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## The Means of Grace.

With Special Reference to Modernism.

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### Introduction.

"The true treasure of the Church is the holy Gospel of the glory and grace of God." That is the statement made by Luther in Thesis 62 of the Ninety-five Theses. It shows that the great Reformer, as early as 1517, had reached a clear and definite conviction concerning the most important treasure which God gave to His Church on earth. It is not in subjective and mystical experiences of an individual that the strength of the Church lies nor in similar conceptions held by a group of individuals, but in the objective acceptance of the gift of redemption wrought by the vicarious atonement of Jesus Christ. No amount of contemplation will give a person the possession of the reconciliation effected by Christ, and all the excessive religiousness of our days will not take the place of the simple belief in the truth of Scriptures which is demanded by the Lord as the first step in the proper relationship to Him. It was our Lord Jesus Himself who began His public ministry with the call: "Repent ye and believe the Gospel." Mark 1, 15. And the same call goes forth throughout the Scriptures, as when Paul in Rom. 10, 16 and 2 Thess. 1, 8 demands obedience to the Gospel, just as he writes, Eph. 1, 13: "In whom [Christ] ye also trusted, after that ye heard the Word of Truth, the Gospel of your salvation; in whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise."

For that reason the topic which is to be treated in the present essay and in its discussion is of vital, of fundamental importance in the life and work of the Church. When the Ephraimites had been defeated by the Gileadites under the command of Jephthah, as we read in Judges 12, the Gileadites took the passages, that is, the fords of Jordan, before the Ephraimites, challenging every man who wanted to pass over to pronounce the word *Shibboleth*. Since

the people of the West-Jordan country had developed a dialect which caused them to pronounce the word with a sharp sibilant sound, *Sibboleth*, their speech, like that of the Galileans at the time of Jesus, betrayed them. So it is to-day with regard to the doctrine of the Word of God, which includes all the means of grace, the Gospel and the Sacraments. Unless a Christian accepts this Word as the absolute truth and the one guide to salvation, he is bound to plunge into spiritual disaster. It is not without reason that the Scripture itself speaks of "the foundation of the apostles and prophets," for it is this foundation of the infallible Word that gives to both teachers and hearers that calm certainty which will not permit the portals of hell to shake its faith. Many and varied are the enemies who in our days are trying to undermine the foundations, and it will undoubtedly be of the greatest value to us if we rehearse the definite stand of our belief over against the vagaries of the false teachers of all times and of the so-called Modernists in particular.

The following points are to be considered in discussing our topic:—

1. The Scripture doctrine concerning the means of grace.
2. The chief errors of all times concerning the *doctrine* of the means of grace.
3. The chief errors concerning the *outward form* of the means of grace.
4. The specific errors of Modernism.
5. Practical questions and difficulties concerning the means of grace.

### 1.

There is a twofold reason for beginning our discussion with a presentation of the points made by the Bible itself. In the first place, it is always of special interest and value to have the facts of the doctrine of Holy Scriptures in a convenient summary, so that the picture is clear in our own minds. In the second place, it is good to emphasize the need of letting the Bible speak for itself. If we, in receiving letters, should start out with the supposition that every letter we receive is a forgery with which some one is deliberately trying to deceive us, then all human intercourse would become next to impossible. Surely the same courtesy ought to be extended to the great letter of God addressed to the world, wherein He declares to us the love which He bears toward us for the sake of His Son, the Savior of the world.

What does the Bible say of itself? What do we learn from its own pages concerning the means of grace? Those are the questions which must first be answered. And the answer is simple enough if we take it from the pages of the inspired account.

