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The Prophectic Office of Christ and the Power of the Word

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THE PROPHETIC OFFICE OF CHRIST

AND THE

POWER OF THE WORD

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

In Lutheran theology there is a constant emphasis on the Word of God as the power of God unto salvation. This great stress on the efficacy of the word came as the result of the denial of the power of the word by the Reformed and Enthusiastic theologians. These men taught that the Word of God, as Zwingli put it, was not necessary for salvation, since the Holy Ghost does not need any leader or vehicle. To ascribe the power to convert to the word of God was beyond their dogmatical concepts. They ascribed this power solely to the immediate operation of the Holy Ghost without the word.

The theology of Karl Barth is similar to these Reformed and Enthusiastic interpretation of the Word. To him the Word of God is only the Word of God when it was first spoken in pre-historical times by God Himself. This is the real Word of God. The written word of God as it was recorded in the day of the prophets and apostles is not the Word of God, but only a testimony to the content of the Word. There is, therefore, in reality only one revealed Word and that is Christ, who during the time of His incarnation spoke

and was in Himself the real Word of God. This Word, Christ, and His spoken words are the Word of God. The Word, however, which Scriptures contain, becomes the Word of God when the Holy Spirit confirms the message in the heart of the believer. To Barth, then, the written Word of God is not the power of God unto salvation, but is only a testimony to the divine truth of God's revelation, which must be confirmed by the operation of the "inner Spirit".[1]

The Lutheran dogmaticians, on the other hand, consider the Word of God or Scriptures as the powerful Word of God. In conformity with Scripture they ascribe a two-fold power to the Word, namely, the vis collativa and the vis effectiva. The vis collativa emphasizes the truth that the Holy Spirit through the Word earnestly offers to all who use His Word, the grace of God and the righteousness of Christ. On the other hand, the vis effectiva stresses the fact that God through the Word actually works, strengthens, and preserves in the heart a living faith in the forgiveness of sin, so that people are converted, justified, sanctified, and finally glorified. Wherever this Word of God is used, the Holy Spirit is always in it, which gives it the power to accomplish the purpose for which it was given (Is. 55:10-11).[2] In other words, God is always operating

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[1]Holmes Rolston, A Conservative Looks at Barth (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, c.1933), p. 70-101.

[2]John Theodore Mueller, Christian Dogmatics (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c.1929), p. 441.

in and through the Word, offering His grace and the forgiveness of sin (I Cor. 2:4). This Word, itself, however, grants these same gifts, for it is the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16).

Until the advent of Barthian theology, the Lutheran theologians were confronted with the Reformed and Enthusiastic concept of the Word of God. These Reformed and Enthusiastic theologians held that there were no dynamics in the Word and that the Holy Spirit worked outside of the Word. Against these theologians, the Lutheran dogmaticians testified, as Scripture also affirms, that the Word of God is a power unto salvation (Rom. 1:16, John 6:63), and that the Holy Spirit works in and through the Word (I Cor. 2:4). With the coming of the Barthian school and its emphasis on "Christ" as the only true Word of God, another facet of the power of the Word, which is not so evident, must be stressed, namely, the power of the Word of God in the prophetic office of Christ. Against these Barthian theologians, the Lutheran dogmaticians are now laying special stress upon both the power of the words of Christ as the Logos and the power of His Words, which are supplied through His prophetic office.

This latter fact is evident throughout the entire New Testament, especially in the Gospel according to St. John. In this book special stress is laid upon both the power of words of Christ as God and upon the power of His words as our Prophet (John 6:63, John 14:24). Christ, therefore,

in His prophetic office, reveals and actually offers and conveys this grace of God to men (Eph. 2:17-18). With this offering of this grace comes also the actual conferring of it (Matt. 9:2.6, 11:28).

The purpose of this thesis is to set forth that the power of the Word also lies in the prophetic office of Christ, as it is revealed in both the Old and New Testaments and in the oral and written word today. In order to show the power, which the Holy Spirit exerts through the Word, a short section will be devoted to His relationship to the Word. The concluding chapters will set forth the characteristics and the efficacy of the Word. In addition, each section of the outline will be considered as a separate chapter throughout the entire thesis. May the Lord bless our study of it.

CHAPTER II

THE PROPHETIC OFFICE OF CHRIST IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Whatever man knows of God, he knows through God's revelation of Himself either by nature, or by the special revelation of God that is through Christ and His written Word. By means of the natural knowledge of God, man knows that there is a personal, omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, and Divine Essence, who not only created the world, but also preserves and governs it. From this natural knowledge of God, man is also able to know Him as a Being of justice and holiness, who hates evil and loves the good. This latter knowledge comes from the law which God wrote in man's hearts (Rom. 1:32, Rom. 2:14-15).

This natural knowledge of God, however, does not reveal to man the true God. It only tells him that there is a Being to whom he owes his existence. But to know who this God is cannot be known except through revelation. In order to manifest Himself to man, God spoke directly to the patriarchs of old and inspired the prophets of the Old Testament to write down His word, in which He reveals Himself and offers the grace of God and the righteousness of Christ. This revelation of God in the Old Testament was

was the work of Christ or the pre-existent Logos, for He was the true Teacher and Prophet of the Old Testament, who inspired the holy men of old and revealed to them the message of salvation (I Pet. 1:10-12, John 12:41).

In the New Testament God reveals Himself personally through the Word, the Logos, which is God Himself. This Word of God is Christ, who was in existence already in eternity (John 1:1) and who knew the counsels of God (John 1:18). In order to reveal God and His grace to man, God sent forth Christ, the Logos and His Prophet, to manifest God and to show Himself as the Savior from sin, death, and the devil (John 6:51-65). Christ, then, was the Word of God, which God sent to offer and convey the grace of God to men. His words are the powerful words of God (John 6:63).

Christ also performed His prophetic office in the New Testament in another manner. As God's prophet, He spoke through the apostles and inspired them to write down His words in the New Testament canon. These words, which they had written, were not merely the words of man, but they were the words of Christ, in which He taught the apostles the truths of God's grace and gave them the authority to offer this grace to all people (Matt. 28:19).

Christ exercises His prophetic office today through His written and through the oral proclamation of the Christians. In His state of exaltation He is still the

true Prophet and Teacher of the Church (Col. 3:16), so that the grace of God might be offered to men through His Word. (John 8:31,32). All, who preach and teach the words of Christ as they are revealed in the Scriptures, are preaching the Word of Christ. Christ, therefore as our Prophet, not only offers and conveys this grace of God to men, but also confers it to men through His Word. Thus the central thought which is to be considered in this thesis is arrived at, namely, the relationship between the power of the Word and the prophetic office of Christ.

Frequently the activity of Christ in His prophetic office is thought to be only in the New Testament. The reason for this is that the prophetic office of Christ is not as evident in the Old Testament as it is in the New Testament. Already in the Old Testament Christ, as the unrevealed Logos and the Angel of the Lord, spoke directly to the patriarchs and the prophets (Acts 7:38).[1] This mission מלאך יהוה is not the same as that of the created angels. His importance lies in the fact that He is the announced Organ of a special condition of the grace of Jehovah to Israel. Only in one case does He depart from this office (2 Sam. 24:17), and this is outside of His

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[1]F.E. Mayer, "The Means of Grace," Concordia Theological Monthly, X (February, 1939), 84.

office.[2]

In addition, this "Angel of the Lord" is often identified with יהוה. There are many passages in the Old Testament in which it is almost impossible to distinguish between them; in fact, they are seemingly one and the same person. Genesis 21:17 furnishes us with a good example: God hears the cry of Hagar...the Angel of the Lord calls to her...God opens her eyes. In this passage the "Angel of the Lord" is designated as יהוה or God. Other passages which emphasize this point are Gen. 16:7ff, 21:17ff, 22:11ff, Ex. 3:2ff.[3] Thus in these passages where the "Angel of the Lord" is called God, there must be a direct connection with or identification of God with the יהוה מלאך.

Henstenberg carries this conclusion even further. He deduces that the Angel of the Lord is Christ, or the Incarnate Logos. In his Kommentar zum Johannisevangelium he states:

> Durch das ganze Alte Testament zieht sich die Lehre von dem Engel des Herrn, dessen Vermittlung "Ueberall", wo Gott zu den Sterblichen in Beziehung tritt, hinzudenken ist, auch wo ihrer nicht ausdruecklich gedacht wird...Bei den beiden ersten unter den angefuehrten Stellen (1 Mos. 16:33; 32:31) koennen wir spezial nachweisen, dass Gott durch Vermittlung

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[2]Gerhard Von Rad, "מלאך im AT," Theologisches Woerterbuch zum Neuen Testament, edited by Gerhard Kittel (Stuttgart: Verlag von W. Kohlhammer, 1933), I, 75-79.

