

"He became, in fact, the founder of a new Rationalism which has largely dominated the religious thought of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries."³

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1. Schleiermacher: The Christian Faith, p. 131
2. Ibid., pp. 361 and 425
3. Qualben: A History of the Christian Church, p. 380

3. Critical Estimate

Schleiermacher did not judge Christianity as it was exemplified in the apostolic Church and as it was re-interpreted, re-established, and presented by Luther. Schleiermacher saw Christianity in the devitalized, extreme, uncertain, and corrupted form of his day. He saw Christianity as represented in Orthodoxy, and as the caricature that Rationalism had made of it. For that reason, much of what Schleiermacher said was justifiable and true. At the same time, it should be noted that Schleiermacher went to an opposite extreme, and sought a new basis on which to build a restored Christianity.

It has been noted that Schleiermacher was an extreme subjectivist. True, Luther was a subjectivist, too, in his emphasis on "Testimonium Spiritum Sancti." But there was a great difference between the subjectivism of the two men. Luther's subjectivism was anchored in the rock of God's revelation in Scripture. Schleiermacher's subjectivism was thorough-going, but the foundation of Scripture had no place in his thinking. His foundation was the completely subjective principle of "Feeling", or "immediate self-consciousness".

It can readily be seen what a dangerous principle Schleiermacher followed in contrast to Luther. There could be no uniformity in following Schleiermacher's subjective principle. Each individual, as a follower of

Schleiermacher, building on his own feeling of God-consciousness, would come to a differing conclusion. On that basis, chaos would necessarily result. On Luther's foundational principle, the results would be uniform unless men misused the authority of Scripture in their interpretations.

Another resulting contrast in which Schleiermacher suffers greatly by comparison with Luther may be seen in the estimate of the person and the work of Christ. Directed and dominated as he was by his subjective principle of authority, Schleiermacher presented a Christ to fit his system. For him, Christ was an ideal, sinless man, who was unique in His God-consciousness. Christ's redemptive work, for Schleiermacher, consisted in "assuming believers into His God-consciousness."¹

In contrast to such a conception of Christ, note Luther's matchless statement in revealing his concept of the person and the work of Christ:

"I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord; who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned man, secured and delivered me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver, but with his holy, precious blood, and with his innocent sufferings and death; in order that I might be his own, live under him in his kingdom,

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1. Schleiermacher: The Christian Faith, p. 425

and serve him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, even as he is risen from the dead, and lives and reigns forever. This is most certainly true."¹

In veering away from Luther's fundamental view of the authority of Scripture which had, it is true, been brought into disrepute by the Scholastic theologians of Orthodoxy, Schleiermacher went to an opposite, philosophical extreme which became a new type of Rationalism -- a Rationalism which was basically false. In seeking to evade Scylla, Schleiermacher became a victim of Charybdis.

E. THE DIALECTICAL THEOLOGIANS: BARTH AND BRUNNER

This investigation follows the swing of the pendulum of theological thought respecting the authority of Scripture to still another position. This time the position of the pendulum is well nigh impossible to determine. From some of its characteristics, it would seem that the position is somewhere between that of Schleiermacher, and Orthodoxy (which might be described as Liberalism, and Fundamentalism). Then again, the claim is made that it is engaged in a struggle against both the fronts of Liberalism, and Orthodoxy, and that therefore the pendulum swings to the opposite extreme of the points of view so far considered in this comparative study. Brunner

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1. Schaff: Creeds of Christendom, Vol. III, p. 79

made the plain statement that "Fundamentalism, and Orthodoxy in general are a petrification of Christianity; and Modernism and all doctrines of imminence are its dissolution."¹

Barth made the far-reaching claim that he and those with him belonged to a lineage "which runs back through Kierkegaard, to Luther and Calvin, and so to Paul and Jeremiah."² Pointedly, he stated that his lineage was not that of Martensen³ to Erasmus. He went further to declare that "this ancestral line does not include Schleiermacher."⁴ Possibly, it is the paradoxical characteristic of the movement that creates the dilemma of not knowing where to spot it on the swing of the pendulum.

The comparative study of this chapter leads one to consider the most significant development of Protestant theology for some time. This development finds its most significant expression in the writings of Karl Barth, and Emil Brunner. Of these two, Barth is recognized as the outstanding leader. About Barth, Mackintosh made the strong claim that "in him we have incontestably the greatest figure in Christian theology that has appeared

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1. Brunner: The Theology of Crisis, p. 14
2. Barth: The Word of God and the Word of Man, p. 195
3. Martensen was a Danish theologian who was a contemporary of Kierkegaard. He belonged to the school of Orthodoxy. Kierkegaard fought against him vigorously.
4. Barth: The Word of God and the Word of Man, p. 195

for decades."¹ Brunner, too, was a prophet of great influence, and power. It is these two representatives of the Dialectical School of theology that this study is to investigate in order to determine the position they held respecting the authority of Scripture, and in order to determine the relation of that position to Luther's view.

1. General Characteristics

It will be necessary to make some general observations on the Dialectics before proceeding to the specific subject under consideration. These general considerations are a necessary background for a proper understanding of the philosophy of Scriptural authority according to the Dialectics.

a. The Dialectical Method

The descriptive term used in designating the particular type of theology, of which Barth, and Brunner are the leaders, is the adjective "Dialectical". The Dialectical method of thinking, while extremely difficult to follow, and confusing for those not familiar with it, yet is a method which has been prevalent in philosophical circles since the time of Plato. Barth, in defence of

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1. Mackintosh: op. cit., p. 263

his use of the method, stated that it was used by Luther, and Calvin. It was used by the Scholastics. Kant, and Hegel used this method. Kierkegaard, from whom Barth has taken much of his emphasis, used the method, too.

Hoyle's quotation of Feuerbach's definition of the Dialectical method is illuminating: "True dialectic is no monologue of the solitary thinker with himself, it is a dialogue between an I and a Thou."¹

Pauch described it by saying:

"The dialectical method is one of description. It depicts man in his relation with God. It deals with human life as it is influenced by the crisis which develops from the realization of death, by the crisis which becomes apparent in the question as to the meaning of life. The dialectician does not speak of God in the affirmative way of the dogmatist, nor in the negative way of the mystic, nor in the rationalistic way of the modernist critic. Setting aside all these methods, he makes room for God Himself to speak."²

Or, let Brunner describe his own method:

"Dialectical theology is the mode of thinking which defends this paradoxical character, belonging to faith-knowledge, from the non-paradoxical speculation of reason, and vindicates it as against the other."³

The Dialectical method, then, is one which counters the "no" by its opposite "yes". The thesis is postulated and then the antithesis is set up against it. Following both of these, a synthesis results. Barth illustrated

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1. Hoyle: The Teaching of Karl Barth, p. 228
2. Pauck: Karl Barth, p. 90
3. Brunner: The Word and the World, p. 7

his Dialectical method as he spoke of election:

