

THEOLOGICAL QUARTERLY.

1073A

VOL. XIV.

JANUARY, 1910.

No. 1.

THE OLD LUTHERAN VIEW OF WHAT CONSTITUTES THEOLOGY.

Beginning with Luther and extending to about the middle of the eighteenth century, Lutheran writers on the nature of theology are careful to segregate theology from philosophy, jurisprudence, and medicine, thus destroying the ancient academic *quadriga* of the universities. They assert that theology must be placed in a class by itself. The later dogmaticians discuss this matter in the Prolegomena of their works on systematic theology, usually in the first chapter, *de natura et constitutione theologiae*, or some kindred phrase. The earlier dogmaticians, before Hutter, have not felt the necessity of entering into an elaborate argument on what constitutes theology, but they express their mind on this question in connection with the various heads of doctrine which they present. Luther wrote no *Dogmatik*, yet Luther has more than any other writer of the Lutheran Church made plain the essential and characteristic features of theology. In the "Locis," "Systems," and "Compendis" of the later period we find merely in logical and precise form what Luther had expressed more or less casually.

The old Lutheran view insists, first of all, that theology is something in the theologian, "in the soul of the human being whom we call a theologian," and that the theologian earns his title to that name by possessing theology.¹⁾ This is a basic point in the old Lutheran view, and it deserves to be exhibited

1) Calov, *Isagoge ad ss. theol.*, l. 2, p. 201.

in its full bearing, because the term "theology" is rarely employed in this sense in our day. As a rule, we regard and speak of theology as a fixed product, a body of doctrine, a textbook, a section in a library or in a catalogue of books, a series of lectures, etc. We may point to a tier of bookshelves and say: This is the entire Protestant Theology of the Sixteenth Century. The older Lutheran divines grant that the term "theology" may be thus used, but deny that that is its primary meaning. They would call such a use of the term a metonymy, or a catachresis. They argue that before theology can be exhibited in a lecture or in a book, it must have existed in the person who delivers the lecture or writes the book. That which enabled the person to produce these theological results they would call "theology" in the primary or sovereign meaning of the term. All other meanings are derived from this one, and are consequents of the same. They represent an abstraction from the primary meaning. Theology in the abstract, accordingly, falls under the head of doctrine, and is theology in spoken or printed statements of theologians. Theology in the concrete is what exists in the concrete individual called theologian. This use of the terms "abstract" and "concrete," at first sight, seems to be an inversion. We feel inclined to consider a ponderous tome like Quenstedt's *Theologia didactico-polemica* a very concrete object, and in our different view it certainly is concrete; and the mind which produced the tome we should regard as something abstract, and in our different view it is abstract. One must bear in mind, in order to understand the Lutheran dogmaticians, that they distinguish between *causa* and *causatum* in this connection, — that which produces and that which is produced. That which produces they call the *concretum*, because it is found in some concrete individual, though it is not itself a material object, a concrete substance, but rather an invisible, impalpable faculty of the mind; that which is produced is, as it were, drawn away, projected from the producer, and in this sense abstract, though it may be a material, a concrete substance.

When thus employing the term "theology," the older Lutheran theologians acknowledge two things: 1. that they are not considering the native meaning of the compound word "theology," but are following an established custom. The compound theology means "an account of God," or of God and divine matters. Common parlance, however, has brought into use the other meaning before noted. 2. The term "theology" does not occur in Scripture, but its equivalent is expressed in all those passages which speak of the characteristics, functions, and duties of the Christian pastor. Gerhard and Fecht derive from Hebr. 5, 12—14 the genus under which theology should be grouped. The apostle addresses Hebrew Christians and reproves them for their deficient knowledge and experience in matters spiritual: they ought to be teachers, but they require to be taught, and he must feed them milk, because solid food is for full-grown men "who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern good and evil." Constant occupation with a certain thing trains the mind to a high degree of efficiency. The result is an internal fitness, an habitual adaptness for that thing, a habitude of the mind. For such a habitude the apostle looks in teachers of the Church, and this habitude the Lutheran dogmaticians, accordingly, require in a theologian. They find this habitude expressed also in the term "sufficiency" in 2 Cor. 3, 5, where the apostle, after exclaiming in ch. 2, 16: "Who is sufficient for these things?" states that he possesses sufficiency, though not of himself. The matter for which "sufficiency" is required is "the ministry of the New Testament," ch. 3, 6, or the "manifestation of the savor of the knowledge of Christ in every place," ch. 2, 14. Also 2 Tim. 3, 17 is adduced, where the apostle declares "the man of God," *i. e.*, the person specially dedicated to the service of God, the minister or pastor, like Timothy, to be "thoroughly furnished unto all good works." *Ἐπίς, ἱκανότης, and ἐξάοτις* are the three biblical terms which in the old Lutheran view enable us to classify theology with the genus habitudes and aptitudes, or habitual fitnesses of the mind.

