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BIBLIOLOGY.

(Concluded.)

The doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture, the essentials of which have been presented in our last issue, is the cardinal topic of Bibliology. According to this doctrine, the Bible was written by divine inspiration¹⁾ inasmuch as the inspired penmen²⁾ performed their work as the personal organs³⁾ of God,⁴⁾ especially of the Holy Spirit,⁵⁾ who not only prompted and actuated them toward writing what they wrote,⁶⁾ but also suggested to them both the thoughts and the words they uttered as they wrote.⁷⁾

1) 1 Tim. 3, 16.

2) Rom. 15, 15. 1 Cor. 5, 9. 2 Cor. 2, 3. 4. 9. Gal. 1, 20. Phil. 3, 1. 1 Tim. 3, 14. 1 John 1, 4; 2, 1. 13. John 5, 46. 47. Luke 3, 4. Matt. 13, 14; 15, 7. Luke 20, 42.

3) Matt. 2, 5. 17; 8, 17; 12, 17; 13, 35; 24, 15; 27, 9. 35. Acts 2, 16; al.

4) Matt. 1, 22. Acts 4, 24. 25. Hebr. 4, 7. Rom. 9, 25; 1, 2.

5) Acts 1, 16; 28, 25. 2 Sam. 23, 1. 2. 2 Pet. 1, 19—21. 1 Pet. 1, 11. 12. Matt. 13, 11. Luke 12, 12.

6) 2 Pet. 1, 21. 2 Tim. 3, 16. Rom. 15, 18. 19. Gal. 1, 11. Jer. 30, 2.

7) Jer. 30, 2. Rom. 15, 18. 1 Thess. 2, 13. Acts 2, 4. 2 Pet. 1, 19—21. John 10, 34. 35. Matt. 22, 43. 44. Rom. 15, 9—12. Gal. 3, 16. Rom. 10, 16. 1 Pet. 3, 6. Hebr. 12, 26. 27; 8, 8. 13; 7, 20. 21; 4, 7. Rom. 4, 6. 7. 9. Eph. 4, 8. 9. John 7, 42. Luke 16, 17.

Inspiration, then, is not identical with revelation. The one may be without the other, or the two may also go together. Abraham had revelation without inspiration;¹⁾ Moses and Paul wrote some things under inspiration without revelation,²⁾ and other things by both revelation and inspiration.³⁾ Neither is inspiration the same as illumination, the latter being common to all Christians,⁴⁾ while the former was restricted to the holy men of God by whom the holy Scriptures were given for our enlightenment.⁵⁾ A Scripture based upon or sprung from revelation only or resulting from illumination would not be simply and in the scriptural sense the word of God. On the other hand, inspiration does not imply a suspension or extinction of the personality or individuality of the organs employed by the Spirit of God. It is not without a peculiar purpose that God has given us the Old Testament by a variety of organs, Moses, David, Isaiah and other prophets, and the New Testament by four different evangelists and several apostles, and that Paul was not prompted to write all his epistles in the same frame of mind and under the same circumstances. God has, so to say, given us the benefit of the various talents and peculiar graces of a multitude of holy men in the composition of His own Book, thus making it an instrument of many stops varying in quality and volume of tone, but all of them sounded by the same breath and responding to the touch of the same hand upon the keys, all the melodies and harmonies originating in the same mind, the Spirit of Truth. Even when Paul gives us his judgment or "opinion,"⁶⁾ as distinguished from the commandments of God,⁷⁾ it is because God would have him speak what he there speaks, and

1) Gen. 12, 1—3.

2) Exod. 3, 1. Rom. 1, 13; 16, 1 ff. 1 Cor. 1, 14—16.

3) Gen. 1—3. 2 Thess. 2, 3—12.

4) Eph. 1, 18; 3, 9; 5, 18.

5) 2 Pet. 1, 19—21. 1 Pet. 1, 11. 12.

6) γνώμη, 1 Cor. 7, 25. 40.

