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Ein Prediger muss nicht allein *weiden*, also dass er die Schafe unterweise, wie sie rechte Christen sollen sein, sondern auch daneben den Woelfen *wehren*, dass sie die Schafe nicht angreifen und mit falscher Lehre verfuehren und Irrtum einfuehren. — *Luther*.

Es ist kein Ding, das die Leute mehr bei der Kirche behaelt denn die gute Predigt. — *Apologie, Art. 24.*

If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?
1 Cor. 14, 8.

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Introduction to Sacred Theology.

(*Prolegomena.*)

The Nature and Constitution of Sacred Theology.

18. Theology and Academic Freedom.

Modern rationalistic theology demands that the official teachers of the Church, both in the pulpit and in the lecture chair, should be invested with full academic freedom. That is to say, they should be allowed to assert their subjective opinions without any restrictions whatsoever; even Holy Scripture must not be forced upon them as the only source and standard of the faith which they are to inculcate. The ancient Christian rule that in the Christian Church the Word of God alone must be taught is rejected as "servitude of the letter," "unworthy academic coercion," "legalism," etc. (*Buchstabenknechtschaft, unwuerdiger Lehrzwang, gesetzlicher Geist usw.*). However, this demand for academic freedom is in direct opposition to Holy Scripture; it is a freedom that is carnal and ungodly, since it involves full scope to criticize, condemn, and reject the Word of God. The academic freedom which modern rationalistic theology seeks for itself must therefore be repudiated as antichristian and atheistic, for it insists upon independence from God and Christ. As a matter of fact, the true freedom of a Christian consists in the very fact that he has been liberated from his own sin-bound will and has become a servant of Jesus Christ. Rom. 6, 22: "But now being made free from sin and become servants to God." The essence of true Christian liberty is therefore loyalty, obedience, and subjection to the Word of the Lord. John 8, 31. 32: "If ye continue in My Word, then are ye My disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." As soon as the theologian relinquishes the Word of God as his only source and norm, he ceases to be a *δούλος Χριστοῦ*, and becomes a slave of men. He has not obtained freedom at all, but has exchanged the holy service of Christ for the unholy thralldom of human opinions, views, and judgments; in place of the divine Master he now serves a human taskmaster, even if this taskmaster is only his own carnal heart. The enormity implied in the demand for free play to teach one's own subjective views in place of the infallible Word of God appears as we study the solemn demand with which Holy Scripture approaches the Christian theologian. The Word of God affirms:—

1. That the Christian Church till the end of time has only one Teacher, Christ Jesus, the Son of God. Matt. 23, 8: "But be not ye called Rabbi; for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren." As the one Master, or Teacher, Christ commanded His apostles to teach all nations all things whatsoever He had commanded, Matt. 28, 20. Christ's own divine Word as set forth by the holy

prophets and apostles in Holy Scripture is the only saving truth which the Christian Church should believe and proclaim. Gal. 1, 8: "But though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." Eph. 2, 20: "And [ye] are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets." In this manner, Holy Scripture positively asserts that all teaching in the Christian Church should be nothing else than the teaching of God's Word. Negatively, Holy Scripture condemns the inculcation of human opinion in place of the Word of God by calling all those who insist upon teaching doctrine other than Christ teaches in Holy Scripture, antichrists. 1 John 2, 18: "As ye have heard that antichrists shall come, even now are there many antichrists." 2, 22: "Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son." The demand of modern rationalistic theology that the theologian must be given free scope to divulge his own theology is therefore thoroughly anti-Scriptural.

2. All Christians are commanded in clear and unmistakable terms to hear such teachers only as proclaim the Word of God in its complete purity and truth. All theologians who are disloyal to the "words of our Lord Jesus Christ" should be rejected as deceivers, ignoramuses, and enemies of the faith and must be avoided. 2 John 10: "If there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him Godspeed." 1 Tim. 6, 3. 4: "If any man teach otherwise and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, . . . he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting." Rom. 16, 17: "Mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned and avoid them." These warnings apply not only to ministers of the Gospel, but also to theological professors who have been called to instruct the future teachers and preachers of the Christian Church. Also their Christian call and profession requires of them that they be absolutely true to the Word of God in their whole ministry of teaching, John 8, 31. 32.