"Indeed, opposite responses are awakened simultaneously in a single individual. There is never so decisive a Yes that it does not harbor the possibility of the No: there is never so decisive a No that it is not liable to be toppled over into the Yes."¹

b. The Theology of Crisis

The Dialectical theologians surrounded their theology with an atmosphere charged with expectancy and climax. They expressed it as crisis. Brunner entitled one of his books, "The Theology of Crisis". Brunner voiced what this crisis is by saying:

"The disintegrating tendencies of our modern world have led us to a decisive point where the issue can be only one of two things: either new life or death. ... The substance of Christian theology, the content of Christian faith, is in a stage of complete decomposition."²

For the state of affairs, to which he referred, Brunner blamed both Orthodoxy, and Modernism. He accused Modernism of a "non-critical faith in reason."³ This type of reason opposed faith in Christian revelation. Instead of believing the absolute necessity of an historical self-manifestation of God to man, Modernists asserted that a movement from man to God is possible. Orthodoxy, on the other hand, according to Brunner, was

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1. Barth: The Word of God and the Word of Man, p. 59
2. Brunner: The Theology of Crisis, pp. 1-2
3. Ibid., p. 14

guilty "in its insistence on the rigidity and finality of its form, which, because of its lack of critical insight, it assumed to be essential to its existence."¹ So he concluded that "Modernism, and Fundamentalism are born of the same mother, that is, of the fear of sound critical thinking."²

All of this, Brunner believed, must be faced. These positions must be discovered to be wrong. Then there would result the possibility of leading those who would follow to the crisis decision, and "our fatal illness will turn into convalescence, into life itself."³ In that idea of decision may be found the drive of the Theology of Crisis. Such is the goal of that revelation which God gave of Himself.

2. The Bible

In order to arrive at the Dialectic's view of the authority of Scripture, it is necessary to understand their concept of the Scriptures. Again the paradoxical element comes clearly into view. In the Dialectic's concept of Scripture is one of the most evident, distinguishing characteristics of the Dialectical school of thought in contrast to those viewpoints that have already been

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1. Brunner: The Theology of Crisis, pp. 1-2
2. Ibid., p. 21
3. Ibid., p. 22

considered. Brunner can be quoted in order to indicate the evident difference:

"The distinction of a human from a divine side of Scripture is not only permissible ... but without it, faith in the Bible is impure and mixed with bibliolatry. It is just on its freedom to distinguish the human from the divine side (but never to separate them) that the peculiarity of Christian faith in the Bible depends, in contrast to all veneration of holy Scriptures in other religions."¹

The divisions of the consideration now to follow are plainly suggested by Barth's book: "The Word of God and the Word of Man". The order will be reversed in treatment.

a. The Word of Man

The fact is plainly postulated by the Dialectics that the Bible is a human book; that it is in a real sense the word of man. Barth so declared in what seems an extreme statement:

"The Bible is the literary monument of an ancient racial religion and of a Hellenistic cultus religion of the Near East. A human document like any other, it can lay no a priori dogmatic claim to special attention and consideration. This judgment, being announced by every tongue and believed in every territory, we may take for granted today. We need not continue to break through an open door."²

The Dialectics are very specific on the point that the Bible is a human record. They conceive it to represent man's attempt to express that revelation which God

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1. Brunner: The Philosophy of Religion, p. 155
2. Barth: The Word of God and the Word of Man, p. 60

has given of Himself to the Bible writers. "But the word of the prophets is not in itself the Word of God; it is merely a word concerning the Word of God."¹

It is to be noted that such a concept is not the same as the view of subjectivists, such as Schleiermacher, who hold that the Bible is a record of man's religious experiences. Furthermore, such a concept is not identical with the point of view which affirms the Bible to be a progressive statement of what man has discovered about God. In fact, the view is quite the opposite. The Barthian believes that God has revealed Himself, and that God has come to men in self-revelation. These men, then, have sought to state in their words the revelation which has come to them. The argument on this point is clearly stated in these words of Brunner:

"The Word of God in the Scriptures is as little to be identified with the words of Scriptures, as the Christ according to the flesh is to be identified with the Christ according to the spirit. The words of the Scriptures are human; that is, God makes use of human, and therefore frail and fallible words of men who are liable to err. But men and their words are the means through which God speaks to men and in men. Only through a serious misunderstanding will genuine faith find satisfaction in the theory of verbal inspiration of the Bible. In fact, this misrepresents what true faith conceives the Bible to be. He who identifies the letters and words of the Scriptures with the Word of God has never truly understood the Word of God; he does not know what constitutes revelation."²

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1. Brunner: The Theology of Crisis, p. 34
2. Ibid.

The Dialectical School placed a strong emphasis on the idea of error in Scripture. The extreme statements made would almost indicate the application of the Dialectical method to the limit in order to create a better setting for the use of the Yes to follow the No. Brunner stated the case:

"And so with the Bible as a whole. It is full of errors, contradictions, and misleading views of various circumstances relating to man, nature, and history. It contains many contradictions in its report of the life of Jesus; it is overgrown with legend, even in the New Testament."¹

Elsewhere Brunner also declared:

"This Gospel is witnessed to by men, who doubtless are entangled in human errors and encumbered with earthly imperfection. ... That is why in the Bible we find so many errors and inaccuracies, so much that is no better than what man has said and done in other places and in other times: the Bible is full of that frailty and fallibility which is characteristic of all that is human."²

The Dialectics are specific in indicating some of the major areas where error is evident or where presentations are unsatisfactory. As an illustration, note how Brunner discussed the relation of Scripture to science:

"Modern astro-physics, geography, and geology have once for all destroyed the view of the world characteristic of antiquity and the Bible."³ He spoke of the irreconcilable conflict between the world view of Copernicus,

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1. Brunner: The Philosophy of Religion, p. 155
2. Brunner: The Word and the World, p. 96
3. Brunner: The Philosophy of Religion, p. 171

Galileo, and Newton with that of the Bible, and added that the Bible view had to give way. He further asserted that biological evolution has superseded the Biblical account of creation. He summarized by saying: "The Biblical world-view, cosmological, and historical, has gone for good."¹ But this admitted result did not alarm Brunner. He found peace of mind by stating:

"If we hold fast to this truth that the Word of God is given to us only in human, questionable form, it is a matter of course that Biblical criticism and Bible-faith or Bible-authority go together. Biblical criticism is nothing but the act by which we recognize that the crib is not Christ, that the ground is not the gold, that God's Word is not only indirectly identical with the Bible word, although we have one only through the other."²

b. The Word of God

One comes now to a very complex part of the theology of the Dialectics. Having postulated the understandable statement that the Bible is the Word of man, how is it at the same time the Word of God? It would seem that there the paradoxical element is forcefully exhibited.

In his dogmatic work, "The Doctrine of the Word of God", Barth gave this definition of the Word of God: "The Word of God is primarily and originally the Word which God speaks by and to Himself in eternal hiddenness."³ It

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1. Brunner: The Word and the World, p. 98
2. Ibid., pp. 101-102
3. Barth: The Doctrine of the Word of God, p. 218

is plain to see that Barth was leading one way back of Scripture. He was, in his definition, even back of revelation. Barth further reasoned that God had spoken to Himself apart from man, or man's knowledge of what God had said. In its highest, remotest form, such was Barth's presentation of the original Word of God.