7) 1 Cor. 7, 25: ἐπιταγήν κυρίου οὐκ ἔχω.

just as he speaks, "for our profit,"¹⁾ and the Spirit of God did not in that moment withdraw his inspiring influence from the apostle, who, as one who "has the Spirit of God,"²⁾ utters what, though not intended as a "commandment of the Lord," is nevertheless given by inspiration of God. When Paul speaks of *his* expectation and hope and joy and desire,³⁾ it is because God would tell us in his word what was in the heart of his servant and apostle, even as he inspired David to utter the joy and hope and anguish of his soul in words suggested by the Spirit of God, that such Scripture also should be profitable for consolation, for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, as truly as the Sermon on the Mount or the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah.

But when we say that the doctrine of inspiration is the cardinal topic of Bibliology, we would not be understood to assert that the other points of doctrine which come under this head must be obtained and established by deduction from that central doctrine. That the doctrines of the authority, the perspicuity, the efficacy, the sufficiency, and the purposes of the Bible are in a measure implied in the statement that the Bible is the inspired word of God, is true; but it is equally true that all these points of doctrine are also explicitly set forth in express statements of Scripture, and it is from such explicit *dicta* that we derive such points of doctrine as theological truths.

The *Authority* of the Bible is that property whereby the Bible justly claims unrestricted acceptance of all its statements,⁴⁾ full assent to all its teachings,⁵⁾ unwavering confidence in all its promises,⁶⁾ willing obedience to all its demands by those whom they concern;⁷⁾ the prerogative by

1) 1 Cor. 7, 35.

2) 1 Cor. 7, 40.

3) Phil. 1, 20; 2, 2. Rom. 10, 1.

4) John 10, 35. Luke 24, 25. — Ps. 119, 160. 140. 151.

5) 2 Tim. 3, 16. 2 Thess. 2, 15. Luke 24, 25—27; 16, 29—31.

6) 1 Thess. 2, 13. 2 Cor. 1, 20. Tit. 1, 2. 3. 2 Thess. 2, 15.

7) Deut. 12, 32; 5, 9. 10. Exod. 20, 5. 6. Jam. 2, 10. Josh. 1, 8.

which it is the only infallible source and norm of doctrine¹⁾ and rule of life.²⁾—To doubt, or to lead others to doubt, or in any way to set aside any word of God, is the devil's theology, which the father of lies taught and practiced in Paradise³⁾ and in the desert,⁴⁾ and which in theory and practice permeates the rationalistic and syncretistic theology of to-day, while true theology says with David: "My heart standeth in awe of thy word."⁵⁾

The *Perspicuity* of the Bible is that clearness of holy writ which renders all the doctrines and precepts laid down in the inspired word freely accessible to every reader or hearer of average intelligence and sufficient knowledge of the languages employed and of a mind not in a manner pre-occupied by error as to preclude the apprehension of the truths themselves however clearly set forth in words of human speech.⁶⁾

The *Efficacy* of the Bible is that property by which the Bible has indissolubly united⁷⁾ with the true and genuine sense expressed in its words⁸⁾ the power of the Holy Spirit,⁹⁾ who has made it for all times the ordinary means by which he operates¹⁰⁾ on and in the hearts and minds of those who properly hear or read it.¹¹⁾

The *Sufficiency* of the Bible is that perfection according to which the Bible contains all that is necessary for the achievement of its ends and aims.¹²⁾

1) Luke 16, 29. 2 Tim. 3, 15—17. Jer. 8, 9; 23, 16.—1 Cor. 14, 37. Is. 8, 19. 20. Gal. 1, 8. Acts 17, 11; 15, 14. 15.

2) Luke 16, 29. 2 Tim. 3, 16. 3) Gen. 3, 1. 4. 5.

4) Matt. 4, 3—10. Luke 4, 3—12. 5) Ps. 119, 161.

6) Ps. 119, 105; 130. 2 Pet. 1, 19. Ps. 19, 8. Eph. 3, 3. 4. John 8, 31. 32.—2 Cor. 4, 3. 4. John 8, 43—45. 47. 2 Pet. 3, 15. 16.

7) Rom. 1, 16. 1 Thess. 2, 13.

8) Eph. 3, 3. 4. Acts 8, 30. 31. 34.

9) Rom. 1, 16. 1 Thess. 1, 5.

10) Ps. 19, 8; 119, 105. 130. 2 Pet. 1, 19. 2 Tim. 3, 16. 17.

11) Rev. 1, 3. Eph. 3, 3. 4. John 7, 17.

12) Is. 8, 20. Luke 16, 29—31. 2 Tim. 3, 16. 17.