The disastrous consequences of academic freedom granted to ministers and theological professors are apparent in all churches where such freedom has been in vogue. As a result of this ungodly freedom we find in these denominations 1) hopeless confusion in doctrine and endless wrangling concerning theological problems by which these churches have been made to suffer complete disruption (cp. the denominations in which Modernists and Fundamentalists are engaged in interminable controversy); 2) the absolute denial of the basic Christian truths taught in Holy Scripture, such as the divine inspiration of the Bible, the vicarious atonement of Christ, the justification of a sinner by grace, through faith, the resurrection

of the dead, etc. Academic freedom resulted at once in "progressive theology," that is, in the liberalizing of theology according to the standards of human reason and modern science, until it has become thoroughly atheistic and agnostic in character and refuses to insist even on the heart-inscribed truths of natural religion. Present-day Modernism, which is the direct consequence of academic freedom, is a complete revolt against the sacred theology of God's Word, and the absolute rejection of Biblical Christianity.

The true Christian theologian rejoices in the possession of divine truth as offered in Holy Scripture, by which he has become free from every delusion and error. His constant endeavor is to make known to men bound and perishing in sin the saving and freeing truths of Christ, the divine Liberator of sin-lost men. Loyalty, obedience, and subjection to the Word of God constitute for him the supreme, glorious, and perfect liberty, which he must hold, guard, and protect against all odds. John 8, 36: "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." It is for this reason that he so strenuously repudiates the academic freedom which unbelieving and unfaithful theologians now demand for themselves.

19. Theological Systems.

The peculiar nature of Christian theology has given rise to the question whether it is proper in the field of theology to speak of theological systems. The answer to the question depends of course on the meaning in which the term *system* is used. Christian theology, or doctrine, is indeed a system inasmuch as it presents to the student a complete unit (*ein abgeschlossenes Ganzes*). It is a system inasmuch as it is "an orderly arrangement of parts or elements into a whole," or "an organized body of truth." The one author of Christian theology is the one, true, and living God, who proclaims the divine truth in the Old Testament as in the New Testament, by Moses no less than by Paul, so that Holy Scripture sets forth, not the subjective views of Moses, or Isaiah, or Peter, or Paul, or John, etc., but the sacred doctrine of God Himself. Scripture doctrine is everywhere and in the same degree divine doctrine (*doctrina divina*). Again, in this divine doctrine, clearly and infallibly stated in Holy Scripture, the article of justification by grace, through faith in Christ, is the central teaching, to which the other articles of faith either lead up (*articuli antecedentes*) or point back (*articuli consequentes*). 1 Cor. 2, 2: "I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified." Acts 20, 27: "I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." In the center of Paul's preaching, which, according to his own testimony, embraced "all the counsel of God unto salvation," the doctrine of Christ, crucified for the sins of the world, was basic and pivotal. In view of this close connection of the various Christian doctrines with its central teach-

ing and with one another, a connection which is so intimate that errors in one point must inevitably produce errors also in the others, Christian theology may certainly be called a system. And we apply the term especially to point out not only the absolute unity of the whole body of truth, but also the rigid coherency of its elemental parts. Luther is right when he says: "In philosophy a small error in the beginning is a very serious error in the end. So also in theology a slight error will destroy the whole doctrine. For the doctrine is like a mathematical point; it cannot be divided, that is, it cannot brook either subtraction or addition. Hence the doctrine must be one, certain, perpetual, and round golden ring, in which there is no break. If even the least break occurs, the ring is no longer perfect." (St. Louis Ed., IX, 644 f.) Whoever, for instance, errs with respect to the Holy Trinity must err also with regard to the deity of Christ; or whoever teaches synergism cannot teach in its unadulterated form the doctrine of divine grace. Just because Christian theology is a system, it does not permit any perversion or denial of a single one of its doctrines; for every perversion of its constituent parts must needs destroy the entire system.

