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## EDITORIAL COMMENTS

It is the time of the year when the Protestant Churches commemorate the Reformation of the 16th Century. Whether the Churches of the Reformation have the right to celebrate the work of God when all that the Reformation stands for is being forsaken is another question. There is, without question, an intellectual and spiritual dishonesty present in the Churches which, while turning their backs on the truths of the Reformation, nevertheless profess to commemorate this event and profess to do this as faithful children of Calvin.

This issue of the Journal presents to our readers two articles which deal with the Reformation. The first article discusses the relation between the Lutheran and Calvinistic Reformation and does so in the hopes that it will aid in seeing what is wrong with Calvin's spiritual children and why Reformation Churches are so profoundly troubled.

Prof. H.C. Hoeksema has reviewed Dr. Berkhouwer's two volumes on The Holy Scriptures in past issues. In this issue of the Journal he concentrates his attention on a positive definition of the truth of Scripture as that truth is defined by Scripture itself. This too is important in light of Reformation Day and in light of current views in the Reformed Churches with respect to the doctrine of Scripture. The Reformation was, above all else, a return to God's Word. Today's Church is beset by countless troubles because it turns away again from the Word of God which held the Reformers bound in the chains of its authority.

If these articles result in a re-echo of those solemn words of Luther spoken at Worms: "I am bound by the Scriptures. . .and my conscience is captive to the Word of God" this issue will not have been in vain.

## THE RELATION BETWEEN THE LUTHERAN AND CALVIN REFORMATION

Prof. H. Hanko

When the Protestant Churches celebrate the Reformation of the 16th Century on October 31 they commemorate especially the anniversary of that one event which launched the Reformation: Luther's act of nailing on the door of the church at Wittenberg, the university's bulletin board, the 95 theses which he drew up against the sale of indulgences in the territory of Frederick the Wise. While this event indeed launched the Reformation, it was, in itself, not intended to be an act of reformation. There were countless abuses in the Romish Church of the 16th and preceding centuries; one among many was the evil of indulgences. Luther was not alone in protesting the sale of indulgences as he was not alone in protesting the many evils which were present in the Romish Church. But in the purpose of God the time for Reformation had come. The time had come for the restoration of the truth long obscured by Rome's apostasy. The time had come for a return to the true institute of the Church. Events rushed on swiftly seemingly beyond the control of the monk of Wittenberg--though he remained the central figure. Events begun with the thudding of the hammer on the chapel door could no longer be stopped. The Reformation was begun and it remains with us today.

But as important as this event is which we commemorate on Reformation Day, a large segment of the Protestant Churches trace their spiritual ancestry back, not to Wittenberg and Luther, but to Geneva and Calvin. The Lutheran Churches remain a branch of the Reformation distinct from the Calvinistic and Reformed Churches. Nor have the two yet come together. The differences are too great. The chasm is too deep;

Does all this mean that the Lutheran Reformation was a failure as far as the Calvinistic Churches of the world are concerned? Is it a hypocrisy to commemorate the Lutheran Reformation when key doctrines of Luther and of the Lutheran Churches are specifically repudiated by a large branch of Reformation Churches? Should the Churches who go under the name of Calvinistic celebrate some other event more closely connected with the work of Calvin? Such an event as the publication of the "Institutes of the Christian Religion" for example? or

the arrival of Calvin in Geneva? Is it necessary, if we are to be honest, to repudiate the Lutheran Reformation and speak of it as some kind of pre-Reformation spasm which was perhaps relatively worthwhile but which did not contribute essentially to the essence of the Reformation as wrought by the Reformer of Geneva?

These questions assume a position quite different from the position of much of modern ecumenism. The thought of ecumenism which controls much of the church life today would not admit the validity of the questions and would refuse to answer them on the grounds that they are based on false assumptions. The position which today leads many churches into one ecclesiastical structure and which is intent on bringing Protestant Churches back into the bosom of mother Rome is a position which relativizes doctrine. Perhaps ecumenical leaders would admit that Rome was in need of reform and that the 16th. Century Reformation was necessary to force Rome to reform. But they would hasten to add that the purpose of the Reformation has now been nearly accomplished. Rome has reformed or is in the process of reforming. The Reformation has attained its purpose. The schism of the Reformation ought to be healed. And, with respect to the questions of the divisions between various branches of Protestantism in general and between the Lutheran branch and the Calvinistic branch in particular, the answer of today's ecumenical leaders is that these differences are really unessential. At least, they are not of such import that they offer sufficient ground to indulge in the luxury of splitting the body of Christ. The differences ought to be forgotten. After all, Lutheranism and Calvinism are but two of many ways of looking at Scripture. We should, in the interests of unity, be able to see the value of each other's viewpoints and live together in peace and harmony.

The assumption behind the questions appearing above is that the differences are important. The breach between Rome and Protestantism which the Reformation defined remains. The differences between the various branches of the Reformation are differences with respect to essentials of Scripture. They

cannot be ignored. Even in the interests of unity they cannot be glossed over.

An essential answer to the questions asked above is an assertion of the truth that God is the author of the Reformation. The Reformation is not a work of man. It is not the work of Luther. It is not the work of Calvin. To read the history of the Reformation and to study the works of those men who took a prominent part in it is to be forced again and again to the conclusion that events were out of the hands of these men whose names have lived on in history. They were instruments. They were used by God to accomplish the work of reform. But God moved them. God controlled events. God worked what no man could possibly work. God brought about Reformation--a Reformation needed to preserve the Church from the apostasy of Rome.

But to assert that God is the author of the whole Reformation is to assert also that there was a proper place for Luther in the Reformation and a proper place for Calvin. Both, although they themselves could not attain unity in their own life times, and although the two branches of the Reformation which followed from them have not been able to join hands up until the present, were needed for the work that had to be done. Both had a place. Luther could not have done what Calvin did. Calvin could not have done what Luther did. The Reformation would not have happened without both of them.

To understand this it is necessary to go back briefly to the history of the Church beginning with Augustine who lived from 354 to 430. At the time of Augustine a man arose in the Church by the name of Pelagius who taught in Rome doctrines contrary to Scripture. Without going into detail as to his views, it is sufficient for our purposes to note that he taught that a man was free at birth from original guilt and original pollution; that, in other words, man came into the world sinless. If a man sinned in the course of his life, he did so because he learned from others the bad habit of sin.. Sin was a habit. Sin is not rooted in a depraved nature; sin is only in the deed. Sin is not first of all a corruption inherited

which infects the whole nature. Only an act can be sinful. The view which Pelagius held of salvation was adjusted to fit this view of sin. Salvation was the work of man himself. It might be, on occasion, that a man needed the assistance of divine grace to help him overcome deeply rooted habits even as a man may need the help of a doctor to overcome the habit of alcoholism. But for the most part, since to do the will of God required only the breaking of a habit, man was capable of doing this himself if only he had the will to do it. Through strenuous and daily effort, man could do God's will and thus be saved.