Then Barth moved from that concept of "eternal hiddenness" to state how the Word of God comes within the area of man's knowledge, and explained the relationship that comes to exist between that Word of God and the Word of man. That Word of God, he said, comes within the realm of creation, and is presented to man in three forms:

1". Through Preaching

Barth posited this inclusive statement:

"The presupposition which makes proclamation to be proclamation and therewith the Church to be the Church, is the Word of God. It attests itself in Holy Scripture in the word of the prophets and apostles, to whom it was originally and once for all uttered through God's revelation."¹

This preaching or proclamation, as it is also called, is a means by which God speaks through the speech of man. Through it, the Word of God comes within the realm of man's experience. Unless this characteristic is present, it is not real proclamation. It is to be remembered that

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1. Barth: The Doctrine of the Word of God, p. 98

Barth was speaking of a preaching or proclamation rooted in the witness of God in Scripture. Mackintosh drove this thought home in his interpretation of Barth's view:

"We cannot too carefully signalize this fact that in preaching, the Church does not draw her message from the hidden depths of her own consciousness; she speaks as the canonical Scriptures, witnessing to a unique event, guide her to speak."¹

Barth explained his position still further about God's Word in preaching through a series of four statements. These four statements he spoke of as four circles, narrowing from the outer to the innermost.

First: "Real proclamation means the Word of God preached, and the Word of God preached means, in this first and outmost circle, man's language about God on the basis of an indication of God Himself fundamentally transcending all human causation, and so devoid of all human basis, merely occurring as a fact and requiring to be acknowledged."²

Second: "Real proclamation thus means God's Word preached, and God's Word preached means, in this second circle, man's language about God on the basis of God's self-objectification which is neither present nor predictable nor relatable to any design, but is real solely in the freedom of His grace, in virtue of which from time to time He wills to be the object of this language, and is so according to His own good pleasure."³

Third: "Real proclamation, therefore, means the Word of God proclaimed, and the Word of God proclaimed now means, in this third inner circle, man's language about God which, according to God's own judgment which cannot be anticipated and never passes into our control, and in view of the object pro-

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1. Mackintosh: op. cit., p. 289
2. Barth: The Doctrine of the Word of God, p. 101
3. Ibid., pp. 102-103

claimed as well as of the subject proclaiming, is true language and therefore language to be listened to, language which rightly demands obedience."¹

Fourth: "The Word of God preached now means, in this fourth and innermost circle, man's language about God, in which and through which God Himself speaks about Himself."²

It would appear that a form of sovereign election takes place. As man preaches or proclaims a message based on Scripture, then as God chooses and when He chooses, His Word will gleam forth through the proclamation.

2". Through the Written Word

Barth built his case further by moving from the lesser to the greater. He had spoken of proclamation, grounded on Scripture, as a means through which God's Word is presented to man. Now he proceeded another step:

"Over against proclamation in the Church, there stands an entity extremely like it as a phenomenon, temporal like it, yet different from it, and in order superior to it. This entity is Holy Scripture."³

He, then, proceeded to state precisely his view of the Bible and how this Word of man can be the Word of God. So, in describing it, he said that it is

"Man's word with God's commission to us behind it, man's word to which God has given Himself as the object, man's word which is acknowledged and accepted

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1. Barth: The Doctrine of the Word of God, p. 104
2. Ibid., p. 106
3. Ibid., p. 113

by God as good, man's word in which God's own language to us is an event. This very fact of the language of God Himself becoming an event in the human word of the Bible is, however, God's business and not ours. That is what we mean when we call the Bible the Word of God."¹

"The Bible is God's Word so far as God lets it be His Word, so far as God speaks through it."²

It should be noted that Barth held a very high estimate of God's place and work in Scripture. God's absolute sovereignty is emphasized. When He, according to His sovereign will, chooses to manifest Himself, there the revelation of Himself, or manifestation of Himself causes the word of man or Scripture to become truly God's Word. The Bible, Barth believed, is not something evolved from the Church. On the contrary, God has spoken, and therefore one has the Bible. When, through that record, which has been projected by God, He speaks, then it becomes God's Word.

"The Bible therefore becomes God's Word in this event, and it is to its being in this becoming that the tiny word 'is' relates, in the statement that the Bible is God's Word. It does not become God's Word because we accord it faith, but, of course, because it becomes revelation for us."³

3". Through the Revealed Word

Progressing backward, and upward with Dialectical thought, one is brought to consider the third form by

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1. Barth: The Doctrine of the Word of God, p. 123
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., p. 124

which the Word which God spoke in "eternal hiddenness" has been brought within the knowledge and experience of man. That form is revelation. This revelation, according to Barth and Brunner, is not objectively identical with Scripture. It may become so when God makes it so. It becomes so

"whenever and wherever the word of the Bible really functions as a witness, and whenever and wherever by means of it we also are brought to see and hear what was seen and heard by those to whom God spoke of old."¹

But viewed objectively, revelation occurred prior to Scripture. "Deus dixit" is revelation in contrast to Scripture which is "Paulus dixit" or the "dixit" of some other writer. Revelation was the dynamic of God speaking, which occasioned the result of what man recorded in Scripture. Yet, when through Paul, or John, or Jeremiah, one hears God speaking again, then Scripture becomes for him the Word of God.

Barth finally gave a splendid summary of the whole consideration of the three forms by which God's Word has been made known to man:

"It is one and the same, whether we regard it as revelation, as the Bible, or as proclamation. There is no distinction of degree or value between these three forms. For so far as proclamation really rests upon recollection of the revelation attested in the Bible and is therefore the obedient repetition of the Biblical witness, it is no less the Word of God than the Bible. And so far as the Bible really at-

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1. Mackintosh: op. cit., p. 290

tests revelation, the Bible and proclamation are also the Word, the one Word of God within which there can be neither a more nor a less."¹

3. The Authority of Scripture according to the Dialectics

Having laid the foundation for the Dialectic's view of Scripture, it is now possible to build on that foundation, and state specifically what is the authority of Scripture according to the Dialectics.

a. It Testifies of Jesus Christ

Brunner declared that "the revelation of God is not a book or a doctrine, but a living person."² That person, of course, is Jesus Christ. The Scriptures testify of that revelation of God in Jesus Christ. "He, Christ, is the Word of God in the Bible."³ On this point, Brunner maintained that the Dialectical position squared with the position of Luther, for he quoted:

"To use the words of Luther: 'Christ is the King and Lord of Scripture.' He, perhaps the most congenial interpreter of Scripture the Church has ever had, explicitly asserted the subordination of the Scripture to Christ, in such well known utterances as these: 'The Scriptures are the crib, wherein Christ is laid; 'If our enemies uphold the Scriptures against Christ, we on the other hand if necessary uphold Christ against the Scriptures; the Scriptures are apostolic and canonical in so far as they teach Christ, and no further;' 'It is for Christ's sake that we believe in

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1. Barth: op. cit., p. 136
2. Brunner: The Word and the World, p. 84
3. Brunner: Our Faith, p. 9

the Scriptures, but it is not for the Scripture's sake that we believe in Christ'."1

"It is of this good Shepherd God that the Bible speaks. The voices of the prophets are the single voice of God, calling. Jesus Christ is God Himself coming."2

Inasmuch, then, as the Scriptures testify of Christ, they are authoritative, Brunner said that it is only through the Bible that one can know and understand Christ; and that this is true of the Old Testament as well as of the New Testament, for Jesus Christ is the meaning of the Old Testament.