[3]Gerhard Von Rad, op. cit., p.76.

seines Engels geschaut wurde. 1 Mos. 16:7 geht voran: Und es fand sie der Engel des Herrn. Und nach Hos. 12 war es der Engel des Herrn, mit Jakob in Pniel verkehrte. Uebrigens hat der unsichtbare Gott, 1 Tim. 1:17, nicht etwa eine doppelte Vermittlung, unter dem Alten Bunde den Engel des Herrn, unter dem Neuen Bunde den eingeboren Sohn,....sondern in dem Engel des Herrn stellt sich der Logos selbst dar in Vorspiele seiner Menschwerdung. Von dieser Anschauung geht das Alte Testament selbst aus, indem es bei Sacharja und Maleachi ankuendigt, dass in dem Messias der Engel des Herrn unter seinem Volke erscheinen werde. Und dieser Anschauung folgt Johannes, indem er Joh. 1:11 sagt, der Messias sei in sein Eigentum gekommen, in Kap. 12:41, Jesaias habe Christus gesehen. [4] [5]

Christ's prophetic office in the Old Testament which reveals His powerful Word is further brought out by the word דָּבָר. Christ was already present at the creation (John 1:1), and the worlds were made by Him (John 1:3). The Word, Christ, then spoke in the beginning at the creation of the world and especially at the creation of man. Genesis 1 illustrates this point very clearly when it is compared with John 1:1-3. The term דָּבָר in Genesis 1 does not refer only to God the Father, but to the Triune God, as can be seen from John 1:3: All things were made by Him (Christ), and again from Genesis 1:26: Let us make

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[4]E. Hengstenberg, Kommentar zum Johannisevangelium (Berlin: Gustav Schlawitz, c.1867), I, 61ff.

[5]Cremer does not agree with Hengstenberg that the "Angel of the Lord" is an anticipatory manifestation of Christ. He says: "To infer... that the angel of Jehovah is an anticipatory manifestation of Christ is not merely logically and exegetically rash in the highest degree; for not a word is said in the New Testament about such a relationship". cf. Hermann Cremer, Lexicon of New Testament Greek, Translated by William Urwick (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, c.1878), p. 21.

man. When God or מלאך speaks, it is also Christ speaking.

מלאך or אדון bears the same connotation. Isaiah records that he heard the voice of the Lord אדון, who told him that the Children of Israel were a people who stood and perceived not. (Is. 6:9). These passages are referred to by John in the New Testament (John 12:38 ff.) and are especially ascribed to Christ in John 12:41: These things said Esais, when he saw His (Christ's) glory and spake of Him. Christ, then, as the unrevealed prophet spoke with and through Isaiah.

The conclusion, which can be reached through the study of these passages, is that when God spoke in the Old Testament, He spoke through the prophetic office of Christ. Luther in his Commentary on Genesis thinks that in almost all the places where the name of God is mentioned, Christ is revealed.[6] Christ, therefore, as God, but speaking to men in His prophetic office, gave the word its power.

The New Testament sheds more light upon this fact. Peter tells us that the πνεῦμα Χριστοῦ testified and revealed to the prophets the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow (I Pet. 1:10-11). This is mani-

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[6]Martin Luther, "Auslegung des ersten Buches Mose", Dr. Martin Luthers Saemmtliche Schriften, edited by J. Walch (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1881), II, 403.

fested in Isaiah 53, where the prophet relates the sufferings of Christ in great detail. An interesting point here is that in Peter's epistle the "Spirit of Christ" does the revealing, where in Isaiah this revelation is referred to אדני. Here again is the identification of Christ with Jehovah and a reference to Christ's prophetic office in the Old Testament.

Even a more striking revelation of the prophetic office of Christ in the Old Testament is found in the words אדני דבר. These words contain at all times revelation, and, in fact, the revealing of the word is really the main form of the divine revelation through Christ's prophetic office. An examination of this phrase in the Old Testament shows that wherever these two words are used there is a personal connection established between God and the prophets. cf. Hosea 1:1,2: The Word of the Lord that came to Hosea... and אדני said to Hosea; also Micah 1:1; Zeph. 1:1. The word of אדני, the God of the coming salvation, speaks to the prophets through the prophetic office of Christ. This Word of God, the self-revelation of the eternal Godhead from eternity in the word, is the source and principle of all prophetic words; in this they have their divine basis and power.[7]

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[7]Otto Procksch, "Wort Gottes im AT", Theologisches Woerterbuch zum Neuen Testament, edited by Gerhard Kittel (Stuttgart: Verlag von W. Kohlhammer, c.1938), IV, 97.

This divine communication with or inspiration of the prophets gave the prophet's words their power.

The revelation of this Word of God to the prophets through Christ's prophetic office was accomplished in various ways. A beautiful description of the direct revelation of the word of the Lord is the appearance of יהוה to Samuel (I Sam. 3:1ff). The Word of the Lord had come to him, but its knowledge was not yet revealed to him (I Sam. 3:7: יהוה דְּבַר־יהוה טֶרֶם יִגָּלֶה אֵלָיו). He thought at first that it was Eli's voice. He heard it as the voice of a man (I Sam. 3:4f), until Eli told him that it was the voice of the Lord. The next time the Lord called, Samuel recognized it as the Word of the Lord: עַבְדְּךָ שֹׁמֵעַ כִּי יהוה דֹבֵר and receives the prophecy, while Jehovah stands before him.[8] Here again God, through the prophetic office of Christ, spoke to the prophets and gave their words their power.

Christ in His prophetic office not only spoke to the prophets of the Old Testament, but He also spoke through them. Jeremiah records that יהוה commanded him to speak the things which the Lord revealed to him. Jer. 1:7: אֵת כָּל־אֲשֶׁר אֲצַוְּךָ תְּדַבֵּר. Later Jehovah tells him, "I have put my words in thy mouth." Jer. 1:9: יהוה לִי הִנֵּה

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[8]Otto Procksch, op. cit., p. 94.

אֵלִי וְגַם שְׁמוּאֵל דָּבָר בְּפִי׳ . Samuel also spoke the words of the Lord when he revealed to Eli what the Lord had said. These words which Samuel spoke were the דְּבַר־יְהוָה. Amos also realized that the Lord God spoke through the prophets, to whom He revealed His secrets. Amos 3:7: כִּי׳ לֹא יַעֲשֶׂה אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה דָּבָר כִּי אִם־גָּלָה סוֹדוֹ אֶל־עֲבָדָיו הַנְּבִיאִים. In addition, Jeremiah recognized that the prophets were the bearers of the word of the Lord: Jer. 18:18: וְדָבָר מִנְּבִיאִים . According to I Peter it was also the "Spirit of Christ", which revealed this grace of God to the prophets and filled their words with power (I Pet. 1:11).

The Hebrew word for prophet נָבִיא, which is derived from נָבָא also shows the function of Christ's prophetic office exercised through the prophets. נָבָא means "to boil forth words under divine inspiration". In other words, to speak under a divine influence, to prophecy. cf. Greek: προφητεύω .[9] This divine influence according to the Old Testament, as we have previously pointed out, is either רוּחַ or מַלְאַךְ, with the emphasis on Christ in His prophetic office, in which He spoke through the prophets. This is also supported by the phrase: "And the word of the Lord came to a certain prophet" such as Hosea

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[9]William Gesenius, A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament, Translated by Edward Robinson (Boston: Houghton Mufflin Co., c.1882), p.638.

(Hosea 1:1-2). According to the New Testament Christ gave prophets for the perfecting of the saints (Eph. 4:11). This is further substantiated by the call of the prophets, as well as the placing of the words in their mouth by Jehovah (Jer. 1:1-9: The calling of Jeremiah). The writer to the Hebrews gives further proof that the word "prophet" bears this connotation in the Old Testament. He points out that God at various times spoke to our fathers by the prophets: ὁ θεὸς λαλήσας τοῖς πατράσιν ἐν τοῖς προφήταις (Heb. 1:1). Therefore, since Christ is the second person of the Trinity, and since the God of the Old Testament who spoke with the prophets was Christ, Christ, then, according to this passage spoke through the prophets, giving their words their power. In other words, the words of the prophets were the powerful words of Christ in His prophetic office (Acts 3:18; Acts 4:25). It is to be remembered that the true prophet spoke only the דבר יהוה (I Kings 13:1.2.5.9.17.32), or only the things which were revealed to him.

In summary, Christ, as the Angel of the Lord, as the God of the Old Testament who spoke to the Children of Israel, and as the second Person of the Trinity, spoke His Words through the prophets and the patriarchs. All the words of these men, which they spoke under the influence or inspiration of Christ, are the powerful words of Christ who exercised His prophetic office through them. These words

revealed the dynamic words of Christ and God's grace to the children of Israel and to all men.

CHAPTER III

THE PROPHETIC OFFICE OF CHRIST IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The revelation of the power of the word is manifested more vividly in the prophetic office of Christ in the New Testament. Christ, the unrevealed Logos, who is from eternity (John 1:1-4), is sent by God to proclaim and reveal the grace and truth of our Lord Jesus Christ (John 1:14, John 1:17). This λόγας of John denotes Christ, who is from eternity, and especially from the beginning of the world, what God had to say to man. This Logos then is the Word of God as it has come into the world or the revelation of God's grace and the announcement of salvation (I Pet. 1:23-28).[1]

This revelation of Christ as the Logos also presents two important facts concerning the prophetic office of Christ and the revelation of the Word. Christ, as God Himself, is the Source and Teacher of all truth, especially the truth which relates to man's redemption. This is implied by the names given to Him in Scripture. He is called Counselor (Is. 9:6), the Witness (Is. 55:4), the Interpreter

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[1]Hermann Cremer, Lexicon of New Testament Greek, Translated by William Urwick (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, c.1878), p. 394.