It is interesting to note that, under the influence of Augustine, this view was condemned by the Church of that time. Augustine strongly opposed it on the basis of Scripture, and, in so doing, developed the doctrines of original sin, predestination and sovereign grace. The Council of Ephesus in 431 condemned Pelagianism.

Yet, during the life time of Augustine the error of what became known as Semi-pelagianism raised its ugly head. Especially such men as Cassianus and Faustus developed these views. These men attempted to take a position, so to speak, half-way between outright Pelagianism and strict Augustinianism. In brief, the view of Semi-pelagianism was that salvation was a cooperative work of God and man with man generally taking the initiative. Man, through the fall, was not dead in sin, only seriously sick. Grace, though infused, can be resisted and only supplements man's own power. Predestination is based on foreseen faith and the cross of Christ is of universal value.

This position was approved by two regional synods: Arles in 472 and Lyons in 475. On a church-wide level, however, the issue was not resolved until the Synod of Orange in 529. While also the Synod of Orange was a local Synod, the decisions of it were approved by Pope Boniface II and were generally accepted throughout the Western branch of Christendom.

The Synod of Orange was in reality a victory for Semi-pelagianism. Although Semi-pelagianism was condemned and Augustinianism approved, the Synod made compromise decisions. And, as is always the case with questions of the truth, a



compromise is a victory for the lie. Specifically, Orange spoke of sin as injuring man in both body and soul and bringing death to all men. It spoke further of grace as being the origin of all good even of prayers. It described grace as being the effectual power of the disposition towards faith, of all good as being a gift of God, of the need which all saints have for God's help. It insisted that God loves only His own gift in us and spoke of the will as being restored only through baptism. It accepted the position that unmerited grace precedes meritorious works and that even unfallen man needed such grace.

But the weakness of this position is obvious. For one thing, the Synod condemned (although such a view had never been a part of the Augustinian system) predestination to sin. The Synod condemned a caricature of Augustine's views created by his enemies. The Synod never mentioned the doctrines of irresistible grace and of sovereign predestination. In fact, the impression was left that the Synod carefully and deliberately avoided mentioning these key points in the theology of Augustine. The Synod left room for the idea of sin as being only a sickness, spoke of grace as being the source of a disposition to faith, left room for the meritorious value of good works, and failed to condemn the Pelagian conception of free will.

Semi-pelagianism therefore became official Romish doctrine. While we cannot trace this in any kind of detail here, it is not difficult to show that the entire erroneous structure of Roman Catholic sacerdotalism especially as it emphasized the meritorious character of good works as necessary to justification was a direct outgrowth of Semi-pelagianism. Many evils in the Church arose specifically from this erroneous position. The whole system of penance, of masses for the dead, of works of supererogation, of indulgences--all these and others were developed within the framework of fundamental doctrinal apostasy which began with Orange.

What is of importance to us is to notice that the evils in the Church against which so many raised their voices were evils which had a doctrinal origin. This is, in part, why many efforts towards reform which preceded the Reformation were

doomed from the outset to failure. The doctrine of the Church (with the exception of some of the pre-Reformers) was never called into question.<sup>1</sup> But the evils which sapped the spiritual life of the Church could not be rooted out without doctrinal renewal. Reform movements which tried reformation without a return to the truth of Scripture failed.

But not only were the evils in the Church the direct result of doctrinal error in a general way; but specifically, the evils in the Church were rooted in errors of soteriology. At bottom the errors of Rome were errors which dealt with the truth concerning the work of salvation. While the Romish Church in the centuries preceding the Reformation stood firmly in the tradition of Nicea and Chalcedon, this same Church strayed grievously from the doctrines of sovereign grace and the unmerited character of works.

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It was into this Church with these corruptions that Martin Luther was born. Born to God-fearing parents who were pious and faithful sons of the Church, Luther was brought up in the tradition of the Romish faith as it had developed up until his day. Yet Luther was brought to face all these important questions of soteriology. He was brought to face them not first of all in the arena of theological debate, but he was forced to face them in the depths of his own soul. The church historian Philip Schaff writes:

In order to understand the genius and history of the German Reformation we must trace its origin in the personal experience of the monk who shook the world from his lonely study in Wittenberg, and made pope and emperor tremble at the power of his word.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. e.g., the Council of Constance which met specifically to initiate reform in the Church but which burnt Hus at the stake for doctrinal deviation.

<sup>2</sup>History of the Christian Church, Philip Schaff; Eerdmans, 1955; VII, 105.

God began the work of reformation in Luther's soul. This very matter of salvation, not as an abstract theological truth, but as a question of the personal assurance of salvation, was for many years the main problem which Luther faced. He could arrive at no peace in his heart, no assurance of the love and favor of God. His days were as the darkness of night and his thoughts were filled with fear and turmoil as he contemplated the just severity of God against sin and strove to bring his storm-tossed soul into the quiet haven of God's peace.

Yet as true as all this was, we must not suppose that the whole work of the Reformation was the result of a spiritual crisis in Luther. It was not, as some have asserted, a movement launched because some monk from the Augustinian Order thought he had received a divine insight into a problem which particularly bothered him. It was not the imposition of a highly gifted man of a subjective experience upon a band of followers. This is the gist of the position taken by the Roman Catholic historian Philip Hughes. He writes in his book, "A Popular History of the Reformation":

He was now on the verge of his thirtieth year, and next year, taking up his work as professor in the faculty of theology in the university, he would, all unconsciously, begin the movement we have learned to call the Reformation.

What ~~that~~ movement will chiefly be, in Luther's intention, is not a crusade to reform the moral lives of Catholics, clerics as well as layfolk, but rather a crusade against Catholicism itself, observant, conscientious, dutiful Catholicism, now considered to be a corruption of the Gospel of Christ. And on his own showing, according to his own account, the origins of his stupendous conviction lie in his own personal experience of the ineffectiveness and the mischievousness of Catholicism as a solution offered him for his spiritual troubles, and in his own divinely guided discovery of the true mean-

ing of the religion of Christ. It is Luther, and not his opponents, who brings into court, as an important consideration, the experiences, the spiritual crises which he experienced in his life as a monk.<sup>3</sup>

This is a misinterpretation of the life of Luther and of his writings. It was not a mere subjective experience which launched the Reformation. It must be remembered, on the one hand, that God wrought the Reformation in Luther's soul by creating this intense struggle which consumed so much of his time in his earlier years. But, on the other hand, God led him through this deep and profound struggle in order to lead Luther away from the errors of the Church of which he was a part and to bring him at last to the truth of Scripture.

Quite naturally, and upon the advice of others, Luther sought the cure for his spiritual maladies in the prescriptions of the Church. He tried them all. He entered the Augustinian convent in Erfurt and sought peace in a life of monkish self-denial. He committed himself body and soul to the Church and placed his salvation entirely in the hands of those who had promised to bring him to heaven. He walked the way of self-denial and imposed on himself all the rigorous exercises which his order required. He was faithful in penance and confession in the hopes that this would solve his problems. He himself tells us:

I was indeed a pious monk and kept the rules of my order so strictly that I can say: If ever a monk gained heaven through monkery, it should have been I. All my monastic brethren who knew me will testify to this. I would have martyred myself to death with fasting, praying, reading, and other good works had I remained a monk much longer.<sup>4</sup>

As a monk I led an irreproachable life. Nevertheless I felt that I was a sinner before God.

