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MARTIN CHEMNITZ
AND HIS LOCUS DE SACRA SCRIPTURA
AGAINST ROMAN ERRORS

A thesis Presented to
The Faculty of Concordia Seminary
Department of Systematic Theology

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Bachelor of Divinity

by
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Preface

Many who have achieved great things have not become famous. The names of men who have done much valuable work during their lifetime are often forgotten or only casually mentioned. Such is the lot of Martin Chemnitz, the second greatest theologian of the Lutheran Church. He has been hailed by Catholics as the man most responsible for preserving the work of the Reformation and the one who saved the Lutheran Church from eventual dissolution. In spite of that, he is usually known by Lutheran students only in an incidental way. Some know that he was connected with the Formula of Concord and that he was a post-Luther theologian and scholar. The actual part he played in the history of the Lutheran Church is known only to a very few who have made a special study of Reformation history and the Catholic Counter-Reformation. On the other hand, the name of Melanchthon is familiar to Lutherans of all ages, even to those not too well acquainted with Reformation history; however Melanchthon's influence in great part was actually destructive and harmful to the true Lutheran position. Thus the latter because of his misdeeds becomes a historical figure. Martin Chemnitz, more worthy of fame and commemoration, is forgotten.

This strange quirk of history might be explained in several ways. Perhaps it is natural that Melanchthon's

name should be remembered, since for one thing he basked in the light and glory which enveloped him through his close association with Luther at Wittenberg. Then, too, though Melanchthon was known to be inconsistent and dissimulating, Lutherans naturally turned to him as the logical person to take the lead in the church after Luther's death. On the other hand, the work of Chemnitz was not thrilling or sensational; he was instead only too eager to avoid the lime-light.

This paper has been written with the intention of giving credit to whom it is due. The value of the work of Chemnitz will be shown in an account of his life and in an analysis of the first locus of his most important work, the Examen Concilii Tridentini.

Part I

The Life of Martin Chemnitz

Chapter I

The Years of Preparation

Martin Chemnitz was born on November 9, 1522, of undistinguished parentage. His birthplace was a small town about 35 miles southwest of Berlin, the town of Treuenbrietzen, in the province of Brandenburg. His father was a cloth and flax merchant; consequently during his early childhood the family was not in dire straits financially. His father, however, died early, leaving the widow and son to face the hardships which were to follow.

Little is related about the early boyhood years of Martin in the few scanty accounts that we have of his life beyond the fact that even in his early years he definitely showed superior mental abilities and a marked ambition for learning. This superior endowment saved him from a life of drudgery and total oblivion, for it moved his teacher, Lorenz Barthold, to prevail upon his mother to send the fourteen-year old boy to the school at Wittenberg. Such a step would no doubt have been impossible had it not been for a certain widow by the name of Kelner, who promised to pay the expenses at the "Trivialschule" at Wittenberg. It seems, however that the Mrs. Kelner was not as generous with her money as had been expected, for young Martin returned home only a half year later because of a lack of funds. This, however, may

not have been due to the lack of generosity on her part. The boy may have been unwilling to tell her about all the personal needs which are a severe drain on the pocketbook of any normal boy at such a preparatory school. The lack of such items, moreover, makes it extremely embarrassing and inconvenient when trying to keep up with other boys who are not in financial straits. Luckily, this did not mean an end to Martin's educational career. Shortly after the boy's return home from Wittenberg, a rather prominent relative, secretary of the Council at Magdeburg, Niemann by name, visited the Chemnitz family in Treuenbrietzen. Mr. Niemann recognized the boy's plight and made it possible for him to enter the school at Magdeburg. Here he studied for three years without interruption, from 1539 till 1542, and after completing his preparatory school work in 1542, he accepted a job as teacher at Galbe on the Oder. During this year of teaching, he saved enough money to enter the University of Frankfurt on the Oder in 1543.¹

He chose this university in part because it was near to his home, though perhaps the deciding factor was the fact that his rather eminent cousin, George Schueler Sabinus, was professor of rhetoric there. Sabinus himself was a poet and statesman of no small renown.² Strangely enough, the rather illustrious professor took an interest in the young

1. "Martin Chemnitz," Kirchliches Handlexikon p.703

2. Friedrich Koldewey, "Neun bisher nicht gedruckte Briefe Melanchthons ueber und an Martin Kemnitz," in Zeitschrift fuer die historische Theologie, edited by Dr. Karl Kahnis, p.4

student, and together with Matthaeus Most, professor of Greek, advised and directed him in the pursuance of his studies. Still handicapped by the lack of funds, he again dropped out of the University to accept the position of rector of a school in Brietzen, a suburb of Frankfort on the Oder. After another year of teaching, he again had made enough to pay his expenses at a university; this time he entered the University of Wittenberg in 1545.³

When Chemnitz arrived in Wittenberg, he carried with him two letters of recommendation addressed to Melanchthon. One letter had been written by his cousin, Sabinus, who was also the son-in-law of Melanchthon; the other came from the Burgomaster of Brueck. As a result, a close and friendly relationship sprang up between Melanchthon and Chemnitz, the noted professor taking a personal interest in the studies of the young man. The study of Greek under Melanchthon and the study of mathematics under Reinhold the Elder, an adherent of Copernicus, kept Chemnitz so busy that he never took the opportunity to hear the lectures which Luther was delivering at the University. In later years he regretted this very much;⁴ yet the reason was quite natural:-- though his passion for learning took him into many fields, he was particularly interested in the study of philosophy and astrology.⁵ Melanchthon himself

3. "Martin Chemnitz" New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge. p.703

4. Friedrich Koldewey op.cit. p.4-5.

5. New Schaff Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge op. cit. p.704.

encouraged Chemnitz in these studies, for as the majority of scholars of that day he, too, was interested especially in the field of astrology.⁶ Chemnitz liked to study intensively and thoroughly in a limited field. That might explain why he neglected to hear the lectures of Martin Luther. His lack of interest in the theological affairs of the University might be explained, moreover, from the fact that it did not appear to him to be a field that would meet the challenge of his scientific and searching mind.⁷ Through Melanchthon's influence, Prince George III had offered the young student a position in his school and at Melanchthon's insistence he was preparing to pass the requirements for the Master's degree in order to meet the qualifications of the offer. At this point, however, the Smalcald War, 1546-1547, broke out and Chemnitz was once more forced to discontinue his university training.

Since 1544, his cousin, Sabinus, had held the position of rector and professor of the newly-founded university at Koenigsberg. A letter of recommendation written by Melanchthon on October 30, 1547, relates that Chemnitz was about to receive an honorable position in the surrounding regions but that the outbreak of the war had upset those plans; he suggests that Chemnitz could be given a position in the academy.⁸ Sabinus took the suggestion of his father-in-law and gave Chemnitz a position as tutor of

6. Kirchliches Handlexikon, op.cit. p. 704

7. Friedrich Koldewey, op.cit. p. 5

8. Ibid, p. 10 .

young Polish noblemen and later the directorship of the Stadtschule of Kneiphof. The outbreak of the plague ended this work. ⁹

Chapter II

The Period of Transition

The real turning point in the direction of his interest and ambition came for Chemnitz in the year 1550 when Duke Albrecht of Prussia appointed him as librarian at the castle with a good salary. ¹⁰ This work placed a wealth of material at his disposal, especially material of a theological nature. Feeling that this was a sign from above that he should take a more active interest in the study of theology, Chemnitz applied himself industriously to the perusal of these works. This included the study of the Old and New Testaments in their original languages, the works of the Church fathers, the most important scholastics, especially the meditations of such mystics as Anselm, Bernard of Clairveaux, and Bonaventura, which he later said had made quite an impression upon him. In addition, he read the works of the chief reformers as well as those of their opponents. He paid particular attention to the controversial issues of the moment and whenever a solution to the problem did not satisfy him, he earnestly attempted to arrive at an unprejudiced and fair conclusion through his

9. New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge, op. cit., pp. same as above.

10. F. Bente, "Historical Introduction," in Concordia Triglotta.

own study of the problem. ¹¹ It is interesting to note that about this time he wrote a letter in Greek to Melancthon asking advice as to the best way to begin a study of theology; in the reply, among other suggestions, Melancthon advised that the best way to become a good theologian is to learn to distinguish between Law and Gospel. ¹²

But the studies and lucrative position at the castle library in Koenigsburg came to an end when he was drawn into the controversy fomented by Osiander. The latter had come to Koenigsburg in 1549 where he was received with welcome by Duke Albrecht, who had come into the Protestant Church through Osiander in 1523. Out of gratitude for his "spiritual father", the Duke had appointed him pastor of the Old City Church and a little later first professor of theology at the University of Koenigsburg with a doubled salary, though Osiander had never earned an academic degree. Due partly to this unfair elevation and to his overbearing, domineering, and sly ways, but to a greater extent to his doctrinal aberrations, fierce opposition arose against Osiander among the faculty members of the University, Briessman, Hegemon, Isinder, and particularly Moerlin.

In 1549 he began publicly to propound a doctrine in which he abandoned the forensic conception of justification by imputation of the merits of Christ, and returned to the Roman view of justification by infusion, that is, by infusion of the eternal essential righteousness of the divine nature of Christ. According

11. "Martin Chemnitz," Kirchliches Handlexikon.