The Bible says of itself that on its roll, on its pages, were written the *words of the Lord*. It is expressly stated that Moses wrote the "words of the Lord," Ex. 24, 4, and that these words were included in the Book of the Covenant. Of the Book of the Law, as written by Moses, the Lord says to Joshua that it shall not depart out of his mouth. Josh. 1, 8. Cp. Josh. 23, 6. The technical term for the commandments and revelations of God in the early days was "the Law of Jehovah," or "the Law and the Testimony," or the "Word," or "the Book." Is. 8, 20: "To the Law and to the Testimony! If they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them." Is. 29, 18: "And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the Book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity and out of darkness." Is. 34, 16: "Seek ye out of the Book of the Lord and read."

This is abundantly supported in the New Testament, for the collection of the Old Testament writings is referred to as "Moses and the prophets," Luke 16, 29. 31; "Moses and all the prophets," Luke 24, 27; "the Law of Moses and the prophets and the Psalms," Luke 24, 44. 45. Time and again Jesus refers to the books of the Old Testament as a definite entity, as a unit which was generally so accepted, even by His bitter enemies, who would have been the last to accept His argument if it had not been in keeping with the truth. He tells the Jews: "Search the Scriptures," John 5, 39, or: "Ye search the Scriptures," in the form of a statement referring to a general practise. He makes an incidental reference, which by virtue of that very fact is all the more emphatic, when He says, with regard to a single word: "The Scripture cannot be broken." John 10, 35.

No less emphatic are the writers of the New Testament in declaring the canonical books of the Old Testament to be the Word of God Himself. St. Paul writes that to the Jews were "committed the oracles of God." Rom. 3, 2. Like a mighty challenge his words to Timothy ring out: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God." 2 Tim. 3, 16. And just as definite is the statement of the Apostle Peter: "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." 2 Pet. 1, 21.

But what about the New Testament? Can we be as certain

of our belief with regard to the writings which were accepted by the Church between the middle of the first and the end of the fourth centuries? We have here, in the first place, Christ's assurance to His disciples. He told them, John 14, 26: "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." John 15, 26: "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of Truth, which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of Me; and ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with Me from the beginning." John 16, 13: "Howbeit when He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth; for He shall not speak of Himself, but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak, and He will show you things to come." Acts 1, 8: "Ye shall receive power, after the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and in Samaria and unto the uttermost parts of the earth." What the apostles by virtue of this commission spoke by word of mouth and what they wrote down in proclaiming the Gospel message, is *the truth of God Himself*.

We have, in this connection, in the second place, the testimony of the men themselves that they were speaking and writing the Word of God. Paul declares that he was "an apostle, not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead." Gal. 1, 1. In the same chapter, vv. 11. 12, he states: "But I certify you, brethren, that the Gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." The same apostle writes: "And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. . . . And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power." 1 Cor. 2, 1. 4. And again: "If any man think himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord." 1 Cor. 14, 37. And again: "When ye received the Word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the Word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe." 1 Thess. 2, 13. Nor is Peter less definite when he writes: "But the Word of the Lord abideth forever. And this is the Word which by the Gospel is preached unto you." 1 Pet. 1, 25.

Of this inspired Word, of the Gospel, the message of salvation, the word of reconciliation, it is *definitely stated that it is a means of grace*. In His great prayer on the evening before His death the Lord states: "Sanctify them through Thy truth; Thy Word is truth." John 17, 17. St. Paul says that the Word of God effectually works in those who believe. Again, he writes to Timothy: "That from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture . . . is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that a man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." 2 Tim. 3, 14—17. Titus 1, 2. 3: "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began, but hath in due time manifested His Word through preaching, which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Savior." This is in exact agreement with the entire Old Testament, as shown in some of the passages quoted above, as well as Is. 55, 10. 11: "So shall My Word be that goeth forth out of My mouth; it shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." With these statements agrees also the passage Heb. 4, 12: "The Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." In short, the doctrine of the Bible concerning the Gospel as a means of grace, as actually conveying to the heart of man the power of the Spirit unto salvation, may well be summarized in the words of St. Paul, Rom. 1, 16: "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth."