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<sup>3</sup>A Popular History of the Reformation, Philip Hughes; Image Books Edition, 1960, pp. 93 & 94

<sup>4</sup>Quoted from The Reformation, Hans J. Hildebrand; Harper & Row, 1964; p. 24

My conscience was restless, and I could not depend on God being propitiated by my satisfactions. Not only did I not love, but I actually hated the righteous God who punishes sinners. . . . Thus a furious battle raged within my perplexed conscience, but meanwhile I was knocking at the door of this particular Pauline passage, earnestly seeking to know the mind of the great Apostle.<sup>5</sup>

But it was all to no avail. Every good work which the Church prescribed he undertook to do. Every method laid down by the clergy as the sure way to God was tried again and again. But the ways in which the Church led him went deeper into darkness and farther from the light of God's love and mercy. He found no peace.

It was from the Scriptures that he finally learned the truth. This knowledge did not come in a flash of insight, but only by way of long and arduous study. In 1508 Luther was appointed professor in the University of Wittenberg established but a few years before by Frederick the Wise. In 1512 he began to lecture in theology and studied especially the Psalms and the epistles of Paul. It was the phrase "the righteousness of God" which constantly attracted his attention. He had always thought that this phrase (found especially in Rom. 1:17 and 3:22) referred to God's essential righteousness and His consequent hatred of sin.

Meanwhile, that same year I had again turned to the exposition of the Psalter, confident that after academic treatment of the Epistles of St. Paul to the Romans and Galatians and the Epistle of the Hebrews I was better trained. Certainly I had been possessed by an unusually ardent desire to understand Paul in his Epistle to the Romans. Nevertheless, in spite of the ardour of my heart I was hindered by the unique word in the first chapter: "The righteousness of God is revealed in it." I hated that word "righteousness of

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 27.

God", because in accordance with the usage and custom of the doctors I had been taught to understand it philosophically as meaning, as they put it, the formal or active righteousness according to which God is righteous and punishes sinners and the unjust.<sup>6</sup>

But gradually Luther came to see that the phrase "The righteousness of God" referred to imputed righteousness which God gives to His people on the basis of the cross. He describes this insight as follows:

At last, by the mercy of God, meditating day and night, I gave heed to the context of the words, namely, "in it the righteousness of God is revealed, as it is written, He who through faith is righteous shall live." There I began to understand that the righteousness of God is that by which the righteous lives by a gift of God, namely by faith. And this is the meaning: the righteousness of God is revealed by the gospel, namely, the passive righteousness with which a merciful God justifies us by faith, as it is written, "He who through faith is righteous shall live." Here I felt that I was altogether born again and had entered paradise itself through open gates. There a totally other face of the entire Scripture showed itself to me. Thereupon I ran through the Scriptures from memory. I also found in other terms an analogy, as, the work of God, that is, what God does in us, the power of God, with which He makes us strong, the wisdom of God, with which He makes us wise, the strength of God, the salvation of God, the glory of God.

And I extolled my sweetest word with a love as great as the hatred with which I hated the word "righteousness of God". Thus that place in Paul was for me truly the gate to paradise. Later I

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

read Augustine's "The Spirit and the Letter", where contrary to hope I found that he, too, interpreted God's righteousness in a similar way, as the righteousness with which God clothes us when He justifies us. Although this was heretofore said imperfectly and he did not explain all things concerning imputation clearly, it nevertheless was pleasing that God's righteousness with which we are justified was taught. Armed more fully with these thoughts, I began a second time to interpret the Psalter.<sup>7</sup>

Luther later said, quoted in his "Table Talk":

The words "righteous" and "righteousness" of God struck my conscience like lightning. When I heard them I was exceedingly terrified. If God is righteous (I thought), He must punish. But when by God's grace I pondered in the tower and heated room of this building, over the words, "He who through faith is righteous shall live" (Rom. 1:17) and "the righteousness of God" (Rom. 3:21), I soon came to the conclusion that if we, as righteous men, ought to live from faith and if the righteousness of God should contribute to the salvation of all who believe, then salvation will not be our merit but God's mercy. My spirit was thereby cheered. For it is by the righteousness of God that we are justified and saved through Christ. These words (which had before terrified me) now became more pleasing to me. The Holy Spirit unveiled the Scriptures for me in this tower.<sup>8</sup>

And so, after a long and difficult struggle, Luther saw the glorious truth of Scripture that by the works of the law is no man justified before God, for the just shall live by faith.

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<sup>7</sup>Quoted from Captive to the Word, A Skevington Wood; Eerdmans, 1969; pp. 51, 52.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 53.

God led the troubled monk away from himself, away from his monk's cell, away from penance and indulgences, away from all works, away from the Church itself, to the foot of the cross of Calvary. The cross is the rock of justification. And it is by faith alone that the righteousness of God manifested in the cross becomes the portion of God's people.

Thus the fundamental principle of Luther's life and of the whole Lutheran Reformation was the truth of justification by faith. There is no student of the Reformation who denies this. Schaff writes:

Henceforth the doctrine of justification by faith alone was for him to the end of life the sum and substance of the gospel, the heart of theology, the central truth of Christianity, the article of the standing or falling Church.<sup>9</sup>

Luther himself said:

One article, the only solid rock, rules in my heart, namely, faith in Christ: out of which, through which, and to which, all my theological opinions ebb and flow, day and night.<sup>10</sup>

This principle of justification by faith was the tool in Luther's hand to attack the entire towering structure of Roman Catholicism. It was the weapon with which the stronghold of the pope was challenged. It was the banner that led the forces of the Reformation into victorious battle with the strongest powers which Rome could summon to her aid. The whole corrupt institution of Roman Catholicism was shaken to its foundations by this fundamental principle of the truth. So it had to be. The doctrinal apostasy of Rome was particularly in the field of soteriology. The attack had to come at this point. All the evils in the Church to a greater or lesser degree resulted from this cardinal doctrinal error; the Reformation had to begin with a reaffirmation of the truth at this point.

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<sup>9</sup>Op. cit., VII, 124.

<sup>10</sup>Quoted from The Great Light. James Atkinson; Eerdmans, 1968; p. 109.



Yet it soon became evident that the Reformation could not stop with Luther. I.e., the Reformation could not stop with the establishment of the truth of justification by faith. The structure of Biblical and Reformed truth cannot be erected on the foundation of this principle of soteriology. This is not to say that the principle itself is not entirely Scriptural; there is no doubt that it is. Nor is this to say that Luther was wrong in emphasizing this principle. It was necessary to destroy the error of Rome. But the truth of justification by faith is a stone in the structure of the truth and not the foundation. It is a block in the wall but not the cornerstone. It is an integral part of the system of the truth, but it is not the heart which gives life to all.