Brunner became eloquent in declaring the thought, that it is in the Bible only that this unique testimony is given of Christ.

"The Bible is the soil from which all Christian faith grows. For if there were no Bible, we should know nothing of Jesus Christ, after whom we are called Christians. Christian faith is faith in Christ, and Christ meets us and speaks to us in the Bible. Christian faith is Bible faith."3

Barth, too, brought his discussion of "The Revealed Word of God" to a climax by declaring:

"This fulness of time, which is identical with Jesus Christ, this pure event in relation to which everything else is not yet an event or has ceased to be one, this 'it is finished!' this Deus dixit, to which there are no analogies, is the revelation attested in the Bible."4

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1. Brunner: Our Faith, p. 9

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid., p. 7

4. Barth: The Doctrine of the Word of God, p. 131

On the basis of this presentation of the Dialectics, that the Bible testifies of Christ, and that this testimony is found nowhere else authoritatively except in Scripture, it can readily be seen that the Dialectics held tenaciously to the idea that Scripture is authoritative in a unique way. That uniqueness is explainable by these words of Brunner: "For unpervverted Christian faith, Scripture is only revelation (and therefore authoritative) when conjoined with God's Spirit in the present."¹

b. God Speaks Through It to Man

Brunner was discussing the question: "Whence do I know that this word is truly God's Word and therefore truth?"²

He continued:

"The answer is: It is God Himself who tells you that the Gospel Word, which comes to you from outside is His Word. He testifies to the truth of the Gospel through the Holy Spirit. This the old theologians called the testimonium spiritus sancti internum."³

The thought is that the Word becomes authoritative because God speaks through it to man. Barth clinched this idea with this explanation:

"It is not the right human thoughts about God which form the content of the Bible, but the right divine thoughts about men. The Bible tells us not how we should talk with God but what He says to us."⁴

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1. Brunner: The Philosophy of Religion, p. 151
2. Brunner: The Word and the World, p. 62
3. Ibid., p. 63
4. Barth: The Word of God and the Word of Man, p. 42

Brunner illustrated the concept one is to have of the Bible with the analogy of a phonograph. One may buy a record of Caruso and play it. Caruso's voice is heard. His voice is really heard. The scratching of the needle, and other voices are not the master singer's voice but an unavoidable accompaniment. So with the Bible. It is human, as already emphasized. But in and through that book, the Master's voice may be heard. God speaks.

"It makes the real Master's voice audible, -- really His voice, His words, what He wants to say. But there are incidental noises accompanying, just because God speaks His Word through the voice of man. Paul, Peter, Isaiah, and Moses are such men. But through them God speaks His Word."¹

This idea is emphasized constantly in the Dialectics. God is subject, not object. "He is the self-speaking, not the thought-of or the looked-at, God."² Should it be otherwise, it can readily be seen, according to the Dialectics, that the authoritative quality would be on a low level comparatively, for then Scripture would be only as authoritative as man's thinking, or presentation is accurate. The Dialectics discount the accuracy or even the possibility of man reasoning what God is. But since it is God speaking, and God proclaiming; since God is subject, and not object, then Scripture becomes highly authoritative.

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1. Brunner: Our Faith, p. 10
2. Brunner: The Word and the World, p. 64

c. God Acts through It

Barth presented a discussion headed "The Strange New World within the Bible". He projected himself into a series of Biblical scenes centered in the lives of Abraham, Moses, Gideon, Samuel, and others. As he presented these dramatic pictures, he asked: "What lies behind these presentations that labors for expression? What is there within the Bible?"

The answer in substance was: God at work -- God acting.

"There is a spirit in the Bible that allows us to stop awhile and play among secondary things as is our wont -- but presently it begins to press us on; and however we may object that we are only weak, imperfect, and most average folk, it presses us on to the primary fact, whether we will or no. There is a river in the Bible that carries us away, once we have entrusted our destiny to it -- away from ourselves to the sea."¹

"In it (The Bible) the chief consideration is not the doings of man but the doings of God."²

Brunner was discussing the content of Scripture. He denied the modernist point of view that it is a record of man's upward surge toward God. He believed that this is not the case; that in fact, just the opposite is true; and that it is in reality God acting, and God coming to man.

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1. Barth: The Word of God and the Word of Man, p. 34
2. Ibid., p. 39

In other words, God acting is the revelation of Scripture. On that fact, the authority of Scripture reaches a high reality. There is an immeasurable, authoritative difference between God acting, and man striving. The one is potent in itself. The other is merely exemplary. The one is all that God is, and can do descending into the realm of one's need and experiences through the agency of Scripture. The other would constitute an expression of frail, and erring man striving toward God.

"It is not man's movement toward God but God's movement toward man. It is this movement of God toward man which the Bible calls revelation, reconciliation, redemption, salvation. Salvation here is the entrance into history of something absolutely new; yea, of God Himself. There is an activation of a divine a priori in the human mind."¹

4. Critical Estimate

A comparison of the authority of Scripture according to the Dialectics with the position held by Luther has resulted in two, strong, personal reactions. On the one hand, there is the conviction that the two points of view are surprisingly alike. On the other hand, a person is equally amazed at how far apart the points of view are. The two reactions offer a possible approach to a critical evaluation, and summary.

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1. Brunner: The Theology of Crisis, p. 13

One outstanding similarity, related to this investigation, is the high and exalted position accorded God in His relationship to man, and mediated through Scripture. However, it must be stated that the Dialectics emphasized God's absolute sovereignty, and arbitrary will, while Luther stressed God's grace, and loving mercy together with His righteousness and holiness. Both schools of thought stressed the definite self-revelation of God through Scripture in contrast to the liberal, rationalistic emphasis on Scripture which makes that Book but a record of man's striving to know God. The Bible, according to Luther, and the Dialectics, is God's Word to man. In Scripture, God speaks.

The Dialectics, and Luther agreed that Scripture is the means through which God works. Both agreed that Scripture is a means of grace.

There was comparative unity also in the insistence that God has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ, and that the great function of Scripture is to present Jesus Christ. Brunner quoted Luther at length to indicate the fact that, in the main, he was in agreement with Luther on this point.

There was found also a similar stress on the idea expressed in the words: "Testimonium Spiritus Sancti".

The Dialectics with Luther stressed the subjective element of God speaking to man. Both stressed that message which

which God speaks as being contained in, and mediated through Scripture.

The dissimilarities between the Dialectics, and Luther, however, are even more striking than the similarities. It is the differences which are especially to be evaluated.