This much may be said of the Word as it is conveyed to our minds through the senses of hearing and of sight. The power of the Holy Spirit is in the Word, whether we read it at home or whether we hear it in church. If we but ask the Lord to open our eyes that we may behold the wondrous things out of His Law, as we sit down for our own private devotions, and if we but send up a petition to the Throne of Grace as we enter the church, asking the Lord to grant to our pastor a rich measure of His Holy Spirit to preach the Word with all boldness, as it is meet, and to grant to us the spirit of meekness, that we may take our reason captive under the obedience of Christ and receive with true humility the engrafted Word, which is able to save our souls, Jas. 1, 21, then we

shall experience in richest measure the fact that the Word is truly a means of grace. (Home devotion; regular attendance at church services, etc.)

If men were not so easily subject to doubt and unbelief, it would have been sufficient to have only the Word, as the one means of grace containing the full measure of the wonderful assurance of love and grace through the merits of the Savior. In the Gospel we have the message of salvation which most definitely and adequately assures us that God would have all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth, 1 Tim. 2, 4; for even in the Old Testament He affirmed with an oath that He had no pleasure in the death of the wicked. Ezek. 33, 11. But God knows the weakness of men and has anticipated their doubts. He not only gives us His Word with its assurance of grace and mercy; but He has added to this Word as it was given to men by proclamation and writing certain other means connected with His Word, by which He transmits to men the treasures of His love in such a direct and obvious manner that human doubts and fears are met more than half-way.

A parable will fairly well illustrate the significance of the other means of grace, or the Sacraments, as compared with that of the Word alone. A wealthy man may give to his poor neighbor a clear and unconditional promise that he will give him a certain piece of real estate, a most desirable piece of property. The poor man may rely fully and without question upon the word or message which has been given him; but, at the same time, assurance is made doubly sure, and the entire gift is definitely placed beyond the possibility of a doubt, if the wealthy man causes to be delivered to his neighbor the warranty deed for the property concerned, made out correctly in every detail, with the name of the beneficiary clearly written out, so that the instrument will stand before every court in the state. Or, in a similar way, a man may promise to another a certain number of bonds or other valuable papers, definitely stating that the party of the second part is to be regarded as the possessor of the papers concerned. Yet the beneficiary will never be altogether satisfied with regard to his possession of the bonds until they have been delivered into his hand or until he has received a paper which will satisfy all legal requirements regarding the transaction. This and more is included in the proper appreciation of the Sacraments as additional means of grace.

We have this assurance with regard to Holy Baptism. The Lord Jesus gave the express command: "Go ye, therefore, and

teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." Matt. 28, 19. An exact translation of this Great Commission would cause it to read: Go and make disciples of all nations by baptizing them. The Sacrament of Holy Baptism, by Christ's command, is to be used in making disciples, not as a mere rite of initiation, but as a means which confers discipleship.—Similar commands to baptize are found throughout the New Testament. St. Peter told the multitude on the day of Pentecost: "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." Acts 2, 38: When Saul had received the heavenly vision by which he had been changed from a persecutor to a defender of Christianity, he was told by Ananias: "Arise and be baptized." Acts 22, 16. We see, then, that the command to baptize is definite and specific. It concerns an act that is definitely expected according to the will of God.

To this we must add the direct and express *assurance* concerning the gift of God's grace bestowed by and in Holy Baptism. Our Savior Himself stated: "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Mark 16, 16. Salvation is here clearly attached to the Sacrament, if faith is present. The same is included in the words of Ananias, for to his appeal addressed to Saul: "Arise and be baptized," he adds the statement: "And wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." Acts 22, 16. Thoroughly unmistakable and unambiguous is the statement of Peter: "Be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." Acts 2, 38. In Eph. 5, 25, 26 the apostle writes: "Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word." And Peter bluntly states: "Baptism now also doth save us." 1 Pet. 3, 21.