Nevertheless Christian theology may not be called a system in the sense in which human systems of knowledge are so called. In science and philosophy a system is "an orderly collection of logically related principles and facts, arranged so as to express the whole range of truth in any department." In that sense sacred theology is not a system; for it is not constructed by human reason on the basis of a given fundamental principle. Its author is not man, but God. In it reason has only an instrumental, not a magisterial, function (*usus instrumentalis, non usus magisterialis*). Nor does it deduce and demonstrate its truths from a given premise or principle, but it merely inculcates the truths set forth in Holy Scripture, with a proper emphasis on the cardinal doctrine of justification by grace. In other words, the analysis and synthesis which the theologian applies never go beyond the Word of God. Wherever Holy Scripture contains *lacunae*, or omissions, the system of the Christian theologian likewise contains *lacunae*, or omissions. The true theologian teaches only what Holy Scripture teaches, not more and not less. His system is only a declaration and statement of Scriptural doctrine.

This is a point of weightiest importance, and only as the theologian continually and conscientiously observes it, will he be kept from the fatal mistake of adding to the Word of God human opinions and doctrines, a perversion of Christian doctrine against which Holy Scripture most earnestly warns. Let the Christian theologian therefore bear in mind the basic truth that the system of Christian doctrine, while it is complete so far as its scope is concerned, that is, so far as it pertains to the salvation of sinners, it nevertheless contains

“missing links”; that is, there remain questions which Holy Scripture does not answer. For example, Holy Scripture sets forth most emphatically the *sola gratia* and the *universalis gratia*; that is to say, sinners are saved alone by grace, and divine grace desires the salvation of all sinners. This being true, the question arises: “Why are not all men saved?” The proposed explanation that the difference lies in men (*aliquid discrimen in homine*), since some are better than others, is most strenuously denied by God’s Word, which declares that all men by nature are in the same guilt (*in eadem culpa*). Rom. 3, 22—24: “For there is no difference; for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” With the same emphasis Holy Scripture denies also the Calvinistic explanation that God has eternally reprobated some to damnation. Hence it is clear that Holy Scripture does not answer the question, *Cur alii, alii non?* This does not mean that Holy Scripture does not give us any information with regard to the question of salvation and damnation. It tells us clearly that, if sinners are saved, they are saved solely by grace and that, if they are lost, they are lost through their own fault. Nevertheless, when we compare two individual sinners, as David and Saul, or Peter and Judas, and ask, “Why was the one saved and the other not?” (*Cur alii prae aliis?*), this question remains unanswered. Nor is it proper for the Christian theologian to endeavor to answer the question; for in that case he must draw on human reason to decide what is properly a matter of divine revelation. Attempts to solve the particular point in question have resulted either in Calvinism, the denial of universal grace, or in synergism, the denial of grace alone. But the Christian theologian must affirm both the *universalis gratia* and the *sola gratia*. In the system of Christian doctrine therefore *lacunae*, or doctrinal “missing links,” must be admitted, as St. Paul himself declares when he writes: “We know in part, and we prophesy in part,” 1 Cor. 13, 9. The Christian theologian must know and teach in part only, that is, only as the divine truths, which he is to inculcate, are clearly set forth in Holy Scripture. In connection with this point we may note also the following truths:—

1. Holy Scripture is, in all its parts, the divinely inspired, infallible Word of God, in which He teaches His own way to salvation. To this way of salvation, which is both complete and perfect, the Christian theologian must add nothing, neither must he take away from it even the least particle, John 10, 35; 2 Tim. 3, 16; 2 Pet. 1, 21; John 8, 31. 32; Rev. 22, 18—20. Any change or perversion of the divine Word is a scandal, which offends God and ultimately renders impossible the salvation of sinners which God has purposed by giving His Word to men.