12. Friedrich Koldewey, op.cit. p. 5.

to his own statement, he had harbored these views since about 1522. ¹³

Chemnitz entered the controversy on the side of Moerlin, who had received his doctorate under Luther at Wittenberg and since 1550 had held the pastorate of the Cathedral of Koenigsberg. From his pulpit Moerlin denounced the doctrines of Osiander as un-Lutheran and Romanistic, while Osiander replied to Moerlin in his lectures. Lutheranism far and wide was aroused as a result of this controversy, but Osiander insisted on his teachings in the face of all opposition, although even the anti-Philippists sided with Melancthon against Osiander. At the height of the controversy, 1552, Osiander died; shortly after this, Duke Albrecht banished Moerlin and imposed silence on both sides. At Koenigsberg, Duke Albrecht continued to protect and favor the Osiandrian party which in time developed into a semi-political party. ¹⁴ Since Chemnitz had opposed Osiander and had written brilliantly against his false teachings, he, too, fell under the disfavor of the Duke, but because of his knowledge of astrology, the Duke did not want to lose him. Conditions in Koenigsberg were too inhospitable and embarrassing for Chemnitz with the Osiandrian party in control, so in 1553 he returned to Wittenberg to become the table-mate and close companion and friend of Melancthon. ¹⁵

13. F. Bente, "Historical Introduction," in Concordia Triglotta. p.152-153.

14. Ibid, p. 154.

15. Friedrich Koldewey, op. cit. p. 5-7.

Chapter III

The Years as Theologian

The ties of fellowship and friendship were firmly cemented between Chemnitz and Melanchthon during his stay of one and one-half years there. Melanchthon began to notice his potential capabilities as a theologian. While journeying with Melanchthon on an inspection tour of the convents under Melanchthon's supervision, Chemnitz impressed the professor with his theological knowledge and ability to such a degree that Melanchthon asked him to take over the lectures on his Loci Communes. Through Melanchthon's request, Chemnitz was accepted as lecturer in the philosophical faculty at the university in 1554, and on January 9 of that year he began lecturing on Melanchthon's Loci. When Chemnitz held his first lecture, the lecture hall was crowded beyond capacity, and Melanchthon himself, who had taken his place among the listeners, led the group to a larger classroom. ¹⁶

Probably at this time, Chemnitz definitely decided on theology as his life's work. He was making his mark at the university as a lecturer and in all probability would eventually have been accepted into the faculty as a full-fledged professor. ¹⁷ Chemnitz lectured for several weeks with great success and wide acclaim. His

16. Friedrich Koldewey, op. cit. p. 5-7

17. ibid, pp. 6-7.

position as lecturer, however, was very brief. Moerlin, who had accepted the superintendency in Brunswick after leaving Koenigsberg, invited Chemnitz to come to Brunswick and make a bid for the vacant office of co-superintendent. With quick decision, Chemnitz accepted the invitation to Brunswick, preached a sermon there, and soon thereafter received and accepted the call as coadjutor to Moerlin, though not without protest from Melanchthon and the other Wittenberg theologians. Despite the appeals from the faculty at Wittenberg and the attempt of Melanchthon to induce him to accept the position as preacher at the Castle Church in Wittenberg, it seemed that Chemnitz had his heart set on taking up work among the people of a parish rather than to deal academically with theology in the classroom. He was ordained by Bugenhagen on November 25, 1554, and so entered into the field where he was to spend the rest of his life in richly-blessed labors. As a preacher, he was not exceptional; his inexperience coupled with a rather raw and weak voice, a degree of shyness and scholarly dryness at first made him an uninteresting speaker; but as time went on he developed a clear and powerful voice and a simple, forceful, textual, and impressive manner of preaching. 18

Though not renowned as a preacher, Chemnitz soon became noted as an administrator and organizer, a systematizer, and an arbitrator of theological disputes.

18. "Martin Chemnitz", Kirchliches Handlexikon.

Meanwhile, he did not miss the lecture hall of the University for he soon began to deliver weekly lectures here in Brunswick. In April, 1555, he began lecturing to the pastors of the area on Melanchthon's Loci Communes. The pastor of the Church of St. Peter took these lectures down as they were given and later turned them over to Chemnitz for revision. Since this was too burdensome, Chemnitz later worked them out himself, but they were not published until after his death.¹⁹ It was his purpose through this work not to be creative but rather to strengthen and re-establish the doctrines of the Lutheran Church. His presentation was clear and positive, combined with warmth and careful judgment and discrimination. Wherever Chemnitz becomes polemical, his opinion is always expressed gently and modestly. From 1556 on, he conducted semi-annual open forums among the foremost theologians of the district. This activity, too, increased his theological insight and judgment. Chemnitz also did some excellent exegetical work, especially in the messianic portions of the Old Testament and in his exegetical lectures on the four Gospels. The result of that work, his Evangeliienharmonie, reveals his keenness of exegesis, the gift of organizing and systematizing, and his thorough and extensive scholarship.²⁰

On August 19, 1555, Chemnitz married Anna Jeger, the daughter of a Licentiate of Law in Wolfenbuettel,

19. Published by Polycarp Lyser in 1591.

20. "Martin Chemnitz", Kirchliches Handlexikon. p. 704.

Herman Jeger. The friendly relations between Melanchthon and Chemnitz obviously had not yet been disturbed at this time, for Melanchthon sent a warm letter of congratulation and a wedding present. ²¹ Anna bore Chemnitz three sons, of whom Martin the Second is the most noteworthy, first as councilor in Brunswick, later as professor of law at the University of Rostock, and finally as chancellor of Schleswig. A son of Martin II, Bogislaw Philip, is best known for his History of the Swedish War in Germany, one of the best sources of information on the second half of the Thirty Years War. ²²

In the doctrinal controversies which split the Protestant church, Chemnitz always took a firm stand on the side of true confessional Lutheranism, and his unwillingness to compromise in any doctrine gradually drew him farther away from Melanchthon's camp. This first became evident in his fight on the side of Moerlin against the Adiaphorists. As early as 1556, Melanchthon, in a letter written on March 24, shows that a breach was gradually growing between the two friends. "Let us zealously nurse our friendship!" he beseeches Chemnitz in the letter. The tone of the whole letter shows that the aging professor felt that he was being forsaken by his friend, and in the postscript he touchingly appeals, "I beg that you remember our friendship!" ²³ This breach becomes

21. Friedrich Koldewey, op. cit. p. 7

22. "Martin Chemnitz," Kirchliches Handlexikon. p.707

23. Friedrich Koldewey, op.cit. p. 7.

quite evident to us during the Adiaphoristic Controversy; however out of respect for this longstanding friendship, Chemnitz preferred to remain in the background rather than come into open conflict with Melanchthon. ²⁴

The Adiaphoristic Controversy arose when Maurice of Saxony persuaded the Leipzig and Wittenberg faculties to prepare and adopt a compromise document called the Leipzig Interim. This document which was to replace the highly unsatisfactory and radical Augsburg Interim agreed to reintroduce Roman ceremonies and to acknowledge the authority of the popes and bishops, if they in turn would agree to teach the true doctrine. Melanchthon was the chief author of this betrayal of Lutheranism. Though he might have written this partly out of fear for his own bodily well-being, there is little doubt that the ideas expressed were really his own. The tone of the whole document is one of compromise and concession. He states that there is no controversy between the Lutherans and the Romanists on the state of man before and after the Fall. He omits the sola fide in the article of justification and asserts that man cooperates in conversion. He maintains that good works are necessary to salvation, bows to the supremacy of the hierarchy and agrees to the re-establishment of abolished ceremonies. This compromise document was adopted by the Leipzig and Wittenberg faculties on December 22, 1548, at Leipzig. ²⁵

²⁴. "Martin Chemnitz," Kirchliches Handlexikon. p. 705
²⁵. F. Beñte, "Historical Introduction," in Concordia Triglotta.

This threw all Lutheranism into a panic and a wave of books engulfed the country from both sides. Though Melanchthon regarded the reintroduction of Romish ceremonies as entirely harmless, Matthias Flacius, who led the attack against the Interimists, and the followers of Flacius, saw that this attitude would eventually undo the work of the entire Reformation.²⁶ Martin Chemnitz, writing against the Interim in his work entitled Judicium de Adiaphoris, summarized the crux of the whole issue in the words:

"Even though the intention of those who receive and use the adiaphora be not an evil one, the question is whether the opinion of the one who commands, imposes, and demands the adiaphora is impious or wicked, whether such reception and observation is of the true doctrine, and whether the weak are offended and grow faint thereby." 27

When Chemnitz went with Moerlin to Wittenberg to meet with Melanchthon in 1557 to discuss the principles advocated by the Leipzig Interim, Melanchthon was ostensibly grieved that Chemnitz had taken position against him. Melanchthon cried out that they had come to kill him. In a passionate appeal, he reminded Chemnitz of their former close association and mutual respect. Chemnitz, deeply moved by this appeal, probably influenced his colleagues to be satisfied with the apologies and promises of Melanchthon.

26. F. Bente, op.cit. p.108.

27. Ibid, pp. 111 ff.

"Apparently at no time was the friendship between Chemnitz and Melancthon completely broken off. Never did Chemnitz speak a word of scorn or disparagement over Melancthon. His love for him, his personal loyalty and gratitude remained, when he could no longer agree with him on many points of doctrine, that is the reason why still in 1561 he was considered by some to be a follower of the Wittenberg School. After Melancthon's death, April 19, 1560, the position of Chemnitz in the controversies became clear." 28

It was the Crypto-Calvinist dispute which definitely showed on which side Chemnitz stood.

The Crypto-Calvinist Controversy raged around Hardenberg, who had been appointed Cathedral preacher in Bremen in 1547. A former priest, he had been won for the Reformation and now inclined toward Zwingli's view of the Lord's Supper. The other Lutheran pastors in Bremen, of course, could not tolerate this, and in order to unmask his loyalty to the Reformed doctrine, demanded that he sign a tract on the Real Presence written by John Timann, a pastor in Bremen. When he refused to do so, objecting especially to the doctrine of the omnipresence of the human nature, he was attacked in sermons by Moerlin and Timann. In 1561, the Diet of Lower Saxony deposed Hardenberg and he left Bremen to become a Reformed preacher at Emden. As a tragic sequel, however, the burgomaster of Bremen, secretly won to the cause of the Crypto-Calvinists, expelled all the Lutheran ministers and made Bremen a Reformed city. 29

28. Friedrich Koldewey, op. cit. p. 8 . . .
29. F. Bente, op. cit. p. 184.

Melanchthon clearly showed that he was on the side of the Crypto-Calvinists. When Timann was attacking Hardenberg in Bremen, Melanchthon wrote to the latter that he should not be too hasty in coming into conflict with his opponents, but that "he should dissimulate." In another letter encouraging Hardenberg, he wrote that "the madness of the writers who establish the bread-worship is growing."

In those words, Melanchthon also condemned his old friend, Chemnitz, for the latter's writings after Melanchthon's death depart sharply from the view tolerated by Melanchthon. In 1560, at a conference in Brunswick, he delivered a paper entitled Vera et Sana Doctrina de Praesentia Corporis et Sanguinis Christi in Coena Sacra. In this treatise, to which a forward was added by Moerlin, he rested the doctrine of the Real Presence on the plain and simple sense of the Words of Institution. Another treatise written in 1561 turned the decision in favor of the Lutheran confession in refutation of Hardenberg's principles. This work bears the title Anatome Propositionum Hardenbergii de Coena Domini Quas Exhibuit Saxoniae Inferioris Ordinibus and was printed in both Latin and Greek. In these works, Chemnitz refuted the Reformed contention that the doctrine of omnipresence violates the idea that Christ had a true, natural human body. He showed that Scripture clearly speaks of the exalted character of the human nature of Christ because of the attributes communicated to it by His divine

nature, yet without any essential change in the human nature. ³⁰ His best-known work on this subject is that published ten years later in 1570, De Duabis Naturis in Christo.³¹

As a result of his part in the controversial conferences, Chemnitz saw the need for a unified, organized system of doctrine. In September, 1557, at a conference in Worms, he became acquainted with the South-German theologians, Brenz, Andreae, Pistorius, and Marbach, as well as with the Romanist representatives, Staphylus and Canisius. This meeting in particular convinced him that the only salvation for the Lutheran Church, humanly speaking, lay in the formation of a common system of dogmatical presentation and a standard method of instruction. To him the chief cause for the doctrinal differences and controversies seemed to be the varied method of expression and presentation in refuting Roman teaching. ³²

In the years following the Adiaphoristic Controversy during which Chemnitz had distinguished himself by his theological knowledge and skill, his activities continued to mark him as one of the foremost theologians of his time. He labored as supervisor and administrator, preacher, arbitrator, and organizer. In addition, he leveled the weapons of doctrinal acumen and forceful presentation against Roman detractors who had in writing attacked Protestant teachings, so that from 1565 through the next

31. "Martin Chemnitz," New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge.