The old Lutheran view insists, in the second place, that this internal fitness is thoroughly practical in character, scope, and aim. It enables the theologian to discharge efficiently every function of the Christian ministry; its legitimate activity is determined from all those passages in which the duties of Christian teachers or pastors are named, and its models are the pastors whom Scripture describes, *e. g.*, Apollos. The mind of the theologian is not employed merely in the contemplation of divine matters, not in a theoretical knowledge, not in intellectual exercises, the training of reason and the sharpening of the judicial faculty. The theologian's calling aims at saving himself, and those who hear him, from the wrath to come. To this end he leads men to know and to do the will of God. Not *γνώσις*, but *πραξις*, not a fitness to understand, but to execute what God wants His children to do, is the quality of a true theologian. It is held that knowledge is necessary to the theologian, and that there can be no adequate practice of things about which a person is not adequately informed. But it is denied that a person can be denominated a theologian merely because of his knowledge. Theological study is never an academic diversion, or philosophical research applied to spiritual matters, which rests satisfied with establishing what facts are known and knowable. The theological habitude by which a theologian knows divine matters ever urges him to action, either to instruct others, or to defend the truth of Scripture, or to correct errors, etc. It is in these practical employments that his theological habitude and aptitude must be exhibited and proved. Lutheran schools of theology in a later period have created various theological disciplines, and have named one of them "Practical Theology." The meaning is not that all the other disciplines are not practical, but that this particular theological habitude, now called "practical," is practical in a peculiar way. The fitness to expound a book of Scripture, or to present a dogma of Scripture in its entirety, is certainly as much a practical habitude as the fitness to catechize children or to compose and

deliver a sermon. When Reusch, the commentator of Baier, distinguishes between a theoretic knowledge of God, which he assigns to dogmatic and polemic theology, and a practical knowledge, which is exhibited in moral theology,²⁾ he is hardly in accord with the older teachers of the Church, though he weakens his distinction considerably,—and thus places himself in closer touch again with his predecessors,—by declaring that “all knowledge is for a practical end.”

The old Lutheran view insists, in the third place, that the theological habitude afore described is a gift of divine grace, not a natural endowment of certain gifted persons. *Theologus fit, non nascitur*. Wherever the theological habitude becomes manifest we behold a phenomenon of the new spiritual life, which sets in with the regeneration of a sinner. The theological habitude postulates and presupposes faith in its possessor, faith with all its antecedents, a personal sense of guilt and sorrow for the same, and, with all its consequents, renewal of the mind, will, and affections, a sanctified conduct, etc. The theologian must be a believer. Not that *faith* is this theological habitude, for in that case every believer would have to be regarded as a theologian; but faith engenders and nurtures as one of its fruits this theological fitness. We remember that the old Lutheran theologians appeal to the *usus loquendi* in justifying their acceptance of the term “theology.” In a broad meaning any Christian might be called a theologian, because he possesses a fitness to know and to do the will of God; and the term has been thus applied by courtesy. But the usage of speech has restricted the application of this title to those Christian men who have entered the service of the Church and labor in the Word, in one way or the other. The scriptural reason for their claim that the theologian must be a believer the Lutheran dogmaticians find in such passages as 1 Cor. 2, 14—16. If the natural, *i. e.*, unregenerate, man cannot receive the things of the Spirit of

2) Joh. Petri Reuschii *Annotatt. in B. Joh. Guil. Baieri Comp. Theol.* Pos. Jenae 1757. Proleg., cap. I, § 2—4, p. 5—7.

God, he cannot declare them to others; and if he cannot do that, he is incapacitated for theological work. This view does not lose sight of the fact that the externals of the theological habitude may be found in unbelievers. If the Church did not know from actual experience that a very thorough knowledge of Scripture truths and fine practical skill in pastoral work may exist in men who reject the Scriptures, the Word of God would compel her to grant such a possibility; for we hear it speak of men preaching to others and being reprobate themselves. Men of this kind have occupied and still occupy theological chairs in the universities of the Church and fill its pulpits. They are called theologians, and it has not been questioned, either in Luther's day or now, that the Word of God as proclaimed by them may produce divine results. But this only goes to show that the theological habitude may be shammed just as well as contrition, faith, uprightness, charity, or any other grace of God. The clergy are as little immune from hypocrisy as the laity. The spirit of deception may occupy the pulpit and the theological professor's chair no less than the pew. But no sane person claims that it is a characteristic of genuine Christianity to be a sham; just as little as all jurists are shysters, or all physicians quacks, or all philosophers dreamers. Since Satan can be transformed into an angel of light and quote Scripture, since Antichrist can seat himself in the temple of God and pretend to do God's work, it would be possible to call even Beelzebub and Loyola theologians. — The old Lutheran emphasis on faith as a requisite in a theologian, therefore, contains no Pietistic or Donatistic leaven, but is the sober application of Scripture truth. It demands in the aspirant to theology a supernatural equipment, which is not required in the philosopher, the philologist, the jurist. *Pectus facit theologum.*

