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“GRACE AND FREE-WILL.”

An article in the *Lutheran Quarterly* by Prof. Vollert, Ph. D., as an object lesson to our adversaries.

It seems that in recent times this question becomes mooted more and more in every quarter of the Lutheran church. Even the theologians of the General Synod, who usually boast that it never has concerned them, being only a squabble between the Missouri and Ohio synods, have, as time passes on, joined with the Ohioans and Iowaans in the controversy against Missouri, and try to defend that position. At least they want to show that with joyful eyes they look on the war the Ohioans are waging on Lutheran doctrines as confessed by us. They do this mainly by translating articles from German sources, and seem to think that they have established the point when this or that “theologian of the fatherland” also coincides with them. They show, at any rate, that they hold certain doctrines because they are held by others—as all the world is wont to do.

We do not know whether our adversaries are rejoiced to find such able allies or not. Certainly they ought to become suspicious of the correctness of their position in regard to all the questions that have arisen between them and us and the scripturalness of their doctrines, if all the world hastens to the rescue. History teaches that the fight for the Truth of God has ever found few supporters, while its enemies found the whole host of half-Christians and all the

THREE OF THE PRINCIPAL PROOFS FOR THE DIVINE
AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE.

III.

The prophecies contained in the Old and the New Testament, and the accurate fulfillment of these prophecies, are further conclusive evidence of the divine origin of the Bible.

Prophecy, no less than the doing of miracles, is a divine prerogative. Men cannot prophesy. The future hangs before us like a heavy veil which no human eye can penetrate, no human hand can lift or brush aside. God alone can "show what shall come hereafter." If the writers of the Bible prophesied, God must have spoken by them, their prophecies must be the Word of God, and their claim that all the rest of the Bible is God's Word must be true. Now, *did* the writers of the Bible prophesy? Let us "seek out of the book of the Lord and read."

A. Prophecies concerning Christ.

1. *Gen. 49, 10.*—How gloriously this prophecy has been fulfilled! Did not the kingdom of Judah exist as a well-appointed kingdom, having its own lawgivers or rulers—however they may have lacked independence—till Shiloh came, the Virgin-born, the Prince of Peace? And were not, and are not, the people gathered unto Him, learning from Him and governed by Him through His Word? And when Christ came and the Jews rejected Him, was not their kingdom overthrown once for all? History, both secular and ecclesiastic, shows this prophecy fulfilled.

2. *Deut. 18, 15.*—"This was spoken by Moses 1400 years before the day of Christ. Moses occupied a position among the prophets of Israel altogether unique. By him God established the first covenant with the people, gave them the Law, led them out of Egypt with a high hand, doing great and wondrous deeds, spoke unto him face to face. Now Moses says God will raise up unto them another

such prophet, who shall likewise deliver the people, who shall establish a covenant between God and the people, and to whom the Lord shall speak face to face. In saying that this prophet shall come after him, Moses indicates that his own prophetic work is insufficient, that a better covenant must be established between God and the people, and hence, that the coming prophet must be greater than he. You know who this true prophet is: Jesus, who has delivered us from the bondage of hell and established the covenant of grace." (Weseloh, *Das Buch des Herrn und seine Feinde.*)—That this prophecy has been fulfilled, we not only know from the New Testament; the quotations from Josephus and Julian¹) corroborate it, while even the most pronounced rationalists admit that Jesus was a great and wonderful prophet.

3. *Ps. 22.*—How plainly are the sufferings of Christ foretold in this Psalm! What an awful depth of humiliation are we permitted to look into! What a vivid picture of the suffering Savior! *V. 1.*: Christ's plaintive cry upon the cross; *vv. 6—8.*: The very things we read of Jesus as He hung upon the tree; *vv. 14—18.*: Might be mistaken for the Gospel narrative.—And now, following this tremendous, this unparalleled suffering and this inconceivable humiliation, lo, the exaltation and the work which the exalted Savior is doing in the world through His Word, *vv. 22—31.*—Can this be David, the son of Jesse, that experiences such wondrous things? Must not this Psalm be a prophecy concerning a Greater One than David? Are not all these sayings literally fulfilled in the crucified and risen Christ?