32. "Martin Chemnitz," Kirchliches Handlexikon p. 705.

eight years, he was occupied with the production of his classic in polemics, the Examen Concilii Tridentini, in addition to all his other manifold duties. 33

In 1567, he was called upon together with his superior, Moerlin, to reorganize the Church in Prussia which had been disrupted by Osiander's erroneous doctrines. From this the Corpus Doctrinae Prutenicum resulted. 34

Shortly after this, Moerlin accepted the call to Koenigsberg; although Chemnitz desired to follow him there, he finally was prevailed upon to accept the position of Superintendent in Brunswick. Later, in order to strengthen his authority, the city sent him to the University of Rostock to obtain his doctorate at the city's expense. This he did only "to be able to testify and write more frankly in behalf of the truth, since doctors are openly commanded to further the Christian doctrine." His academic debate carried on at Rostock on June 28, 1567, created admiration for himself and brought honor to the city. As superintendent, too, Chemnitz labored with distinction; among other things, he carried through a strict marriage-law, provided for a generous poor-law, and introduced wandering singers into the province. 35

Shortly after the ascent of Duke Julius in Brunswick in the year 1567, he commissioned Chemnitz to prepare a

33. This phase of his work is discussed more in detail later in the paper.

34. "Martin Chemnitz," New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge.

35. "Martin Chemnitz," Kirchliches Handlexikon, p. 706.

common order of service and a guide for instruction based on the Evangelical confession. Together with Andreae of Wuerttemberg and Abbot Ulner from Magdeburg he prepared the required works for Brunswick-Wolfenbuettel. To the work on a common church liturgy he appended the Corpus Doctrinae Julium, as an instruction manual. This work was so widely and well received that it became the common norma doctrinae and defeated the purpose of Selnecker as General Superintendent when he attempted to introduce the Corpus Doctrinae Philippi, into Brunswick in 1570. 36

In 1576, Chemnitz helped to found the University of Helmstaedt, advised in the selection of its first professors, and preached the dedicatory sermon.

If Chemnitz is known to a Lutheran at all it is probably because of the part he played in the production of the Formula of Concord. As a result of their work in unifying the church in Brunswick, he and Andreae had become better acquainted and soon found themselves in complete harmony. Andreae had preached six sermons which had been embodied in the Swabian Concordia of the Wuerttemberg theologians. This Andrea submitted to Chemnitz for correction and revision and the result was the Swabian-Saxony Concordia.

36. "Martin Chemnitz," New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge.

Chiefly on the basis of this Swabian-Concordia with some additions from Selnecker's Maulbronn Formula (which had unmasked the Crypto-Calvinists), a document known as the Torgau Book was prepared by eighteen theologians, Andreae, Chemnitz, and Selnecker included. These three, then, worked on a final revision of the articles of the Torgau Book and produced the Formula of Concord, 1577. ³⁷ The Catalogus Testimoniorum which was appended to the Formula was prepared by Chemnitz and the bulk of the work on the Formula was also his. Incidentally, he almost split with Andreae, but was completely reconciled and in 1580 prepared a preface to the Formula of Concord with Andreae's help. ³⁸

Though the adoption of the Formula of Concord as a universal Lutheran Symbol was largely due to the enthusiastic endorsement and appeal of Chemnitz, yet oddly enough it was never accepted in Brunswick. Explanation, however, is found in his falling out with Duke Julius over the installation of the latter's son as Bishop of Halberstadt with all the old elaborate rites of the Church. His rebuke of this action threw him into disfavor with the Duke and consequently also with the Protestant princes in the province. In Brunswick, the Corpus Julium remained the standard and norm of doctrine;

37. F.Bente, *op. cit.* p. 236 ff.

38. "Martin Chemnitz," Kirchliches Handlexikon p. 707

the last important public activity of Chemnitz was his defense of the Formula of Concord against the theologians of the University of Helmstaedt at a conference at Quedlingburg. Together with Selnecker and Kuchner, he prepared an apology of the Book of Concord, 1582.

Chemnitz' entire theological and ministerial career was spent in the thirty-three years at the Brunswick pastorate. Because of physical decline, he found it necessary to give up his office in 1584, and he died on April 8, 1586, "in child-like faith in the Lord, deeply mourned as a teacher who would shine like the stars forever." His coadjutor conducted the funeral service, and he was buried on April 10 in the church-yard of St. Martin's Church. The text used was his favorite, "I live, yet not I, but Christ, who liveth in me." 39

The importance of Chemnitz in the history of the Lutheran Church is evident from this brief sketch of his life's activities. What the work of Chemnitz means to the Lutheran Church today can best be seen in the words of the Romanists: "You Lutherans have two Martins; if the second had not appeared, the first would have disappeared (Si posterior non fuisset, prior non stetisset)."⁴⁰ He was the foremost Lutheran theologian of his day and, next to Luther, the greatest theologian of the Lutheran Church. His work was characterized with the gifts of

39. ibid.

40. F. Bente, op. cit. p. 242.

theological insight, acumen, and consistency; the theological clarity and correctness of the Formula of Concord is due chiefly to his work. He never attempted to be creative but he aimed at the systematization and establishment of the doctrines already brought to light. His writings always show sober discretion and he never went to the extremes of the younger Lutheran school. He was suspicious of innovation, never speculative, but always practical. 41

The nature of the personality and character of Chemnitz is well described in the following:

Es mangelte Chemnitz natuerlich durchaus nicht an der noetigen Lernbegierde, auch nicht an dem noetigen Ingenium fuer des Studium der Systematik.. .. Erklaert werden kann dies alles nur durch die tiefe Christliche Demut diesses so reich begabten Mannes der persoendlich nichts gelten wollte, auch nichts als Theolog, sondern fuer sich nur die Stille eines kleinen gesegneten Kreises praktischer Predigerwirksamkeit suchte. Chemnitz war kein Streber, eher litt er an einem, wie man es heutzutage gern, aber oft unpassend nennt, inferiority complex. (C.T.M. Vol. VII, p.666, J.T.M.).

Mit seiner groszen, bleibenden Demut verband aber Chemnitz in seinem von Heiligen Geist goettlich hergerichteten Theologencharakter eine seltene theologische Gruendlichkeit, die ihn aller Oberflaechlichkeit abhold sein liessz Chemnitz war als Theolog eigentlich ein self-made man.... Aber was Chemnitz der Nachwelt an theologischen Schriften hinterlassen hat, traegt alles den Charakter reifen, tiefgehender Gruendlichkeit, ganz besonders jene Schriften, bei denen es sich um die Erhaltung der reinen Evangeliumslehre gegen roemische, Calvinistische und enthusiastische Irrlehre handelt

.....Aber eben weil Chemnitz so nuechtern maeszig

41. "Martin Chemnitz," New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge.

war, konnte er auch so heldenmaessig feststehen und festhalten wie fast kein anderer seiner Zeit. 42

And from the same source here is a good characterization of the work of Chemnitz:

Die ganze theologische Betaehtigung des anderen groszen Martin traegt den Charakter rein praktischer Einstellung. Chemnitz blieb die ganze Theologie wirklich voll und ganz habitus practicus. Er haette leicht auf irrige Bahnen kommen koennen, eben weil er unter Melanchthon stand. Er haette Scholastiker werden koennen, wie es sein Scholastischer Lehrer war, besonders als er bewagen wurde, ueber dessen Loci zu lesen..... Offenbar maesser diesem Werk nicht grosze Wichtigkeit bei (the publishing of his revised edition of Melanchthon's Loci). Und warum wohl nicht? Liegt nicht der Grund waehrscheinlich gerade darin, dasz sich Chemnitz nie recht als Scholastiker fuehlte, dasz es ihm beim theologisieren doch weit hoeher ging, als einfach loci klarzustellen, dasz es ihm dazu trieb, Seelen fuer Christen zu gewinnen, kurz, dasz ihm die Theologie nur praktisch genommen wichtig war? Auch hierin aehnelt der zweite grosze Martin den ersten. Der teureste Biblelspruch war Chemnitz das glaubenswarme Paulusbekennntnis, "Cum Christo crucifixus sum; vivo autem non amplius ego, sed vivit in me Christo," Gal. 2: 20. Aus dem in ihm lebenden und webenden Christus heraus hat Chemnitz Theologie getrieben als habitus practicus theosdotos, immer praktisch, immer demuuetig, immer gruendlich, immer maessig nuechtern, immer auch unbeweglich fest.*43

Having now briefly examined the life of the most neglected and disregarded Lutheran theologian, the chief work still remains, namely the analysis of the first locus of his most important theological and polemical work, the Examen Concilii Tridentini. A brief review of the historical background of this work will serve to

42. Dr. J.T.Mueller, "Der 'andere Martin' und seine hohe Bedeutung fuer uns lutherische Theologen in Amerika," in the Concordia Theological Monthly, edited by the faculty of the Concordia Seminary, vol. VII p. 666-667.

43. Ibid. p. 668.

enhance appreciation of its value.

In 1560, Johann Monheim, a German Roman Catholic, published at Duesseldorf a catechism on the fundamentals of Christianity. Monheim's evangelical spirit showed itself especially in his treatment of the doctrines of the Church and the sacraments. In these doctrines particularly, he tried to keep Romanist traditions and at the same time included certain Calvinistic and Lutheran elements. ⁴⁴ This work the Jesuits fiercely attacked in a writing entitled Censura de Praecipuis Capitibus Doctrinae Coelestis. In it, the Jesuits attempted to portray the supposed splendor and magnificence of the Roman Church in an effort to entice the Protestants to return. In the year 1562, Chemnitz replied to this attack with his Theologiae Jesuitarum Praecipua Capita in which he surveyed and analyzed the Jesuitical teachings and summarized the dangerous principles and consequences of the Jesuitical doctrine. ⁴⁵ When this work appeared, it was a severe jolt to the prestige of the Jesuits; with the intention of repairing as much of the damage as possible, Andrada, one of the Romanists at the Council of Trent, answered Chemnitz in 1564 with his Explicationum Orthodoxarum de Controversiis Religionis Capitibus Libri Decem. ⁴⁶ It would have been better for the papists to

44. "Martin Chemnitz," New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge. Vol. VII, p. 471-472.