The old Lutheran view insists, in the fourth place, that the theological habitude must be acquired by divine means and a divine method. The acquirement of the knowledge of grammar, languages, the sciences, history, etc., is commended, but

the study of these matters must be coupled with, yea, must be merely a stepping-stone to, a believing study of Scripture. Moreover, it must be supported by believing prayer and tested by trials and tribulations borne in faith for Christ's and the truth's sake. Hence, it is not possible to regulate the study of theology, or determine the proficiency of theological aspirants by the common rules of secular schools, which can, and often must, leave the spiritual element out of consideration.

The view just outlined was held by the older Lutheran theologians in conscious opposition to another view which had prevailed prior to their coming, and in fearful anticipation of its return. Luther's theology was a revolt from the theological system prevalent in his day. It came forward with a ringing protest against the domination of Aristotelian philosophy in the study of theology. One of Luther's earliest reformatory efforts, his *Disputation wider die scholastische Theologie*,³⁾ was a challenge to the doctors of the schools to offer reasons why they should not be stripped of their false glory. It had been held that no one could become a theologian without the aid of Aristotle, that a theologian must be a logician, or he would never be a theologian. Against the former claim Luther set up this other: Unless we decline the aid of Aristotle, we shall never be theologians; and the latter claim he pronounced a strange and heretical statement.⁴⁾ The scholastic theology of his day raised Luther's righteous anger. He declared that it had caused him to lose Christ; that he had had to unlearn all the things which it had taught him, because they were contrary to Scripture; that the fruit of all its teaching was ignorance on such vital questions as: what is sin, righteousness, baptism, a Christian life? ignorance of the truth and a standing offense set up to spite the Word of God.⁵⁾ He advised young men to shun scholastic philosophy and theology as they would spiritual death.⁶⁾ In his old age he still complained that it was a greater task for him to unlearn popery, "den Papst

3) St. L. Ed. XVIII, 184.

4) XVIII, 23.

5) XVIII, 840.

6) XVIII, 1198.

zu verlernen," than to learn Christ; and he extolled the good fortune of his students at Wittenberg who were given an open sesame to theology by the Bible, which had been made so plain that anybody could read and understand it, by Melancthon's *Loci Communes*, and by his own Exposition of Galatians and Deuteronomy.⁷⁾

Luther's position would be misunderstood, if he were regarded as an enemy to philosophy considered by itself. He did not hold science and art in habitual contempt; he was not a barbarian, not a *Kulturfeind*. He holds that those are altogether in error who regard philosophy and the study of nature as useless to a theologian; he applauds a poetic effort of Eobanus Hesse, and takes occasion to speak of poetry and rhetoric as valuable aids to the theologian.⁸⁾ Some had asserted that theologians might possess divine wisdom, but they were void of worldly wisdom; this assertion draws a smile from Luther.⁹⁾ Modern historical research has proved Luther a student who was fully abreast of his age also in secular learning, a scholar well versed in his classics, though preferring the Latin to the Greek, a lover of nature, a keen observer of state affairs, a student of sociological questions, with a poetic vein, an ear for music, and an eye for art; in every respect an open-eyed, wide-awake, up-to-date sixteenth century gentleman whose kind interest extended to all that the times could offer him in the way of learning and culture, and who, while impregnating his generation with the thought of his fertile mind, absorbed instinctively the knowledge which his age possessed.

Luther opposed philosophy only in so far as it was employed to guide the study of theologians and to determine facts of theology. "I greatly fear that philosophy will again be mingled too much with theology, although I do not object when men teach and learn philosophy," he said to his colleagues.¹⁰⁾ "I am grieved," he exclaims, "to see the glorious name of theology dragged down to the level of ridiculous

7) XXII, 692 f.

8) XXIa, 366. 491 ff.

9) XXII, 1852.