For the Dialectics, Scriptural revelation is but one aspect of God's self-revelation. Dialectics stressed the first, and highest form of revelation: "That Word which God speaks by and to Himself in eternal hiddenness."¹ Dialectics taught that God has caused that revelation to be brought within the realm of man's experiences. Now comes the outstanding difference in the Dialectical conception of Scripture to that of Luther's. Scripture, according to the Dialectics, is man's record of God's self-revelation. It may be seen that the position is a mediating one. It is not that of the extreme Liberal or of the Rationalist. Neither is it that of Luther. According to the Dialectics, God had spoken first, and then man had made a human record of that revelation.

There follows, as a direct result, a contrasting view of the human element in Scripture. While Luther stressed the inclusion of the human, though Spirit-directed, characteristic of the authors in presenting God's revelation,

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1. Barth: The Doctrine of the Word of God, p. 218

yet he presented the view that the record as originally made was errorless and completely, in a unique sense, the Word of God. The Dialectics, on the other hand, stressed, to the extreme, the human element. Scripture is full of error, they said. One might well believe that he was reading the most radical Rationalistic point of view in these words:

"And so with the Bible as a whole. It is full of errors, contradictions, and misleading views of various circumstances relating to man, nature and history. It contains many contradictions in its report of the life of Jesus; it is overgrown with legend, even in the New Testament."¹

Such a viewpoint, as that of the Dialectics, shakes a person's confidence in Scripture as the meeting place with God. But for the deep sincerity of Barth and Brunner, and the depth of their critical ability, one would be tempted to believe that their emphasis on Scripture as the Word of man was adopted as an easy way out in order to meet the criticisms of Liberals and Rationalists. Undoubtedly, the position represented a recoil from the position of Orthodoxy.

It is self-evident that Barth, and Brunner went far beyond Luther into the question of revelation and its relation to Scripture. There had been little controversy about revelation in Luther's day. Consequently, Luther,

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1. Brunner: The Philosophy of Religion, p. 155

in a positive way, stated his frank convictions, without the background of later controversies. The Dialectics had the background of controversies that had raged in Orthodoxy, Rationalism, Liberal theology of which Schleiermacher was the forerunner, and in present day Orthodoxy or Fundamentalism. The Dialectics weighed, and sifted all of these varied viewpoints, then made a new approach to the whole question, and came through with their own unique, epoch-making theory.

In contrasting the two points of view, a personal reaction has been that there is a definiteness, a solidity, and security about Luther's view of Scriptural authority in contrast to that of the Dialectics. There seems to be, in the Dialectics, a hazy uncertainty that is almost terrifying when one reads: "The Bible is God's Word so far as God lets it be His Word, so far as God speaks through it."¹

Nevertheless, the Dialectical School is undoubtedly making an important contribution to the question of Scriptural authority. Their study, their critical insight, and their attempt to get back to original fundamentals may evolve a development which, added to Luther's generally stated, and basically sound contributions, will result in an important advance in man's understanding and exper-

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1. Barth: The Doctrine of the Word of God, p. 123

ience of Scriptural authority. Certainly, the Dialectical School is making people think, and diligently re-study the whole question of Scripture in all of its relationships.

F. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Chapter VI has presented a study which has given a broad view of the question of Scriptural authority. Using Luther's established view as the focal point, the study has gone out in several directions to examine contrasting, and typical viewpoints that have arisen since Luther's day. Such a study leads one to realize that the subject under consideration is a vital one, since it has been the source of continual controversy, and the object of diligent study by movements and theologians ever since Luther's day. New emphasis, and differing conclusions are continually being presented. The question involved is not a static one, but one which is going through a constantly changing process of evaluation.

The four comparisons which have been made with the original, and fundamental, "material" principle established by Luther have led to a study of probably the main comparative viewpoints that have evolved since Luther's day, and that continue to exist today. The value of such an investigation is that it gives perspective. One sees the subject -- The Authority of Scripture according to Martin Luther -- in the setting of dominant, rival views

that challenged Luther's concept for the allegiance of men. A contrast study deepens a person's appreciation for that particular philosophy of authority which is basically sound, and true.

In Orthodoxy and Rationalism, there was revealed a dominant stress on an intellectual approach to the problem of authority for Christian faith, and life. There was this difference in the two: Orthodoxy made its intellectual approach on the basis of rationalizing Scriptural revelation to the extreme; while Rationalism made its approach by an extreme reasoning process which ignored Scriptural revelation. While the conclusions at which they arrived were radically different, yet intellectual rationalization was the method used in determining the basic standard of what was to be considered authoritative.

Neither of these two movements offers an acceptable solution to the problem of authority for the Christian life. Rationalization is as unstable, and inconsistent in solving eternal truths concerning divine relationships as the human mind has shown itself to be in solving all of its problems. It is as variable as human nature is variable. The rationalizing method of the two movements is also decidedly lacking in warmth, love, power, and such characteristics which are real and essential in experiencing the "power of God unto salvation."¹ These two

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1. Romans 1:16

movements failed in their ultimate purpose of settling the problem of authority, because they lacked or ignored what Luther had experienced -- the vital, dynamic factor of Christian experience, rooted in the revealed Scripture.

It has been noted that Schleiermacher made an attempt to settle the problem of authority on a basis that is an opposite extreme of that exhibited in Orthodoxy, and Rationalism. It appeared as though he recoiled from the cold, and almost brutal rationalizing method of the two previously considered movements. Schleiermacher sought his authority in the completely subjective principle of "feeling". In other words, he completely rejected Luther's principle of Scriptural authority.

But, such a basis as Schleiermacher attempted to establish is as fundamentally unsound and unstable as the former. It, too, found authority in a variable, and uncertain human characteristic. In Schleiermacher's case, the result was a warm, loving, and vital type of faith in contrast to the characteristics of the two movements already considered. But basically, it varied in its real content. For each person, "feeling" would be different from what it would be for another. The main lacking element to have made the problem of religious authority what it should have been Schleiermacher was that of an acceptance of Scripture as God's objective revelation to

man. Without such an anchor, Schleiermacher's subjective principle could not but produce religious chaos. Such a result has been abundantly demonstrated in subsequent history in the Liberal movement which Schleiermacher has fathered.

Of the four considered movements, the Dialectical School offers the most acceptable solution to the problem of religious authority. This school has evaded the intellectual over-emphasis which was the weakness of Orthodoxy, and Rationalism. The movement has guarded against the equally weak over-emphasis on the emotional subjectivism of Schleiermacher. The Dialectics have evolved a principle of Scriptural authority which has evidenced a critical, and spiritual insight which has brought to the fore a renewed quest to determine just what is the authority of Scripture.

In part, the fault of the Dialectics lies, so the author believes, in the exaggerations which result from an extreme use of the Dialectical method. An illustration of this tendency to exaggerate has been outlined in the contrasting views of Scripture, on the one hand, as the word of man, and on the other hand, as the Word of God. It seems, too, that there is exhibited an over-anxiety, on the part of the Dialectics, to compromise the real authority of Scripture with current viewpoints of rationalistic science. At the same time, the Dialectics lack that

firm, convincing, consistent time-tested view of Scriptural authority which characterized Luther. The connection is too loose and uncertain between the written Scripture, and that revelation of God in Scripture which the Dialectics speak of as God speaking and God acting.