45. "Martin Chemnitz," Kirchliches Handlexikon p.706

46. New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge Vol. I p. 169.

have left "well enough alone," for this latter work provoked Chemnitz to write his master work, the Examen, in four volumes between the years 1565 and 1573. It is written with clarity, simplicity, and yet forcible directness. First he untwists the complicated sentence structure of the Roman decrees to uncover their true and exact sense. He then refutes the claims of the Papists in a three-fold manner: from Scripture, from the analogy of faith, and from history. The work moreover is distinguished by the careful and painstaking efforts of Chemnitz to uncover the exact status controversiae and the systematic way in which he probes to the heart of the problem and solves it from clear passages of Holy Scriptures. The work was well-received, not only because of its skillful treatment of the subject, but also because the readers could see that the author was not concerned with discussing a dead theological issue; it flowed rather from the ardent desire on his part to bring about true godliness and soundness of doctrine. Throughout, the work exhibits the result of profound and careful research as Chemnitz treats every phase of theology. ⁴⁷ The analysis of this paper is confined first to his locus De Sacra Scriptura ⁴⁸.

47. "Martin Chemnitz," Kirchliches Handlexikon, p. 706

48. The first complete translation into German was made by Georg Nigrinus, pastor in Gieszen bei Frankfurt am Main, 1576. In 1884, it was translated into German by Deacon Bendixen, Kolditz, and D.Chr.E.Luthardt, Leipzig. Another

In his Locus De Sacra Scriptura, he makes repeated mention of three Romanists in particular: Andrada, Pighius, and Lindanus. The references are better appreciated if something is known of these men.

Didacus Payva d' Andrada was the man whose work mentioned above occasioned the writing of the Examen. He was born at Coimbra, Portugal, on July 26, 1528, and died at Lisbon on December 1, 1575. He joined the Jesuits and taught theology at the University of Coimbra. After Chemnitz had completed his Examen, Andrada began his reply which was cut short by his death. What was completed was published as the Defensio Tridentinae Fidei Catholicae, Quinque Libri.⁴⁹ The Romanists praise this unfinished work as his best.⁵⁰

Albert Pighius, a Dutch Romanist, was born at Kampen in 1490 and died at Utrecht on December 26, 1542, thus really before Chemnitz' theological career. He studied philosophy and mathematics at Louvain University and in 1517 completed his theological studies at the University of Cologne. He served the Church of St. John the Baptist, Utrecht in the Netherlands, was called to Rome by Pope Hadrian VI in 1523, and took part in the Diets of Worms and Regensburg. He was one of the staunchest defenders of

German edition was prepared by a number of Lutheran pastors and published by L. Volkering in St. Louis in 1875.
49. New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge
Vol. I p. 469.

50. "Didacus Payva d' Andrada" in Catholic Encyclopedia.
Vol. I, p. 469.

the Papacy and was the first to argue from traditions in an effort to refute Protestant objections in advance. ⁵¹ Though a faithful member of the Catholic Church, his eagerness for debate often led him into unwarranted concessions and "near-heresies" which the Council of Trent later rejected. His theological writings include: Apologia Indicti a Paulo III Concilii Adversum Lutherum Confoederationem, Cologne 1537, directed against Luther and Calvin; De Libero Hominum Arbitrio et Divina Gratia, Cologne, 1542, also against Luther and Calvin; and his last work, Apologia Adversus Martini Buceri Calumnias, Mainz, 1543. ⁵²

William Lindanus was born at Dordrecht in 1525, and died at Ghent on November 2, 1588. He studied philosophy and theology at Louvain and became an expert in Greek and Hebrew. After entering the priesthood, he became professor of Sacred Scriptures at the University of Dillingen in 1554. In 1556, he took his doctor's degree at Louvain. In succession he held the offices of vicar-general to the Bishop of Utrecht, dean of the Chapter at the Hague, bishopric of Ruremonde in 1562, and finally the bishopric of Ghent where he died. He made earnest efforts to carry out the regulations of the Council of Trent in the lands under his jurisdiction. His works include: De Optimo Scripturam Interpretandi Genere, Cologne, 1558; Panoplia

51. "Martin Chemnitz," New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge, Vol. IX, p.67.

52. Catholic Encyclopedia Vol. XII, p. 82.

Part II

Chemnitz Locus De Sacra Scriptura

Against the Roman Errors.

Introduction

The Nature of the Problem.

The Council of Trent was convened because the whole Christian world had been clamoring for many years for a council to correct the abuses in doctrine and practice. The first session, therefore, was opened with the Papal decree that the Council purposed to suppress all errors and to preserve the true purity of the Gospel. As customary, the Council also in the first session declared by which means this was to be accomplished. In previous Councils, it had been the custom to place the Sacred Gospel in the midst of the assembly to signify the means by which errors should be corrected. Constantine the Great, when he opened the Synod of Nicea, declared, "The evangelical books are both those of the Apostles and of the ancient Prophets; these clearly instruct us what to decide about divine things. Let us, therefore, accept the solutions of the problems on the basis of the divinely-inspired writings." ⁵⁴ The Council of Trent clearly had departed from this custom, for it by no means considered

⁵⁴. Examen Concilii Tridentini per Martinum Chemnicum, edited by Preuss, 2, p. 5.

Scripture to be the rule and norm of judgment. Instead, they place traditions on the same level with Scripture; they disregard the usual distinction between the canonical and apocryphal books of Scripture; they decree that the Vulgate edition of Scriptures alone is authentic and must be accepted even where it is clearly in error; finally, most impudent of all, they declare that the interpretation of the Church alone is authentic and correct, even when it openly contradicts the sense of the Scriptures.⁵⁵

From these facts, as taken from the First Decree of the Fourth Session, the intention of the Papal reformers is clear. Realizing that they hold many teachings which can in no way be supported by Scriptures, they have devised another means to defend their teachings. Instead of wasting time and words in the preparation of such a lengthy decree, they could have dispatched with the whole matter simply by proclaiming that "they wished to retain the present condition of the Church, whatever that might be, and that they would admit that nothing could be corrected and amended from the norm of Sacred Scripture."⁵⁶ Obviously enough, the designation of Tertullius in his De Resurrectione Carnis, "Those who shun the light of Scriptures," applies to those who were assembled at the Council of Trent, for they have concealed themselves in the darkness of other defenses, terrified lest they be

55. Ibid, par. 1-4, p.5.

56. Ibid, par. 5-6, p. 6.

dragged forth to the light of Scriptures, where their false teachings would be exposed. The usual Loci of the papists therefore seem to be: The Insufficiency, Obscurity, and Uncertainty of Scripture; Traditions; The Imperial Authority of Interpretation. This, then, points the path which must be taken in our discussion of the Locus De Sacra Scriptura.⁵⁷

If the papist's claim is allowed to stand that traditions must be accepted on a par with Sacred Scriptures, then the whole fight against Romanists' abuses is lost at the outset. For this reason, the primary object of the Locus De Sacra Scriptura is to overthrow the papists' attack against Scriptures and to establish Sacred Scriptures as the only true, infallible, God-given source and norm of faith and morals. This locus is an all-out defense of the Lutheran principle of sola Scriptura, the fundamental point of division between the Lutherans and Romanists. From the above summary of the statements of the first decree can be noted the four methods by which the Romanists attempted to undermine the sola Scriptura. In this locus, therefore, it is necessary to prove the following points: I. Sacred Scriptures was intended by God and the holy writers to be the only source and norm of faith and morals; II. The Canonical books of Scripture are truly reliable as accepted by the early Church, while the apocryphal books must not be admitted as equal;

57. Ibid. par. 7-8, p. 6.

III. Scripture is truly reliable as found in its original languages and all translations must be corrected and amended by the original; IV. Scripture does not need the interpretation of the hierarchy to make it a reliable source and norm of doctrine. Each of these points is taken up in order and discussed in detail in the four sections of this locus.

Chapter I

The Roman Position on Scripture Exposed

Romanists resent the accusation that they do not give the proper honor to the Sacred Scriptures and that they do not consider it to be a worthwhile source of doctrine. With indignation they point to official statements of the Church which seem to prove the contrary. On the face of it, a cursory reading of the first Decree of the Council of Trent gives the impression that this accusation is unfounded.

"The holy ecumenical and general Synod of Trent receives and venerates with a feeling of piety and reverence all the books both of the Old and New Testaments, since one God is the author of both."⁵⁸ Nevertheless, in the face of this decree and in spite of similar assertions, it is true that the Jesuits and all the papists commonly accept the principle that Scripture is mutilated, incomplete, and imperfect. Andrada immediately takes exception to this accusation and cries that it is a lie and a malicious attempt to do the Romanists an injustice. From this, therefore, it would seem that in his published treatise Andrada might confess the realization that the divine doctrine, essential to faith and morals, is contained

58. H.J.Schroeder, "Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent. p. 19.

in Scriptures "entirely, totally, intact, and complete." A perusal of his work shows that this assumption is not true. 59

Andrada states that Christ thought that man's fallible memory must be aided with a written Gospel; for that reason He desired that a brief summary of the doctrines be written, while the largest part of the teachings should be left in the treasury of traditions, implanted in the inward parts of the Church. This position he defends on the basis of Jer. 31:31-34, following the practice of other Romanist theologians. Because God speaks here of a "new Covenant" which consists in this that he "will put his law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts," Andrada concludes that the words of the New Testament (Covenant) were to be promulgated orally and were not to be put down on stone tablets or written by ink, as was the Old Covenant. Since this is true, the writings of the Evangelists and Apostles were not produced as a result of a direct command of Christ; because they did not have Christ's command, it could not have been their intention that posterity should use their writings as the canon, norm, and rule of the Church. Moreover, Andrada continues, Christ and the Apostles must have preached a great deal more than could be contained in the writings of the new Testament: it follows that the Church must observe also those things which were handed down by

word of mouth. Such is the Romanist position as summarized by Andrada, one of their greatest sixteenth century theologians. ⁶⁰

An examination of a work of another theologian of the Catholic Counter-Reformation, Pighius (Eccles. Hierar., Book 1, Chapter 2 ff.) clearly reveals the true stand of the Romanists. He asserts that the Apostles never intended that their writings should be the judge of our faith and religion, but rather that faith and doctrine should be the judge of their writings; the authority of the Church, then, is really superior to the authority of Scriptures, since the Church gives the writings of the Apostles canonical authority. In the third chapter he contends that the various apostolic letters were written to fit the special needs of particular congregations and therefore were not meant to be universally or generally applied. As proof, note Paul's epistle to Philemon. For this reason, all those must be anathema who reject the observations of ecclesiastical traditions even when such traditions contradict or go beyond Scripture. In the fourth chapter, he advises that traditions be used in controversial matters rather than Scriptures, since the former are much more clear and inflexible, while Scriptures "are as pliable as a waxen nose or a lead ruler," so that it can be twisted and turned to fit any preconceived notion. If this practice would have been observed in the Church's

60. ibid. par. 3, p. 5.

dealings with Luther, he observes, this terrible conflagration never would have arisen. ⁶¹

From the statements of Pighius, Chemnitz points out that the manner of argument of later theologians is not at all like that employed by Eck, Emser, and others of Luther's time, who were not averse to arguing on the basis of Scripture. Pighius realized that this method of procedure was too detrimental to the papal position, and saw that they could prove anything they desired if they would "orate with every carefully-chosen rhetorical device about the limitations, imperfection, insufficiency, ambiguity, and obscurity of Scriptures and defend the necessity, authority, perfection, certainty and clarity of unwritten traditions." ⁶²

Now what of Andrada's objection that the accusations against the papists are lies and injustices? If the accusations are true, why does he become so excited and make such a fuss? His answer reveals the attitude of the whole Roman Church on all its doctrines, both then and now. "Because," he says, "the common people, the lay people, would be angered if Sacred Scriptures is attacked with such atrocious and terrible words." Now the motive of the papists of the Council is clear why they would not want to state the case with the same insulting remarks that the other papal writers are accustomed to use.