That this was true also historically soon became evident even in the history of the Reformation. While Lutheranism made rapid progress in Germany and other countries, it never produced the Reformed faith. That is, it never became a system of beliefs which was in full harmony with the Word of God. There was good reason for this. Lutheranism, in spite of Luther, became essentially synergistic. Although Luther himself was not in any sense of the word a synergist, Philip Melancthon, his close friend and co-worker was. Under the influence of Melancthon synergism was officially incorporated into the confessional standards of the Lutheran Churches and continues to the present as an integral part of Lutheran theology. But synergism is not essentially different from Semi-pelagianism. There is difference of emphasis, but not of principle. Synergism too speaks of salvation as a cooperative venture in which God and man both participate in the work of salvation. These synergistic ideas appeared early in the Lutheran Reformation. No doubt Luther himself was free of them but his colleague was not.

There is something inevitable about this. If the truth of justification is taken as the foundation of the whole structure of the truth it is all but inevitable that synergism should appear in some form. This does not mean that the seeds of synergism are present in the truth of justification. But it does

mean that it is impossible to maintain the principle of justification by faith alone in all its implications unless one sees it as a part only of the whole structure of the truth dependent itself upon other principles. The truth of soteriology, as important as it is, is not the most basic principle of the truth. It is not fundamental, It is not the cornerstone. It cannot stand if it is made such a principle.

As Schaff notes:

The Lutheran system is a compromise between Augustinianism and Semi-Pelagianism. Luther himself was fully agreed with Augustine on total depravity and predestination, and stated the doctrine of the slavery of the human will even more forcibly and paradoxically than Augustine or Calvin. But the Lutheran Church followed him only half way. The Formula of Concord (1577) adopted his doctrine of total depravity in the strongest possible terms, but disclaimed the doctrine of reprobation; it represents the natural man as spiritually dead like "a stone" or "a block", and teaches a particular and unconditional election, but also an universal vocation.<sup>11</sup>

For this reason, the Reformation, if it was to be successful, could not stop here. It had to move on. It had to develop, and in another direction. Justification by faith had been necessary to overthrow the false and evil structure of Romanism. But the Reformation had to take a different tack if it was to face the future. It was the weapon to destroy the enemy, the only weapon which could successfully do this. But it could not be the principle of further development.

It was because of this that God prepared a man in France, Calvin, to continue the cause of the Reformation. He occupied his own place in the struggle and an important place it was. Schaff takes note of this:

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<sup>11</sup>Schaff, op. cit., VIII, 541.

Revolution is followed by reconstruction and consolidation. For this task Calvin was providentially foreordained and equipped by genius, education, and circumstances. . . . Calvin, the Frenchman, would have been as much out of place in Zurich or Wittenberg, as the Swiss Zwingli and the German Luther would have been out of place and without a popular constituency in French-speaking Geneva. Each stands first and unrivalled in his particular mission and field of labor. . . . Calvin was twenty-five years younger than Luther and Zwingli, and had the great advantage of building on their foundation. He had less genius, but more talent. He was inferior to them as a man of action, but superior as a thinker and organizer. They cut the stones in the quarries, he polished them in the workshop. They produced the new ideas, he constructed them into a system. His was the work of Apollos rather than of Paul: to water rather than to plant, God giving the increase. Calvin's character is less attractive, and his life less dramatic than Luther's or Zwingli's, but he left his Church in a much better condition. He lacked the genial element of humor and pleasantry; he was a Christian stoic: stern, severe, unbending, yet with fires of passion and affection glowing beneath the marble surface. His name will never arouse popular enthusiasm. . . . But he surpassed them in consistency of self-discipline, and by his exegetical, doctrinal, and polemical writings, he has exerted and still exerts more influence than any other Reformer upon the Protestant Churches of Latin and Anglo-Saxon races. . . . History furnishes no more striking example of a man of so little personal popularity, and yet such great influence upon the people; of such natural timidity and bashfulness combined with such strength of intellect and character, and such control over his and future generations. He

was by nature and taste a retiring scholar, but Providence made him an organizer and ruler of churches. . . .

Widely as these Reformers differed in talent, temperment, and sundry points of doctrine and discipline, they were great and good men, equally honest and earnest, unselfish and unwordly, brave and fearless, ready at any moment to go to the stake for their conviction. They labored for the same end: the renovation of the Catholic Church by leading it back to the pure and perennial fountain of the perfect teaching and example of Christ.<sup>12</sup>

Calvin never met Luther, but knew of Luther and of Luther's teachings. While he was still a student in Paris, the shock waves of the Reformation were rolling over France. He had studied the principles of the Lutheran Reformation and had done this in the light of his own intimate knowledge of Roman Catholicism. He did this while still a member of the Romish Church and only committed himself to the cause of the Reformation after careful consideration. He repeatedly acknowledged his debt to Luther and, in one of his most striking phrases, after the controversies with Lutheran theologians concerning the presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper, he wrote to Bullinger:

Often have I been wont to declare, that even though he were to call me a devil, I should still not the less esteem and acknowledge him as an illustrious servant of God.<sup>13</sup>

But the point is here that Calvin saw immediately that the Reformation, while it had to begin with questions in the field of soteriology, specifically with the truth of justification by faith, could not possibly end there. If the gains of the Reformation and the cause of the truth were to be consolidated and moved forward, this had to be on a different principle than the principle of justification by faith. For, as important as that

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., VIII, pp. 257, 258, 260.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., VII, 661.

principle was, it could not serve as the real foundation for the Reformed faith which was to be true to the Word of God.

Calvin was, above all, a Biblical theologian. And with his intimate knowledge of Scripture, Calvin saw immediately that the most fundamental principle of all Scripture is the principle of theology. God stands on the foreground. The Scriptures are, above all else, the revelation of God. And God reveals Himself for His own glory. Hence, it is the knowledge of God which is basic. On this principle only could the Reformation be secured. Rome's imposing structure was dashed to pieces by Luther's thunderings from Wittenberg; but upon these crumbled ruins could a new edifice, faithful to Scripture be reared, which was built upon the fundamental truth of God's glory.

Not soteriology but theology lies at the heart of all Scripture. In Vol. I of the Courtenay Studies of Reformation Theology (The volume of John Calvin) J.I. Packer writes on "Calvin the Theologian". In his lecture he makes these comments:

The layout of the 1559 Institution shows us at once its scope and range. As the opening chapter, dating from 1539, explains, it is a treatise on the knowledge of God, and the knowledge of ourselves which is bound up with it. As in Scripture, so in Calvin, "knowledge of God" is a concept which unifies belief, experience, and conduct. It embraces both the knowing of God, which is religion, and what is known of, or about God, which is theology. It denotes an apprehension of God, not merely as existing but as being "for us" in grace, and of ourselves as being "for Him" in worship and service. . . .