4. *Is. 50, 6.*—Compare the Evangelists' account of the shameful treatment accorded Jesus in the council chamber of the Jews and in the judgment hall of Pontius Pilate.

5. *Ps. 16, 9b—11a.*—How grandly was this prophecy fulfilled in the death and resurrection of Christ!

1) *Theol. Quart.*, vol. IX, No. 1, p. 45.

6. *Is. 53*.—If unbelieving critics have deemed it necessary to say that this chapter *must* have been written *after* the suffering and death and resurrection of Jesus, *we* surely have no reason to doubt that *Jesus'* suffering and death and resurrection are here spoken of, and that we have in this chapter a most striking pre-presentation of these things.

B. Prophecies Describing the Time when Christ Should Come.

7. *Is. 53, 2 a*.—In a day when the house of David would be fallen and very lightly esteemed. How well this accords with history!

8. *Hagg. 2, 7. 9*.—At the time of the second temple.

9. *Mal. 3, 1*.—At the time of the second temple and of John the Baptist.

10. *Jer. 3, 16. 17*.—At a time when the first covenant shall be no more.—That this is indeed a prophecy concerning the days of Christ, see v. 15 and compare the whole with *Jer. 23, 4—6*. These two prophecies evidently treat of the same subject, and in the latter one the Messiah is expressly mentioned. The whole was palpably fulfilled in the days of Jesus Christ.

C. Prophecies concerning the Jewish People.

11. *Deut. 28*.—Afflictions of the Jews because of their apostasy. Vv. 28. 29 a. The attitude of the Jews toward their Messiah and their utter inability to understand their own accepted Bible are plain testimony and evidence that this prophecy has been fulfilled.—V. 29 b. The numerous persecutions, the general hatred, and the well-nigh universal antipathy toward the Jews, show this prophecy fulfilled.—Vv. 37. 48—50. 52—57. What a plain prediction of the sufferings the Jews endured at the hands of the Romans!

12. *Matt. 24, 1. 2*.—Destruction of the temple foretold.—We all know it was not the custom of the Romans to destroy works of art such as the Jewish temple. Moreover, we know that Titus commanded his troops to spare the temple. But Christ not only predicted that the temple

would be destroyed, He foretold that it would forever so remain, Matt. 23, 38.¹⁾ Julian attempted to rebuild it, but to no avail.

13. *Luke 19, 43. 44.*—The history of the destruction of Jerusalem shows that this prophecy was literally fulfilled.

D. Prophecies concerning the World Monarchies.

14. *Dan. 2.*—Nebuchadnezzar has a dream which troubles his spirit. He sends for the astrologers, the magicians, the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans, and demands of them that they not only interpret his dream, but tell him what he has dreamt. But they cannot tell the dream, and they declare there is not a man on earth that can; none but the gods can show the king his dream. Nebuchadnezzar commands them all to be slain. And the executioners seek even Daniel to slay him. Daniel, however, asks the king to give him time that he may interpret the dream. Then he makes the matter known to his companions, that they may “desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret; that Daniel and his fellows should not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon.” Hereupon the dream is revealed to Daniel in a vision by night, and not only the dream, but the interpretation as well, whereupon Daniel goes to Arioch, whom the king had appointed to destroy the wise men of Babylon, and desires to be brought in before the king. His request is granted, and Daniel tells the king his dream and the interpretation thereof. (The dream, vv. 31—36a; the interpretation, vv. 36b—45.)