The Dialectics have gone farther than Luther, by a long way. However, it seems questionable whether they have added positively to the authority of Scripture, or whether they have superimposed views which in the long run will weaken the real authority which Scripture possesses.

A consideration of the first three movements studied in this chapter has indicated serious dangers that continually threaten evangelical Christianity. Such dangers must continually be guarded against in order that the foundation of Luther's principle of Scriptural authority will not be undermined. The fourth considered movement has elements that have contributed positively to the strength of Scriptural authority. At the same time, it has weaknesses which threaten or endanger a sound view of that authority. The fourth movement has characteristics which indicate that the subject of Scriptural authority will become a subject of much future study, and the object of a complete re-evaluation. However, this author believes that such a study, if it is not to land in the quagmire of many preceding attempts, will have to go out from the foundational principles which Luther enunciated.

CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Before the meaningful word *ΤΕΤΕΛΕΤΑΙ* can be appended to this thesis presentation, it becomes necessary to bring to a focus the various aspects of the investigation made, and to summarize the findings which have resulted. Such an attempt will characterize the procedure of this concluding chapter.

Ever since the fall, with its resultant disintegration of the personality of man, and its result that man is born in sin and dominated by its power, it has been absolutely essential that an authoritative voice must speak to man. If man is left to his own devices, the result is tragedy. If man becomes rebellious, and refuses to listen to the voice of God, the result is chaos. These facts are clearly evidenced in the historical record of the Old Testament. The New Testament adds its verification. A study of Romans 1:18-3:20 especially "drives home" what the result has been, and what it continues to be, unless a supreme authority speaks to, and assumes control of the life of man.

A person needs only to view the present world sit-

uation,¹ or to examine the record of American life² to

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1. Walter A. Maier, the famed radio speaker of The Lutheran Hour, who is said (according to the news-magazine, Time) to speak to the largest radio audience in the country, gives a graphic description of the world situation in one of his sermons: "Was it ever easier to demonstrate the failure of everything human than in this hour, when hundred millions of our fellow-men are diabolically trying to kill one another? Picture the horror of it -- the best brains in England, Germany, France (Many countries added since), inventing new means of slaughter by which masses of their fellow-men may be reduced to bleeding pulp, cities wiped out overnight, millions of non-combatants blockaded into scurvy, starvation, and death, ships torpedoed and thousands drowned in dark terror! Think of the youth in these countries, born only to die on the battle-fields of age-old hatred! As this nightmare rises before you, you need no further argument to convince yourself that the brutal rule of sin tyrannizes the world today, despite all culture, schools, libraries, in our much vaunted civilization."

Maier: Peace through Christ, p. 4

2. In describing certain aspects of life in our land, Maier writes in an equally disillusioning way: "Alfred Cahan has shown that, while the population of the United States increased by more than 200 per cent between 1867 and 1929, and while marriages grew by 400 per cent during this period, the divorce-rate in these sixty-two years had advanced 2000 per cent. Similarly it is no pleasant picture of the American home which Louis I. Dublin drew in an address before a New York audience in this discouraging comparison: 'In 1887 there were 5.5 divorces for every 100 marriages; in 1900 there were 7.9, and in 1930, 17.' And he finished the comparison by warning: 'Out of every 9 marriages now existing, 2 are likely to end in divorce.'"

Maier: For Better Not for Worse, p. 426

He goes on to add to his description in another book of sermons by saying:

"Instead we sit back arrogantly and pride ourselves on the American way of life. What is this American way? Is it seen in empty

learn that the human race needs to hear, and to heed an authoritative voice which will lead it in paths of righteousness and peace. That everyone has experienced the enslaving power of sin, and has failed by his own attempts to conquer sin, is proof positive that a person needs a higher authority than his own will and understanding to live victoriously.

God must become regnant in human life.

One of the two primary principles of the Reformation was that Scripture is that authoritative means by which God can become regnant in the lives of men. However, there has not been full agreement in Protestantism as to just what that specific authority is.

The purpose of this thesis has been to re-open that subject of Scripture and its authoritative qualities; and, through a critical, and analytical examination to arrive at a more positive conclusion as to what one's convictions should be concerning the question of the authority of Scripture. In order to arrive at a helpful answer to the

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churches and overflowing penitentiaries? Can it be found among our 70,000,000 unchurched, our 4,000,000 criminals, in our \$15,000,000,000 annual crime bill, or the masses of our destitute countrymen? Is our American way signalized by the 1,000,000 illegitimate births and abortions every year and the 1,000,000 divorces every three years? ... About 20,000 people in the United States also commit suicide every year. ... During the last year (1940) more than 71,000 American husbands deserted their wives."

Maier: Courage in Christ, pp. 148, 219, and 132

problem to be investigated, the approach was made from the important vantage point stated in the thesis subject: The Authority of Scripture according to Martin Luther. In so doing, as was stated in Chapter I, the investigation approached the important subject by viewing that man "who again set up the beacon light of 'Sola Scriptura' as authoritative," and "who was the moving and moulding genius in the Reformation movement."¹ In general, it may be stated, the investigation proceeded by employing four methods of approach: the historical, the psychological, the philosophical, and the comparative.

Following a chapter which introduced the subject, the investigation proceeded to the main body of the thesis. In Chapter II, an analyzation was made of the concept of Scriptural authority which was current at the time that Luther appeared on the scene of history. The investigation brought to light the facts that, in its official pronouncements, the Roman Catholic Church held to the position that Scripture and tradition were equal in authority; and, that the official decrees declared that God was the author in a similar way of both Scripture and tradition.

To the casual reader, it would appear that there was no difference in the two revelations in the matter of

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1. Ante.: Chapter I, p. 9

authority. To the world, in general, it would seem that the Roman Catholic Church conceived the two authorities to be equal, and the two to be in complete harmony with each other. Plausibility for such a view was added when the investigation revealed the fact that Scripture was available, and was used, too, in the pre-Reformation Roman Catholic Church. It would seem to the unwary reader that little complaint could be launched against the Roman Catholic view of Scriptural authority, especially when it was noted that Scripture was supreme in its authority with tradition, and that the two were declared to be in harmony with each other.

However, a further analyzation revealed the fact that, in reality, there was a decided distinction made between the authority of Scripture, and that of tradition. Several evidences of that fact were presented.

The Roman Catholic Church in Luther's day was shown to use a method of interpretation which was confusing, and often meaningless. That method was known as the fourfold method of interpretation. Such a method did not get at the real meaning of Scripture. Furthermore, it was clearly evidenced that such a method made it possible for the exegete to get just about any interpretation he wanted out of Scripture.