In making the knowledge of God his central theme, and presenting the reformed faith as a recovery of this knowledge--a truly religious theology, and a truly theological religion--Calvin was picking up Luther's early polemic against the scholastics, mystics, and merit-mongers, who

thought to know God without knowing Jesus Christ.<sup>14</sup>  
James Atkinson in his book "The Great Light" essentially agrees.

From the structure of the book (The Institutes) as well as from Calvin's other writings, it is crystal-clear that Calvin's theology began from the conviction of the absolute transcendence of God and therefore of His total otherness in relation to the creature man. If Luther found his liberation in the doctrine of justification by faith alone, Calvin found that same liberation in a passionate theocentrism, in a terrifying certainty of being mastered by God. Calvin, if not God-intoxicated, was certainly God-possessed. This doctrine of the unqualified sovereignty of God related to the consequent equally unqualified creatureliness of man, lies at the heart of Calvin's experience and theology. It further dominates all of Calvin's exposition and is the stumbling block his critics never negotiated.<sup>15</sup>

Anyone who has read Calvin knows that this is true. Calvin saw that Scripture is theocentric in the highest sense of the word. God reveals Himself. Hence the knowledge of God is all-important. But the knowledge of God through His revelation is for the purpose of the glory of His own name. Soli Deo Gloria was the theme of Calvin's life and his deepest theological principle. And from this it follows that God is sovereign in all that He does, for He does all things for Himself that "of him, and to him, and through him may be all things." God is above all, glorious and majestic. He reigns supreme in the heavens to accomplish His own purpose and realize His own glory. Hence, God's sovereign determination in the counsel of His will is of

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<sup>14</sup>John Calvin, A Collection of Essays, Edited by G.E. Duffield; translated by G. S. R. Cox & P. G. Rix; Eerdmans, 1966; p. 155.

<sup>15</sup>Op. Cit., pp. 173, 174.

primary consideration. God determined to glorify Himself through His only begotten Son Jesus Christ Whom He would raise to power and glory in heaven through the way of the cross and the resurrection. On this principle rests the truth of predestination. And from this follows the sovereign character of the work of salvation as God performs it in Christ on behalf of His people. It is here that the truth of justification by faith must find its proper place and contribute its own part to the whole of the truth. Even this truth must, in the broad and sweeping scope of the revelation of God, be subservient to God's own glory. All things are for God's sake. God's glory stands at the heart of all Scripture. To it must all be subjected. For its sake all things are done in heaven and on earth. Not man and his salvation; not even man justified by faith is the most important thing that happens in history. God is glorified in His own works. What is not for the glory of God will never take place. What God determines to do in all His works is actually wrought that God may receive all glory forever and ever

This is the genius of the Reformer of Geneva. This is the work to which he was called and appointed. This is the divinely ordained role he played in the Reformation.

To fail to put the truths of soteriology in this perspective is to run the grave risk of repeating the error of Rome and of falling into the heresies of some kind of Semi-pelagianism. Only when the deepest principle of God's glory is firmly maintained can its corollary be preserved: God's absolute sovereignty in the work of salvation.

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The importance of this has been largely forgotten today. It is not our purpose in this essay to point this out in detail. It is sufficient to note the fact that, even in Churches which parade their Calvinism with pride, this important emphasis which Calvin insisted upon was the key to the Scriptures is lost.

The emphasis today in many different forms falls upon man and his salvation. Hence even revelation is spoken of in terms of the kerygma. Those who maintain this (and they occupy a broad scope in the theological spectrum from liberals to con-

servatives within the Reformed Churches) maintain that the Scriptures cannot and do not give to us any knowledge of God as He is in Himself. This, these men insist, is not the purpose of Scripture. The purpose is rather to bring man to some confrontation, through the kerygma, with God.

This is, quite understandably, characteristic of those who deny the infallibility of the sacred Scriptures, who speak of the fact that the Word of God is in the Scriptures while denying that the Scriptures are the Word of God.

But it all leads to a certain relativizing of doctrine. Even such a theological conservative as Dr. Hendrik Hart, assistant professor of philosophy at the Institute for Christian Studies in Toronto, Canada, who himself professes to believe in the infallibility of Scripture can write at length of this. In a footnote to a discussion of this point he says:

Theories of truth that speak of absolute objectivity make truth to be a conceptual matter of doubtful origin. Intellectualistic doctrines of truth cannot possibly account for the biblical notion of truth as something to be done and lived. Truth primarily concerns man's relation to the Word of God and not his first of all having correct ideas or beliefs.<sup>16</sup>

This is not in the tradition of the Reformation. Especially is it not in the tradition of the Calvin Reformation. Nor is it the emphasis of Scripture. Scripture is the objective and infallibly inspired record of the revelation of God. It is through the Scriptures that God is known. He reveals Himself in order that through the knowledge of Himself He may have all the glory. This knowledge of God is itself eternal life. "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom that hast sent." John 17:3. And this knowledge of God as the principle of eternal life results in God's glory because God is the sovereign Author of it in all the work of salvation.

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<sup>16</sup> The Challenge of Our Age, Hendrik Hart, Christian Perspective Series, 1967/1968, p. 62, footnote 19.



Failure to maintain this truth has once again brought about a shift from a proper and Scriptural emphasis on theology to an improper and dangerous emphasis on soteriology. This shift is so dangerous just because it cannot serve as an adequate guard against a repetition of the errors of Semi-pelagianism. It is not strange then that the truth of sovereign grace as emphasized by Augustine and Calvin has been lost in these troubled times and that even the Reformed Churches have become mired in the heresies of Arminianism. Just as the strictly soteriological emphasis of the Lutheran Reformation led to the synergism of Melanchthon and subsequent Lutheranism, so does the soteriological emphasis of our day lead to Arminianism. And Arminianism is incipient modernism--a fact that is becoming increasingly evident today.

Only a Scriptural return to the theology of Calvin will rescue the Church from disaster. Only a return to Calvin's wholly Biblical system of truth will give even the Reformed Churches the right honestly before God to continue to commemorate the Reformation.

## AS TO THE DOCTRINE OF HOLY SCRIPTURE

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

The phenomenon of Holy Scripture is to be explained wholly and solely as belonging in the sphere of the wonder of grace. This is true not only because Scripture is as to its content the revelation, the announcement, of this wonder of grace, but also because Holy Scripture itself, as a phenomenon, is the fruit, the product, of this wonder of grace. It has been brought forth by the wonder of grace.

He who would explain the phenomenon of Holy Scripture differently must inevitably be swamped in the waters of higher criticism.

Basically the struggle in this regard is always a struggle concerning the wonder. He who does not will the wonder is also unable to will Scripture. And the natural man, who is from below, who does not understand the things of the Spirit of God, who does not and cannot perceive the things of the kingdom of heaven, does not and cannot will the wonder. It is foolishness to him; and his attempt will always be to deny that wonder. He cannot rest until he has dragged it down into the sphere of the natural and the earthy. And just because Scripture as a phenomenon is the fruit of the wonder, cannot be explained from the earthly course of development, from mere natural causes, therefore it ought not to surprise us that the natural man also is unable to acknowledge that Scripture for what it really is. And also he who undermines this principle by allowing the Scriptures to arise partly out of natural causes, by explaining Scripture as the product of a concurrence of divine and human factors, departs from the line of the truth. Such an one may, through the power of tradition, hold fast for a time to an infallible Scripture; but he will find himself more and more under the necessity of conceding the truth of Holy Scripture to higher criticism.