“The great image is a type of the world power, of the four great world monarchies. The fact that each successive metal is inferior to the one above it indicates that the moral strength of the world monarchies shall steadily decline, each being inferior to its predecessor; that the world shall grow worse and worse as time passes by. The golden head is Nebuchadnezzar, or the Assyro-Babylonian king-

1) Observe the prominence given ἀφίεται in the Greek original.

dom; the silver breast, the Medo-Persian kingdom; the thighs of brass, the Greco-Macedonian kingdom; the legs and feet of iron, the 'imperium Romanum.' The last-named is the most-dreadful one of all and will trample all nations under its feet. That the feet are made of iron mixed with brittle clay and branch out into ten toes, points to the fact that the Roman empire will finally weaken and be divided and dissolve into a multitude of kingdoms. — Secular history shows the accomplishment of this vision. The stone that falls from heaven and becomes a great mountain is the kingdom which God shall set up out of heaven, the kingdom of Messiah, which shall spread over all the earth and overcome and outlast the kingdoms of this world. — Ecclesiastic history attests the truth of this revelation." (Stoeckhardt, *Biblische Geschichte des Alten Testaments*, p. 351 f.)

15. *Dan. 4, 1—24.* — Nebuchadnezzar had another significant dream. He saw in his dream a tree of great height. "The leaves thereof were fair and the fruit much." Its height reached unto heaven and its branches to the ends of the earth. The king saw, and, behold, a watcher and an holy one (an angel) came down from heaven and gave command that the tree should be hewn down. Nevertheless, the stump of its roots should be left in the earth. — That Nebuchadnezzar's "tree" was not a tree but a man, is seen from the latter part of the angel's communication, to-wit: this man shall be bound with a band of iron and brass, shall dwell with the beasts of the field and eat grass, his heart shall be changed from a man's heart, and a beast's heart given unto him. This matter has been decreed by the watchers and the holy ones (cf. v. 24: "the decree of the Most High") to the intent that the living may know the power of the Most High. —

All the wise men of Babylon could not interpret the dream. But Daniel declared the interpretation thereof. The great and beautiful tree he declared to be none other than Nebuchadnezzar himself, whose realm and dominion reached to the end of the then known world. And this Nebuchad-

nezzar was to be driven from men, bereft of his reason, abased to the level of a beast, and to dwell with the beasts of the field, till seven times should have passed over him; to the end that he might know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men. Finally, Daniel counseled the king to break off his sins and iniquities and prove his repentance true by righteousness and by showing mercy to the poor; then God would have patience with him and graciously spare him the grievous fate of which he had dreamed. In thus interpreting Nebuchadnezzar's dream, Daniel prophesied to the king, and in recording the interpretation, he prophesied before the face of all the world.

How true this prophecy was we see from vv. 28—37. At the set time the dream came to pass just as Daniel had foretold. At the end of twelve months Nebuchadnezzar walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylonia, and, gazing on the magnificent city lying at his feet, he cried in unfeigned rapture: "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty?" But while the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, "O King Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken: The kingdom is departed from thee. And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will." "The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws." At the end of the days (the seven times) he lifted up his eyes unto heaven, and his understanding returned unto him, and he blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him that liveth forever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, before

whom all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing, who doeth according to His will both in heaven and on earth, and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him: What doest Thou? whose works are truth, and His ways judgment; and those that walk in pride He is able to abase. Thus was Nebuchadnezzar again received into grace, reinstated in his kingdom and his royal glory, and he attained even greater glory than he had known before.

In chapter 5 Daniel interprets for Belshazzar the handwriting on the wall and plainly foretells to the king how both he and his kingdom shall shortly perish. This prophecy was fulfilled that selfsame night. Ch. 7—12 Daniel again prophesies of the four great world monarchies, and likewise of Mohammed and Antichrist, and the fulfillment of this prophecy is so obvious to the student of history that—who but the willfully blind can fail to see it?