(Job 33:23), the Apostle (Heb. 3:1), the Word (John 1:1), the Truth (John 14:6), and the Wisdom (Prov. 8). He is also the "Light of Men" (John 1:14), the "Light of the world that lighteth every man" (John 1:19), the "Light to lighten the Gentiles" (Luke 2:32, Is. 60:3), the "Word dwelling among us full of grace and truth" (John 1:14), and the "Christ in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. 2:3). Since He Himself is God, He is the Source of all these things, especially the Source and Teacher of all Truth. For this reason His words are the powerful Words of God, for they are God's Words.[2]

Scripture, however, does not only call Christ, God, (I Tim. 3:16), but it also calls Him the Son of God (John 1:14) and the Prophet sent by God to reveal the things of the Father. As the promised Prophet of the New Testament (Deut. 18:15, Luke 4:17), or as "That Prophet that should come into the world (John 6:14, John 1:21, Luke 24:19), the Father delivered to Him all things and through Him and Him only can man know God (Matt. 11:27). In fact, Christ is the only One who can reveal the Father to man, for He is in the bosom of the Father (John 1:18). Since He was with the Father, He has also heard and known the counsels of the Trinity (John 3:31, 8:26). As He reveals this grace and the counsels of God to men, Christ also actually offers and

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[2]William Shedd, Dogmatic Theology (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, c.1889), p. 366ff.

conveys this grace (Eph. 2:17,18). Thus, as the Prophet sent by God, Christ reveals and offers the power of His word to man.

Since His words are God's words or the words of God's Prophet, they have power not only to reveal, but also to confer the grace of God. John states that the words of Christ have especially the power to grant eternal life (John 6:63, John 6:48ff) where Jesus calls Himself the living Bread which came down from heaven and says that He has the power to give eternal life to those who believe. In John 6:14 Christ calls Himself the "Life". This is only one of the many attributes as to the power of His Word. His words have also the power over nature (Matt. 21:19), over lunatics (Matt. 17:28), over devils (Matt. 15:28), power to convert (Matt. 13:1-23), power to heal (Matt. 12:13), and power to forgive sins (Matt. 9:2). Christ's words regardless of where or to whom they were spoken always had almighty power, for He was God Himself and the Prophet sent from the Father (Matt. 28:18).

This truth is further emphasized in the expression of Christ: "I say unto you" (ἐγὼ λέγω ὑμῖν) and similar formulas. In the frequent use of this formula, Jesus reveals the characteristics of His all-powerful word. He himself, who is God and God's Prophet, gives the power to His own Words (Matt. 28:18). In Christ's sermon, the "Sermon on

the Mount", Christ places a great emphasis on λέγω γὰρ ὑμῖν. In these few chapters it is not the authority alone which gives His words power, but also the transmitting of its elevating content, and the fact that it is offering the contents through Him, namely, Christ (Matt. 5-7), Matt. 13:17).[3]

The great authority and power behind each of Christ's word is again brought out by the ἀμήν. In the Gospel of St. John it is used 25 times, and in the remaining Gospels it is frequently used in the discourses of Christ (Matt. 5:18, Mark 3:28, Luke 4:28): ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν. This phrase has the force of "most assuredly I say unto you".[4] St. John, however, is accustomed to put even more emphasis on the ἀμὴν with a repetition of it (John 1:51,52, John 3:3). A very interesting fact to be noted is that it is used most frequently in the Gospels, and here with reference to the words of Christ. Since Christ is God, and God's Prophet, He only can say that His Words are most certainly true, for He is the Truth (John 14:6). Because of this, His words are the most powerful truth.

In addition to this, Christ's words which He speaks are different from those of the other prophets. Christ speaks

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[3]Otto Procksch, "Wort Gottes im AT", Theologisches Woerterbuch zum Neuen Testament, edited by Gerhard Kittel (Stuttgart: Verlag von W. Kohlhammer, c.1938), IV, 103.

[4]Joseph Thayer, Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (New York: American Book Company, c.1889), p. 32.

His words Κατ' ἐξοχήν (Matt. 7:29), that is to say immediately and by His own authority (John 7:46, 1:18). Jesus did not receive His doctrines by divine inspiration (II Peter 1:21), but possessed them as the omniscient and omnipotent Son of God (Matt. 23:8.10, Luke 24:19, Luke 4:32, Matt. 7:29, John 6:23). Therefore, the words of Christ have authority and power because they are His Words, the Words of the Son of God.[5]

The people also recognized that Christ's words had a special power and authority, which the words of the other prophets did not have. At the raising of the youth of Nain, Christ restored the life of the young man with the words, "Young man, I say unto thee, Arise." And immediately he that was dead sat up and began to speak (Luke 7:14-15). When the people saw the power of His words they glorified God saying, "That a great prophet is risen up among us and the God hath visited His people". The Emmaus disciples also recognized Jesus of Nazareth as a Prophet mighty in deed and Word, before God and all the people (Luke 14:19). Other instances are found at the feeding of the 5000 (John 6:14), at Christ's teaching in the temple (John 7:40), and in His conversation with the woman of Samaria (John 4:19). In fact, the power and the authority which were exerted through

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[5]John Theodore Mueller, Christian Dogmatics (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c.1929), p. 441.

Franz Pieper, Christliche Dogmatik (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c.1924), III, 395.

His words astonished the people, for He taught as one having authority and not as the Scribes and Pharisees (Matt. 7:28,29).

There is yet more power revealed and exerted in the words of Christ. God, in order that His words might have the greatest authority and power, gave to Christ, His Prophet, the Spirit without measure (John 3:34: οὐ γὰρ ἐκ μέτρου δίδωσιν τὸ πνεῦμα). In other words, John records that He (Christ) "whom God has sent", speaks the powerful Word of God, for God had given Him the fulness of His Spirit. Christ had been anointed by the Spirit of the Lord "to preach the Gospel to the poor; was sent to heal the broken hearted; to preach deliverance to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind; to set at liberty them that are bruised; to preach the acceptable year of the Lord (Luke 4:17-18). Therefore, because He was anointed by the Holy Spirit with power, His words are dynamic to give the fulness of God's grace to men.

The prophetic office of Christ, however, is not limited to its revelation in the Old Testament and to the work of the Incarnate Logos. After Christ's ascension in His session, He continues His prophetic office mediately through His apostles. Already as the Incarnate Logos or God's Prophet, He chose twelve ἀπόστολοι or μαθηταί to whom He gave authority and power to heal the sick, to cast out devils, to forgive sins, and to preach the King-

dom of God (Mark 3:14-15, Luke 9:1).

These ἀποστόλοι did not have the authority or power within themselves to do these things, but the fact that they were sent by Christ gave efficacy to their words. This is brought out by the meaning of ἀπόστολος . In the New Testament it has the meaning of a messenger or an ambassador of Christ who was sent to preach in His stead. It usually refers to a man who is a representative of another person with full power and responsibilities. These apostles, therefore, were representatives of Christ, and their words which they spoke were the words of Christ (John 20:21).

St. Paul, although not one of the original twelve apostles, gives as one of the qualifications of an apostle, that he had to be chosen or called by Christ (Romans 1:1-2). The other qualifications are given by the other writers of the New Testament. According to them they had to be eye-witnesses of Christ's life (II Pet. 1:10), and had to be sent out by Christ (Luke 11:49, John 20:21). Christ, therefore, is the one who gives the apostles authority and power, since they are His ambassadors. Because of this fact, the words which they speak are not the mere words of man, but the Word of God and the words of Christ in His prophetic office (I Thess. 2:12, Gal. 1:11-12, II Cor. 13:3). These words are powerful words, for their words are in truth the "Word of God, which effectually works in them that believe" (I Thess. 2:13).

In addition, it must be stated that not only the words of the apostles were the words of Christ when they spoke under His influence, but also the words of all New Testament writers. Each writer wrote the things which Christ had placed into his heart by inspiration (Rev. 1:2). They, as the inspired penmen of Christ, wrote down the efficacious words of Christ. These words have power in themselves, as well as the power of Christ in His prophetic office.

In summary, Christ, as the Incarnate Logos and as the Prophet sent by God, revealed God and His omnipotent Word. As the Incarnate Logos and God Himself, He gave His own words their power. As the Prophet sent from God and by His anointment with the Holy Spirit beyond measure, His Father also gave His divine power and authority to His words. After His ascension into heaven, Christ continued His prophetic office through His apostles. Since they were sent by Christ, their words received their authority and power from Christ; in other words, their words were the omnipotent words of Christ.

CHAPTER IV

THE PROPHETIC OFFICE OF CHRIST TODAY

The prophetic office of Christ did not end with its revelation in the Old and the New Testaments. Christ, as God's Prophet, is still exerting His power through the written Word of God today. Whenever and wherever this Word of God is read Christ manifests His power through the Word, for it is His Word which was recorded by the apostles and prophets (II Cor. 13:3). Jesus affirms this truth of the dynamic characteristic of the Word. He tells the unbelieving Jews, who did not hear His words, to search (ἐρευνᾶτε) or examine carefully the Scriptures (γραφάς), for they have the power to grant eternal life to those who read them (John 5:39).

The apostles also testify that Christ exercised His power through the read Word. St. Paul tells Timothy that his study and instruction in the Holy Scriptures are able to make him wise unto salvation (II Tim. 3:15: τὰ δυνάμενά σε σοφίσαι εἰς σωτηρίαν). Not only does his study of Scripture give him this eternal wisdom, but it is also profitable for reproof, for correction, for instruction in

righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect to all good works. St. Paul also admonishes Timothy to exert himself in the study of Scriptures (σπούδασον), so that he might be able to rightly divide the Word of Truth or God's Word (II Tim. 2:15). Through his read or studied Word Christ exerts His power, for they are His words.

This same power is exercised in the Word today. Wherever the Bible is read, Christ speaks through it the words of truth and gives the read word the power to make us wise unto salvation, power to grant us eternal life (John 5:39), and power to make a perfect man of God (II Tim. 3:15).