61. Ibid, par. 4-6, p. 7-8.

62. Ibid, par. 1, p. 13.

Though they wished to confirm the very same assertions, they chose and composed the words of the decree in such a way that it would not arouse the lay-people. ⁶³ This duplicity, moreover, shows itself not only in their presentation of their views of Scriptures in the decrees of the Council of Trent, but the same thing is found to be true in all Romanist literature intended for popular lay consumption, not only at that time, but also in modern publications.

"Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing." In one chapter, page, paragraph, sentence or phrase of a book, the Romanists leave the impression with the reader that Scriptures is indeed everything that the Lutherans claim it to be; however, in the next chapter, page, paragraph, sentence, or phrase of the same book, the exact opposite view is expressed and the curse is pronounced upon all those who hold the opposite view. For instance, an uninformed reader of a paid advertisement placed in all major newspapers by the Religious Information Bureau of the Knights of Columbus would be convinced that Protestant accusations against the Roman position on Scriptures is untrue and maliciously unfair.

"How many people know the Bible from cover to cover? How many read it in an orderly, connected fashion..., compared to the number who become familiar with scattered verse, or favorite chapters?"

The Bible reader can, of course, find interest and inspiration in single chapters-sometimes even in

63. Ibid., par. 2, p.7.

a single verse. But by fastening our attention on only a few passages, we miss the complete picture of the revelation which would be clearer through a more comprehensive study.

There is also danger that this "skip-and-stop" method of Bible reading will lead to confusion and misunderstanding. "A little knowledge," it should be remembered, "is often a dangerous thing." Verses lifted out of their context often suggest conclusions which would not be correct at all if the verses were properly considered in their relation to the entire Bible story.

Knowing a little about the Bible.... or merely believing that it's a "good book".... isn't enough. Being nearly right won't do. The important thing is to know and understand the revelation of God's plan and promise in its entirety. 64

In an effort to show the Protestant world that the Catholic Church is not opposed to the reading of Scriptures by the lay-people and that the Catholics, too, honor and revere Scriptures as the divinely -given Word of God, the Romanists published in 1941 a carefully prepared modern translation of the New Testament on the basis of the Latin Vulgate. The preface to this edition conveys the impression that all Protestant accusations and remonstrations against Rome's defection from Scriptures are ridiculous. Opposite the page where a quotation is printed from an encyclical letter of Pope Benedict XV in which he urges the reading of the Scriptures and a notation of Pope Leo XIII granting an indulgence of 300 days for all those who read Scriptures

64. "Could you Answer This One About the Bible?" Advertisement in the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, January 26, 1947.

for at least a quarter of an hour a day, the words of the preface definitely dedicate the Roman Church to the veneration of the Scriptures:

In her belief in the divine authority and the perfect truth of the Bible, as being the inspired Word of God, the Catholic Church has never hesitated. Nor has the Church forgotten that this sacred Book was destined by its Author to convey His message to all His faithful servants of every place and time. Neither has she overlooked the fact that this message must lie sealed and silent to many of her children unless given them in their own language, at least by the voice of their pastors, if not by means of the written page. ⁶⁵

Cardinal Gibbons, too, in his popular presentation and defense of the Roman Catholic doctrines, a book directed to interested and unprejudiced Protestants, goes to great lengths to prove that the Catholic Church is more eager to preserve and perpetuate Scriptures than the Protestants. He points out that in the same century in which the canon of the Bible was established, Pope Damasus provided for a new translation of Scriptures into the Latin language, "The living tongue not only of Rome and Italy, but of the civilized world." Any restrictions on the circulation of the Bible in England in the fifteenth century, moreover, were occasioned by the need for preserving the common people from corrupted texts promulgated by Wycliffe and his followers, a perfectly legitimate reason for doing so, Gibbons asserts. A host of other examples are advanced to show that the

⁶⁵. The New Testament, Translated from the Latin Vulgate, pref., p. 23.

Church does not forbid or discourage the reading of the Bible and he clinches his arguments with a description of the fervency and devotion with which students for the priesthood read Scriptures:

So familiar, indeed, were the students with the sacred Volume, that many of them, on listening to a few verses, could tell from what portion of the Scriptures you were reading. The only dread we were taught to have of the Scriptures was that of reading them without fear and reverence.

And after his ordination every Priest is obliged in conscience to devote upwards of an hour each day to the perusal of the Word of God. I am not aware that clergymen of other denominations are bound by the same duty.

What is good for the clergy must be good, also, for the laity. Be assured that if you become a Catholic you will never be forbidden to read the Bible. It is our earnest wish that every word of the Gospel may be imprinted on your memory and on your heart. 66

To the average person who does not think through the problem or is unacquainted with the true nature of the problem, these assertions on the part of Catholic writers sound true enough. Closely examined, however, they are revealed to be just as ambiguous and misleading as the statements of the Council of Trent. All such Roman Catholic arguments avoid the real core of the problem. No Protestant should be ready to accuse the Catholic Church of forbidding its people to read the Bible, nor that they neglect to honor and use it. The fault of the Romanists lies in their refusal to use the Scriptures as a source and norm of doctrine: they

66. James Cardinal Gibbons, The Faith of our Fathers, p. 23.

make mighty efforts to give the lay people the impression that they stand firmly on Scriptures; at the same time they will not admit Scriptures as the sole source and norm of doctrine. This stand leads finally to absurd contradictions which are apparent when these contradictory statements are placed side by side. Try to harmonize, for example, such statements taken from a text-book for religion in Catholic high schools:

Holy Scripture is a collection of sacred books written by writers under the inspiration of God, and recognized as such by the Church.

By saying that God inspired the sacred writers we mean:

1. That by a supernatural influence He moved them to write just what He intended; and
2. That He so directed and assisted them in what they wrote as to preserve them from error. ⁶⁷

Now try to harmonize this statement with the following:

There are many arguments against the Bible's being the sole rule of faith. The first Christians believed and practiced the Christian religion before the New Testament was written. If Christ wanted people to get the faith from writing, why did He not write Himself, why did not all the Apostles write? There have been millions upon millions of good religious Christians who could not read. Before the invention of printing ordinary Christians could not get a Bible, and even today many are too poor to purchase a copy of it. ⁶⁸

The Romanists themselves cannot harmonize these conflicting positions: on the one hand they maintain that the holy writers of the Scriptures wrote by inspiration, that is, "by a supernatural influence He

67. Francis Cassilly, S.J., Religion, Doctrine and Practice, p. 316.

68. Ibid, p. 323.

moved them to write." ⁶⁹ on the other hand, they assert: "...if God had intended that men should learn his religion from the Bible, surely God would have given that book to man. Did He do so? He did not... Jesus never wrote a line of Scripture, nor did He command His Apostles to do so, except when He directed St. John to write the Apocalypse 1:11, but ordered them to 'teach all nations', Matt. 28:19." ⁷⁰ Yet, pressed for further explanation, the good Catholic will have to admit, "Yes, God is the author of the Bible...!"⁷¹ Furthermore, in one breath they declare that God by inspiration moved the holy writers "to write just what he intended and that he so assisted them in what they wrote as to preserve them from error.. It cannot contain any error, and so must be infallibly true. Copyists and printers, however, can and do make mistakes in copying, and printing the Bible.... we are bound to believe what is contained in it." ⁷² In the next breath, these very assertions are retracted: "Without the authority of courts to decide on its laws and enforce them, a country would soon come to ruin; and so, naturally speaking, would the Church, if Christ had not given it the living authority to decide on the meaning of Scriptures and on other religious questions." ⁷³

69. Ibid, p. 316

70. Arnold Damien, S.J., "Church or Bible?" in The Truth about Catholics. p.2.

71. Francis Cassilly, op. cit. p. 316.

72. Ibid, p. 316.

73. Ibid, p. 323.

The Bible cannot be a complete guide of salvation because it never was and never will be in the reach of everyone, it is full of obscurities and difficulties not only for the illiterate, but even for the learned.... Scriptures alone do not contain all the truths which a Christian is bound to believe, nor do they explicitly enjoin all the duties which he is obliged to practice. 74.

And as a clinching argument that the Protestant Bible cannot be the rule of faith, "Now with regard to the King James edition learned Protestant Preachers and Bishops have written volumes to point out the errors that are in it... In the present Protestant Bible there were no less than thirty thousand errors." ⁷⁵ And this argument they use in the face of their own admission that Scripture is the infallible Word of God in spite of such minor errors! It is obvious that the Catholic Church today is guilty of the same inconsistency and ambiguity of which Chemnitz accused the framers of the decrees of the Council of Trent. While, on the one hand the hierarchy desires to convince the lay people that the Roman Church accepts Scriptures on the same basis as the Protestants, the Romanists at the same time cast Scripture aside as fallible, incomplete, and even erroneous unless it is complemented with the traditions of the Church. By assuming this attitude, what they are unable to prove from Scriptures or even what is disproved by Scriptures, the papists can establish by an appeal to

74. James Cardinal Gibbons, op. cit. p. 86.

75. Arnold Damien, S.J., op. cit. p. 3.

the traditions of the Church. Nothing can be gained in an argument on any other doctrine, therefore, unless traditions are eliminated and Scripture is set alone into the throne which traditions have usurped in the Roman Church.

In the previous chapter we exposed the duplicity of Romanist writings on Scripture; now it is clear that the Roman Church considers traditions to be equal, even superior, to Scriptures as a source of doctrine.