It was also set forth that when it came to a question of the proper interpretation of Scripture, then tradition

dictated what that interpretation was to be. We shall add a sentence from a longer quotation in the second chapter to clarify this fact:

"That is to be held as the true sense of Holy Scripture which our holy mother church hath held and holds, to whom it belongs to judge of the true sense and interpretation of the Holy Scriptures."¹

Evidence was presented that the Roman Church, in speaking of Scripture, referred to the Vulgate version. That version, in many instances, was not faithful in its translation of the original Hebrew, and Greek. From several of these mis-translations resulted some of the erroneous basic doctrines of the Roman Church.

It can clearly be seen that Scripture was approached as an arsenal from which to glean proof passages to establish what was stated and taught in tradition. Such a method offered wide latitude for a prejudicial procedure. It undermined the objective, and fair use of Scriptural authority. It made Scripture a handmaid of tradition.

Hence, it was only in theory that Scripture, and tradition were equals in authority. In practice, tradition ruled supreme. Scripture was used, and was forced to say "yes" to what tradition declared.

Such a view as has been outlined was Luther's heritage of authority for his Christian faith and life. For

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1. Waterworth: The Canons and Decrees of the Sacred and Oecumenical Council of Trent, p. 222

centuries, that concept of religious authority had been drilled into the consciousness of clergy, and laity alike.

In Luther's case, as was shown in Chapter III, this traditional concept of authority was strongly inculcated. His home training, his school education, and his monastery indoctrination were an effective trinity of factors in establishing him on the traditional basis of what was authoritative.

In Chapter III, the historical process was unfolded by which Luther gradually veered from the traditional Roman Catholic concept to one which declared that "Sola Scriptura" was, and could be the absolute authority for apostolic Christianity. It was stated, and verified that influences, and forces were at work to contribute to this end. Certain individuals, and current movements were daring to think, and to point out weaknesses, and inconsistencies that were inherent in the Roman Catholic view of authority.

However, the fact was stressed that the most potent factor in bringing about a change in Luther's convictions was that he discovered, and heard the authoritative voice of God in Scripture. That authoritative voice revealed to him the many contradictions of tradition with Scripture. The "Great Illumination" brought to him the vivid experience that Scripture is authoritative. As a result of that experience, Scripture became his continual re-

source. As he progressed in the knowledge of Scripture, Luther became increasingly critical of tradition. He lost confidence in Scholasticism. He saw the inconsistency of current practices, based on tradition, with what Scripture taught.

It was further shown how Luther gradually began to declare his doubts about the Roman Catholic authority, and to set forth his own growing convictions. Through his writings, and the resultant controversies, he came more and more into the clear. Finally, when backed up against the wall, and forced to make a final decision, Luther declared himself unequivocally committed to the conviction that Scripture alone was, and could be, authoritative in that which pertains to the Christian faith and life.

God brought Martin Luther into the world to lead a movement which had to come in order to keep the Christian Church from destroying itself. To make Luther what He wanted him to be, God caused many forces to play in his life in order to equip him properly for the great task which he was to perform. God directed Luther's life in such a way that certain psychological factors played a role in forming his convictions, and in equipping him to become a leader. Chapter IV of the thesis outlined, in part, the play of the psychological factors upon Luther's life, and the importance of such psychological factors

in contributing to the end for which Luther was raised up by God.

It was set forth that the factor of personality ideally fitted Luther for his work. His inherited physical, mental, moral, and religious characteristics moulded a unique personality. His acquired characteristics developed under the influence of disciplined exactness, pious practices, fear-filled, and awesome concepts of God, strongly-emphasized consciousness of sin, and the example of the monastic ideal. All of these influences served to unfold the potential personality which was necessary to lead the Reformation movement.

It was further stated that Luther's development continued under the influence of impressionable experiences. His monastery experiences, his disillusioning trip to Rome, the effect upon him of contacted personalities, his tower experience, and his continued experiential contact with Scripture were set forth as contributing, psychological factors in preparing him to be a fit vessel for God's use in purifying His Church, and in re-establishing the rule of the authority of Scripture in the lives of God's obedient people.

Finally, the psychological factor of expressional experiences was presented as having played a dominant part in preparing Luther for his important work. He expressed himself in speech, and on paper in his ninety-

seven theses, in the ninety-five theses, in the disputations, and in a series of letters, and treatises. Such expressions served to lead him to positive convictions that veered more and more toward the assurance that Scripture alone is authoritative. As this process unfolded, he shrank increasingly from the authoritative claims of tradition. The climactic, "either-or", expresionnal experience at the Diet of Worms completed the psychological process.

Having set forth the process by which Luther arrived at his fundamental, and basic view of "Sola Scriptura" being authoritative for apostolic and evangelical Christianity, the investigation of Chapter V presented an analytical discussion of Luther's view of the authority of Scripture. In short, the aim in Chapter V was to delineate Luther's philosophy of authority. Furthermore, the aim was to make a fresh approach to discover what Luther's philosophy was.

The investigation, therefore, led into Luther's writings to discover the details of his view of the authority of Scripture. It was found that Luther wrote much of a decidedly doctrinal nature in which he declared himself very clearly on many questions, and in which he was very specific on several aspects of his view of the authority of Scripture.

It was noted that Luther came to his views of the authority of Scripture because of dynamic life-experiences. He had lived in the middle of the stream of the Roman Catholic viewpoint. Because of resulting, dramatic experiences, he learned that the Roman Catholic view was without foundation in fact. It was shown that this Roman view was ineffective in Luther's personal life, and in the life of the Church. Luther had a splendid advantage in having known from experience, and from long study just what the Roman Catholic theory of authority was. He could let the whole system pass in review before his mind, and then could say: "My philosophy is not that." His sole authority, as has been positively shown, was Scripture alone.

When setting forth the details of Luther's philosophy of authority, it became necessary to clear away certain seeming contradictions, and often misunderstood, and misquoted statements. It was shown that Luther's view of the canon was not identical with the accepted canon of Protestantism today. In the light of that fact, any statements which Luther made about the books which he did not consider canonical can not be said to indicate his view of the canonical books.

In presenting the details of Luther's philosophy of authority, several of his expressed views about the idea of inspiration were given. Luther regarded the terms,

Scripture, and the Word of God, as synonymous. There is no hint in Luther of distinctions made concerning these terms. Luther also declared, again and again, that Scripture as originally revealed and written was inerrant. At the same time, he frankly recognized the personal characteristics of the various human authors.

Furthermore, Luther held to the idea that Scripture was literally inspired. A considerable portion of the chapter was devoted to delineating how Luther continually dealt with Scripture as a literally-inspired document. His method of interpretation was one that insisted continually on a literal understanding of stated, Biblical truths. That insistence was so definite that it resulted in a split in the Protestant forces. It was shown further that Luther followed the principle of using Scripture to interpret Scripture, and of using clear portions to give clarity to the more obscure parts.

The best indication of the high authority ascribed to Scripture by Luther was exemplified by the fact that Luther regarded the Word as a means of grace. That quality of being a means of grace, he ascribed both to the written, and to the sacramental Word. The Word, in that twofold sense, represented for him the way through which the Spirit of God worked in the heart of man.