Or will anyone dare deny or indulge a doubt that these prophecies are prophecies indeed? Will anyone dare insinuate that they were written *post eventum*? As for Daniel, we have it on the authority of Josephus that his prophecies concerning Alexander the Great were shown to that monarch upon his arrival in Jerusalem with gratifying results. Alexander was thereby disposed to treat the Jews with kindness. The other prophecies which we have quoted from the Old Testament—Daniel's too, of course—are all contained in the Septuagint version. Now the Septuagint version was prepared in the third century B. C., and as all these prophecies, with the single exception of Deut. 28, treat of Christ, their prophetic character is above suspicion. Deut. 28 treats quite largely of the afflictions of the Jews at the hands of the *Romans*. And surely, none will dispute that these things occurred after the completion of the Septuagint. Consequently Deut. 28 is prophecy. Finally, touching the passages quoted in this connection from the New Testament, it will be remembered that they have been shown to be authentic under Thesis II. Consequently they, too, are prophecy.

Thus there can be no reasonable doubt that the writers of the Bible prophesied, that the Spirit of the Lord spake by them, that God has, also in this manner, stamped their word as truth and firmly established their claim that the entire Bible is the inspired Word of God.

IV.

The only proof for the divine origin of the Bible that begets true faith (fides divina) in the Scriptures is the witness which the Holy Spirit, through the Word of Scripture, witnesses in the heart.

The other two proofs are founded upon reason and cannot beget real, divine faith, that full persuasion or assurance, that spiritual confidence, which is the very essence of faith. All they can engender is human credence, a perfectly natural, purely human conviction. However, their value must not be underrated. We shall say a few things on that score at the end of this paper. Divine faith in the Scriptures, only the Scriptures themselves can beget, by means of the witness of the Holy Spirit, connected with, and operating through, the Scriptures.

What is the witness of the Holy Spirit? It is connected with the Scriptures and operates through the Scriptures, and that without the use of arguments founded upon reason, and without the concurrence of such arguments, if any such have been previously or simultaneously employed. (Cf. 1 Cor. 2, 4. 5.) When the contents of the Scriptures have, through reading, hearing, or in any other way, been received into the mind of a man, the latter's understanding is enlightened, and his will is affected, in such fashion that he perceives the Scriptures to be the Word of God and receives them as such. 2 Cor. 4, 6. 1 Thess. 2, 13.

How is the Holy Spirit's testimony in the heart obtained? Not immediately—for it is connected with the Scriptures and operates through the Scriptures. Nor is it immaterial *how* we read and hear. He *e. g.* who reads the

Scriptures to criticise them, to revile them, to offer willful and obstinate resistance to their workings, or who reads them without a desire to know the truth, merely to experiment on them, must not expect the testimony of the Holy Spirit. Howbeit, even on such people the Spirit's testimony has, no doubt, been bestowed. The line,

And fools who came to scoff remained to pray¹—

is no mere flight of fancy. It is more than likely that some such thing was experienced by those officers whom the Pharisees and chief priests had sent to take Jesus, but who returned empty-handed and, on being asked, "Why have ye not brought Him?" replied, "Never man spake like this man." Unquestionably, the testimony of the Holy Spirit was experienced by Chr. Gerson and Franciscus Junius while they were reading the Scriptures without so much as a thought of seeking to know the truth. Gerson writes that "he had often wondered what manner of delusion that was that had such a powerful hold on so many myriads of men, to-wit, the Christian superstition, when one day it came to pass that a woman gave him the books of the New Testament in his mother tongue as a pledge. Availing himself of the opportunity he read them; not that he conceded any authority to the Christian religion or believed that there was any truth in them, but merely to find out what the errors of the Christians were. But while he read his heart was so deeply agitated that he began to acknowledge in a certain degree the divinity and majesty of these writings, and, seized with a desire to learn, he reread them and compared them with the books of the Old Testament, when, lo! there was kindled in his heart such a great light that he acknowledged without reserve (*plena fide*) the authority and divine origin of these books and professed the Christian faith." (Musaeus in Baier, vol. I, p. 137.)