10) XXII, 39.

fictions and old wives' fables." 11) Luther insists on an essential difference between the study of theology and every other study that is guided by reason and the common experience of men. In his opinion, the highest art of a theological candidate is to carefully distinguish between the prudence of reason and the wisdom of the Word or the science of God. 12) Jurisprudence is occupied with secular, temporal, ephemeral affairs, but theology with heavenly, spiritual matters and affairs of the conscience. 13) He acknowledges two classes of theologians: such as are guided by their conscience bound in God's Word, like William of Paris and Gerson, and speculative theologians, like Thomas, Scotus, Occam, Alexander, etc. 14) He uses strong language against all theologians who endeavor to reason out divine matters and form their opinions by speculation; he calls them the devil's tools. 15) He vindicates to theology imperial rights; he would have her enthroned as empress, philosophy and all other useful arts collected about her footstool and serving, not ruling and domineering over her. And he raises his hand in prayer and pleads: God preserve His beloved Church, which He has borne as a mother bears her child in her womb, and keep us from the philosophical theology of the schools, such as Servetus, Campanus, and others advocate. 16)

Theology is in a class by itself; it deals with a subject matter, employs in its labors an instrument, and aims at a goal, of which philosophy knows nothing. Therefore philosophy commits a most unphilosophical blunder when it undertakes to dictate to theology. That is Luther's position. The subjects which engage the philosopher lie within the confines of the cosmos of matter and of the human mind; these are his data, and when he restricts his labor to them, he can produce useful results. When he passes beyond the limits of what is actually known and knowable, we might, with Schiller, call him "a bold navigator," but his work is no longer philosophy, but speculation, *Phantasie*. His hypotheses are legitimate efforts at

11) XVIII, 1378.

12) XXII, 1840.

13) XXII, 1481.

14) XXII, 1894.

15) XXII, 630.

16) XXII, 255.

finding out the truth, but they are not truth while they are hypotheses, just as little as a frail board that is pushed over the edge of a precipice in a vain endeavor to reach a distant object is firm ground. The philosopher recognizes no other authority than his own reason. He is careful only to allow nothing to deflect his reason from its proper course, no passion, no emotion, no sentiment, no habit. Lastly, the philosopher seeks to attain a state of well-being, happiness, under the conditions surrounding him in this visible world and within the space of a human life; for, not knowing philosophically anything that lies beyond these boundaries, he is unable to do anything as a philosopher to shape transmundane or eternal conditions.

The theologian has for his subject-matter sinful man; he pursues his study guided by divine revelation which he follows by faith; and his goal is everlasting salvation. The theologian, Luther holds, is occupied with man in so far as he is a sinner, and theology endeavors to make sinful man conscious of his sinful corruption.¹⁷⁾ While the jurist seeks to establish civil righteousness, which is a person's own product, the theologian imparts to sinful man a foreign righteousness which God has bestowed by grace.¹⁸⁾ Hence, the adequate subject of theology is sin and grace, or sinful and lost man as justified by Christ, or sinning man, the redeeming Savior, and justifying God.¹⁹⁾ Genuine theology, he says, begins its work by seeking a person's regeneration through the Spirit, and continues by leading him to do good works and by assuring him that not only a particular honest occupation of his, but his very person is accepted with God.²⁰⁾

The theologian goes about this business by expounding Scripture. Men who have done this in a clear and convincing manner, like Augustine, St. Bernard, Tertullian, Cyprian, Luther considers "great theologians."²¹⁾ To teach the people to understand the Word of God and all that is necessary for

17) V, 483.

18) XXII, 1513.

19) V, 484.

20) V, 584; IX, 497.

21) III, 1509.

their salvation, that is what theologians are needed for.²²⁾ The aptness to teach Luther considers all-important; it overshadows every other theological effort, so that Luther is led to say that theology is not occupied with admonishing, but with teaching.²³⁾ Now, Luther knew well enough that Scripture enjoins upon the ministers of the Word that they exhort, admonish, urge, plead with their hearers; he has issued very powerful exhortations himself. What he means to say, then, can be nothing else than this, that mere pleading, sentimental fervor, revivalistic attacks upon the sensibilities, are not theological efforts. Every exhortation must start from a solid Scriptural basis of fact, must rest on sufficient information of Scripture.

Luther views the theologian also as a spiritual warrior, a champion who rushes into battle armed in the Pauline panoply, Eph. 6. Romanists and Humanists, jurists, medical men, artists, noblemen, peasants, dispute the truth which he proclaims, vex him exceedingly, and compel him to attest his theological fitness in another capacity. Reproving the gainsayers, battling for God's Word, he remembers, is a divinely specified theological function. That would be a pretty theology, he remarks with slight irony, which would suffer everything to pass uncensured.²⁴⁾ He considers it his bounden duty to maintain and defend the truth; and because he is doing this, he holds that he is "a Christian theologian and dwells in the realm of truth."²⁵⁾

Nor has Luther forgotten that God has a very sweet message of comfort to the sorrowing, and that it requires just as great skill to convey this message properly as to act as the crier in battle at the head of the Church's host. What other men flee from, misery, disease, despair, that is sought out by theologians because they are mindful of their office. To revive the crushed spirit, to soothe a broken heart, to quiet a troubled conscience, "this," says Luther, "is what our theology is for."²⁶⁾ He feels that he is not always successful in restoring spiritual

22) XVIII, 858.