It must be clear, then, to every reader of the Bible, that Baptism is a means of grace, that, if used according to Christ's institution, in connection with Christ's words, it actually gives to and confers upon every one who believes forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. Jesus says: "Except a man be born of the water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." John 3, 5. It follows that the person reborn of the water and of the Spirit, through Holy Baptism, does enter into the kingdom of God. St. Paul writes to Titus: "According to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost." Titus 3, 5. Here also salvation, the imparting of the blessings of

Christ's redemption, is ascribed to the water of Baptism. And still stronger, in a way, is the word of St. Paul: "As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." Gal. 3, 27. So Christ, the Savior, with the fulness of His redemption, is ours through Baptism. Surely, then, it is a means of grace.

But this is true no less of the Sacrament of the Eucharist, or the Holy Communion. We have there, in the first place, the specific command of Christ: "This do in remembrance of Me." 1 Cor. 11, 25. And in the same paragraph we are told that we should thus show and proclaim the Lord's death, the power of the redemption wrought through His death and sealed by His resurrection, "till He come." The Lord's Supper is to be celebrated in the Church until the Lord's return to the Last Judgment. That is the clear command of the Lord.—But, in the second place, He also shows that this meal is not a mere gesture of remembrance, but also a powerful instrument and means of grace. This appears not only from the statements: "This is My body; this is My blood," Matt. 26, 26—28; Mark 14, 22—24; Luke 22, 19. 20; 1 Cor. 11, 23—29, which clearly speak of the real presence in the Sacrament, but particularly from the explanatory clause which He adds: "Which is given for you . . . which is shed for you for the remission of sins," and from the warning statement of St. Paul with regard to discerning the Lord's body, for "he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord." Luther, therefore, is right in saying of the significance of the Eucharist: "That is shown us by these words: 'Given and shed for you for the remission of sins'; namely, that in the Sacrament forgiveness of sin, life, and salvation are given us through these words. For where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation." So the Lord's Supper likewise is a means of grace, imparting to the believer, receiving the external elements, the blessings of God's mercy in Christ Jesus. These facts, therefore, are bound to influence the attitude of the Christian not only to the Word, but also toward the Sacrament of Holy Baptism and the Holy Communion. (Baptism as soon as possible; comfort of Baptism; frequent attendance at Communion and earnest preparation.)

## 2.

The term Modernism does not necessarily imply that a movement or an idea is modern in the sense of being recent, although we shall eventually arrive at that understanding for the sake of this essay. The devil, who is a liar and the father of lies, has

made it one of the chief points in his campaign against the Lord and His mercy to change the truth of God's Word into falsehood. The fundamental line of reasoning whereby he perverts men is that which he used in the Garden of Eden, when he flung a challenge to Eve's faith: "Yea, hath God said?" That is his one line of approach, that of injecting doubt into the hearts of men regarding the truth of God's Word. And the second is this, that he denies the fatal consequences of rejecting the Bible as the absolute truth: "Ye shall not surely die; for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened." Cp. Gen. 3, 1—5.

It is often stated that attacks on the inspiration of the Bible and on its inherent power as a means of grace are of recent date, since the rise of "higher criticism." But, in a manner of speaking, every deviation from the truth of Scripture from the earliest days to the present time amounts to the same thing, at least in its final effects. It was thus in the early days of Israel's history, when false prophets and dreamers of dreams became a menace to the people of God, in leading them aside from the objective truth of the revealed Word. At that time the Lord warned the believers: "Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams; for the Lord, your God, proveth you, to know whether ye love the Lord, your God, and fear Him and keep His commandments and obey His voice; and ye shall serve Him, and cleave unto Him." Deut. 13, 3. 4. All the false prophets of the Old Testament had, in a measure at least, the spirit of Modernism. They went a step or two beyond Miriam and Aaron, in inquiring: "Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses? hath He not spoken also by us?" Num. 12, 2. They showed the spirit of the false prophets at the time of Micaiah, of whom it is said that there was a lying spirit in their mouth, even though Zedekiah, their leader, challenged Micaiah to produce proof against him. 1 Kings 22, 22—24.