In attacking the Romanist position, Chemnitz had no intention of using Romanist weapons, scholastic logic and reasoning. In upholding Scripture as the source and norm of faith and doctrine, he applies the Lutheran principle by using Scripture to refute opposing claims. His practice of quoting abundantly from the writings of the church Fathers is not a deviation from this principle. In this way, he wants to show the Romanists that the principles set forth by the reformation are not innovations but have been held by learned doctors and theologians of the church from earliest times. This method of procedure he reveals by quoting the same principle from Augustine (Against the Donatists, book 2, Chapter 4):

In this examination, let us not use false balances, weighing only what we wish and how we wish, saying as we will, this is heavy and this is light; but let us use the divine balance of holy Scriptures, the treasure of the Lord, and to what is truly weighty let us suspend weights; yea, rather, let us not hang weights, but let us recognize the weights of God. 26

Chapter II

Traditions Rejected as a Source and Norm.

In the previous chapter we exposed the duplicity of Romanist writings on Scripture; now it is clear that the Roman Church considers traditions to be equal, even superior, to Scriptures as a source of doctrine.

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In this examination, let us not use false balances, weighing only what we wish and how we wish, saying as we will, this is heavy and this is light; but let us use the divine balance of Holy Scriptures, the treasure of the Lord, and to what is truly weighty let us suspend weights; yea, rather, let us not hang weights, but let us recognize the weights of God. 76

The Romanist surely cannot object that Chemnitz is using unfair measure. They themselves readily admit that God is the author of Scriptures, that, therefore, Scripture is infallibly true and must be believed. If, then, Scripture is said to clearly state a principle, it follows that all contrary principles are necessarily false. On this premise, Chemnitz proceeds to prove on the basis of Scripture that the Catholic claim for traditions is false. "We, from the command of Christ, John 5,39, and by the example of the Bereans, Acts 17, will search Scriptures, whether these things are so, as the Papists assert." 77

But their use of traditions the Romanists, too, base on the Bible. Andrada and others assert that Jer. 31: 31-34 and 2 Cor. 3:3ff. without a doubt substantiate the Roman claim. Reference had been made above in a summary of Andrada's teachings to his use of the Jeremiah passage by which he attempted to prove that the doctrine of the New Testament was not intended by God to be put into writing. 78 Accordingly, God Himself had planned that the teachings of the New Testament should be given by a different method than that used in the Old Testament; since the teachings of the Old Testament were written on stone tablets and parchments, the tenets of the New Testament must be preserved and perpetuated without writing. And this the Romanists prove from the words

77. "Martin Chemnitz", Kirchliches Handlexikon p.16.

78. Friedrich Koldewey, op. cit. p. 7.

of St. Paul in 2 Cor. 3:2-3, "Ye are our epistle... Written not with ink, but with the spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in the fleshy tables of the heart."

But can this be the true meaning and interpretation of these passages? If it is, then God's "infallibly true" Bible which "cannot contain any error" contradicts itself in spite of the fact that "God so directed and assisted them in what they wrote as to preserve them from error."⁷⁹ For the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, at the very moment in which he himself was committing the doctrines of the New Testament to writing, refers to that passage in Jeremiah (Heb. 8:7-13). Paul, too, "at the time when he wrote "not with ink, but with the spirit of God," was engaged in handing down the doctrines of the New Testament not orally, but in writing; and Paul had already written two epistles to the Thessalonians and the first one to the Corinthians. Obviously, the Apostles themselves did not understand these passages in the sense that the Papists give them.⁸⁰ In fact, if the Apostles did understand them in the Romanist sense, then by writing what they did, they were going directly counter to a command of God. Note that the passages in Jeremiah and Corinthians do not say that the doctrine must be written partly in papyrus and partly on the heart by the Spirit of God. Rather, the doctrine of Christ and of the Apostles should have been

79. Francis Cassilly, op. cit. p. 316 (cf. Above).

80. Preuss, op. cit. par. 2-3, p. 16.

presented, promulgated, and preserved entirely without writing of any kind; if anyone should dare to commit any of those doctrines to writing, it would be done against the will and command of God. The Apostles, however, ipso facto, have demonstrated that this is not the intended meaning of those passages. ⁸¹

The correct interpretation of these passages is given by Augustine, The Old Testament consists of commandments which show what obedience God expects of us and condemn those who do not live in conformity with these commandments; but at the same time the Law of the Old Testament does not give the power to fulfill its own demands. Natural man cannot rightly understand and accept spiritual things and cannot fulfill the demands of the Law. But now, the New Testament is the covenant of grace through the mediation of the Son of God. On the basis of the redemption of Christ, the Holy Spirit works through the preaching of the Word to illuminate the mind, regenerate the will and heart, so that men can accept the Messiah with true faith and become the sons of God in such a way that they truly delight in the Law of God (Rom. 7:22) and begin to obey it from the heart (Rom. 6:17). This is how the doctrine of the New Testament differs from the legalism of the Old Testament. ⁸² The passage in Second Corinthians is parallel

81. Ibid. par. 3, p. 7; par. 3-5; p. 16.

82. Ibid. par. 7, p. 17.

in meaning to this. By these words St. Paul does not mean to deny that what he had written was the true Gospel ; nor does he say that since he had converted them previously by oral preaching, what he was writing at the moment was not the instrument of the Holy Spirit. Rather, he maintains that those Corinthians, who believed with the heart and confessed with the mouth, had been made new creatures who were pleased with the law of God and were obedient from the heart. Such are truly Epistles of Christ, not written with ink but with inner renewal by the spirit of the living God. ⁸³

Proof for the use of traditions as a source and norm not only cannot be found in the inspired Word of God, but on the other hand the sacred history of Scriptures shows that tradition is not suited to convey God's message in all its truth. In such an important matter as the salvation of immortal souls, it is necessary that the sources of our doctrine be of such a kind to exclude every possibility of corruption and mutilation of doctrine. If the world would be without sin, then such precautions would be unnecessary; but in the world of sin three great obstacles tend to prevent the pure preservation of sacred doctrine: (1) the natural judgment of the world diametrically opposes the judgment of the Holy Spirit in spiritual matters; (2) the reason of natural man vaunts

83. Ibid, par. 9, p. 18.

itself against God and does not perceive the things of the Spirit but considers such things as foolish; (3) the devil is a liar, the father of lies and the spirit of error; as such, he constantly attempts to overthrow God's doctrine. For these reasons, divinely revealed doctrine often is corrupted, or changed, by the addition of false doctrine. Nor is the mere title of "prophet" a sure credential that his message is without error, as Jer. 14: 14 and I Kings 22:22 warn; on the contrary, sacred history of Scriptures demonstrates how often the Word of God had been adulterated and corrupted, so that it was necessary for God to use special means to restore the Word to its purity. ⁸⁴

True enough, during the early years of the world's existence the sacred teachings of God's Word were spread and handed down to posterity orally. To Adam God entrusted the message of the Gospel and gave him an extra long life in order that he might preserve the doctrine from corruption. After his death, however, the heavenly doctrine was left in the hands of Cain and the other "Sons of God," who fell away from God and departed from the purity of the Word of God; because "the imagination of man's heart was evil," so that the purity of doctrine was lost, God gave special revelations to Abraham and ordained him as a prophet, Gen. 20:7; moreover, God also successively spoke directly to Isaac and Jacob confirming His doctrine, and at Jacob's death,

84. Ibid., par. 7, p.6.

He entrusted the heavenly treasure to Jacob's sons. As long as Jacob's sons remained alive, the tradition of doctrine no doubt was preserved incorrupted. But the prophet Ezekiel ⁸⁵ shows how corrupt that tradition became in the hundred years from the death of Jacob's sons to the Exodus from Egypt when God said, "Then said I unto them, 'Cast ye away every man the abominations of his eyes, and defile not yourselves with the idols of Egypt; I am the Lord your God.' But they rebelled against me, and would not hearken unto me; they did not every man cast away the abominations of their eyes neither did they forsake the idols of Egypt." Again, God had to restore the purity of doctrine which had been lost, this time through special revelations to Moses. These examples, taken from Sacred Scripture, show how unreliable are oral traditions for the transmission of pure doctrine. Since God's own infallible, errorless Word records how God repeatedly found it necessary to restore the pure doctrine by special revelations, giving at the same time the proper credentials to support the revelation, the natural conclusion must be that oral traditions alone are not a reliable means of doctrinal communication.

Another proof that oral traditions are not to be considered above or on a same level with Scriptures as a source of doctrine is found in the testimony of Sacred Scriptures against the traditions of the Jews. At the

85. Ibid, par. 20: p. 7-8.

time of Christ, as the sacred history of the Gospels reveals, the teaching of Christ was found to be in direct opposition to the teachings of the Pharisees and leaders of the Jews, in spite of the fact that Christ was the fulfillment of their own Scriptures. The cause for this Christ himself explained from this that they were bound by false and vain traditions. Christ repeatedly denounced their practice of accepting the precepts of tradition and thereby disregarding the true meaning and message of Scriptures. It was because of the Jews' acceptance of what "was said by them of old time," that they reduced the Word of God to a system of rules and regulations beyond, and often contrary to, the true purpose of that Word. (Matt. 5:21ff.; Matt. 15:2-9) ⁸⁶ Perhaps the Pharisees' claim that traditions must be observed and respected would not have been so abominable if they had not insisted at the same time that traditions must be accepted as superior to Scriptures. We, too, respect traditions as long as they do not violate Scriptures in any way and are not considered binding. But the blasphemous claims which the Jews made for traditions is evident in the comment of Lyra on Deut. 17 where he cites the Hebrew gloss and states that

86. "Why do you also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?..Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition... But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men(Matt.23)." A sharp denunciation of the Pharisees for misleading the Jews by their false traditions by which they "bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders" and thereby "shut up the kingdom of Heaven against men." (Mark 7:1-25; Luke 11:39-54).

the comment of the Talmud must be accepted even in the event that it should say that right is left.

In the passages cited above, Christ without a doubt was unwilling to grant the least authority to traditions in matters of doctrine and ethics. He denounces those traditions as false and vain and simply refers the Pharisees to the Scriptures, as the true source and norm of doctrine. Irenaeus (Book 4, Ch. 25) mentions that at his own time it was a practice of the Pharisees to bind themselves to traditions in which some things were subtracted from the written Word of God, some things added, and some things interpreted according to their own wish. Such teachings he called "watered down", an expression taken from Is. 1,22,⁸⁷ because the false leaven of traditions had been mixed with the pure Word of God, so that they imagine that the observance of the traditions is as necessary as the Law itself. The similarity between Romanist and Pharisaical traditions at this point is self-evident.

The next point to be considered in the comparison is the cause for the Jewish insistence upon the acceptance of traditions as a source of doctrine. As the Gospel history demonstrates, special emphasis began to be placed on traditions when Christ appeared with His teaching. When a large number of the Jews began to be convinced of the

⁸⁷. "Thy silver is become dross, thy wine mixed with water."

truth of Christ's teaching in the light of their own Sacred Scriptures, the Rabbis realized that they could not maintain their position, if they wished to carry on the battle with the weapons of Scripture alone. Therefore, they prepared another defense in the form of traditions, and in about the year 150 A.D. the Talmud was written to record the oral traditions. By this means, they were successful in turning the majority of the Jews from the truth of Scriptures. Tacit application can be made here, too, to the Romanist position.