23) XIV, 774.

24) XXII, 1032; XIX, 1028.

25) XVIII, 822.

26) XXII, 1924; V, 611 f.

health to hearts that have been ravaged by sin. Much of what he does is patchwork, performed on the soul just like a physician's who patches his patient's body.²⁷⁾ Nevertheless, taking a broad view of all that a theologian does, it is a noble work, for it all tends to the salvation of men.²⁸⁾

Accordingly, Luther declares: "Theology is practical, not speculative."²⁹⁾ True and genuine theology consists in practice, application, and exercise, and its foundation is Christ whose suffering, death, and resurrection is apprehended by faith.³⁰⁾ How utterly dissimilar to other learned pursuits, how unphilosophical, unscientific is all this!

The fitness for this multiform activity, in Luther's view, is not a *donum naturale*. True, in a lighter vein he remarks over his board: "Amsdorf is a born theologian; Dr. Cruciger and Dr. Jonas are feigned and fictitious theologians; Dr. Pommer and myself are not much inferior to anyone."³¹⁾ But his serious opinion is voiced when he declares that, unless God Himself makes a person a good and genuine theologian, it is impossible to become one.³²⁾ And unless God enfolds theologians in His preserving grace, they are not safe, even if they had attained the highest degree of perfection in theology.³³⁾

The publican, in his contrite and trustful attitude before God, appears to Luther as "ein trefflich Meisterstueck der hohen geistlichen Weisheit oder Theologie."³⁴⁾ That which ultimately makes persons theologians is begun for them in the birth hour of the new life, and is fostered and nurtured into maturity and robustness throughout the new life and by means of the same. The specious learning displayed in idle disputations of university professors, with the professional jealousy which it engendered, and the conceit and arrogance which it begot, Luther viewed with unutterable loathing. The friar who dawdled away his worthless life brooding over his Thomas or his Scotus was an object of pity to Luther and filled his heart with sadness. In his estimation, not he is a theologian who

27) XXII, 710.

28) V, 75.

29) XXII, 631 f.

30) XXII, 9.

31) XXII, 1567.

32) XXII, 1481.

33) IX, 158.

34) XI, 1513.

knows great things and teaches much, but who leads a saintly life as becomes a doctor of divinity; and it is not by comprehending and contemplating and much book-lore, but by living, yea, by dying that one becomes a theologian.³⁵⁾ For a person to imagine that he can comprehend invisible matters by means of the visible world, is not the way to become a theologian; the reverse would lead to success: the visible and inferior matters of this world may be properly comprehended through the spiritual wisdom, to which we are educated by crosses and sufferings.³⁶⁾ Theologians who begin to speculate in divine matters, which are too high for them, are inviting Satan's fate, and will meet it.³⁷⁾ True and Christian theology does not present God to us in His majesty, nor does it bid us search out His essence, but to know His will which He has declared to us through Christ.³⁸⁾ Speculative theology guided by reason Luther relegates to the regions of diabolical spirits.³⁹⁾ He has no respect for Zwingli and Oecolampadius, because they speculate and judge matters by their reason.⁴⁰⁾ To maintain such a thesis as this: The just shall live by his faith, against scoffers requires a very high degree of skill; it cannot be done by masters of grammar, but only by theologians.⁴¹⁾ In extreme form we hear Luther express his disgust of a purely intellectual conception of theology, when he asserts that in order to be theological a thing must be diametrically opposed to reason and purely divine, and that a person must become a fool in order to be a theologian. Accordingly, he holds that the sophists in the schools do not know what they are saying when they speak about the three leading virtues of a theologian; for if they could understand them, those virtues would cease to be theological.⁴²⁾ Theology does not depend upon what a person sees or hears, but it takes its beginning when a person hears and believes the Word of God. A theologian might be steeped in the knowledge of the whole world, yet that would

35) IV, 202. 455.

38) IX, 48.

41) XXII, 1535.

36) XVIII, 38 f.

39) XXII, 9.

42) XXII, 1840. 500.

37) IV, 699.