This has been the sad process again and again in the history of the church. This was the case in the 18th and 19th centuries, when the floods of rationalism rolled over the

churches of Europe and America and when the various higher critical schools of thought had their birth. This was the case in the Christian Reformed Churches in the early 1920's, when Dr. Ralph Janssen wanted to explain the phenomenon of Holy Scripture almost entirely out of "common grace." And although Dr. Janssen was condemned because he carried through and consistently applied his principle, there were and are today many who in the deepest sense of the word accepted the principle from which he operated and tried to explain Scripture. They may come to different conclusions. They may want to maintain Scripture as the inspired Word of God. But they really have no independent and distinctive view of the wonder of grace, and therefore also no proper view of the phenomenon of Holy Scripture. In a rather arbitrary manner, and really following the same method as that of the higher critics, they engage in the science of canonics and decide, for example, whether a certain book belongs to the canon and whether it is genuine or not. The only difference is that the decision in this matter follows the conservative line, even when the grounds and the arguments could lead to entirely different conclusions. This was also the basic difficulty in the so-called "Geelkerken Case," which led to the now-cancelled decisions of Assen-1926. The real problem was not the reality of the various phenomena of Paradise; but it was the doctrine of Holy Scripture, a matter which was not really dealt with at Assen. This was also the basic flaw in Dr. Ubbink's *De Nieuwe Belijdenis Aangaande Schrift En Kerk*. The problem was that Ubbink's world-and-life view was such that he really had no place for the wonder of grace, and therefore no place for the phenomenon of Holy Scripture as a wonder. And increasingly I come to the conclusion that a careful analysis of the "new theology" in the Netherlands and in America will reveal the same basic flaw in that theology: in spite of its boast of interest in the "kerugma," in the real message of Holy Scripture, in the witness to God in Holy Scripture, that new theology does not want the wonder of

grace; and because it does not want the wonder of grace, it cannot and does not want to acknowledge the phenomenon of Holy Scripture as the fruit solely of that wonder of grace.

I believe, moreover, that a study of the manner in which various deviating theories concerning Holy Scripture have arisen in the course of the history of the church will reveal the truth, the correctness, of what I have written above. History will show that the problems did not usually begin with the doctrine of Holy Scripture itself. The problems were not initially problems concerning the phenomenon of Holy Scripture. They were not problems concerning the inspiration of Scripture, or concerning the doctrine of the authority or the attributes of Scripture. No, usually men began to have various problems and doubts with respect to the contents of Scripture; and usually those problems concerned especially those aspects of the contents of Holy Scripture in which the issue of the wonder of grace was more or less directly on the foreground. Sometimes the problems concerned the narrative of creation; sometimes they concerned the various miracles recorded in the Old and New Testament Scriptures; sometimes they concerned the wonder of the virgin birth or the wonder of Christ's physical resurrection; and sometimes the problems arose merely in connection with passages or statements of Scripture which were apparently contradictory. Already the very approach to those problems was wrong. It was the approach of rationalism and empiricism. It was the same approach which today would subject the truth of Scripture to the test of natural science or historical science. But, in the second place, it was usually as the result of the rise and solution of problems such as those just mentioned that problems also came to the fore concerning the doctrine of Holy Scripture itself: problems concerning its nature, concerning its origin, concerning its authority, concerning its trustworthiness, concerning its sufficiency, concerning its perspicuity. And so it would come about that various aspects of the truth concerning Holy Scripture as a phenomenon would be denied or compromised. And

this, in turn, would lead to further attacks upon and denials of the contents of Holy Scripture, as might be expected. But what lay behind both of these tendencies? What gave rise to them? What explains the fact that first the contents of Holy Scripture would be attacked as being unacceptable because they were not in accord with the findings of natural science, for example, and that then the origin and nature and authority of Holy Scripture itself would come under attack? The answer lies in the basic world-and-life view of those who made such attacks. They were unwilling to accept the wonder of grace. Their world-and-life view, if not openly naturalistic and evolutionistic, nevertheless came under the influence of such naturalism and evolutionism. And because they were unable and unwilling to accept the basic truth of the wonder of grace, they could and would receive neither the various individual wonders recorded by Scripture nor the phenomenon of Holy Scripture itself as a wonder of grace.

Our point of departure, therefore, must be that of a world-and-life view which considers all things in the light of the wonder of grace.

What do we understand by this wonder of grace?

Essentially, this wonder consists herein, that God not only saves the whole creation, which is lost in guilt and sin, which lies under the curse and the power of death, but that He raises it up unto that eternal destiny in which all things shall be united in Christ, the tabernacle of God in its everlasting and heavenly perfection shall be with men, and God's eternal covenant shall be realized. For we must remember that God does not merely rescue His creation; still less does He carry out an original creation-ordinance through "common grace" and a covenant of friendship with sinful man. But He realizes His eternal counsel and always maintains His covenant; and through sin and the curse and death He raises up His creation to a glory which is as much higher than the original glory of Paradise the First as the heaven is above the earth, as Christ is higher than the first Adam. And that work whereby the

Most High accomplishes this, that is the wonder of grace. Wherever that power breaks through in the accursed creation, there you have a wonder. This is the reason why a wonder is at the same time a sign. Centrally this wonder of grace is realized in Christ, Immanuel, God with us (accompanied by the wonder and sign of the virgin birth). This wonder is further realized in Christ's suffering and in the accursed death of the cross, in His entering into the lowest parts of the earth, in His crying out of the depths to Him Who alone can send deliverance, in His most perfect answer to God's "Thou shalt love Me," and therefore also in His resurrection and His heavenly exaltation at the Father's right hand, so that we now see Jesus, Who was made a little lower than the angels, but Who now stands at the pinnacle of the entire creation, principalities and powers and thrones and dominions made subject unto Him. That wonder of grace is further realized when the exalted Immanuel receives the promise of the Spirit, in order in that Spirit to return unto His own and to dwell in His church as the risen and exalted Savior. And this wonder shall be fully accomplished at His return, when He shall make all things new, when the elements shall melt with fervent heat and shall pass away, and the new heavens and the new earth, wherein righteousness shall dwell, shall be created, and the tabernacle of God in the New Jerusalem shall be forever with men. The realization of this wonder follows the line of sovereign election, with its antithesis in reprobation. And the sphere in which this wonder is realized and in which God's people therefore for a time must live antithetically, battling and suffering by grace, is this entire present earthly life.

Such, briefly, is the idea of the wonder of grace.

It is in this line of the wonder of grace that Holy Scripture also lies.