Furthermore, the arguments which the "traditionalists" among the Jews use to support the value of traditions as an equal even superior, source of doctrine are almost identical to the arguments of the Romanists. The similarity is seen, first, in the argument that the Patriarchs and Prophets did and said much more than could be contained in the books of Scriptures, and that there is no reason why these matters are not of equal importance and authority with those actually recorded in Scriptures. Now what had not been written would surely have been remembered by pious men, who would relate them to others and so pass these oral accounts of the deeds and sayings of the Patriarchs and Prophets down through the ages. Another point of similarity is the argument that traditions are as trustworthy and reliable as Scriptures because they were handed down by pious and trustworthy

prophets and priests of God. So the Jews claim that Moses handed the oral tradition down to Eli the Priest, Eli to Samuel the Prophet, Samuel to David the King, David to Ahijah the Prophet, Ahijah to Elijah, Elijah, to Elisha, Elisha to Jehoida the Priest, Jehoida to Zecharias the Prophet, to Hosea, to Amos, to Isaiah, to Micah, to Joel, to Nahum, to Habbakuk, to Zephaniah, to Jeremiah, to Baruch the Scribe, to Esdra, from Esdra in an unbroken line of especially capable men down to Hillel, Simeon the Just, Gamaliel, and other Jewish Rabbis of New Testament times, when the oral traditions were finally recorded in the Talmud (information from Peter of Galatia). In spite of the similarity between the Romanist and Jewish traditions in almost every respect, the Romanists would hardly dare to admit that the Talmud is of equal authority with Old Testament Scriptures; yet at the same time they insist on maintaining their own traditions alongside Scriptures.⁸⁸

The argument which Chemnitz advances against Rome's insistence does not miss the mark but rather applies also to their present teaching; this is evident from even a casual examination of current Catholic literature. As the Roman Catholic Catechism states, in the wide sense of tradition, the Romanists include also the teaching of the Bible; in the narrow sense the term is restricted to what is handed down orally. However, "all, or most, truths of

88. Preuss, op. cit. par. 1-8, pp. 13-15.

tradition have now found their way into written books."⁸⁹ Evidently, the "most" is inserted in that statement in order to leave the door open for new interpretations or "new proclamations of doctrine." These traditions which have found their way into Romanist writings have been recorded in the decrees of the popes and councils, in the sacred liturgies, and in the writings of the Fathers, Doctors, and great theologians of the Church. "The Fathers of the Church are certain writers of the early centuries who are noted for their sound doctrine and holiness of life... The title Doctor of the Church is conferred by ecclesiastical authority on those who have been eminent for their theological doctrine and personal sanctity."⁹⁰ From their own catechism, then, the present Romanist position obviously is the same as at the time of Chemnitz. The popes, the prelates assembled in a council, the authors of the liturgical formulas, the "Fathers" and "Doctors" have equal authority even greater authority, than the holy writers who first recorded the heavenly doctrine under direct "inspiration of God" by which means God caused the holy Prophets and Apostles to write just what He intended them to write and preserved them from error. In other words, to be consistent the Catholics must maintain that not only the popes, but every

89. Francis Cassilly, S.J., Religion, Doctrine and Practice, p. 320.

90. Ibid p. 321.

member of the hierarchy and every "Church Father" and "Doctor" were moved and directed in their writing by inspiration of God. Perhaps the reason why the Roman Catechism describes the Fathers and Doctors as "noted for their sound doctrine and holiness of life" is to meet in advance the conclusion just deduced. But would they be willing to make an investigation to determine whether the popes, prelates, Fathers, and Doctors actually were sound of doctrine and holy in life? Such an investigation would turn up some interesting results which might tend to shake their trust in the reliability of such sources. At least, it should prove that Scripture alone is a much more trustworthy, clear, infallible source than traditions of such a kind could be.

Chapter III

Sola Scriptura Proved

Now after the study of traditions in which it was found that they were unreliable as sources of doctrine and that God did not intend for the Christian Church to use traditions in that way, a study should be made on the positive side to determine whether Scripture meets all requirements.

The Romanists claim, of course, that Scripture could never be the source of doctrine, since as was shown above, they assert that Scripture is ambiguous, incomplete, difficult to understand, and therefore insufficient in itself. In addition, they attempt to prove from the history of Scriptures that the ecclesia primitiva did not consider it to be the only source of doctrine and so should not be considered as such today. Andrada, taking the chronology of Irenaeus according to which Matthew wrote first at the time when Paul was at Rome, calculates that the first written Scripture of the New Testament did not appear till at least twenty-one years and eleven months after the ascension of Christ. He concludes from this that since the early church was forced to depend entirely on oral tradition for so many years, it is presumptuous and impudent to think that there is a better means of handing

down and propagating the Gospel than that by which the Church of Christ was born, educated, propagated and preserved. Though Andrada errs in maintaining that Matthew is the first written Scripture and overlooks the writings of St. Paul which appeared earlier, let us grant his chronology, Chemnitz concedes, and generously add to it the three years and some months of Christ's ministry. What has that proved? By the same line of reasoning, the Church of God in the Old Testament lacked divinely-inspired Scripture for at least 2454 years, or according to the Septuagint, for 3692 years; a Talmudist or Cabalist could use the same argument against written Scripture of the Old Testament with even greater effect than Andrada. It would be embarrassing for a Romanist to try to justify himself in an argument with such a Talmudist or Cabalist. In spite of that, the Romanists advance the same argument today in their attempt to convince non-Catholics that Catholic doctrines are true. 91

The Romanist line of reasoning is illogical. "The New Testament Church lacked the Written Gospel for twenty years; ergo, it would be best that it lacked that forever; ergo, the Apostles committed a crime against God when they instituted Scripture as another means of spreading the Gospel." Perhaps, however, they think that their other conclusion is more logical: "For twenty years the Apostles

91. Anold Damien, S.J., op.cit. p. 2.

preached and preserved the Gospel with oral tradition alone; ergo, now even after the Gospel teaching has been written the former means must be preserved." This is ridiculous, for the Apostles wrote the very things which they had preached orally with the intention of preserving their teachings from corruption in succeeding years. Perhaps one reason why they didn't write immediately after the resurrection and ascension of Christ was that their teaching might first "be confirmed by signs and wonders and might be approved by unanimous consent of believing people throughout the world," so that posterity would never be doubtful of the truth of what was written. ⁹² But though the Church of the Old Testament for hundreds of years and the Church of the New Testament for a number of years had been without written Scripture, as soon as the doctrine was put into writing, the Church was bound to it and not permitted to add or detract. ⁹³

But let Scripture speak for itself to show the origin, the cause, the purpose, and use of Scriptures in the primitive Church.

Origin. If Sacred Scriptures had been instituted by men or elevated to a position of authority by Luther and other sixteenth century theologians, ⁹⁴ then it would be

92. Preuss, op. cit. par. 14-17, p. 19.

93. Dr. J.T. Mueller, Christian Dogmatics, p. 90-91.

94. Anold Damien, S.J., op. cit. p. 2.

of no higher authority than the Romanist traditions. This, however, is not the way Scripture originated. Instead, the first written Scripture has God Himself as the actual personal Author, when with His own fingers He wrote the words of the Decalog upon tablets of stone. Surely this demonstrates that God would have mankind realize that written doctrines are more dependable than those transmitted orally; in fact, He wrote the words of the Decalog upon stone for the very purpose of recalling the erring Israelites to the truths from which they had strayed. Furthermore, after writing the first words personally, He gave the command to Moses to continue to write and confirmed his writings by miracles. In the same way, the origin of Scripture in the New Testament shows its value as a source and norm. Paul wrote before Matthew, but even before that, the record of another written document is found in Acts 15. There the Apostles and Elders in the first Apostolic Council, after careful deliberations, unaminously decided to write a letter to the Churches of the Gentiles, By this letter, they wanted to convey their opinion on certain controversial matters. This written document was to corroborate the oral testimony of Paul, Barnabas, Judas, and Silas by showing that their teaching was in conformity with Christ's and the Apostles doctrine. ⁹⁵ So Scripture's own testimony as to the origin of the Old and New Testaments contradicts

95. Preuss, op. cit. par. 22, p.20 and par. 4-6, p. 7-8.

the Romanist claim that "...if God had intended that man should learn his religion from the Bible, surely God would have given that book to man." 96

Cause. Here a brief review of the reason why it was necessary to record the doctrines of God in writing will suffice. Since (as has been mentioned above) God found it necessary repeatedly to give special revelations in order to recall man to the purity of doctrine, God instituted through Moses another means of preserving and perpetuating his doctrine, namely through writing. 97 Moreover, from the discussion in the preceding paragraph of the letter sent out by the First Apostolic Council, it is evident that the writers of the New Testament, too, saw the need for written documents to confirm their oral teaching and to refute impure and conjectural doctrines which were being disseminated under the title of Apostolic traditions. 98

Use. Catholics would have us believe that the Protestants of the sixteenth century were the first to claim that Scripture again directs man to Scripture as the source and norm of doctrine. Contrary to their claim, Moses himself was the first to use Scripture as a source and norm. In Deut. 17:19-20, Moses commands that the kings should read in the written word in order "that he turn not aside from the commandment, to the right hand, or to the left." In Deut. 31:24-27, he commands the Levites to

96. Anold Damien, S.J., op. cit. p. 2.

97. Preuss, op. cit. par. 7, p. 10.

98. Ibid. par. 22-24, p. 20-21.

put the written word into the Ark of the Covenant, "That it may be there as a witness against thee." ⁹⁹ But he was not alone in this use of written Scripture. In Isaiah 8:20, the Prophet Isaiah cries, "To the law and to the testimony," when prophets come with strange commands and advice. In 2 Chr. 17:9, when Jehoshaphat set out to reform Judah and bring the people back to the true doctrine, he sent out teachers who "taught in Judah and had the book of the Law of the Lord with them." 2 Chr. 23:18 shows how Jehoiada used the written law of Moses to reform the abuses brought about by Athaliah. King Josiah, in 2 Kings 22 and 23, and Ezra also demonstrate how Scripture was used in Old Testament times. In addition, many passages can be cited from the New Testament. In Acts 26:22, St. Paul declared to King Agrippa that in his preaching he was "saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come." In Luke 24:27, Christ Himself taught the two disciples on the way to Emmaus by "beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all scriptures the things concerning himself." In Rom. 1:1-2, Paul says that his message is the Gospel which God "had promised afore by His prophets in the holy scriptures." In Acts 17:11, we are told that the Bereans "searched the scriptures daily" to determine whether Paul's teaching was correct, and this action is praised. ¹⁰⁰