40) XXII, 631.

not enable him to accomplish anything as a theologian; he must fail in every effort, if he does not enter upon it by hearing and believing the Word of God.⁴³⁾ What is required in theology Luther in one place sums up thus: You must hear, believe, and firmly cling with your heart to this belief, that God is true, no matter how unreasonable His teachings in Scripture may seem to you.⁴⁴⁾ Theology knows of only one rule, which is her chief article, *viz.*, true faith and trust in Jesus Christ; "wer die nicht wohl inne hat, der ist kein Theologus."⁴⁵⁾ Concerning himself he declared that neither his grammar knowledge nor his proficiency in Hebrew could have given him what ability and skill in theology he possessed, but only his faith in Christ and, in particular, his conviction that Christ is the Lord of whom Scripture speaks so often.⁴⁶⁾ To sum up, faith, which rests upon what the theologian's eye beholds black on white on the open Bible page before him, and asks for no other evidence, faith, *e. g.*, in God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is the foundation of theology, yea, is true theology and genuine research ("das rechte Forscherleben").⁴⁷⁾

Such faith is accompanied by every mark of a truly godly life. "Zu einem Theologen gehoeret ein frommer Mann," is one of Luther's axiomatic utterances.⁴⁸⁾ Selfishness, self-assertion, self-aggrandizement, are incompatible with the theological habitude, and destroy it; on the other hand, self-abasement, self-surrender, self-abnegation, are to the theological aptitude what the dew of Hermon was to the plains at its base. When a theologian begins to be dissatisfied with himself, when his literary productions and his efforts as a teacher appear quite inferior to him, then, says Luther, you may begin to hope that you have made a beginning as a theologian.⁴⁹⁾ His practical experience leads him to say that God occasionally suffers philosophers, jurists, physicians, poets, artists, etc., to achieve great honor, but He will in no way tolerate an ambitious theo-

43) VIII, 37.

44) V, 457.

45) XXII, 481.

46) XXII, 1657.

47) XXII, 1956. 1986.

48) XXII, 694.

49) XIV, 436.

logian; He allows their ambition to consume them, and abases them, so that, instead of becoming famous, they become infamous.⁵⁰⁾ If a theologian were to attempt to gather praise or pelf from his labors in the Word of God, that would be like picking red-hot coals from a furnace; he would surely be burned.⁵¹⁾ Yea, Luther considers a haughty and ambitious theologian a madman, because he seeks his own honor in a profession that has been ordained solely for the honor of God; and his contemptible arrogance Luther regards as the source of a host of evils.⁵²⁾ And there is a fine scorn and sarcasm in the answer he conveyed to his conceited opponents at Zwickau when he tells them he would give the costly ring on his finger, and the finger too, if he could know as much theology as the gentlemen at Zwickau imagined they did.⁵³⁾

Think of Aristotle, or Hegel, or Kant inculcating maxims like these, and on such grounds!

Luther's words regarding the true theological method: *Oratio, meditatio, tentatio faciunt theologum*,⁵⁴⁾ were for two hundred years a cherished motto by which theological faculties would invite the matriculating newcomer to guide his studies. It is a saying remarkable alike for its brevity, comprehensiveness, and—worthlessness from the view-point of science. Truer words were never spoken to the young man who comes to hear theology; but imagine advice of this sort being given to a prospective jurist: Besides studying your Justinian, and Cujacius, and Blackstone you must pray for illumination from on high, and then you will not be a jurist after all, unless you are thoroughly hated by men for your juridical labors. Far be it from us to depreciate the value of prayer and tribulation also to the jurist. Godliness is profitable unto all things. "Pray without ceasing!" was spoken also to godfearing attorneys. And adversity has its sweet uses also to the Chief Justice. Nor do these things affect merely the Christian, but also the professional standing of the jurist; for godliness has

50) XXII, 656. 1014. 1030.

51) XXII, 49. 1030 f.

52) XXII, 1087. 1042.

53) XXII, 1890.

54) XIV, 434.

the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come. Nevertheless, the commendation of prayer and tribulation to the theologian carries a more serious import. It is possible to be a good lawyer without the use of a prayerbook. The world has known eminent lawyers who professed no religion. But a non-praying theologian must be considered an abnormality. And a theologian without troubles arising from his profession would be such a strange spectacle that an explanation would be called for.

It behooves a theologian to engage constantly in prayer, says Luther, for two reasons: 1. because the subject-matters which engage his attention are very exalted and sublime matters; 2. because the devil is assailing him unceasingly.⁵⁵⁾ We poor theologians, he exclaims in Table Talk, must get down on our knees and pray, every time we are about to preach a sermon; jurists do not do this.⁵⁶⁾ The proper manner for engaging successfully in the study of theology, in Luther's opinion, is to have a fixed time for prayer in the morning and in the evening, and to read a few chapters of the Bible at the same time.⁵⁷⁾

The theologian's highest concern, however, must be to become thoroughly founded and grounded in the Holy Scriptures. He must be well versed in the text of Scripture, and follow this principle, that spiritual matters are not matters for dispute.⁵⁸⁾ He must carefully note the *modus loquendi* of Scripture.⁵⁹⁾ Accordingly, he defines theologians as "aus Gott Redende."⁶⁰⁾ A theologian must hit the mark, "muss das punctum mathematicum treffen," by saying: Thus it is written in God's Word.⁶¹⁾ Luther would call that a hybrid theology which does not distinguish between matters revealed in Scripture and such as are not.⁶²⁾ He suggests a plan for reading the Bible systematically, in order to be able to study theology successfully.⁶³⁾ When at a banquet with the Duke of Anhalt he spoke of nothing

55) IV, 1906.