The *Purposes* of the Bible are, to convey to the understanding of men the truths and precepts of Scripture;¹⁾ to convert the unregenerate,²⁾ to preserve and strengthen the faith of the regenerate,³⁾ to rear them in holiness of life,⁴⁾ to afford them consolation in their afflictions,⁵⁾ and to furnish weapons of offense and defense to combat error and falsehood conflicting with God's truth,⁶⁾ and all this for the glory of God and for man's eternal salvation.⁷⁾

It is not our purpose here to balance accounts with all the various objections raised against the several bibliological statements laid down in this series of definitions descriptive of the properties and purposes of the Bible. In fact, the only stricture we could not avoid to face would be that we had failed to substantiate a specified point by the testimony of Scripture. We repeat that Bibliology is a matter of faith, not of opinion or reasoning, and there is no essential difference between Bibliology and Christology in this respect. If holy Scripture is "profitable for doctrine" at all, it is certainly and first of all profitable for doctrine concerning itself, its origin, properties, and purposes, and one single plain *dictum* of Scripture is fully and amply sufficient to establish any point of doctrine therein set forth, as surely as "all Scripture," *πᾶσα γραφή*, each and every Scripture, every word that is written by inspiration of God, is profitable for doctrine, and "cannot be broken,"⁸⁾ being the word of God, who is at all times and everywhere *ἀψευδὴς θεός*,⁹⁾ who can neither err nor lie.

1) Eph. 3, 3. 4. Rom. 3, 20. Luke 24, 25—27. 2 Tim. 3, 16. Rom. 15, 4. 2 Tim. 3, 15. Ps. 119, 104. 130. 19, 8.

2) Ps. 19, 7. Luke 16, 29—31. 2 Chron. 34, 27.

3) Luke 24, 25—27. John 20, 31.

4) 2 Tim. 3, 16. 17. John 17, 17. Ps. 119, 9. 43 f.

5) Rom. 15, 4. Ps. 119, 49 f. 92.

6) Acts 18, 24. 28. 2 Tim. 3, 16. Ps. 119, 41—43.

7) John 20, 31; 5, 39. 2 Tim. 3, 15. —Ps. 138, 1 f. 4; 119, 171.

8) 2 Tim. 3, 16. John 10, 35.

9) Tit. 1, 2.

It is, therefore, no argument at all, when the impugn-ers of our Bibliology as of our Theology at large object that our mode of establishing doctrines by quoting detached passages of Scripture is inadmissible, that only the Bible in its entirety, "*das Schriftganze*," and not such "scraps and particles of Scripture," can establish the character and claims of Scripture. This effort to get rid of the testimony of the Bible cannot even bear the test of common sense. We hold that the Constitution of the United States is the established will, not of an individual or of an assembly, but of the *people of this country*. How do we know this, or how are we to prove our assertion? Simply from and by the words of the Constitution, which says in its Preamble: "*We, the people of the United States . . . do ordain and establish this Constitution.*" This quotation has lost nothing whatever of its pertinence or force by the omission indicated, nor by the fact that the whole document is not quoted at length, provided that the quotation be really a true and complete statement of that document to the point at issue. The fact is in this case that while by the above quotation we have made our point, we might quote the whole document, omitting those words of the Preamble, and fail to make our point. But if we would know or show what the Constitution says on the powers of the President, we should turn, not to the Preamble nor to the First Amendment, but to Art. II, Sect. 2 and 3, and only a fool would find fault with us. Thus, also, when we would know and show what the Bible teaches concerning its origin, authority, etc., it is certainly very proper that we investigate, quote, and expound those passages which are intended to give us and others light on those subjects, however long or short, few or many, such passages may be. And for this practice we have fully sufficient precedent in Scripture itself, in the instances too numerous to quote, where Christ and the Apostles refer to texts from Moses and the Prophets. That such texts are cited without their context does not im-

ply a disregard of the context; it is often by a very careful consideration of the context and the real and verbal parallels that the dogmatician will find and show forth the finest points of doctrine contained in the text, and he will be a sorry dogmatician who neglects exegetical theology. But though a richer light may be shed upon a text from its context, it must not be forgotten that the text which is a *sedes doctrinae* is also in itself a light, is true in itself, and has its divine authority in itself, because of its own divine origin, not by virtue of its context. To reject even a detached statement of Scripture or the sense conveyed by the terms thereof, is to reject the word of God, and the simple sentence, "God is love,"¹⁾ is in and by itself as truly Scripture, a light unto our path and the power of God, as the whole epistle of St. John or any book of Scripture or all the Scriptures of both Testaments taken together. All this is also substantiated by express testimony of Scripture, when Christ and St. John apply the term "Scripture" to detached passages of the written word,²⁾ Scripture which cannot be broken, Scripture which must be fulfilled.