Franciscus Junius, when a young man, was sent to Lyons, and, while there he was reading Tully's books *On*

1) *The Deserted Village.*

Laws, a certain person came to him and confirmed with many (arguments) the assertion of Epicurus: "God cares for nothing, neither for His own (affairs), nor for any one else's." This venom took hold of him so firmly, by reason of the person's authority and the subtlety of his arguments, that his heart was ensnared in this evil and hardened. But God rescued him marvelously from this frightful abyss of perdition, after he had for more than a year wallowed in (the mire of) most abominable pleasures. Called home by his father, who had learned that his son was imbued with this atheistic poison, and invited to read the New Testament, he gave up that pestilent opinion. But it is better to hear his own confession: "I opened a New Testament which Providence had thrust in my way. While I was occupied with something else, there presented itself to me at first glance that sublime chapter of John, the Evangelist and Apostle: 'In the beginning was the Word.' I read a part of this chapter and, while reading, I became so agitated that suddenly I perceived that divinity of sentiment and that majesty and authority of diction which leaves all streams of human eloquence far behind. *Horrebat corpus, stupebat animus, et totum illum diem sic afficiebar, ut, qui essem, mihi incertus viderer esse.*" (Melchior Adam in Baier, vol. I, p. 137.)

But whosoever *seeks* the testimony of the Holy Spirit, let him heed what the Savior says John 7, 17: "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God," commenting on which words Chr. Knoesius writes: "This working" (of the Scriptures) "is perceived by all that read or hear the Scriptures without obstinately resisting them, and, what is more, with a heart that longs for the truth, which just and not-to-be-disregarded terms on the part of the subject" (= the reader) "Christ defines John 7, 17." In this spirit let him read the Scriptures. First let him read the Law. The Law will show him clearly, pointedly, and powerfully; God the Holy Spirit will show

him that he is sinful through and through and therefore under the curse. Let him read this first and hear it both in the house of God and in private. Let him meditate therein and ponder these things in his heart. Let him use this Law as a mirror reflecting his own image, and carefully study every feature of this image. Let him suffer the Law to prick his heart, yea, to pierce it like a shower of arrows, and let him suffer the "arrows to stick fast" in him, that he may be imbued with a lively knowledge of his sins and of the just anger of God. And let him continue this use of the Law daily as long as he lives. In this manner he will perceive that he has no power to save himself or to do aught that will tend to his salvation. The Law will reveal to him his total depravity and helplessness.

But let him also read the Gospel, the message of the grace of God in Christ Jesus. Let him read this Gospel and ponder it. Let him apply it to his sinful, depraved, and wounded heart. He will find it a healing balm. For this Gospel preaches, shows, reveals, depicts, describes Christ Jesus. It will impart to him who reads it right a knowledge of Christ. An external knowledge at first. But with the Word of Christ the Holy Ghost will come and illumine his understanding and work faith, divine faith, in the Word and in Christ in the Word. He will cast a ray of the Light of the world into the sinner's heart, and thus will be kindled in him "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Thus he will receive faith. And if he continues in the Word, his light will grow brighter and brighter, his faith will wax stronger and stronger, and even the floods of great waters, of doubt and affliction, will not be able to overcome and extinguish it.

This proof for the divine authority of the Bible is not founded on reason but on experience. This is experimental religion in the noblest sense of the word. And this is proof indeed, not a process, nor a result, of reasoning, however subtle, but this is *proving*, trying, testing, and finding.