It was this attitude, that of setting aside the truth as revealed by the Lord's servants and substituting therefor their own ideas or that of bringing the false revelations of soothsayers and spiritists into the Church of God that caused Isaiah to testify so sharply against those who were guilty of such practises: "And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits and unto wizards that peep and that mutter, should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead? To the Law and to the Testimony! If they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them." Is. 8, 19. 20. This was merely

speaking along the lines found in the prophecies of Amos, about half a century before, who writes: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord; and they shall wander from sea to sea and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the Word of the Lord and shall not find it." Chap. 8, 11, 12.

After the fall of the Northern Kingdom and just before the destruction of Judah by the troops of Nebuchadnezzar it was especially necessary to point to the dangers which threatened from the modernism of the day, and Jeremiah does so with increasing emphasis. Chap. 7, 3. 4. 8: "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place. Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord, are these. . . . Behold, ye trust in lying words, that cannot profit." Chap. 8, 8, 9: "How do ye say: We are wise, and the Law of the Lord is with us? Lo, certainly in vain made He it; the pen of the scribes is in vain. The wise men are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken; lo, they have rejected the Word of the Lord, and what wisdom is in them?" Chap. 14, 14. 15: "Then the Lord said unto me: The prophets prophesy lies in My name; I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spake unto them; they prophesy unto you a false vision and divination and a thing of naught and the deceit of their heart. Therefore, thus saith the Lord concerning the prophets that prophesy in My name and I sent them not, yet they say, Sword and famine shall not be in this land: By sword and famine shall these prophets be consumed." Chap. 23, 28. 30—32: "The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath My Word, let him speak My Word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord. . . . Therefore, behold, I am against the prophets, saith the Lord, that use their tongues and say, He saith. Behold, I am against them that prophesy false dreams, saith the Lord, and do tell them and cause My people to err by their lies and by their lightness; yet I sent them not, nor commanded them; therefore they shall not profit this people at all, saith the Lord." These are stern words indeed, but words that have not lost their significance and their application in our own day and age.

As we trace the modernistic trend with regard to the Word of the Lord in the further history of the people of God we note, indeed, that in one respect the period after the Exile shows a better

situation than before, namely, in this that open idolatry is no longer found. The reformatory labors of the post-exilic prophets, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, together with the stern measures adopted by Ezra and Nehemiah, also their efforts in behalf of the Old Testament canon, resulted in a high respect for the Word of God and a more thorough appreciation of it as a means of grace. But this was in the course of time offset again, at least in part, by the work of the great Jewish schools and academies, in which the Mishna, or second law, the rabbinical interpretation of the Mosaic Law and certain traditions, together with the Gemara, or commentary by the rabbis on the text of the Mishna, resulted in what later was known as the Talmud, the compendium of Jewish religion. Even at the time of Jesus the "tradition of the elders" had gained an authority in the Jewish Church which placed them beside, or even over, the revelation of Scripture. For that reason our Lord rebuked the Pharisees very earnestly: "For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups; and many other such like things ye do. And He said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God that ye may keep your own tradition. . . . Making the Word of God of none effect through your tradition which ye have delivered; and many such like things do ye." Mark 7, 5—13. Cp. Matt. 15, 2—6. Even in those days, then, the foundations were destroyed, Ps. 11, 3, so that the righteous despaired of keeping the objective and absolute certainty of the Bible as a means of grace.

In the early Church the zeal for the Word of God as the one source and form of doctrine was so great that all its members watched with the greatest anxiety lest some one smuggle into the Church a writing which did not have the full authority of the Lord. Between the middle of the first century, when we find Paul warning the Thessalonians not to be misled by spurious letters, as though sent by him, 2 Thess. 2, 2, down to the end of the fourth century, when the Church agreed on the canon of the New Testament, constant vigilance was necessary lest the certainty of the Word of God and the power of its revealed truth be spoiled by books written by mere men, without the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. How well this constant vigilance did its duty appears from the fact that books like the writings of the Apostolic Fathers (the letters of Clement of Rome, of Ignatius of Antioch, of Polycarp of Smyrna, the Teaching of the Twelve, the Letter of Barnabas, the Shepherd of Hermas, and the Epistle to Diognetus) were discarded, together with a mass of apocryphal material, early so-called gospels, heretical books,

infancy gospels, passion gospels, spurious acts, epistles, and apocalypses (568 pages in the edition by James).