But while we thus maintain the unquestionable propriety of the use we make of particular texts of Scripture as *sedes doctrinae*, as source and norm of doctrine in Bibliology and elsewhere, we are fully aware of a vast difference between certain books and passages of Scripture and others of equal authority, but of lesser clearness and importance. The same degrees of clearness and importance do not always go together. "One star differeth from another star in glory."³⁾ Vega and Altair are stars of the first magnitude, and the Polar star is not; but the latter has been sought and found and followed by thousands who never knew the names or places of either of the former. Thus also 2 Thess. 2, 3 ff., though containing some clauses which have been

1) 1 John 4, 8. 16.

2) John 10, 35; cf. Ps. 82, 6; and John 19. 37; cf. Zech. 12, 10.

3) 1 Cor. 15, 41.

variously interpreted also by orthodox theologians, is doubtless of greater importance than many very plain passages in Joshua and Judges. But also among texts treating of the same subjects, there are those of greater and those of lesser clearness. What Daniel and the Apocalypse say of Antichrist is less clear than what we have in 2 Thess. 2. In Isaiah 53 the vicarious atonement is more clearly taught than in the Messianic psalms. "*Novum Testamentum in Vetere latet, Vetus in Novo patet.*" Christ spoke in parables sometimes, at other times he spoke plainly and directly, and speeches of both kinds are recorded in the Gospels. And here it should be noted that the cause of the difference may be either in the text, or in the reader, or in both. The way of salvation was revealed in the Old Testament as by moonlight; we see it in the New Testament as in the sunshine at noon. But we have doubtless observed that eyes thereto accustomed see many things by moonlight which the eyes of one coming from a brightly lighted hall will fail to see. Thus we may be sure that God's children in Israel of old saw Christ in the Old Testament far more clearly and distinctly than we do when we read Moses and the Prophets, and some of them even more clearly than many sore-eyed or drowsy Christians see him in the Gospels and St. Paul. A trained eye, accustomed to microscopic research, will see many things by the same light and through the same instrument which will reveal little to the untrained eye and nothing to the eye with a cataract. Thus the Apostles learned to understand many things in Scripture and the teachings of their Master at a later day, although at an earlier day "they understood none of these things, and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken."¹⁾ On the other hand it is true that also in the New Testament, as in the Epistles of St. Paul, there are, as St. Peter says, "some things hard to be under-

1) Luke 18, 34; cf. John 14, 26.

stood."¹⁾ We may think of 2 Thess. 2, as being enigmatic to the Christians of those days, when Antichrist had not yet developed into maturity, and of such chapters as Rom. 9 to 11, which, because of their subject matter, are, as Luther says, strong wine, not intended for infants in spiritual life or in theology. But Luther also points to the days of affliction under the cross as the proper time at which those chapters will be better understood and duly appreciated. You may not see the stars of heaven by day from your parlor windows; but go down to the bottom of a mining shaft and look up, and you will see them. Thus from the depths of sorrow and anguish many of the texts of Scripture often looked upon as obscure or of little consequence become so many kindly lights beaming forth comfort and strength and wisdom from on high. We have personal knowledge of a case in which the troubled conscience of a Christian was relieved by Paul's request to Timothy to bring with him the cloak the apostle had left at Troas,²⁾ a text which has often been set down as of no practical use in the world and too trivial to be looked upon as given by divine inspiration. Many *dicta* of Scripture were brought into prominence by the controversies forced upon Christians and their teachers by errorists within and assailants without the pale of the church, and what may have previously appeared obscure or irrelevant was then on close inspection found to be most telling and convincing, and this increased familiarity with and deeper insight into the inspired word is one of the chief benefits accruing from doctrinal controversies properly conducted. Luther freely gave his many adversaries credit for having driven him to ransack the Scriptures and thus made him far more a *Doctor in Bibliis* than he would otherwise have been.