Furthermore, Christ exerts the dynamic of His prophetic office in the oral Word today through the office of the ministry. Before His session into heaven, Jesus gave the command to His disciples to preach the Gospel to every creature (Matt. 28:19). In order to accomplish this mission Christ instituted the office of the ministry (Eph. 4:11). Ministers, then, are ambassadors of Christ whom Christ has sent to proclaim His dynamic Word. Therefore, whenever a minister preaches the Word of God, he by authority of Christ announces the mighty Words of Christ which have the power to create faith (John 17:20). Even though this oral proclamation of the Word seems foolish to those that perish, to us who are saved it is the power of God (I Cor. 1:18, I Cor. 12:1). St. Peter also calls this declaration of the Word the ministry of reconciliation (I Pet. 4:11). Thus

Christ by virtue of His prophetic office today speaks His dynamic Words through the office of the ministry.

The word "Κήρυξ" also denotes the source of the power in the oral Word. In the New Testament this terms is used as an ambassador or herald of the divine Word. The authority and the power of the "Κήρυξ" comes by virtue of the fact that He was sent or commissioned by Christ (Mark 16:15). For this reason he is also known as a "ὑπερέτης", a servant or an assistant (literally, a subordinate power) of Christ (I Cor. 4:1), or a co-laborer with Christ "συνέργος". (I Cor. 3:9). The words which he preaches as a herald are the infallible words of Christ and have the power to convert (John 17:20). The "Κήρυξ" of today is the evangelist, whose announcement of the Gospel is the dynamic Word of Christ.

The minister of this present era is really the "διδάσκαλος" of the New Testament. In the New Testament this word denotes one who teaches concerning the things of God and the duties of men.[1] The term "διδάσκαλος" also implied that the teacher used the written Word and from it expounded the truth of God's Word. His words are also the dynamic Words of Christ, because this office was instituted by Christ (Eph. 4:11). Therefore, the oral proclamation of the Gospel by the ministers of today receives its power from Christ's prophetic

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[1]Joseph Thayer, Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (New York: American Book Company, c.1889), p. 144.

office (Heb. 13:7).

In addition, the Word which Christians proclaim is the powerful Word of Christ, for all Christians are members of the royal priesthood (I Pet. 2:9). When they speak the Word of God, their words receive their power from Christ's commission to go and preach the Gospel (Mark 16:15, Matt. 28:19). Moreover, Christ states explicitly that their words are His words (Luke 10:16: "He that heareth you, heareth Me". Paul also emphasizes this truth when he tells his Thessalonian congregation that "from them went forth the powerful Words of the Lord" (I Thess. 1:8: ὁ λόγος τοῦ Κυρίου). Thus the oral proclamation of the Word of God by Christians receives its power from Christ, for it is Christ who is speaking through them.

The power of the Word which is derived from Christ's prophetic office manifests itself also in absolution. When the minister or any other Christian absolves a sinner, he does it by the authority and the power of Christ, which is exerted through His Word. Christ has given this power of the Keys to all Christians (Matt. 16:19). Therefore, when a Christian uses the Word of Christ to remit sins his words of absolution are as efficacious as if Christ personally conferred this forgiveness (John 20:23).

St. Paul stresses this fact in his letter to the Corinthian congregation. In his instruction on the forgiving of an excommunicated person he tells them that "To whom

they forgive anything, to whom he forgave it, for your sakes forgave he it in the person of Christ (ἐν προσώπῳ Χριστοῦ)(II Cor. 2:10). In other words, Paul's words of forgiveness were the powerful words of Christ.

The people who lived during Christ's visible presence on earth also recognized that Jesus had given this power to men. After Jesus had healed the man sick of the palsy, Matthew expresses the truth that when the multitudes saw that Jesus had forgiven sins they marveled and glorified God who had given such power to men (Matt. 9:18). In this passage the people realized that Christ by virtue of His prophetic office had bestowed upon men the power to forgive sins. (John 20:23).

In addition, Christ in His prophetic office endows the visible Word or the Sacraments with their divine efficacy. Baptism receives its divine power because it was instituted by Christ and connected with God's Word (Matt. 28:18-19).[2] It is not the water or something outside the water that gives Baptism the power to forgive sin, to deliver from death and the devil, and to bestow eternal life, but it is the Word of God in the water (Tit. 3:5, Acts 22:16).[3] This Word of God is the dynamic Word of Christ, by which He gives

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[2]"The Small Catechism", Concordia Triglotta, edited by Fred Bente, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921), p. 555:2.

[3]"The Small Catechism", op. cit., p. 551:9-10.

the water His almighty power through His prophetic office. Therefore, since this Word is the mighty power of God, Baptism has and is able to do all that God is and can do (since it has all the virtue and power of God).[4]

This same power of the Word which is exerted in Baptism through the prophetic office of Christ is also exercised in the Lord's Supper. The bread and the wine become Christ's body and blood and receive their power to forgive sins and strengthen faith by virtue of the words of Christ's institution (Matt. 26:26ff., I Cor. 11:24, Luke 22:20). It is not the bread and the wine that endows the Lord's supper with its efficacy, but the Word of God, which is in the Sacrament.[5] In this Word of God and in this Word alone reside the nature and the whole substance of the Lord's Supper.[6] Thus the words of Christ which He speaks through His prophetic office give the earthly their divine power.

In summary, Christ continues His prophetic office in this present time through the written and oral Word. The written Word is the omnipotent Word of Christ whenever and wherever it is read, for Christ works through it in His

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[4]"The Large Catechism", Concordia Triglotta, edited by Fred Bente (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921), p. 735:17.

[5]"The Small Catechism", op. cit., p. 557:8.

[6]"The Babylonian Captivity of the Church," Works of Martin Luther, edited A. J. Holman and translated by A.T.W. Steinhaeuser (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1915), p. 195.

prophetic office. The oral Word is also the efficacious Word of Christ, for He has given His Word with all His authority and power to ministers, teachers, and all Christians. Everywhere this word is spoken, Christ is speaking His Word through their words and gives their words their power. Christ in His prophetic office today also endows the Sacraments with their divine efficacy. The words of institution and the Word of Christ itself turn the Sacraments into a powerful means of grace.

CHAPTER V

THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE WORK OF THE HOLY GHOST AND THE POWER OF THE WORD

In this study of the relationship of Christ's prophetic office and the power of the Word, the two-fold function of the Word of Christ in His prophetic office has constantly been emphasized. Christ is the Prophet, promised and sent by God, and as such reveals the grace of God directly and immediately. In the Old Testament, He, as the Angel of the Lord, spoke directly with the prophets and patriarchs and immediately through inspiration concerning the grace of God. In the New Testament Christ, as the revealed Logos, manifests the very essence and nature of His Father and the infinite grace of God directly to men. After His ascension to heaven He continues this revelation of His Father and His grace to men mediately through His apostles and ministers, for the Words, which they speak, are His gracious Words. This revelation, however, is also the dynamic offer and pardon which God brings to men.

Christ's Words, however, do not only reveal, offer, and convey this grace of God to men, but His words have also the power to engender faith and to grant forgiveness of sin and eternal life. As the Words which Christ spoke to

the man sick of the palsy had the power to grant forgiveness of sin and engender faith, so the Words which Christ speaks mediately through the apostles and ministers have the same power, for they are spirit and they are life.

This same two-fold function of the Word of Christ's prophetic office, however, is also ascribed to the office of the Holy Spirit. Scriptures testify that the Holy Spirit reveals God and offers His grace immediately to the prophets and the apostles and mediately through Christ's Words. While Christ was upon earth, the Holy Spirit spoke through Christ's Word, for Christ was anointed with the Holy Spirit and with power. After Christ's session into heaven, the Holy Spirit continued this activity through the written Word of Christ. These words, then, which the Holy Spirit spoke, had not only the power to reveal God and offer His grace, but also as Christ's Words had this very same power.

Furthermore, these words of the Holy Spirit also had the power to grant this grace of God to men. Scripture clearly asserts that the Words of the Holy Spirit have the power to bring men to the knowledge of Christ, to regenerate them, and to engender faith. Therefore, the power which the Holy Spirit exercises through the Word of Christ stands in close relation to the power of Christ in the Word. To both is ascribed the power to reveal, convey, and confer the grace of God to men. Because of this close relationship, it would seem that the Words of Christ contain two in-

dividual powers, namely, that of Christ and that of the Holy Spirit. This, however, is not the case. The power which Christ and the Holy Spirit exercise through the Word of Christ is one and the same power viewed from two different aspects, namely, that of its relationship to the prophetic office of Christ and the relationship of the office of the Holy Spirit to Christ's prophetic office. In order to understand that there are not two different powers, but one and the same power in the Word, a study of the outward actions of the God-head (opus ad extra) or the work in which the three persons of the Godhead cooperate or concur must be made.

The three actions in which the three Persons of the Trinity concur are the works of creation, redemption, and sanctification. In all of these outward actions the operation of the Trinity is undivided. If at times Scripture ascribes the creation to the Father, redemption to the Son, and sanctification to the Holy Spirit, this is done by appropriation, which, however, does not exclude the divine operation of the other Persons. For example, creation is said to be the work of the Father (Gen. 1:26, John 5:16), and also said to be the work of the Father through the Son and the Spirit (Ps. 33:6, Col. 1:16, Job 33:4). Therefore, though creation is ascribed to the Father, it is also the work in which the Holy Ghost and the Son concurred.[1]

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[1]Franz Pieper, Christliche Dogmatik (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c. 1924), I, 513ff.