In concluding the presentation of Chapter V, several of Luther's beliefs concerning Scripture were given. He believed that Scripture was an absolutely indispensable source of authority. He believed that "Sola Scriptura" was the one and only way by which God spoke to man -- by which man could know the decreed, and revealed will of God. He believed that Scripture was a singularly potent, and authoritative source, and that God at work could be experienced through the agency of Scripture.

Several important considerations led to the inclusion in this research of the comparative approach of Chapter VI. The comparative approach offered an excellent method of evaluating points of view. Both similarities and differences served to place in sharp relief the distinguishing characteristics of that concept which had been made the standard of comparison.

The comparative method also served the purpose of discovering the verdicts which were passed upon the different viewpoints by subsequent history. These criticisms were shown to be so strong in some cases that a widely differing or even a diametrically opposing point of view resulted. When these differing or opposing views broke down and showed glaring weaknesses, the originally established principle was the more firmly grounded. Then, too, the comparative method served admirably to bring up

to date a study which otherwise might have seemed to center primarily in the Reformation era. The standard was further viewed in its relationship to more recent, and even current, comparative points of view on the same question. On such a basis as outlined, the approach of Chapter VI yielded important results for the object of this research project.

In comparing the Authority of Scripture according to Martin Luther with that authority as formulated by Orthodoxy, it became apparent that Orthodoxy lost some of Luther's chief values, and then super-imposed additions that were not found in Luther. Orthodoxy lost the spontaneous, vital, dynamic, experience-impelled, withal objectively-grounded view of the authority of Scripture that characterized Luther. Luther came to his convictions through the fire of inward struggles, and external conflict; through disillusionment, and travail; through exhaustive study; and, through a great, spiritual experience with his God which was rooted in Scripture as the agency of the Holy Spirit in making Christ real to him. Such a background offered a decided contrast to the cold, objective, and intellectual approach, and view which so often characterized the adherents of Orthodoxy. Lacking the depth of Luther's experiences, the theologians of Orthodoxy stereotyped their views in forms which included more than Luther had ever discovered, or intended. Today

there is far more interest and concern shown in discovering Luther's view than that of Orthodoxy. The verdict of history, not to speak of Scripture itself, is for Luther and against Orthodoxy. Even this brief study has so persuaded the writer, too.

Rationalism came into being, in part, as a judgment upon Orthodoxy. That fact was set forth in the investigation of Rationalism. Rationalism was shown to be a revolutionary movement which was out to clear the deck of everything except that which was decreed to be acceptable by unregenerate human reason. Being a new movement, Rationalism was unbalanced and uncertain even about its own basic principles. It can readily be seen why Rationalism showed no mercy to the established view of the authority of Scripture.

The ebb and the flow of the tide of human reactions were again demonstrated in the comparison which examined the basic viewpoints of Schleiermacher and Luther. It was shown that Schleiermacher came to the fore with a disarming contrast view to both Orthodoxy, and Rationalism. Reacting from the intellectual approach of the preceding movements which exalted reason as the determining criterion, Schleiermacher substituted the subjective norm of "Feeling" or "Immediate Self-consciousness". Again, instability and uncertainty served to bewilder men, and to

cast them adrift from the solid rock of the authoritative Scriptures on which Luther had established his view. Schleiermacher's and Luther's viewpoints of authority were far removed from each other. Schleiermacher's principles were found wanting as is the case with the modern movement which continues in the same lineage.

During the time which has elapsed since the rise of Schleiermacher, the three considered movements have contended with one another for supremacy. There have been numerous and strong adherents of all three. Many attempts have been made to find a more satisfactory solution to the problem of religious authority. Of late, a significant development has appeared in that which is known as the Dialectical School. This School is exerting an influence which has been felt, and which is still in the ascendancy.

It was shown that the Dialectics have many favorable characteristics to commend them. The exaltation of the place of the person, and the work of God; the high place given to the revelation of God to man and mediated through Scripture; the insistence that God has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ; and, the stress on the subjective factor of the "Testimonium Spiritus Sancti" indicate a strong kinship of the Dialectics with the view of Luther.

Equally noticeable was the fact which was set forth that there are dissimilarities and new factors which place

the Dialectical School in a different relation to the authority of Scripture from that to be seen in Luther. The complicated, and disconcerting view of the relationship between the self-revelation of God, and the record of Scripture was shown to be one of them.

The final personal conclusion resulted that Luther's basic though broadly stated view of the authority of Scripture remains today the strongest, the soundest, and the most acceptable view. It was shown that it contains a synthesis of characteristics which commends itself above the comparative views considered.

The investigation has now run its course. The research led into several fields. It examined and analyzed a strong and historic system which had failed to meet the needs and questionings of a seeking and hungry soul. It sought to portray the physical, mental, and spiritual struggles of a man who sought release from the domination of a perverted, religious system. It showed a man grappling with a great life-principle, and with personal problems. It set forth the final conclusions of one of the world's most outstanding Christian personalities. It emphasized the details of that concept of Scriptural authority which Luther established as basic for Christian faith and life. It examined contrasting views, and out-

lined developments, and change which differed from the originally postulated view of the main character considered.

Luther gained an immortal place among the "heroes of the faith", because he was used of God to restore, and by restoring, to revitalize the authoritative source of Christianity -- Scripture or the Word of God. Luther merited the eternal gratitude of all of Protestantism because he most directly, under God, was the creative pioneer in restoring, and exalting Scripture to its rightful, and supreme place of authority. He dared to expose, and destroy, to a great extent, the existing, crumbling foundations of perverted authority and then to build positively on that principle of Scriptural authority which is sound because it is true. Others have added details that have contributed to a more complete understanding, and a greater appreciation of what that authority is. But it was he, Luther, who first outlined the sound, vital, and essential concept which is true of the authority of Scripture.

The future presents an open door of opportunity for a re-study, and a still more complete statement of the reality of the authority of Scripture. The last word has not yet been said. The subject is one that must always remain alive for the Christian Church. Since Scripture

constitutes the living, revealed Word of God, it will continue to divulge more and more of its priceless treasure. In that same process, Scripture will continue to reveal still more of its inherent, authoritative qualities.

Barton has written a poem which has been set to music. This poem embodies in it a simple but effective statement concerning the authority of Scripture. It voices a prayer, too, which expresses the desire that surges in every heart which has experienced the grace of God through the means of the eternal Word. The poem could well have been written by Luther for it emphasizes his concept of the authority of Scripture.

Lamp of our feet, whereby we trace
Our path, when wont to stray,
Stream from the fount of heavenly grace,
Brook by the traveler's way;

Bread of our souls, whereon we feed,
True manna from on high;
Our guide and chart, wherein we read
Of realms beyond the sky;

Pillar of fire through watches dark,
Or radiant cloud by day;
When waves would 'whelm our tossing bark,
Our anchor and our stay:

Word of the ever-living God,
Will of His glorious Son;
Without Thee how could earth be trod,
Or heaven itself be won?

Lord, grant us all aright to learn
The wisdom it imparts;
And to its heavenly teaching turn,
With simple, childlike hearts.¹

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1. The Lutheran Hymnary, pp. 138-139

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