As one knows water by its taste, as one tells honey by its sweetness, as one recognizes light by its splendor, so one perceives the divinity of the Scriptures *by coming in contact with it* in the manner and spirit indicated above. When Nathanael, doubting that Jesus, whom Philip had found, was Messiah, asked, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Philip answered, "Come and see." And when Nathanael had seen and heard Jesus, he exclaimed, "Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God." In like manner he that comes to the Scriptures and sees and does not willfully close his eyes, and harden his heart, against the truth, will finally exclaim, "Thou art the Truth, Thou art the Word of God." The Holy Spirit will open his eyes and give him faith. He will so fully persuade him that the Bible is the Word of God and the Christ therein revealed his Savior, that he will triumphantly exclaim: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? . . . Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord." Yea, in the deepest sorrow he will say with Job: "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another." And with Paul: "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day." And with David: "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want," etc. (See the entire Psalm.) His faith will be "the victory that overcometh the world." He will suffer neither the world nor the devil to rob him of this faith, though they torture

him with horrifying cruelty, as they did the Christian martyrs in the days of yore. Yea, should God Himself become cruel to him and with His strong hand oppose Himself to him,¹⁾ yet will he have power with God Himself and prevail.²⁾

This experimental knowledge of the divinity of the Bible must not be confounded, however, with the emotional bliss of Methodism. It doubtless manifests itself more often in silent sorrow than it does in loud and ostentatious joy, and probably finds its truest expression in the Augustinian plaint which the poet has paraphrased as follows:

Alas! that I so late have known Thee,
Who art the Fairest and the Best:
Nor sooner for my Lord could own Thee,
Our highest God, our only Rest!
Now bitter shame and grief I prove
O'er this my tardy love.

And the fear of losing Jesus and His Word, and the sad and sorrowful demeanor resulting from and accompanying such fear, reveal the firmness of the believer's faith in the divine origin of the Bible more frequently than the rejoicing of his spirit and the corresponding joyful expression of his countenance.

This testimony of the Holy Spirit and this assurance of the divinity of the Scriptures is retained, of course, by use of the same means by which it is first received, by means of the Word of God, by continuing in Christ's Word. Willful and wanton persistence in a life of disobedience will silence the Spirit's voice, and forfeit the sinner's assurance, however speciously he may outwardly continue to use the Word; since he who willfully sins on being received into grace grieves God's Holy Spirit and banishes Him from his heart. —

Now, how shall these proofs for the divine authority of the Bible be utilized? When shall we employ proofs founded on reason and when appeal to the testimony of the Holy Spirit in the heart? Here one must consider the person with whom one has to do. If the person be an unbeliever

1) Job 30, 21.

2) Gen. 32, 28; cf. Mark 7, 24—30.

and worship the goddess of reason, prove to him that it is *more reasonable* to accept the divinity of the Bible than it is to reject it. In this manner such persons may at least be induced to hear and read the Scriptures, and through the gracious operation of the Holy Spirit they may then be led to believe. If he whom you have to deal with be a Christian who chances to be vexed by the voice of reason because, *e. g.*, he has discovered apparent contradictions in the Bible, demonstrate to him that these "contradictions" are only apparent, and can never be shown to be real contradictions, and thus bridle his carnal reason, the source of his doubts and vexations, by rational arguments in favor of the divinity of the Scriptures. Then let an appeal be made to the testimony of the Spirit which he has, himself, experienced in his heart, and let him be asked which of these two he holds in higher regard: the Holy Spirit's witness or his own miserable, blind understanding. If he be grieved at the thought that his faith in the Scriptures is dwindling, let him be asked why that thought gives him grief, and let him be asked what better proof he desires of what to you is plain, *viz.*, that at heart he clings very firmly to the belief that the Scriptures are divine. But, however the case may be, one should never fail to direct one's patient to the Scriptures themselves, and tell him to read and hear what they say, without prejudice and stiff-necked resistance to their gracious treatment. Also tell him to pray for the gift of faith in the Bible, as David does in the Psalm: "Stablish Thy Word unto Thy servant," Ps. 119, 38. Above all things, one should not forget to testify, and impress upon the mind that nothing short of repentance and faith will make and keep a man a Christian and enable and cause him to perceive that the Scriptures are divine truth and to receive them as such in divine faith. For "*it is the Spirit,*" and the Spirit alone, "*that beareth witness.*" "*And he that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself,*" 1 John 5, 6b. 10a.

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