Besides exercising this constant vigilance with regard to the apostolic authority of the accepted books of the New Testament, the early Church was also compelled to take a stand against the efforts of the higher criticism of that day. Thus, the Syrian Gnostic Marcion, shortly after the middle of the second century, attempted to mutilate the canon of the New Testament in the interest of his strange speculations. He compiled a gospel of his own, calling it the "gospel of the Lord," in which he omitted all parts of the genuine gospels which did not agree with his heretical views. By a similar procedure he offered a mutilated edition of the letters of Paul, discarding, however, the Pastoral Letters as well as the epistles of Peter, John, and James. His way of dealing with the question left no objective certainty concerning the books of the New Testament and paved the way for similar efforts at a later date.

Unfortunately the Church itself did not maintain the high standard of vigilance which it had observed during the early centuries. During the Middle Ages tradition was placed on the same plane with the Word of God, with the Church asserting its right to be the interpreter of both and with little importance attached to the written Word. Since the people only in rare cases possessed the Scriptures in a language which they could understand and since preaching in the churches was neglected in an increasing measure, the significance of the Word of God as a means of grace was either not felt or entirely ignored. "If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?" 1 Cor. 14, 8.

The Reformation produced a decided change for the better, especially in the Lutheran Church. In Article V of the Augsburg Confession we read: "That we may obtain this faith, the ministry of teaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments was instituted. For through the Word and Sacraments, as through instruments, the Holy Ghost is given, who works faith when and where it pleases God, in them that hear the Gospel." (*Trigl.*, 45.) Luther's own position with regard to the Gospel is interesting. His unbounded respect for the power of the Word of God is so well known as to require no further comment. Some of his statements have become classical sayings in our circles: "To a single word, yea, to a single letter more importance attaches than to heaven and earth. . . . To me it seems that even a single word makes the whole world too small." (Cp. Pieper, *Christl. Dogmatik*, I, 334 F.)

Unfortunately, however, the spirit of Luther and his coworkers did not live in all his children, and his candid manner of treating textual difficulties in the Bible was misunderstood and abused by later teachers in the land of the Reformation. For it was here that the movement known as "higher criticism" degenerated most rapidly into a subjective and destructive science. Originally intended to be nothing more than the study of the history and the literary structure of the various books of the Bible, it rapidly became a body of preconceived notions and vague theories, having for its avowed purpose the overthrow of the old orthodox position concerning the Word of God as a definite entity and a means of grace. Beginning with a Dutch philosopher, the Jew Spinoza, continued in England by Hobbes and in Holland by Le Clerk, it found very favorable soil in Germany, and the names Eichhorn, De Wette, Vatke, and Wellhausen are synonyms of destructive criticism. The movement spread to England and America, with names like Davidson, Smith, Driver, and Briggs in the front ranks. These men denied the reality of prophecy and the validity of any prophetic statement; they denied the reality of revelation; they were avowed unbelievers of the supernatural; they discredited the Bible from Genesis to Revelation; they were the forerunners and the spiritual fathers of the present-day Modernists, whose theories we shall examine more closely below. But where the Bible is not accepted as the Word of God, it will, of course, not be regarded as a means of grace.