This same truth is set forth in regard to the power of the Word as a vis collativa and a vis effectiva. At times Scripture ascribes this power to the Father (I Pet. 1:5, I Cor. 2:5), to the Son (Christ) (Rom. 1:16, Luke 1:76-77), and to the Holy Ghost (I Cor. 2:4, Rom. 15:18-19, Tit. 3:5). Therefore, though Scripture attributes this power of the Word to all three persons of the Godhead, yet to each person there is given a special function of the Word in which the others cooperate. To the Word of God the Father is ascribed the power to sustain and uphold the universe and to grant His Word of grace. To the Word of the Holy Spirit is attributed the power to bring men to the knowledge of Christ. Finally, to the Word of Christ iself is ascribed the power to reveal the Father and to offer and to grant His grace to men. This power, then, is one and the same power, for it is the power exerted by the Triune God. Thus, even though in this study of the relationship of the power of the Words of Christ's prophetic office and the power which the Holy Ghost exercises through Christ's Words, these powers seem to be two different powers, yet it is only one power, the power of the divine Trinity. This thought must be kept in mind in this section of the thesis.

That the Holy Spirit also reveals God and offers the grace of God through the Word is found in both the Old and the New Testaments. David, the great psalmist, records in his last words that the Spirit of the Lord ([illegible]) spake

by me and His word was upon my tongue (II Sam. 23:1-2). The words, therefore, that David spoke when inspired were the Words of the Holy Ghost, or the Spirit of the Lord. It was also this that gave David's words their divine efficacy. A reference to the inspiration of David by the Holy Spirit is also found in the New Testament and confirms what has previously been stated. Peter, while addressing the 120 disciples at the choosing of Matthias, speaks of the Scriptures that had been fulfilled concerning Judas, which the "Holy Ghost spoke by the mouth of David" (Acts 1:16: ἣν προεῖπεν τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον διὰ στόματος Δαυίδ). Other references in the New Testament also confirm this truth. St. Mark refers to David speaking the words of Ps. 110:1 by the Holy Spirit (Mark 12:36: αὐτὸς Δαυὶδ εἶπεν ἐν τῷ πνεύματι τῷ ἁγίῳ). St. Luke also records that the Holy Spirit spoke through the prophet, Esaias, the words of Is. 6:9ff. in Acts 28:25: Καλῶς τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον ἐλάλησεν διὰ Ἠσαΐου τοῦ προφήτου . In each of these incidents the Holy Spirit inspired these individual prophets to speak His Words which reveal God and offer His grace to men.

The New Testament provides additional information concerning the inspiration of the prophets of the Old Testament by the Holy Spirit. In the previous paragraph individual prophets were designated as the inspired spokesmen of the Holy Ghost. In his epistle Peter records that the prophecy of God is sure, for it came not by the will of men, but

"Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost". (II Pet. 1:21: ἀλλὰ ὑπὸ πνεύματος ἁγίου φερόμενοι ἐλάλησαν ἀπὸ θεοῦ ἅγιοι ἄνθρωποι).

The use of the word "אֱמֶת", which was previously discussed, has an important bearing on II Sam. 23:1. In this passage the Holy Spirit is characterized as the voice of God, by which the oracles were revealed to the prophets.[2] With His words came the revelation and offer of God's grace.

In the New Testament the relationship between the prophetic office of Christ and the office of the Holy Spirit sets forth other aspects in regard to the revelation of God and the dynamic offer of His grace to men through Christ's Words. The Holy Spirit throughout the New Testament lends His office to the Words which Christ spoke as the Incarnate Logos, and the Words which He spoke through His apostles and ministers. Already at Christ's birth the Words which Christ was revealing were to contain the Holy Spirit's revelation of God and the dynamic offer of His grace to men, since Christ was anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power (Acts 10:36). This same truth is again set forth at Christ's baptism when the Holy Spirit descended upon Him and lent His power of revealing God and offering God's grace to Christ's Words (Matt. 3:16-18).

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[2]William Gesenius, A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament, translated by Edward Robinson (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, c.1882), p. 524.

The prophet Isaiah also reveals the greatness of this outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon Christ, for through it Christ's words received additional power and authority, so to speak, to reveal God and His gracious promises to men. This anointing of Christ with the Holy Spirit enable Christ to "preach the Gospel to the poor; to heal the broken hearted; to preach deliverance to the captives and the recovery of sight to the blind; to set at liberty them that are bruised" (Luke 4:18, Is. 61:1-2). Therefore, although the revelation of God and the dynamic offer of God's grace is usually ascribed to the power of Christ's prophetic office, it is also a function of the Holy Spirit who also gave His power to reveal God and offer God's grace to Christ's Words.

Furthermore, the Holy Spirit continued this revelation of God and the dynamic offer of God's grace through Christ's Words after Christ's ascension into heaven. While Christ was still with His disciples on earth He had promised them that He would send them another Comforter, who would teach them all things (John 16:13, 15:26). This Comforter would be the Spirit of truth, who would guide them in all Truth and reveal to them all the things of God's grace which Christ wished to reveal to them, but which they could not grasp while He was with them (John 16:13). Therefore, when Christ would leave them the Holy Spirit would take of the things of God's grace which the Father had given Christ to reveal, and manifest these gracious offers to His disciples (John 16:15).

In this same section the truth is emphasized that these words which the Holy Spirit would reveal would not be of Himself, but the Words which Christ tells Him (John 16:13). Because of this fact, the apostles when they wrote the Words of Christ which are found in our New Testament, penned the Words which the Holy Spirit had revealed to them by inspiration. Thus the revelation of God and His grace by the Holy Spirit is closely related to the prophetic office of Christ. The Holy Spirit reveals and offers through Christ's dynamic Words the things which Christ revealed during His incarnation through His own mighty Word. Therefore, although there seem to be two different powers which reveal God and offer His grace, there is in reality only one. It is the same power in the dynamic Word of Christ viewed from the aspect of Christ's prophetic office.

The day of Pentecost also manifested this great power which the Holy Spirit exerts through the Word of Christ. When the Holy Ghost entered into the disciples as they were preaching, the disciples began to proclaim Christ's Words as the Spirit gave them utterance (Acts 2:4). The Words, then, which these apostles spoke, were the dynamic Words of Christ to which the Holy Ghost lent His power. These Words had not only the dynamic offer of God's grace, but had also the mighty power to grant this grace to all of the people who were gathered at this place. This efficacy is affirmed by the fact that 3000 souls were added to the church on that

day, because of the power which the Holy Spirit lent to the Word (Acts 2:41). Thus the Holy Spirit had given His power to the Words of Christ and had given the words of the disciples the power to convert.

Paul himself realized that the words which he spoke were taught and also given their power by the Holy Ghost. "His Gospel", he says, "came not to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Ghost" (I Thess. 1:5). Again he says, "My word and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith might stand in the power of God" (I Cor. 2:4). Paul also states that the Gentiles were made obedient by word and deed. . . by the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 15:18-19). Therefore, he realized that His words were not only the powerful words of Christ, but also the dynamic Words of the Holy Spirit. This same power was given to the words of all the apostles (Acts 4:31).

In addition, Scripture ascribes more divine efficacy to this power which the Holy Spirit exerts through the Words of Christ through Christ's prophetic office. As the <u>vis effectiva</u> the words of the Holy Spirit have the same two offices as the words of Christ, namely, that function of the Law to reveal sin, and that function of the Gospel to reveal, offer, and confer God's grace. The power which the Holy Spirit exerts through the Law is rightly called the foreign office of the Holy Spirit, whereas the power which He exerts

through the Gospel is the primary function of His office.

The words of the Law to which the Holy Spirit gives His power have the dynamic to reveal and work the knowledge of sin. St. John in His Gospel declares that the Holy Spirit, who exercises His power through the Law, has the power to reprove the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment (John 16:8-11). For this same reason the Word of God is called the "sword of the Spirit", which is able to discern and reveal the thoughts and intents of the heart (Eph. 6:17, Heb. 4,12). Thus, the Holy Spirit exerts His power through the Words of the Law and reveals sin in all its greatness. This same divine efficacy is also ascribed to the power which Christ Himself exerts through the Word.

Moreover, the Holy Ghost through the operation of His power in the Word gives the same divine efficacy to the Gospel as does the power of Christ. In the Gospel of St. John Jesus tells Nicodemus that by the working of the Holy Ghost in the Word the Gospel receives the power to regenerate him (John 3:5). Paul, in his second letter to the Corinthians and the Thessalonians, ascribes the power of illumination and conversion to the activity of the Holy Spirit in the Gospel (II Cor. 4:6, II Thess. 2:13). Again, Jesus in His declaration to His disciples, in which He told them that He is the Bread of heaven, points out that the Holy Spirit gives the Word a quickening power (John 6:63a). In addition, Paul in his letter to the Romans attributes the power of sancti-

fication to the working of the Holy Spirit in the Word. He states that through the Gospel which he preached the Gentiles were sanctified by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 15:16). Thus Scripture affirms that the power which the Holy Ghost exercises through the Word actually grants the grace of God which He offers in the Gospel. This dynamic of the Spirit, however, is the same power which Christ gives to the Words of the Gospel.

This power of the Holy Spirit is also present in the Word which is spoken by the Christians today. The Holy Spirit speaks through the Word and gives the Word the power to convert and grant the grace of God to men (Acts 10:44). Wherever the Word of God is, there is also the power of the Holy Ghost, for the Spirit was also bestowed upon the Gentiles (Acts 10:45, I Thess. 1:5). The Word of Christ, then, which Christians use today is the mighty and efficacious Word of Christ and the Holy Spirit (John 16:13-15).