But does not this same Luther here and there confess that the import of a text in hand is not sufficiently clear to

1) 2 Pet. 3, 16.

2) 2 Tim. 4, 13.

him to permit him to give more than a personal opinion in its interpretation, leaving it to others to do better if they can? Yes, and there is probably no reader or interpreter of Scripture who has not met with more passages than one concerning the meaning or bearing of which he must confess a *non liquet*, although with our more exact and intimate knowledge of the original languages after centuries of philological research many difficulties no longer exist for us which were in Luther's way. Thus the more difficult parts of the holy text are but another incentive toward ever renewed obedience to Christ's admonition: "*Search the Scriptures.*" And it may be safely said that every persistent student of Scripture, especially in the original Hebrew and Greek, may expect to find in God's inexhaustible storehouse this and that which perhaps no other eye had yet discovered, or which, at any rate, has nowhere been pointed out in any commentary or postil within his reach, although no other book has been so largely studied and so extensively expounded as the Bible. Even a lesson which we may ourselves have read and carefully studied ninety and nine times, may reveal to us new beauties as we read or study it the hundredth time.

Nor is the work of searching the Scriptures like working in the gold-diggings, where the precious metal must be by some process separated from the surrounding or intermingled dross. In the earlier Luther we find some things which the later and maturer Luther himself discountenanced and pronounced fit for the fire. But the theology of Moses is as pure as that of Peter, and that of Isaiah as unalloyed as that of Paul. Whatever progress there is, is in quantity, not in quality. The New Testament was not composed to supplant or supersede, much less to correct the Old. Paul "believed all things which are written in the law and in the prophets,"¹⁾ and "said none other things than those

1) Acts 24, 14.

which the prophets and Moses did say should come."¹⁾ The holy Scriptures which Timothy had known from a child, which were the books of the Old Testament, were by the apostle pronounced "able to make him wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus."²⁾ Christ and the apostles often appeal to, but never and in no point disavow the Old Testament Scriptures, nor does Christ correct those who "thought that in them they had eternal life," but admonished them to search those Scriptures.³⁾ Neither did the Old Testament Scripture lack the property of *sufficientia*; the Old Testament was just as truly sufficient for the church of the Old Testament to the fulness of time⁴⁾ as the whole Bible is sufficient for the church to the end of time.⁵⁾ Both, the Old Testament and the New, being with equal truth and in the same sense the word of God,⁶⁾ both are of the same divine *authority* and *efficacy*, and the *purposes* of both are, likewise, the same.⁷⁾ The Bibliology, Theology proper, Cosmology, Christology, Soteriology, and Eschatology of the Old Testament being, therefore, materially the same as of the New, and laid down in both for essentially the same purposes, it is with full propriety that we draw and substantiate our doctrinal statements on all these topics from the Old and the New Testaments alike and indiscriminately and thus employ the whole Bible as the source and norm of doctrine and rule of life.

On the other hand, we concede this dignity *only* to the Bible, the canonical books of the Old and the New Testaments. While we consider a doctrine fully and sufficiently established, though it were clearly and indisputably set forth in but one passage of Scripture, as the doctrine of Christ's

1) Acts 26, 22.

2) 2 Tim. 3, 15.

3) John 5, 39.

4) Luke 16, 29. 31.

5) Hebr. 1, 1. 2.

6) Rom. 3, 2. 2 Tim. 3, 16. — 1 Thess. 2, 13. 2 Thess. 2, 15. — 1 Cor. 14, 37.