Holy Scripture is, according to its content, the announcement, the revelation, of this wonder-work of God to His people, in order that they should understand His works and should be His witnesses in the midst of this present

world, and that in such a way, that in the midst of battle and suffering, in the midst of guilt and sin and death, they should be partakers of the only comfort in life and death and should have their faith and hope in God. Holy Scripture draws for us a light-path, shining with heavenly light through the midst of this dark world even unto the everlasting day, a light-path which extends from Paradise-lost unto, yea, into the second and better Paradise which abideth forever. It is like the moon in the night, which assures us that although the sun has gone down, it is still there, and presently shall rise again on the eastern horizon with new glory. But not only is this true of Holy Scripture according to its content; but Scripture is also as far as its origin is concerned to be explained solely from the wonder of grace. It is the product of that wonder. For centrally it is the testimony of Him Who came down from heaven and Who is in heaven, and Who therefore also can testify of heavenly things, because He alone has seen them and heard them, John 3: 12, 13. He, the Son, the divine Wisdom, enters into our human consciousness in order to illumine our darkness. He unites in His Person our nature with the divine nature, our understanding with the divine, our will with God's, and speaks with our mouth and in our language of the eternal and heavenly things of God's covenant. He does that in the old dispensation through patriarchs and prophets: for also in them He is the real Subject. He does that personally during His sojourn on earth. And after His exaltation, presently He speaks again through His apostles and evangelists. He causes the light to break through the darkness of our sinful and foolish understanding; and He causes the righteous to walk in that light that is sown for them in glad hope and childlike trust. Through the wonder of grace, in Holy Scripture the heavenly light breaks through to us in the midst of this dark world. And Holy Scripture is the testimony of this revelation preserved in writing. It is the mirror, produced and formed by the same wonder of grace, in which we behold His reflection, Whom having not seen, we nevertheless love, and

beholding Whose image as in a glass, we are changed from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. (I Cor. 13: 5; II Cor. 3: 18; I Peter 1: 8; I Peter 1: 10, 11; Heid. Catechism, L.D. VI, Q. & A. 19)

In keeping with the preceding, the church of all ages has always received and honored Holy Scripture, not as a human book with human defects, but as the infallible Word of God, inspired by God Himself. Mark you well, this has been the position of the church with respect to Scripture as a book, with respect to the phenomenon of Holy Scripture as an entity. The church has never held that Scripture is in any wise a human book with a divine message. On the contrary, the church has insisted that Scripture as a book, and in its entirety, is the Word of God written. But although this testimony of the church throughout the ages should carry great weight with us, so that we should be extremely careful and hesitant about contradicting this testimony of the church of all ages, nevertheless there is but one possibility of deciding whether or not the church has erred in this respect: and that possibility is that we consult Holy Scripture itself. If Scripture itself does not give testimony concerning itself that it as Scripture is the Word of God, inspired by Him in an altogether special manner, then the faith of the church, though it be centuries old, is in error and must be set aside. If, however, Holy Scripture does present such self-testimony, then the truth of an infallible Scripture must be maintained. And then, remember, at the same time it becomes possible that there should be a testimony of the Holy Spirit, attaching itself to and receiving its content from this self-witness of Scripture, whereby the believers may be able to abandon themselves upon Scripture with indubitable certainty for time and eternity. The question is, therefore: what testimony does Holy Scripture give concerning itself?

And then we wish to point out, in the first place, that it cannot very well be denied that for our Lord Jesus Christ Scripture as a book was indeed the infallible Word of God which



cannot be broken. This fact is, of course, of the utmost weight. Christ Himself is the center of Holy Scripture. He is the Word made flesh. He is the Holy and True One, the Faithful Witness. In the whole of Scripture He is, through the Spirit, the Subject of revelation, but at the same time the object. For He is the express image of the Father's substance and the brightness of His glory. In Him we know the Father. All of Holy Scripture is the revelation of God in Him. Therefore also He understood that Scripture as no one, before Him or after Him, could understand it. In Holy Scripture He found the program for His whole life, His suffering and death, His resurrection and exaltation. That program He carries out; and with clear consciousness He walks in the way which Scripture points out to Him. That Scripture must be fulfilled in His birth. For the Lord had spoken through the mouth of His prophet of old, "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel," (Isaiah 7: 14; Matt. 1: 22, 23). The flight to Egypt and the return from Egypt both take place in order that the Scripture may be fulfilled, the word which the Lord spake through the mouth of His prophet, "Out of Egypt have I called my son," (Matt. 2: 15; Hosea 11: 1). When He returns from Egypt and dwells in Nazareth rather than in Judea, it is again "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene," (Matt. 2: 23). He forsakes Nazareth and comes to dwell in Capernaum, at the Sea of Galilee, in order to fulfill the word which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, Matt. 4: 13-16. He healed all that were sick "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses," (Matt. 8: 16, 17). And in Matthew 12: 15-21 we read that when great multitudes followed Him and He healed them all and charged them that they should not make Him known, this was done "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet..." Out of those Scriptures the Savior shows His disciples time and again how that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things

of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. In order that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, Jesus commandeers an ass and rides into Jerusalem, Matt. 21: 4, 5. In order that the Scripture should be fulfilled, He chose Judas Iscariot to be His disciple, although He knew him, John 13: 18. He tells His disciples beforehand that in the fearful night of His suffering they all shall be offended in Him, "for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad," (Matt. 26: 31). And when Peter takes the sword in order to defend the Savior against the enemies and cuts off the ear of the servant of the high priest, Jesus heals the servant, and reproves His disciples: for if the Savior wanted to take the path of might and of violence, "how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?" (Matt. 26: 54). Also with respect to the multitudes that come out against Him as against a thief, with swords and staves, we read, "But all this was done, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled," (Matt. 26: 56). His garments are divided, and the lot is cast over His robe, "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots," (Matt. 27: 35). And that word of the prophet is the same as the scripture, John 19: 24. When Jesus knows that all things are now accomplished, in order that the Scripture might be fulfilled, He says, "I thirst," (John 19: 28). And John testifies that that which he saw at the death of Jesus is true, and that also the fact that He died before a bone of Him could be broken, and that at the thrust of the spear there came forth blood and water from Jesus' side, in order that the Scripture should be fulfilled, John 19: 32-37. Christ arose also on the third day, "according to the scriptures," (I Cor. 15: 4).

Now all this is already of great significance. The Savior Himself always walks according to the Scripture, the Scriptures, the Word of the prophet, and that too, down to the very smallest details. He does everything in order that

the Scriptures may be fulfilled. And the divine "must" of His life's program, the program of His suffering, resurrection, and exaltation, is always brought directly into connection with those Scriptures, with the fact that this program is set forth in the Scriptures. This is why the Lord says to the sojourners on the way to Emmaus: "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken. Ought not [note the divine "must" here] Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?" And therefore He goes through those Scriptures with them, through Moses and all the prophets, in order to expound to them this divine "must" of the program of His suffering which had just been carried out and finished. (Luke 24: 25-27) And everyone will have to concede that the Scripture here gives testimony concerning itself that as Scripture it is not a mere human book, written by men and characterized by all that is human and defective, but that it is indeed the program which God Himself drew up for the Servant of Jehovah. The Lord Jesus Himself entrusted Himself as the Servant of Jehovah according to His human nature entirely to that Scripture, and fulfilled it in detail.