Just as the Bible itself, however, went through various vicissitudes which threatened to deprive it of its inherent power, at least in the doctrine of certain church-bodies, so the Sacraments likewise were subject to a rationalism which denied their validity as means of grace. Concerning Baptism, indeed, there was little trouble for about fifteen centuries, except that its meaning as a bearer of God's grace was falsely understood and overemphasized in the wrong way. Since many believed that the water of Baptism imparted remission of sins in an absolute manner and largely by virtue of the act (*ex opere operato*), they put off their reception into the Church by Baptism until shortly before their death, in order to have pardon for all sins previously committed. But this mechanical view of Baptism was apparently not shared by one of the greatest teachers of the early Church, Augustine; for he writes: "Whence has water so great an efficacy that in touching the body it can cleanse the soul unless by the operation of the Word; not because it is uttered, but because it is believed." During the

Middle Ages an element of uncertainty was brought into both Sacraments by the strange doctrine of intention, according to which an absolute and conscious intention on the part of the officiating priest was necessary to insure the validity of the Sacrament, but otherwise there was nothing to interfere with Baptism as a means of grace.

With the rise of various Reformed sects in the sixteenth century, however, the doctrine of the power of God in Holy Baptism was made an issue. The Augsburg Confession made a clear statement of the position of the Lutherans in the premises: "Of Baptism they teach that it is necessary to salvation and that through Baptism is offered the grace of God and that children are to be baptized, who, being offered to God through Baptism, are received into God's grace. . . . They condemn the Anabaptists, who reject the baptism of children and say that children are saved without Baptism." (Article IX: Of Baptism. *Trigl.*, 47.) This clear expression concerning Holy Baptism as a means of grace was necessary because not only the Anabaptists, but eventually the great majority of Reformed bodies insisted that the Sacrament was a mere external rite, a symbolical act, signifying the reception of a person into the membership of the external Church. Statements to this effect are found in the Catechism of Geneva, in that of Heidelberg, in the Second Helvetic Confession, in Zwingli's *Fidei Ratio*, in the Articles of Religion of the Anglicans, in the Westminster Confession of the Presbyterians, in the Savoy Declaration of the Congregationalists, in the Baptist Confession of the year 1688, in the Articles of Faith of the Methodists, and in other writings of the Reformed denominations. (Cp. Guenther-Fuerbringer, *Symbolik*, 311 ff.)

The Lord's Supper did not fare so well, even in the early Church. It is true that the Apologists, in general, taught the Real Presence in the Eucharist, holding that both the earthly and the heavenly elements were communicated and received in the Lord's Supper. But many of the teachers of the Church began to err in speaking of the Eucharist as a "sacrifice," and many expressions found in their writings paved the way for the doctrine of transubstantiation as it was acknowledged and promulgated by the Lateran Council of 1215 and as it found general acceptance through the establishment of the Corpus Christi Festival at the end of the thirteenth and the beginning of the fourteenth century. This false position, together with the doctrine of the Mass, brought a strange idolatry into the Church and, as a result, many evil consequences.

But when these views were rejected at the time of the Reformation, the Reformed bodies went to extremes also with regard to this doctrine. While the Augsburg Confession of the Lutherans stated: "Of the Supper of the Lord they teach that the body and blood of Christ are truly present [under the bread and wine] and are distributed to those who eat in the Supper of the Lord" (Articles X: Of the Lord's Supper; *Trigl.*, 47), Zwingli thwarted all efforts at union at the Marburg Colloquy, in 1529, by insisting upon his interpretation "signifies" and thereby causing Luther to declare: "Yours is a different spirit from ours."

The spirit of Zwingli and Calvin has persisted in the majority of Reformed bodies, also with regard to the Lord's Supper. They refuse to accept the real presence of Christ's body and blood in the Sacrament, insisting that the earthly elements are mere symbols of the Savior, who is sitting at the right hand of God and can therefore be considered as only spiritually present. To all such bodies, and to members of such bodies who actually believe this false doctrine, the Eucharist is a mere memorial of Christ's death and therefore no means of grace actually conveying to the believers the benefits of Christ's redemption. Also in this respect the Reformed doctrine paved the way for Modernism. (Cp. Guenther-Fuerbringer, *l. c.*, 337 ff.)

(To be concluded.)