7) Ps. 119, 104. 130. Ps. 19, 7. 8. Ps. 119, 9. 43 f. 49 f. 92. Ps. 138, 1 f. 4. Ps. 119, 171. John 5, 39. 2 Tim. 3, 15. 16. Rom. 15, 4. — John 20, 31. 1 John 1, 3. 4; 2, 12—14. Tit. 1, 9.

descent into hell in 1 Pet. 3, 18—20, we deny the dignity of a Christian doctrine to any tenet not taken in all its parts from holy Scripture, though it were built up and confirmed by a score of arguments and with inexorable logic to the full satisfaction of a philosophical mind. For theological truths we do not look to human reason, but “to the law and the testimony,”¹⁾ and to that only. He who would establish and occupy a royal throne in England beside that of her Majesty the Queen would be as truly a rebel as he who would depose the queen and usurp her crown and throne. And, in like manner, to endow a product of philosophical reasoning with the dignity of a Christian doctrine, though without an explicit denial of the authority of Scripture, is an insurrection in the Church of God, who will not give his glory to another.²⁾ For the same reason no interpretation of Scripture can be allowed to stand which is at variance with Scripture or any part thereof; for God cannot be at variance with himself,³⁾ and his word is truth.⁴⁾ Neither must any interpretation as such be allowed to claim authenticity or infallibility, unless it be an interpretation given or furnished by Scripture itself,⁵⁾ which is the infallible word of God and therefore also its own and only authentic and infallible interpreter. Nor is the exclusive right of interpreting the Scriptures and determining their sense and import restricted to any individual or category of men, nor to the church at large, represented in synods and councils; but every Christian and congregation of Christians is competent to search the Scriptures. To Christians and congregations of Christians the apostles directed their epistles, and not only certain chapters, but the entire epistles. St. Paul charges all the Christians in Galatia to

1) Is. 8, 20.

2) Is. 42, 8.

3) 2 Tim. 2, 13.

4) John 17, 17.

5) Matt. 1, 22 f. cf. Is. 7, 14. Luke 4, 21. cf. Is. 61, 1. Gal. 3, 16. cf. Gen. 22, 18. Matt. 13, 37 ff. cf. v. 24—30. Eph. 4, 10 f. cf. Ps. 68, 18. Rom. 11, 6. cf. v. 5, al.

sit in judgment over the doctrine of their teachers and to apply the teachings of Paul as the norm of doctrine, whereby every teacher, and though he be an angel from heaven, must suffer himself to be tried and judged by the Christian people.¹⁾ This is the right of private judgment, not the right of sitting in judgment over the Scripture, but the right of judging teachers and their doctrines by the Scriptures, a right and duty not confined to Popes or Synods or theological Faculties, but which every Christian may and should exercise upon Popes and Synods and theological teachers in chairs and pulpits and in public print. *This* right of private judgment does not violate the dignity of the Bible, but rather acknowledges and reasserts the majesty of the word of God and again presupposes or implies the doctrine of the *authority*, the *perspicuity*, and the *sufficiency* of Scripture.

And thus it is that the written Word is also for all times the safeguard of true liberty of conscience, of which St. Paul speaks Gal. 5, 1. A Christian's conscience must not be bound by anything save the word of God, and every effort of man to put any other constraint upon any man's conscience is a tyrannical usurpation of authority, and tantamount to an insurrection in the church, which the Christians themselves must put down by the sword of the Spirit, the word of God.²⁾ To suffer and tolerate such imposition of a man-made yoke upon his own or another man's neck is not commendable meekness, but reprehensible weakness in a Christian, for which the Apostle severely reprimands the Corinthians and all who expose themselves to like censure.³⁾ A Christian should promptly resent every attempt at such imposition not only as an indignity inflicted upon himself, but also as an affront and insult directed against God and his holy Word, even as a faithful bride will resent as an

1) Gal. 1, 6—9. cf. Acts 17, 11. 12. Matt. 7, 15 ff. Col. 2, 8. 1 John 4, 1.

2) Gal. 5, 1. Col. 2, 16—23.

3) 2 Cor. 11, 1—4. 19. 20.

ignominious offense against herself and her husband any other man's pretensions to that authority over her which no one but her husband may lawfully hold and exercise.¹⁾

But the maintenance and enjoyment of such freedom of conscience is secured to every Christian only inasmuch and forasmuch as the Bible is an authoritative, clear and sufficient rule of life. When a Christian solicits an opinion of a theologian or theological faculty, or when a congregation asks a synod or an officer of synod for assistance in the adjudication of a case of church discipline, the meaning of such requests can only be that those who are so called upon would assist the petitioners in finding and properly applying what God has spoken concerning the question or case at issue, and hence such recourse to such assistance is by no means a setting aside of the exclusive authority, or a denial of the sufficiency, of Scripture in matters of conscience, nor a relinquishment of the right and duty of the congregation and its individual members to apply the scriptural norm, but an earnest endeavor to exercise that right and perform that duty of judging all things according to the law and the testimony, the infallible word of God. The difficulty in such cases is not a lack of clearness and distinctness of the norm, but a vagueness or complexity in the features or circumstances of the case, which renders it difficult to decide in what category and under what rule the matter to be adjudicated should properly come.