In summary, the power which the Holy Spirit exercises through the Word has the same divine efficacy as the power which Christ exerts through His Word in His prophetic office. There are, however, not two different powers, but there is only one and the same power viewed from different aspects of Christ's prophetic office in which He, as Prophet, gives His own Words their divine power and efficacy. On the other hand, the power which the Holy Spirit exercises through the Word is lent to the Words of Christ through Christ's prophetic office, in which Christ reveals the nature and the

function of the office of the Holy Spirit in relation to Christ's prophetic office. The only solution to this problem that the power which Christ and the Holy Spirit exert through the Word is one and the same power, lies in the Trinity.

CHAPTER VI

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THIS POWER OF THE WORD

That the Word of God is a dynamic power, which is given to it through the prophetic office of Christ, has been clearly set forth in the previous sections of this thesis. In these sections the truth was pointed out that Christ as God's Prophet gave the Word of God its power throughout the Old and New Testaments and still gives it to His Word today. This power of the Word, however, has definite characteristics, which will, if examined in the light of Scripture, show forth the true attributes of the Word.

Throughout the Sacred Scriptures this dynamic of the Word is described in various ways, especially by the use of similes. In the Old Testament Jeremiah describes this mighty Word as an inconquerable fire in which straw is burnt, and like a hammer which shatters the rocks into pieces (Jeremiah 23:29). The Psalmist also points out that this Word has the power "to make him wise" and that this Word is "a Lamp unto his feet and a Light unto his path" (Ps. 119:104-105). In addition, the Prophet, Isaiah, testifies that the Word has the power to do (עשה) what God wills (Is. 55:11).

In the New Testament similar expressions are used to

describe the characteristics of this power of the Word. St. Paul in his letter to the Ephesians compares the power of the Word of God to a sword. In Ephesians 6:7 he calls the Word of God the "Sword of the Spirit". This same terminology is used by the writer of the book of the Hebrews. Here the λόγος τοῦ Θεοῦ is characterized as a quick and powerful weapon, and sharper than a two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of thoughts and the intents of the heart (Heb. 4:12).[1]

A further aspect of the characteristic of this dynamic of the Word is found in II Pet. 1:19. In this passage it is called the "βεβαιότερον τὸν προφητικὸν λόγον ", or the light "which has the power to light up the darkness of the heart". Jesus Himself says of His Words that they are life-giving Words (John 6:63). Luke also speaks of the Word as having the power to "τυφλοῖς ἀνάβλεψιν " (Luke 4:18). In summary, all of these Bible passages show that Scripture ascribes a great dynamic to the Word of God.

This power, however, is not beside or outside of the Word, but is in the Word. This is one of the most important attributes of the power of the Word. Reformed theologians, such as Hodge, speak of the dynamic of the Word as only an

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[1]A good exegesis of this passage is found in W.H.T. Dau, Doctrinal Theology, Lectures on Dr. Graebner's Outlines (Mimeographed), pp. 26f.

instrument and not as the power of God. In his book on dogmatics he states:

> The Truth (meaning the presentation of the Gospel through the external Word) attends the work of regeneration but is not the means by which it is effected.[2]

Again he affirms:

> The infusion of new life into the soul is the immediate operation of the Spirit. . . In the work of regeneration all second causes are excluded. . . . Nothing intervenes between the volition of the Spirit and the regeneration of the soul.[3]

Thus Hodge denies that the Word of God is a powerful dynamic by ascribing power only to the immediate operation of the Spirit.

Zwingli also testifies that faith does not come through the power of the Word but through the immediate operation of the Holy Spirit.[4] Calvin expresses this same thought in his Institutes in the words:

> All the energy of operation (in the means of grace) belong to the Spirit and the Sacraments (the Visible Word) are mere instruments, which without His agency are vain and useless, but with it are fraught with surprising efficacy.[5]

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[2]Charles Hodge, Systematic Theology (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, c.1874), II, 684f.

[3]Charles Hodge, op. cit., II, 684f.

[4]Franz Pieper, Christliche Dogmatik (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c.1920), III, 150.

[5]John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, translated by John Allen (London: Printed for J. Walker; J. Hachard, and others, 1817), III, 306.

The Westminster Confession also denies the power of the Word in the Sacraments. It states:

> The grace which is exhibited in or by the sacraments is not conferred by any power in them . . . but is depended upon the work of the Spirit.[6]

Quakerism calls the Word of God a "dead letter" and ascribes all the power to the working of the Holy Spirit.[7]

Barthian theology also denies that the written and oral Word is the power of God unto salvation. The written and the oral word to these theologians are only a testimony to the truth of the Logos and His own dynamic Words, which is the only true Word of God. In order for the written and oral Words to become the "Word of God" they must be verified in man's heart by the "inner spirit".[8] His theology is Reformed in this respect that there is no power in the oral and written Word, but it depends on a power outside of the Word.

Scripture, however, ascribes the power to the Word and to the Holy Spirit's operation in the Word.[9] According to Paul, the Word or the preaching of the cross "ἐστιν τοῖς σωζομένοις ἡμῖν δύναμις θεοῦ" (I Cor. 1:18). Special

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[6]The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, c.1840), p. 142.

[7]Franz Pieper, op. cit., III, 150.

[8]Holmes Rolston, A Conservative Looks at Barth (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, c.1933), p. 70-101.

[9]cf. Section I of this thesis for Barth's conception of Word of God.

emphasis is placed on the word "ἐστιν", which denotes essence. Thus, God works mightily through and in the Word of God. In Romans 1:16 Paul testifies again that the Gospel or the Word of God "ἐστιν δύναμις Θεοῦ εἰς σωτηρίαν παντὶ τῷ πιστεύοντι." Here, too, the emphasis is on the word "ἐστιν". In this passage St. Paul declares that the Gospel itself is the saving power of God.

This same truth is expressed by the use of the prepositions "διά", and "ἐν" with the Word of God. St. Peter declares that Christians are born again not of the corruptible seed, but of the incorruptible seed "διὰ λόγου ζῶντος Θεοῦ". (I Pet. 1:23). In this text the apostle affirms that men are regenerated through the power of the Word. St. Paul in his letter to the Ephesians points out that the Gentiles were made partakers of His promise in Christ "διὰ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου" (Eph. 3:6-7). In other words, the Gospel has within itself the power to convert. This word has also the power in itself to create faith, as it is revealed in Christ's prayer for His apostles. He prays: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on them "διὰ τοῦ λόγου " (John 17:20)[10]. Therefore in all of these passages the expressions "διὰ τοῦ λόγου" and "διὰ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου" affirm that there is a power in and working through the Word of God.

The simple preposition "ἐν" used with derivatives of the

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[10] I Cor. 4:15.

Word also stress this same point. Paul testifies to his Corinthian congregation that his words were in demonstration of the Spirit and in power, so that their faith would not stand in the wisdom of man but "ἐν" the power of God (I Cor. 2:45). This power of God according to Romans 1:16 is the Gospel. In his first letter to the Thessalonians, he confirms this same fact when he points out that his Gospel came "ἐν δυνάμει" and "ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ" (I Thess. 1:5). In these two passages the " " means "in" the word. Therefore, the Word of God has power in itself and not outside or beside it.[11]

Moreover, this power of the Word is eternally in the Word, for the Word of the Lord endureth forever (I Pet. 1:25). Peter also declares that this Word is an incorruptible seed which lives and abides forever (I Pet. 1:23). It is living in its essence as it is in its effect; it is enduring not only in that its results are eternal, but because its results are also enduring.[12] Since the Word is (ἐστιν) the power of God, the Word as the power of God endures eternally (I Cor. 1:18).

In summary, the power of the Word is in the Word itself, and not beside or outside of it as the Reformed and Enthusi-

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[11] I Cor. 4:15.

[12] J. E. Huther, Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the General Epistles, translated by John Dwight, V, 238.

astic theologians maintain. This Word, as Scripture explicitly confirms, is the powerful and eternal Word of God.[13]

Closely linked with the fact that this dynamic of the Word is eternally in the Word is the truth that the Word of Christ is efficacious at all times when it is applied. The reason for this is that the power of Christ and the power of the Spirit is in the Word. Whenever Christians use the divine Word, they are employing the life-giving words of Christ (John 6:63) and of the Holy Spirit (II Cor. 3:6).

Scriptures also testify that this Word of God is effective at all times. God through the Prophet Isaiah declares that the Word of God is like "the rain and the snow which cometh down from heaven and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, that it may bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater: 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" (Is. 55: 10-11). This text points out that the Word of God is efficacious at all times to accomplish the desires and purposes for which it was sent.

Paul in his letter to the Colossians stresses this same

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[13]For a consideration of the operation of the power of the Holy Spirit in the Word, turn to Chapter Iv of this thesis. H. A. Meyer, Commentary on the New Testament.

efficacy of the Word. He points out that the Gospel brings forth fruit at all times, as it did in his congregation. (Col. 1:5-6). In his epistle to Timothy he again testifies that this power is always a dynamic, for the Word of God is not bound (II Tim. 2:9). Therefore, Scripture clearly sets forth that the dynamic of the Word is always effective, whenever it is used and applied.

Furthermore, this divine power which inheres in the Word is not irresistible, but resistible; that is to say, the saving dynamic of the Word may be withstood even though it is the "δύναμις τοῦ Θεοῦ". This truth is affirmed in Stephan's apology in which he addressed the hardened Jews. He says: "Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcized in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost. As your fathers did, so do ye" (Acts 7:51). Isaiah set forth this same truth when he complains that Israel resisted the power of the Word of God by not believing his report (Rom. 10:16.21). In Acts 13:46 St. Paul and Barnabas declare that the Jews resisted the power of the Word by putting it from them. Thus, even though Scriptures testify that the Word is the dynamic of God, it also asserts that it can be resisted. Luther explains this in this manner: "When God works through means, He can be resisted: but when He works without means in His revealed glory, He cannot be resisted."[14]

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[14]John T. Mueller, Christian Dogmatics (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1929), p. 134.