2. Modern rationalistic theology, which denies the fundamentals of the Christian doctrine, just because it rejects the divinely inspired Word of God as the only source and norm of faith, seeks to construct its own system of teachings (*ein einheitliches Ganzes*) on the basis of "Christian consciousness," "Christian experience," "regenerate reason," etc. In other words, it substitutes for the true *principium cognoscendi* a false standard of doctrine and dethrones Holy Scripture from its exalted eminence of being the only authority in religion. To the modern rationalistic theologian Holy Scripture is only an "authentic record" of divine revelation in which divine and human elements are blended and from which his "enlightened mind" must glean the truths that are to constitute his "system of theology." Or, to state it in different terms, modern rationalistic theology refuses to identify the Word of God with Holy Scripture, for it regards Holy Scripture only as containing the Word of God. Just what is the Word of God, or divine truth, in Holy Scripture, that, it holds, the subjective judgment of the individual theologian must decide. This procedure must be condemned as a *crimen laesae maiestatis* against the divine Lord, as a revolt against His divinely established authority, and as a downright rejection of His holy Word, which must needs result in unspeakable confusion and perversion. This is evident from the fact that the pantheistic system of Schleiermacher and the agnostic system of Ritschl, both of which are built up on the subjective authority of human reason, equally reject the Gospel of Christ and inculcate doctrines in direct opposition to it. The appeal of rationalistic theologians to "Christian consciousness," "Christian experience," and the like, as foundations of systems of faith are a mere pretense for their unholy endeavor to cast aside Holy Scripture and its divine doctrines and to teach their own word.

3. The Christian theologian, in performing his functions as a teacher of the Church, must always remember that the truths of Holy Scripture are infallible truths, which nothing can overthrow, and that it is therefore his sacred duty to present these truths just as they are set forth in Holy Scripture, without addition or subtraction. Systems of philosophy or of science are constructed by human reasoning on the basis of facts or theories gathered by the originator himself; but sacred theology is a science which God Himself, its divine Author, presents to men complete and perfect and altogether adequate for its divinely designed purpose. Hence men are to preach the Word of God and not to philosophize upon it; they are to be preachers, not demonstrators, of the truth. The Christian theologian has completely accomplished his task when he has set forth in clear view the sacred truths taught by God in Holy Scripture. Nothing more is asked of him, but also nothing less.

4. The systematizing therefore which the Christian theologian

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theology perpetrate a piece of fraud which is unpardonable and which leads to downright apostasy from the Word of God, to uncertainty in spiritual matters, and to endless confusion and contradiction. For all who err from Scripture err from truth in general; and the systems of doctrine which are not Scriptural are likewise not rational. For this the history of dogma furnishes abundant proof.

20. Theological Methods.

In the presentation of the dogmatic material the Lutheran divines have employed, in the main, two methods, the *synthetic* and the *analytic*. The synthetic method proceeds from cause to effect, while the analytic method pursues the opposite course, from effect to cause. Synthetically arranged, the dogmatic grouping presents, first, God, as the Cause and Principle of all things created; next, the means by which sinning and apostate humanity is brought back to communion with God; and lastly, the glorious salvation itself to which the believer attains. Analytically the dogmatic material would be grouped as follows: salvation, as the final objective of man; next, the means by which salvation is attained; and lastly, God as the divine Giver and Author of salvation. The analytical method has been preferred by the later theologians of the Lutheran Church for the avowed reason that theology, being a practical discipline, should first present man's final goal as the vital idea in Christian doctrine. After all, however, the grouping of the doctrinal material is immaterial as long as Holy Scripture is recognized as the only source and standard of faith, from which alone the theologian must draw his teachings. If the doctrine is taken from any other source than Holy Scripture, either method is alike unsatisfactory; if the theologian remains loyal to God's Word, both methods may be employed with equal success. For, after all, not the method of presenting the theological material, but faithfulness to Holy Scripture is the prime requisite of a good dogmatic treatise.