But what of the Creeds or Confessions of the church? Do we not term them norms of doctrine and use them as such? We do; but not in the same sense in which we consider Scripture a norm of doctrine. Scripture is *norma normans*; a creed is *norma normata*. The Augsburg Confession is true because it says what Scripture says, and for this and no other reason every doctrine is false which disagrees with what the Augsburg Confession says. In Scripture *God*

1) 2 Cor. 11, 2. Eph. 5, 23 f. John 3, 29.

tells *us* what we *should* believe; in the Confessions *we* tell *others* what we *do* believe. We believe the doctrine we confess, because we know it to be the doctrine of Scripture; and we confess the doctrine we believe, because we would have others know it to be our doctrine. What is the doctrine of Scripture can be ascertained from Scripture only; but what is the doctrine of the Lutheran church can be ascertained from the Lutheran Confessions. The agreement of Lutheran doctrine with holy Scripture stamps the former orthodox; and therefore the disagreement of a doctrine with either stamps that doctrine heterodox. Thus it is that by virtue of their full agreement with Scripture the Lutheran Symbols are applied as a norm of orthodoxy without any disparagement of Scripture or of its normative dignity. To decry the Confessions as a "paper Pope" under the pretense of upholding the majesty of Scripture manifests a grievous ignorance of the nature of the Confessions, or of the Pope, or of both.

In this connection we deem it our duty to touch upon another controverted point. Our fathers have been severely taken to task on both sides of the Atlantic because of our maintenance of the principle that Scripture must be interpreted according to the Symbols of the church. This, it was said, is a palpable perversion of the relation between Scripture and the Confessions, making the latter the norm of the former, elevating the Symbols to the dignity of *norma normans* and degrading Scripture to the position of *norma normata*. What do we say? We say, this grave charge is utterly groundless and rests on an equally grave confusion of terms on the part of our faultfinders. They have simply confounded "interpretation" with "judgment" or "criticism." If we claimed that Scripture must be judged or criticised according to the Confessions, we would stand corrected. But far from maintaining that the Symbols were a norm of *Scripture*, our fathers have held and we still hold that the Confessions are and should be a norm of the *inter-*

pretation of Scriptures; that is, not Scripture itself, but the work of the interpreters or expounders of Scripture, must be approved or rejected according as it is in harmony or at variance with the confessions of the orthodox church. The work of interpretation is human, the work of fallible men. The Confessions of the orthodox church are a correct exhibition of the doctrine of Scripture; or they would not be the Confessions of the *orthodox* church; and that doctrine is therefore divine; or it would not be the doctrine of Scripture, the word of God. Now, which of the two should be normative in its relation to the other, the human work of fallible men, or the divine doctrine of infallible God, Mr. Meyer and other rationalistic commentators, or the doctrine taken from Isaiah and St. Paul? We ask any Christian: is the Apostles' Creed the truth? If it is, are not the words: "The third day He arose again from the dead," sufficient reason for any Christian to reject the elaborate comments of Mr. Renan on the Gospel narrative in his chapter on the resurrection of Christ?¹⁾ Or should he review and remodel, cut down and garble that creed of Christendom according to this or any other interpreter or misinterpreter of Scripture? No. While it is true that the Symbols of the church must be judged by the Scriptures and accepted because of their conformity with Scripture, the divine *norma normans* of all doctrine: it is equally true that the interpretation of Scripture must be in conformity with the doctrine of Scripture or, which is the same, with the correct exhibitions of that doctrine, the Confessions of the orthodox church, and that every interpretation which is incompatible with such doctrine must be false, as being in conflict with Scripture itself, which cannot be broken. Our assailed principle of interpretation is simply that of St. Paul, who says: "*Let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith.*"²⁾ A. G.

1) Renan, The Apostles, ch. 1.

2) Rom. 12, 6: *εἴτε προφητεῖαν, κατὰ τὴν ἀναλογίαν τῆς πίστεως.*