Let it also be noted in this connection that the Lord Himself makes no distinction between that Scripture and that which was spoken by the prophets. Those passages which speak of the divine "must" of the program of Jesus' suffering and exaltation also know of no such distinction. Promiscuously these passages speak of the word of the prophets, and the word through the mouth of the prophet, and of the Scripture. The same word which in Matthew 27: 35 is quoted as the word of the prophet is simply called "the scripture" in John 19: 25. And in order to instruct the sojourners on the way to Emmaus, so that they may understand all that the prophets have spoken, the Lord Jesus expounded unto them "in all the scriptures the things concerning himself." For the Savior Himself, therefore, and for the holy writers of the gospel accounts, the written word is equivalent to the word spoken by the prophets. And that written-spoken word is the divine

program of Jesus' way through suffering to glory.

Now we ought to pay special attention to the fact that such self-testimony of Holy Scripture as that which is described above is what may be called of an "unintentional" character. That is, it is not the express purpose of passages such as those cited above to set forth a certain doctrine, truth, that Scripture is the Word of God, given by inspiration of God. There are, indeed, passages which do the latter and which may be cited as proof-texts in connection with the doctrine of Holy Scripture. But let it be pointed out not only that the faith of the church with respect to Holy Scripture does not rest merely upon a few isolated texts, but also that such "unintentional" self-testimony of Holy Scripture is of much greater significance with a view to the explanation of the centuries-old faith of the church that Scripture is the Word of God than a single text or a few passages in which it is expressly declared that Scripture is given by inspiration of God could ever be. For after all this faith of the church did not come about through a few such proof-texts. No, it is spontaneous. When Scripture came to the church with its testimony, then the believing church received that Scripture spontaneously as the Word of God. And that the church did so had its cause, objectively speaking, in this "unintentional,"--and therefore, all the more powerful,--testimony of Scripture itself. If, therefore, we place ourselves as believers simply before the Scriptures, and do not allow ourselves to be dominated or led astray by the philosophical considerations of our own darkened understanding, then the outcome will be, always and again, that we testify of Scripture that it is indeed God's Word. And all the reasoning and debate about a single proof-text, though such texts can be found, and though they also have significance, but nevertheless, a lesser power and validity as witness,--I say, all such reasoning and debate, as well as all philosophy about a human element or factor or a human-ness of Holy Scripture, ceases when we listen and give ourselves

spontaneously to the overwhelming witness of Holy Scripture concerning itself. Let him who is cast into doubt by rationalistic meanderings and debate concerning the Scriptures, let the theologian who believes in the depth of his soul that he has a prophetic witness with respect to the Scriptures and who honestly does not want to lose the Word of God,--let him, I say, lay aside all considerations of the mind, and let him place himself as a simple believer before the overwhelming testimony of Scripture concerning itself. And let him see, then, whether also in his own heart, through the testimony of the Holy Spirit, the faith is not again awakened that the Scriptures as a book are truly the Word of God.

For this testimony is indeed overwhelming. It is of such a kind that all the rationalistic objections which may be conjured up and all the schemes which may be devised empirically to show that there is a human element in the Holy Scriptures and all the difficulties which we may meet with respect to our text of Holy Scripture are made to fade and to disappear into total insignificance, so that we forget them.

Let us look briefly at some further elements in this self-testimony of Holy Scripture, and that too, from the mouth of the Lord Jesus Himself.

Let us look at the fact that the Lord of the church Himself gave testimony concerning the Scripture as such, and that too, in such a manner that there can be no doubt about it but that He accepted that Scripture as the Word of God.

That Scripture was and is, remember, His own Word. For it was He Who testified in and through His prophets and apostles of old. For that reason also He always points to that which is written; and what is written is for Him final. For Him it is the end of all contradiction because it is the written Word of God. Three times the Lord Jesus turns aside the temptation of the devil with an appeal to Holy Scripture, and that too, with the well-known formula, "It is written." That which is written, therefore, has authority,--so much authority, such an absolute authority, that it is the end of

all contradiction. Even the devil does not venture to contradict this "It is written." But how should that which is written ever have authority, absolute authority, unless it had this authority from God? And how should that which is written ever be able to have such divine authority unless it were written, in last instance, by God Himself? It could not possess and it would not possess such authority if it were characterized by all that belongs in the sphere of the human and defective. It cannot be doubted that in the days of the earthly sojourn of the Lord Jesus the canon of the Old Testament was already closed. For the Lord Jesus and for the apostles, this canon is "the scripture" or "the holy scriptures" or "the scriptures" or the "law and the prophets." And how did the Lord speak of these Holy Scriptures? He says of them, Matthew 5: 17-19: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. (emphasis added) Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments (emphasis added), and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven." How can this word of the Lord Jesus ever be brought into harmony with the presentation that when we speak of the law and the prophets we have to do with a human book (whether in part or wholly), characterized by everything that is human and defective? In the same vein also, the Lord Jesus says to His disciples after His resurrection, Luke 24: 44: "These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me." To the unbelieving Jews the Lord says: "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me," (John 5: 39). And in the same context He identifies the written word of

Moses with His own Word when He says to them, John 5: 45-47: "Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust. For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?" This entire word is based upon the identity of Moses' writings and Jesus' word. In other words, the writings of Moses are His Word. Similarly, in Luke 16: 29 and 31, the Lord lets Abraham, in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, say unto the rich man in hell: "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them... If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead."

That Scripture, according to the presentation of the Lord Jesus, cannot be broken, not even in a single word, not even there, where it says, "Ye are gods," John 10: 34, ff. And what is written in that Scripture stands diametrically over against the traditions of men, Matthew 15: 3-9.

If, then, the Scripture gives this testimony of itself, and that too, through the Word of Him Who is the Holy and True One, the Faithful Witness, Who cannot lie, then there is certainly no choice for the believer but to receive that Scripture as the Word of God. We stand simply before the alternative: Christ and the Scriptures, or no Christ and no Scriptures. For he who rejects the Scriptures as the Word of God must needs come also to the conclusion either that Christ simply did not stand any higher in this respect than His contemporaries (and for that reason spoke of the Scriptures as He did), or that He, although He knew better, simply adapted Himself to the popular ideas concerning the Scriptures. In both instances we lose the Christ of the Scriptures. But both of these presentations are impossible in the light of the Scripture. For Christ did not only speak concerning the Scriptures, but He has also fulfilled the Scriptures and has walked the path which Scripture laid out for Him as the Servant of Jehovah, down to the finest detail.

There was no jot and no tittle unfulfilled.

Such, then, is the self-testimony of Scripture from the mouth of the Lord Jesus during His earthly sojourn. In a later essay, the Lord willing, we shall examine this self-testimony of Holy Scripture further, and shall also enter into the matter of an alleged "human factor" in Holy Scripture.

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