In summary, the characteristics of the power of the Word are clearly set forth in the Sacred Scriptures. Scripture testifies that the power of God is in the Word, not beside or outside of it; that the power of the Word is valid and effective at all times; that this power of the Word is eternally connected with the Word; and that this power of the Word is resistible.

CHAPTER VII

THE EFFICACY OF THE WORD AS THE POWER OF GOD

This study of the relationship of Christ's prophetic office and the power of the Word has revealed that the power of the Word lies in the prophetic office of Christ. Each word that Christ speaks, as the Logos and as God's Prophet through His written and oral Word, is the powerful Word of God. Since this Word is such a dynamic, it has two divine functions which it performs as the vis collativa and as the vis effectiva. As the vis collativa it actually offers to men the grace of God. As the vis effectiva it in fact confers this grace of God to men.

The vis collativa and the vis effectiva, however, must be viewed from two different aspects because of the two-fold nature of the Word of God, namely, that of the Law and that of the Gospel. The power of the Word which is exerted through the divine Law is the foreign function of Christ's prophetic office. As the auxiliary function of the Word the divine Law has the ability to work the knowledge of sin and reveal the wrath of God. On the other hand, the power which is exerted through the Gospel is the primary function of Christ's prophetic office. Through this work of the Word God actually

works, strengthens, and preserves in the heart a living faith in the forgiveness of sin.

The foreign function of the power of the Word which is exercised through Christ's prophetic office is exerted through the words of the Law. In His prophetic office Christ not only reveals and confers God's grace to men, but He declares the will and demands of God to men and His divine wrath against sin (Rom. 3:22-24). Through the words of the Law Christ also teaches what is right and pleasing to God and reproves everything that is sin and contrary to His will.[1] In addition this word of the Law has also the dynamic to terrify and condemn the secure sinner (Rom. 10:4).

Reformed theology, contrary to the teaching of Scripture, fails to make the proper distinction between the primary and the foreign function of Christ's prophetic office. They consider the revelation of the Law as part of the revelation of the Gospel, thereby changing the Law into God's gracious revelation. These theologians, therefore, believe with Calvin that "the revelation of the Law is not a foreign work, but a part of the Gospel by which men are informed that all their thoughts and affects and pursuits are corrupt and vicious."[2]

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[1]"Formula of Concord", Concordia Triglotta, edited by Fred Bente (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c. 1921), V, 2, 801.

[2]John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, translated by John Allen (London: Printed for J. Walker, J. Hatchard, J. Richardson, etc. c.1813), II, 84 (Institutes III, 9, 19.).

Calvin affirms this concept of the contents of the Gospel when he states:

> When mention of the whole Law is made, the Gospel only differs with respect to its clear manifestation.[3]

Since Reformed theologians consider the law a part of the Gospel and make both the Law and the Gospel part of Christ's real work, their concept of the Word and faith is altered. No longer is faith simply the response of man to this promise of the Word, his trust in a pledge of divine mercy, it is at the same time a response to a commandment which accompanies the promise of the Gospel, or as Calvin states it "an obedience of faith".[4] Faith then, according to Calvin and the Reformed theologians, becomes an acceptance as true of "whatsoever is revealed in the Word", and secondly, a conduct which conforms with "each particular passage thereof, yielding obedience to the commands, trembling at the threatenings, and embracing the promises of Christ."[5] Thus the Word of Gospel to them becomes a Law which demands obedience, or as Neve states it:

> Calvin stresses Scripture as a book of laws from heaven that are to be obeyed to the letter.[6]

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[3]John Calvin, op. cit., I, 455 (Institutes II, 9, 4.)

[4]John Calvin, op. cit., II, 217 (Institutes III, 2, 6.)

[5]The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, c.1840), p. 77.

[6]J. L. Neve, A History of Christian Thought (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, c.1946), I, 288.

The Barthian concept of the Law is very similar to that of the Calvinistic and Reformed. With these theologians Barth agrees that the Law and the Gospel are one and the same Word. He states:

> We hear the Law of God when we hear the Gospel. The two dare not be separated....When we say 'faith', we must also say 'obedience'; when we say 'Gospel', we must also say 'Law'.[7]

Both of them, however, belong to one Word of God, which is Law and Gospel. Thus Barth also agrees with the Reformed theologians that the Law is part of the Gospel and a part of the primary function of Christ's prophetic office. It is to him also a book of Laws which demand obedience.[8]

Scripture, however, affirms that there is a primary and a secondary function of Christ's prophetic office with its definite distinction between Law and Gospel. Everything in Scripture that demands of men perfect obedience to God (Gal. 3:10), that renders all the world guilty before God (Rom. 3:19), and that mediates the knowledge of sin (Rom. 3:20) is law. On the other hand, everything that offers, conveys, and grants peace to the sinner (Rom. 1:16-17, 10:15, Acts 20:24, Eph. 6:15, 1:13) is Gospel. This same distinction is set forth clearly by St. John. He asserts that the "Law was

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[7]K. Barth,"Freis Reformierte Synod Barmen-Gemarke", Hermann Sasse, Here We Stand, translated by T. Tappert (New York and London: Harper & Brothers, c.1938), p. 163.

[8]F. E. Mayer,"The Function of the Law in Christian Preaching", Concordia Theological Monthly, XXI (February, 1950), 123-129.

given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1:17). From this same passage the truth is also pointed out that the primary function of Christ's prophetic office was to reveal and offer the grace and the truth of God. Since the revelation of the Law is ascribed to Moses, it is therefore the foreign function of Christ's prophetic office.

Moreover, Christ in the foreign function of His prophetic office revealed the full will and wrath of God. With this revelation of the Law Christ also gives the Law its divine efficacy by showing its true meaning and power.

In the Old Testament Christ exercised this phase of His prophetic office mediately through Moses and the other prophets. These men whom God had chosen proclaimed the same Divine Law which Christ preached during His incarnation (Lev. 19:18). This is brought out in Deut. 18:18 where Moses prophesies that God will raise up a prophet like unto him. In the New Testament this same truth is affirmed in Jesus' conversation with the rich young lawyer who asked him which is the greatest commandment of the law. In reply to his question Christ explained to him that it was the same law of love which was found in the Old Testament (Matt. 22:34-40).

This truth is also pointed out in Christ's Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7). Here Christ proclaims the true Law of God, unadulterated by the false teachings and interpretations of the Scribes and Pharisees. For example, in His interpre-

tation of the Fifth Commandment of the Decalog, He gives this commandment its full power and true explanation. "Committing murder", he says, "is not done only when a man actually kills another, but is already present when their is anger in his heart." Christ, then, by revealing the entire Law of God, gave His Divine Law the power to reveal sin in all its greatness.

A consideration of Christ's prophetic office throughout the New Testament will reveal that the efficacy of the words of the Apostles reveal this same fact. Paul in his Epistle to the Romans points out that the words of the Law have the power to revive sin (Rom. 3:19, Rom. 7:10), and have the power to make one conscious of his sin (Rom. 7:7). Again he states that "without the law sin is dead" (Rom. 7:8). Therefore, Christ through the words of the Apostles also exercised this divine power of the law.

In addition, this Divine Law is efficacious in other respects because of the power of the prophetic office of Christ. This Divine Law which Christ, God's Prophet, proclaims, has the power to reveal the sin of unbelief (John 8:24), the power to make man guilty before God (Rom. 3:19), the power to condemn man eternally (II Cor. 3:9), the power to reveal the wrath of God (Rom. 1:18), and the power to show man his incapabilities to overcome sin (Rom. 5:23).

In summary, Christ through the foreign function of His prophetic office reveals the dynamic words of the divine

Law in both the Old and the New Testaments. In the Old Testament He carried out this function by speaking through the prophets and the patriarchs, while in the New Testament, He, as the Incarnate Logos, revealed the true meaning of, and power of the divine Law by giving it its correct interpretation and setting forth its condemning power. These words of the divine Law have the power to point out sin in all its greatness, to manifest the wrath of God, and to condemn men eternally.

The primary function of the power of the prophetic office of Christ is exerted through the Words of the Gospel. This power is manifested in both the vis collativa and the vis effectiva. As the vis collativa the Gospel has the power to offer and convey the entire grace of God to men.

That the Gospel has the power to offer the forgiveness of sin is pointed out throughout Scripture. Luke in his Gospel declares that Christ's words have the power to "Give the knowledge of salvation to his people for the remission of sins (Luke 1:76-77: τοῦ δοῦναι γνῶσιν σωτηρίας τῷ λαῷ αὐτοῦ ἐν ἀφέσει ἁμαρτιῶν αὐτῶν). St. Paul affirms this same truth in his Epistle to the Romans in a positive manner when he states that "in the Gospel the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith" (Rom. 1:16-17). Again in his charge to the elders in the Church of Ephesus he confirms this same truth. He asserts that His Gospel, which he had received of the Lord Jesus, testified of the grace of God (Acts 20:24).

Furthermore, this Gospel has also the power to offer and convey the other gifts of God's grace. In his letter to the Ephesians Paul declares that through the Gospel the exceeding riches of the grace of Christ are offered to all (Eph. 2:7). According to St. John these same words of Christ have also the power to offer eternal life to all who believe them (John 6:40, John 3:14-18). St. Paul in his letter to the Ephesians declares that these Words of Christ have the power to offer and convey peace. In this passage he calls them the "Gospel of peace" (Eph. 6:15: εὐαγγελίου τῆς εἰρήνης). In this same epistle he calls this Gospel "the Gospel which offers salvation to them" (Eph. 1:13). Therefore, Scripture affirms that the Gospel as the <u>vis collativa</u> has the power to offer and convey the entire grace of God to men.