56) XXII, 534.

57) XXII, 1862.

58) V, 456; XXII, 6. 7. (Comp. IV, 666.)

59) XVIII, 838. 856.

60) XVIII, 559.

61) XXII, 370.

62) II, 1829; XIX, 821.

63) XXII, 1862.

else than the Word of God; this banquet Luther calls "a theological banquet."⁶⁴⁾

Luther is aware that Scripture may exhaust the patience of its student before the student exhausts its contents. Accordingly, he warns the student: Beware of tedium, and do not imagine that because you have read your text once and again you have read it sufficiently; such reading will not make you a respectable theologian.⁶⁵⁾ Referring to his own example, he declares that he did not take theology by storm in one bold onrush, but by digging deeper and deeper into God's Word. After he had studied theology twenty years, he could not adequately explain the distinction between Law and Gospel. One can never finish learning God's Word; new wonders are opening up in its pages all the time.⁶⁶⁾

Luther recognizes emphases in Scripture, *e. g.*, John 3, 16,⁶⁷⁾ the doctrine of universal grace,⁶⁸⁾ of sin,⁶⁹⁾ of the Gospel,⁷⁰⁾ of the two kinds of righteousness which a Christian possesses,⁷¹⁾ of faith and love,⁷²⁾ but chiefly of Christ and His atoning work.⁷³⁾ With the Manger-Child he would have the theologian begin his studies and follow the Child in His progress and grow up with Him, then compare diligently the account of His suffering, comparing the Old Testament with the New, especially with John and Paul, and thus become a theologian who can hit the *punctum mathematicum* by saying: There is a righteousness for us, and Jesus Christ is that righteousness; for He is the end of the Law for righteousness to every one that believeth.⁷⁴⁾

Partly as aids to the forming of the habitus theologicus, partly for exercising their judgment Luther recommends the reading of the church-fathers, however, with critical discrimination,⁷⁵⁾ and of Melancthon's *Loci*, which he calls an excellent book. Whoever has well memorized ("gar im Kopfe

64) XXII, 1221.

65) XIV, 435.

66) XXII, 59. 421. 690.

67) XI, 1103; XIII, 660. 2103.

68) I, 1029.

69) II, 1525.

70) II, 1890.

71) IX, 21. 25.

72) IX, 671.

73) VI, 838; XXII, 5; IV, 550.

74) XXII, 692. 294. 370.

75) I, 285; XXII, 1834.

hat") the Bible and the *Loci Communes* is on the royal highway to theology.⁷⁶⁾ And Luther insists that his young theologians should study Hebrew and the sacred languages.⁷⁷⁾

Luther has much to say about *theologia crucis*. The final schooling which a theologian receives, and which makes him efficient in theology, are those trials of faith which come to him *because* of his calling. Luther holds that he has to thank "his papists" for very much: by the devil's malice they have so bruised, crushed, and terrified him that they have made a fair theologian of him.⁷⁸⁾ From his own experience he draws the conclusion, that unless the cross is laid upon us and the devil is chasing us so that we are run to cover in Scripture, we are only speculative theologians, who are perambulating with reason on their arm.⁷⁹⁾ Many shun afflictions, and are casting up all sorts of curious questions which please their fancy; such are traveling a perilous path.⁸⁰⁾

However, spite of all humiliating experiences Luther is convinced that these bruised theologians are the most valuable members of the teaching force at the university. The jurists ought to doff their caps to them, for it's the theologians that fill and maintain the universities.⁸¹⁾ Theology offers life and salvation, while every other study merely serves for the support of the body.⁸²⁾

The view of theology outlined in the foregoing paragraphs was incorporated in the faith of the young Lutheran Church. Thus thought, spoke, and acted all her theologians. While Melancthon appears inclined to grant a larger scope to philosophy, and frequently in his letters boasts of the comfort which it affords him in his troubles, he, too, acknowledges that only ancillary rights can be accorded to philosophy in the domain of theology. Luther's sentiments regarding the relation of philosophy to theology are echoed at the funeral of Hutter, when Balthasar Meisner in his oration declares: "We

76) XIV, 438; XXII, 693.

77) XXII, 692; XIV, 774.

78) XIV, 436.

79) XXII, 49. 59. 501; IV, 1906.

80) IV, 698 f.

81) XXII, 972. 1523.