The synthetic method was commonly used within the Lutheran Church by the early dogmaticians, such as Melancthon, Chemnitz, Hutter, Gerhard. The analytic method was followed by Dannhauer, Koenig, Calov, Quenstedt, Bayer, Hollaz, and others. Occasionally we find a combination of the two methods. The time is past when a dogmatic treatise is judged by its method, though a modified form of the synthetic method is perhaps now given the preference. But what the Christian Church must demand of all dogmatic treatises or books is a clear, thorough, and practical presentation of the Scriptural truths. The only theology which deserves a place in Christ's Church is the sacred theology which God Himself has given in Holy Writ. From this paramount treasure of divine truth the Christian theologian dare not deviate; if he does, he is disloyal to the high charge entrusted to him. In his system of theology the two distinc-

tive principles of the Christian faith, the *sola Scriptura* and the *sola gratia*, must stand preeminent; otherwise his entire theology becomes rationalistic, paganistic, and destructive, a disgrace to the name of Christ and a menace to His Church. *Quod non est biblicum, non est theologicum*. All dogma which is not founded upon this axiom does not deserve the name of Christian theology.

21. The Acquisition of the Theological Habitude.

Our Lutheran dogmaticians have rightly emphasized the great truth that "the theologian is not born, but made." (*Theologus non nascitur, sed fit.*) By this axiom they wished to say that no man by nature is a theologian nor can become a theologian by his own reason or strength. Theology is a God-given habitude. (*Theologia est habitus practicus θεόδοτος.*) Hence the Holy Spirit Himself must make a person a theologian. How the Holy Spirit accomplishes this is excellently described by Luther in the famous *dictum: Oratio, meditatio, tentatio faciunt theologum*. This is the best description of theological methodology which has ever been attempted; for it names, briefly, yet fully, all the various elements which cooperate in the making of a true theologian. It recognizes first of all the necessity of *prayer*. Of prayer as a means by which to acquire the theological habitude, Luther writes: "For this reason you should despair of your wisdom and reason; for with these you will acquire nothing, but you will by your arrogance cast yourself and others into the pit of hell, as did Lucifer; but kneel down in your chamber and ask God in true humility and seriousness to grant you His Holy Spirit through His beloved Son in order that He may enlighten you, guide you, and grant you true wisdom." (St. Louis Ed., XIV, 434 ff.) That sincere and constant prayer is an indispensable factor in the acquisition of the theological habitude is attested not only by all true theologians who have served the Christian Church in the spirit of its divine Lord, but also by Holy Scripture itself. John 15, 7, 8: "If ye abide in Me and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is My Father glorified that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be My disciples." 16, 24: "Ask, and ye shall receive that your joy may be full." Jas. 1, 5: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him."

The second requisite in Luther's methodology is *meditation*, or study. Of this Luther writes: "In the second place, you should meditate, and not only in your heart, but also outwardly, the oral Word and the express words which are written in the Book, which you must always consider and reconsider and read and read over with diligent attention and reflection to see what the Holy Ghost means thereby. And take care that you do not become weary of it, thinking that you have read it sufficiently if you have read, heard, or said it

once or twice, and understand it perfectly. For in this way no great theologian is made, but they [who do not study] are like immature fruit, which falls down before it is half ripe. For this reason you see in this psalm [Ps. 119] that David is always boasting that he would speak, meditate, declare, sing, hear, read, day and night and forever, yet nothing else than alone the Word and the commandments of God. For God does not purpose to give you His Spirit without the external Word. Be guided by that. For He did not command in vain to write, preach, read, hear, sing, and declare His external Word." By meditation, Luther, then, understands the constant study of Holy Scripture as the pure and infallible Word of God, by which the Holy Ghost not only converts and sanctifies sinners, but also renders the theologian capable of doing the work of a truly Christian teacher in the fear of God, in other words, by which He bestows the theological habitude. That such constant study of God's Word is commanded also in Holy Scripture is clear. 1 Tim. 4, 13: "Till I come, give attendance to reading." V. 15: "Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them, that thy profiting may appear to all." 6, 20: "O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings and oppositions of science falsely so called."