This Gospel, however, has not only the power to offer these various gifts to men, but it actually has the power to confer them. This power is the <u>vis effectiva</u> by which God through His Word actually works, strengthens, and preserves in the heart a living faith in the forgiveness of sin. Through this power of the Word a sinner by faith is converted, justified and sanctified.

That this Gospel has the power to confer faith can be readily affirmed from Scripture. According to St. Paul the Gospel has the power to work faith in the heart. In Romans 10:17 he states that "ἡ πίστις ἐξ ἀκοῆς, ἡ δὲ ἀκοὴ διὰ ῥήματος Χριστοῦ". Faith, then, is created by the "ἀκοῆς", and the "ἀκοῆς" comes through the ῥῆμα Θεοῦ. Christ

also ascribes this same power to the Word when He prays for them who believe on Him through the Word of the Gospel (John 6:20). Luke, too, points out that this same Gospel is able to create and strengthen faith (Acts 11:14).

Furthermore, this Gospel as a vis effectiva has also the power to save souls and make them wise unto salvation. James in his epistle exhorts his fellow Christians to "lay aside all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness and to receive the engrafted Word which is able to save your souls".[9] Paul also affirms that the "word of God is able to make men wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus".[10] In his letter to the Corinthians he again confirms this same fact when he tells them that the Gospel which he preached had the power to save them (I Cor. 15:1-2).

A more striking passage which stresses this same point is found in Romans 1:16. In this text Paul calls the Gospel the " δύναμις γὰρ Θεοῦ ἐστιν εἰς σωτηρίαν ". This expression manifests the Gospel as a mighty potency which is able to awaken repentance, faith, comfort, love, peace, joy, courage in life and death, hope, and the rest of the grace of God. The working of this power of God is also a saving

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[9] James 1:21: δεξάσθε τὸν ἔμφυτον λόγον τὸν δυνάμενον σῶσαι τὰς ψυχὰς ὑμῶν

[10] II Tim. 3:15: Καὶ ὅτι ἀπὸ βρέφους ἱερὰ γράμματα οἶδας, τὰ δυνάμενά σε σοφίσαι εἰς σωτηρίαν διὰ πίστεως τῆς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ.

dynamic "εἰς σωτηρίαν" to all who believe it.[11] The revelation of this work of the Gospel is accomplished by God through the prophetic office of Christ.[12]

In addition, the Gospel as the dynamic Word of God is also efficacious in that it has the power of regeneration, that is, to change a man inwardly. Because of this inward change he willingly and joyfully walks in God's divine Law according to the new man which is created in him by the power of the Gospel. Scripture also sets forth this same truth. James testifies that God has begotten us by the Word of Truth (James 1:18). At the end of this section he calls the regenerate "κτίσματα" of God. The "ἀποκτείν", then, was a creative act, and this lends virtue to the Gospel. In God's hand it is a creative instrument. According to Paul, he, as a preacher of the Gospel, could say to his Corinthian hearers: "ἐν γὰρ Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ διὰ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου ἐγὼ ὑμᾶς ἐγέννησα" (I Cor. 4:15). Peter also substantiates Paul when he tells his hearers: "ἀναγεγεννημένοι οὐκ ἐκ σπορᾶς φθαρτῆς ἀλλὰ ἀφθάρτου διὰ λόγου ζῶντος θεοῦ καὶ μένοντος" (I pet. 1:23). Thus from the moment that men hear and know the grace of God the Word of God works dynamically in the heart of man.[13]

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[11]Other passages: Rom. 15:16, II Cor. 11:7, I Thess. 2:2.

[12]Heinrich A.W. Meyer, "Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Epistle to the Romans," Meyer's Commentary on the New Testament (translated by John C. Moore and Edwin Johnson; New York: Funk and Wagnalls, c.1884), V, 48f.

[13]W. H. T. Dau, Doctrinal Theology. Lectures on Dr. Graebner's Outlines, pp. 25ff.

This power of the Word is mediated through the prophetic office of Christ.

This Gospel also has the power to deliver from eternal death and bestow upon them eternal life. St. Paul states that "in Him we have the redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sin according to the riches of His grace.. ...having made known unto us the mystery of His will (Eph. 1:7-9). Because of this power it is also called the Word of reconciliation (II Cor. 5:19).

On the other hand, this Gospel can deliver man from the fear of death and make him a conqueror of it. In I Cor. 15:55 Paul affirms that through the power of the Gospel death has lost its sting (Κέντρον).[14] Death, therefore, can have no power over man because the Gospel is the dynamic power of God.[15]

That this Gospel has also the power to grant eternal life is evident from Acts 13:46. Here Paul tells the Jews that they have put aside the Word of God which was able to grant them eternal life. This same truth is emphasized in John 6:51-65, in which Jesus speaks of Himself and His Words as having the power to grant eternal life.

The same divine efficacy which is ascribed to the written and oral Word of the Gospel can also be said of the

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[14] A "Κέντρον " is a sting that causes wounds or death. Joseph H. Thayer, op. cit., p. 344.

[15] Franz Pieper, op. cit., I, 383.

visible Gospel or the Sacraments. Baptism receives the power through the Word to sanctify and cleanse from sin (Eph. 5:26), to save and regenerate men (Tit. 3:5, Rom. 6:3.4, Mark 16:16), and make men heirs of eternal life (Tit. 3:5-7). This same efficacy can be ascribed to the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper has the power because of the Word to grant the forgiveness of sin (Matt. 26:28), and to strengthen faith (I Cor. 11:25-26).

In summary, the Gospel has two functions which are exercised through the Words of Christ. As the vis collativa the Gospel has the power to offer and convey the knowledge of salvation, the forgiveness of sin, and the riches of God's grace to men. As the vis effectiva the Gospel has the power to create, strengthen and preserve faith, the power to grant the forgiveness of sin, and the power to grant eternal life to all that believe. This divine efficacy of the Word of the Gospel is exerted through the prophetic office of Christ.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

In summary, the power of the Word lies in the prophetic office of Christ. Christ in His prophetic office gives to the Words its dynamic to reveal God and to offer, convey, and confer the grace of God to men. These Words, which manifest the dynamic of the Word, are the powerful Words of Christ Himself.

This great power of Christ, which is in the Word, is revealed in both the Old and New Testaments. In the Old Testament Christ, as the Angel of the Lord, as the God who spoke to the children of Israel, and as the second Person of the Trinity revealed His powerful Words through the prophets and the patriarchs. These words were the Words of Christ, which revealed to Israel the dynamic of His Words and the grace of God.

In the New Testament Christ manifests this same great power in the Word of God through His prophetic office. He, as the Incarnate Logos and the Prophet who was sent by God, revealed God and His grace, as well as His omnipotent Word. As the Incarnate Logos and God Himself, He gave His own Words their power. As the Prophet whom His Father sent into the

world and by His anointment with the Holy Spirit beyond measure, God also gave divine power and authority to His Words. After His session Christ continued His prophetic office through the words of His apostles. Since they were sent by Christ, their words receive their authority and power from Christ. For this reason their words were the omnipotent Words of Christ.

The prophetic office of Christ today also manifests the great power of the Word of God. Christ, as God's Prophet, is still exerting His power in this present time through the written and oral Word. The written Word is the omnipotent Word of Christ, for Christ gives this Word its power in His prophetic office. The oral Word is also the efficacious Word of Christ, for He has given His Word with all His authority and power to ministers, teachers, and all Christians. Everywhere this Word is spoken Christ is speaking through their words and gives them the power to reveal God and confer God's grace to men. This same Word of Christ also gives the Sacraments their divine efficacy.

Closely related to the power which is exerted by Christ in the Word is the power of the Holy Spirit. This power, which the Holy Spirit exercises through the Word, has the same divine efficacy as the power which Christ exerts through His Word. These powers, however, are not two different powers, but one and the same power viewed from different aspects of Christ's prophetic office in which Christ gives His own Word

its divine power and efficacy.

The characteristics of this power of the Word which is exerted in the Word through Christ's prophetic office are clearly set forth in Sacred Scriptures. Scriptures testify that this power of Christ is in the Word, not beside or outside of it, that this power of the Word is valid and effective at all times, that this power is eternally connected with the Word, and that this power is resistable.

Finally, Christ through His prophetic office gives His divine efficacy both to His Words of the Law and to His Words of the Gospel. Christ through the foreign function of His prophetic office reveals the dynamic words of the divine Law in both the Old and New Testaments. In the Old Testament He carried out this function by speaking through the prophets and the patriarchs, while in the New Testament He, as the Incarnate Logos, revealed the true nature and power of the divine Law by giving it its correct interpretation and setting forth its condemning power. These words of the divine Law have the power to point out sin in all its greatness, to manifest the wrath of God, and to condemn men eternally.

On the other hand, Christ through the Word of the Gospel reveals the primary function of His prophetic office. This Word of the Gospel, however, must be viewed from the aspects of the _vis collativa_ and the _vis effectiva_. As the _vis collativa_ the Gospel has the power to offer and convey the knowledge of salvation, the forgiveness of sins, and the riches

of God's grace to men. As the vis effectiva the Gospel has the power to create, strengthen, and preserve faith, the power to grant the forgiveness of sin, and the power to grant eternal life to all who believe. This divine efficacy of the Word is exerted through the prophetic office of Christ.

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