82) XXII, 1515.

need philosophy, but not overmuch; we need philosophy, but not exclusively; we need philosophy, but it must be pursued correctly, soberly, and in a spirit of submission.”⁸³⁾

“We cannot join hands with those who, essaying to explain the nature of theology, have recourse to and consult the habitudes which Aristotle has enumerated in the Sixth Book of his *Nicomachean Ethics*,”⁸⁴⁾ declares honest old Brochmand, the primate in his day of the Lutheran Church of Denmark. And because the theologians of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are often represented as men of inferior training and culture, it may be well to note, as we did in the case of Luther, that Brochmand was considered a man of erudition, a graduate of several universities and in the front ranks of the learned profession of his day. A. Michelsen says of him: “Of his capacity as a public teacher Bishop E. Pontoppidan has handed down the following judgment: ‘Not until Brochmand came did the study of theology at the University of Copenhagen begin to flourish.’ In the history of Danish literature Brochmand’s age is usually termed ‘the learned epoch;’ all learning in those days, however, was of a theological character, and Brochmand was regarded as the most learned theologian of the country. The theological development of Denmark had step by step followed that through which Germany, the mother-country of the Reformation, had passed. The milder ‘Philippist’ tendency, which had passed away with the death of Niels Hemmingsen in 1600, had been succeeded by a reign of rigid orthodoxy, and Brochmand was its standard-bearer. His guiding stars and models were Luther; next, the Form of Concord (although the Danish Church did not adopt this confessional standard); next, L. Hutter, Aegidius Hun-

83) *Philosophandum est, sed ne quid nimis; philosophandum est, sed non solum; philosophandum est, sed recte et sobrie et submisse.* R. E.² 9, 471.

84) *Non possumus cum his facere, qui naturam Theologiae explicaturi, habitus Aristotelicos, enumeratos lib. 6. Ethic. Nicomachicorum, ad eunt et consulunt.* (Casp. Erasm. Brochmand, *Universae Theologiae Systema.* Lips. 1638. Proleg. Sect. III.)

nius, Martin Chemnitz, Johann Gerhard (who received a call to Denmark about this time). Brochmand himself, however, through his book, *Universae theologiae Systema*, published for the last time and in a sixth edition at Ulm in 1658, became one of the greatest systematic theologians of that age of rigid and logically precise systems."⁸⁵⁾

We have, in the foregoing citation from Brochmand, not the rant of a science-hater or the ignorant vamping of an unlettered person, but the mature judgment of a learned man who stands before us steeped in all the knowledge of his age, who has studied philosophy, rhetoric, the sciences, history, has visited many lands and universities, and is looked up to by his contemporaries as an encyclopedic mind. It is not from lack of information, but from deep insight that this scholar when he speaks as a theologian demurs to the application of Aristotelian laws and rules to the study of theology.

Echoes from the blast which Luther had drawn are heard in Gerhard's, Quenstedt's, Calov's writings. Baier, who calls the *habitus theologiae revelatae* a science, is careful to add, "if not in the primary and strict sense of the term, at least in a laxer meaning," and this meaning, he declares, excludes the Aristotelian conception of science, which works with self-evident principles and arrives at conclusions that are necessarily correct.⁸⁶⁾ The echo gradually dies away in the noise with which Rationalism begins to fill Luther's land. Buddeus appears restive when he approaches the question: What is the genus of theology? He calls the question an *otiosa altercatio*, an idle wrangling; he maintains that theology is a science in a Scriptural sense (Col. 1, 9. 10; Tit. 1, 1); however, he, too, rejects the Aristotelian concept of theology, because theology must always lack the *evidentia objecti*, the evident quality of its subject-matter, for which it can offer only the *evidentia testimonii*, the evidence of the divine Scriptures.⁸⁷⁾

85) R. E.² 2, 635.

86) *Compendium Theol. Pos.*, ed. Preuss, p. 19—21.

87) *Institutiones theol.-dogm.* Lips. 1724, p. 53. 55. 57.

When the dogma of the verbal and plenary inspiration was overthrown, the old Lutheran view of what constitutes theology also passed away in Germany and the countries which bowed to the influence of German neo-theology. Then a strange thing happened: the old view was brought out again in far-away America. Dr. Walther, not because he habitually bowed to the authority of the older dogmaticians of the Church, but because he found in their definition of theology the true reflex of the Scriptural idea, resuscitated the buried definition,⁸⁸⁾ taught it to two generations of American theologians, and made it a distinctive feature of American Lutheranism. His successors have followed him,⁸⁹⁾ and to this day in the theological schools of the Synodical Conference of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America and of the church bodies in fellowship with the same this definition is accepted: *Theologia est habitus practicus θεόσδοτος.*