Concerning *temptation* as a means by which the Holy Spirit creates or enhances the theological habitude, Luther writes: "In the third place, there is *tentatio*, that is, trial. That is the true touchstone, which teaches you not only to know and understand, but also to experience how true, sincere, sweet, lovely, powerful, comforting, the Word of God is, so that it is the wisdom above all wisdom. Thus you see how David, in the psalm just mentioned, complains about all manner of enemies, wicked princes and tyrants, false prophets and factions, which he must endure because he always meditates, that is, deals with God's Word in every possible way, as stated. For as soon as the Word of God bears fruit through you, the devil will trouble you, make you a real teacher, and teach you through tribulation to seek and to love the Word of God. For I myself — if I am permitted to voice my humble opinion — must thank my papists very much for so buffeting, distressing, and terrifying me by the devil's fury that they made me a fairly good theologian, which otherwise I should never have become." As Luther here says, his whole theology grew out of his trials and troubles, which forced him to seek strength and comfort in Holy Scripture. And Luther experienced trials both from within and from without. First he was troubled by *tentationes* within his heart. Before he became a Christian theologian, he was plagued with the agony of a troubled conscience, produced by his insistence on work-righteousness as the means of obtaining pardon. From this state of dread and anguish he was at last rescued by the

knowledge and understanding of the blessed Gospel, from which he indeed learned how "true, sincere, sweet, lovely, and powerful the Word of God is." Afterwards, when he began to proclaim the Gospel of Christ in its purity and truth, trials came to him from without. He was stigmatized as a heretic and schismatic, not only by the Romanists, but also by the Enthusiasts of his time, so that again he was forced "to seek and love the Word," and thus he became so established in, and convinced of, the divine truth that he could say: "Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise." Trials, or *tentationes*, therefore, made Luther a "fairly good theologian," because they compelled him to anchor his hope only in the Word of God. And so every Christian who aspires to become a true theologian must seek, study, and cling to, Holy Scripture until he regards it as the "wisdom above all wisdom."

Luther concludes his remarks on his famous axiom with the words: "Then [namely, if you follow the rule of David exhibited in Ps. 119] you will find how shallow and unworthy will appear to you the writings of the Fathers, and you will condemn not only the books of the opponents, but also be ever less pleased with your own preaching and writing. If you have arrived at this stage, you may surely hope that you have just begun to be a real theologian, who is able to teach not only the young and unlearned, but also the advanced and well-instructed Christians. For Christ's Church includes all manner of Christians— young, old, weak, sickly, healthy, strong, aggressive, bad, simple, wise, etc. But if you consider yourself big and imagine that you have it all and feel tickled with your booklets, preaching, and writing, as though you had done marvelously and preached wondrously, and if you are much pleased because people praise you before others and you must be praised or otherwise you are disappointed and feel like giving up,—if you are minded like that, my friend, just grab yourself by the ears, and if you grab rightly, you will find a fine pair of big, long, rough asses' ears. Then go to a little more expense and adorn yourself with golden bells, so that, wherever you go, people can hear you, admiringly point at you with their fingers, and say, 'Behold, and lo, there is that wonderful man who can write such excellent books and preach so remarkably!' Then certainly you will be blessed, yes, more than blessed, in the kingdom of heaven— indeed in that kingdom in which the fire of hell has been prepared for the devil and his angels! In fine, let us seek honor and be haughty wherever we may. In this Book, God's glory alone is set forth, and it says: '*Deus superbis resistit, humilibus autem dat gratiam.*' Amen."

Luther's emphasis upon true humility as a requisite of a true theologian is certainly in place, since the Holy Spirit with His sanctifying and strengthening gifts is present only in a contrite, humble heart. To the humble alone God gives the grace of true theology.

JOHN THEODORE MUELLER.