99. Ibid. par. 9-10, p. 10.

100. Ibid., par. 14-15, p. 12-13.

In the fact of all this evidence from the Bible itself, as Chemnitz presents it, how can the Catholics today still maintain that Scripture was never intended to be the source and norm of doctrine? ¹⁰¹ It is almost unbelievable that Gibbons can say:

No nation ever had a greater veneration for the Bible than the Jewish people. The Holy Scripture was their pride and their glory. It was their national song in time of peace; it was their meditation and solace in time of tribulation and exile. And yet the Jews never dreamed of settling their religious controversies by a private appeal to the Word of God. ¹⁰²

Sufficiency. The Romanists grant that everything in the Bible is God's Word, infallibly true, and therefore must be believed. ¹⁰³ But this, so they say, does not mean that the Bible is to be the only source of doctrine; for it is obvious that the limited pages of the Bible could not contain everything that has occurred and was preached from the beginning of the world. Lindanus bases this argument on the words of St. Peter, "The Word of God is that which is preached unto you." But, he says, the Apostles preached more than could be contained in the limited codex of the New Testament, Many more things, therefore, must be believed than that which is contained in the Apostolic writings. The same argument, Chemnitz replies, could be used of the books of the Old Testament. Thus, during the years of which Moses writes, the Patriarchs of course did and said much more than what Moses

101. Anold Damien, S.J., op. cit. p. 2-4.
102. James Cardinal Gibbons, op. cit. p. 77.
103. Francis Cassilly, S.J., op. cit. p. 316.

reports. The prophet Isaiah, too, obviously preached during his eighty-year ministry much more than is contained in the sixty-six chapters of his book. In spite of this, Moses, Isaiah, and all the other writers of Scripture selected only those things which are necessary for faith and morals of men and recorded them in writing. God Himself was the Judge who made that selection, for what Moses reported about creation he could have learned only from the revelation of God. ¹⁰⁴

Contrary to this sound reasoning taken from Scripture itself, the Catholic catechism can still blandly say, "There are many arguments against the Bible's being the sole rule of faith." ¹⁰⁵ With all his cunning treachery and in contradiction even of their own position, Cardinal Gibbons hopes to snare the unsuspecting non-Catholic with the assertion, "Scriptures alone do not contain all the truths which a Christian is bound to believe." ¹⁰⁶ To this the Lutheran Church today still replies with Chemnitz on the basis of Scripture itself:

a. Holy Scriptures do not contain everything which man may know; for with regard to matters of earthly concern it offers very little instruction....

b. Holy Scripture does not reveal all divine things which man might desire to know....

c. Nevertheless, Holy Scripture contains all things necessary to be known for the Christian faith and life and, therefore, for the attainment of eternal salvation (Quenstedt) ¹⁰⁷

104. Preuss, op. cit. par. 12-13, p. 12.

105. Francis Cassilly, S.J., op. cit. p. 323.

106. James Cardinal Gibbons, op. cit. p. 86.

107. Dr. J.T.Mueller, Christian Dogmatics, p. 137.

After advancing these arguments in behalf of Scriptures in general, Chemnitz then takes up each individual book of the New Testament. He shows how each canonical writing, because of its origin, occasion, use, and sufficiency, was intended to be, and should be, the source and norm of doctrine. Following this, he includes a list of quotations from a host of church fathers to prove that he is not departing from the original opinion and practice of the ancient Church. The nature of the limited study represented by this paper will not allow for an analysis and summary of these sections.

Chapter IV

The True Canon of Scripture

Placing the Church above Scriptures, the Romanists declare that the Protestants have their Bible because of the endorsement of the Church. If, then, the Protestant Church is willing to accept the Bible on the testimony of the Church, it should also be willing to accept the authority which the Church has given to traditions, as well as to the Apocryphal books, Chemnitz takes up this problem from three angles. First, he determines the exact meaning of the term "canonical" as applied to Scripture, Next he shows how the canon of Scripture was selected. Finally, on that basis he lists the books which meet the standards of canonical books and rejects those that the Romanists have imposed upon the Church.

In the First Decree of the Fourth Session of the Council of Trent, the Romanists had listed in addition to the commonly accepted books of Scripture also Tobit, Judith, The Wisdom of Solomon, Baruch, and the two books of Maccabees; moreover, they pronounced the anathema upon those who do not accept all the books listed. The contention of Chemnitz is that they thereby pronounce the anathema upon Eusebius, Jerome, Origen, Melito, and the entire primitive Church, because, as he shows, their

testimony contradicts the decree of the Romanists. 108

The Romanists define the term "canonical" as "something which has been decreed by the Church," in the same sense as "canonical hours" or "canonical satisfactions." This, however, is not the original meaning of the term "canon." 109

We trace the true meaning of the term canon back to its use by Paul: Gal. 6:16, "As many as walk according to this rule (canon)"; Phil. 3,16, "Let us walk by the same rule (canon)"; 2 Cor. 10:13, "But we will not boast of things without our measure, but according to the measure of the rule (canon) which God has distributed to us." According to this usage, Paul signifies that the words of the Apostles are to be compared to a measuring line or cord which is used in keeping a structure within the desired measurements and according to the desired specifications. The Church is the House of God and the architects must have a "blue-print," or guide, to measure by. That rule or measure which the ministers should use in their building of the Church is the doctrine revealed to the Patriarchs and Prophets together with that revealed directly by Christ and through the Apostles. Only those writings which contain the true teachings of the Patriarchs, Prophets, of Christ and of the Apostles can rightly be called "Canonical Scriptures." 110

108. Preuss, op. cit. par. 22, p.58.

109. Ibid, p. 51, par. 2.

110. Ibid, par. 3, p. 51.

This is not a meaning which is restricted to New Testament usage. We find the same use of the term in secular literature. Varinus, for example, uses the term "canon" to denote that part of the scales which shows the deviation in weight and defines it as "the rule or infallible measure which in no way permits anything to be added or subtracted." Aristotle (Politics, Ch. 8) states: "It is better that all things be according to the law than according to man's will, for the latter is not a true measure (canon)." Cicero says that Tyro is the measure (canon) of his own writings, because by it he measures, corrects, and amends. Plutarch (Vita Solonis), "Certain histories are called canonical; the reason for this name can easily be understood." ¹¹¹

Augustine, too, understands Scripture to be canonical in the sense that it is to be the measure or norm of all doctrine, as the following quotations from his writings demonstrate. "All faith and pious intellect ought to be subservient to Scriptures, for by it everything must be approved and judged" (Contra Faustum Manichaeum, Book 2). "Our Lord wishes nothing to be believed against the confirmed authority of Scriptures..." (Contra Faustum, Book 13).

We do no harm to Cyprian when we distinguish any of his letters from the Canon of Divine Scriptures. For not without good reason was the Ecclesiastical Canon determined with such wholesome care, to which certain

111. ibid, par. 4-6, p. 52.

books of the Prophets and Apostles belong and which dare not be judged by us, and according to which we judge whether other writings are trustworthy or not.. I study Cyprian's letters on the basis of canonical writings and what agrees with Scripture I accept with praise, but what does not agree I politely reject. (Contra Cresconium, Book 2, Ch. 31-32) 112

Thus Chemnitz demonstrates from the writings of Paul, from the writings of secular writers, and from the writings of one of the doctors of the Church, Augustine, whom the Romanists also list as a source of authoritative tradition, ¹¹³ that from the very meaning of the term "canonical," true Canonical Scripture must be those writings which are the infallible norm and measure of all other doctrinal writings. Such writings can be that only when they have been determined without a doubt as actually coming from authoritative sources; therefore, Scripture does not become canonical simply by the authority granted to it by a Council of the Roman Church, as Romanists then and now maintain. The rejection of this idea is the next step in the argument of Chemnitz against the Romanist claim; the question is: can the Church give authority to any writing which does not have canonical authority in itself? ¹¹⁴

First of all, he shows how Eusebius, Jerome and Augustine recognized a distinction between those books of the Bible which are to be regarded as canonical and those books

112. Ibid, par. 6-7, p. 52-53.

113. Ibid, par. 7, p. 53ff.

114. Francis Cassilly, S.J. op. cit. p. 320.

which must not be considered as authoritative norms of doctrine. Eusebius (Book 3 and 25) divides Scriptures into three classes: 1) those which have the unanimous consent of the primitive church(catholic, homologoumena); 2) those whose authorship was not unanimously approved but which did not contain any objectionable parts; 3) those which are altogether conjectural, adulterated, false, and harmful to the Church. ¹¹⁵ This division reported by Eusebius is that of Jerome and Augustine, The Catholics however, support their position from Jerome by saying that he included Jude and James in Holy Scriptures. A closer examination of Jerome, however, reveals that he distinguished between Scriptures and Canonical Scriptures. In Scriptures he includes all those books which can be read in the Church with profit and for the edification of the people, thus including such books as Judith, Tobit, and the Maccabees; in Canonical Scriptures, on the other hand, he admits only those writings which can be used for proving ecclesiastical dogmas; from this list he excludes the Apocrypha and Antilegomena. ¹¹⁶ The writings of Augustine, too, show that he realized that certain writings in themselves had canonical authority, whereas other writings must be rejected. ¹¹⁷ Catholics, again, would like to use Augustine to support their own views

115. Preuss, op. cit. par. 14-15, p. 55, par. 33, p. 61.
 116. Ibid, par. 29, p. 60.
 117. Ibid, par. 16, p. 57.

of Scripture, claiming that he, too, called apocryphal books canonical. On the basis of his writing (Civitate Dei, Book 15, ch. 23; Contra Faustum; Contra Gaudentii Epistolam), it is clear that Augustine divides Scriptures into two main classes. He classifies as apocryphal all those books which are totally false, fictitious, and harmful. He classifies as canonical all the books which are read in the churches. He does not, however, consider the latter to be of equal authority in comparison to each other, for he re-divides the canonical books into those accepted by the ancient Church and those rejected by the ancient Church. "This Scripture" he writes, "which is called Maccabees was not considered by the Jews to be on the same level with the Law and the Prophets and the Psalms to which God testified by his own witnesses." 118

The divisions of Scripture which Chemnitz ascribes to Jerome and Augustine are seen to be the same as those made by the Lutheran Church today, though today the Church uses a clearer terminology than that employed by the two Fathers. All writings which claim to have authority in religious matters are divided into two main classes, canonical and uncanonical. Canonical writings, those books which received sufficient testimony from the ancient church to entitle them to a place in the canon of Scripture, are again subdivided into "Homologoumena" and "Antilegomena"; the former received unanimous testimony

118. Ibid, par. 27, p. 59-60.

from the ancient Church, while the latter were questioned by some in the ancient Church. Uncanonical books include the Apocrypha of the Old Testament and the Pseudépigrapha (spurious writings attributed falsely to the Apostles) of the New Testament, and these were rejected already by the Jewish Church, by Christ, and by the early Christian Church. 119

To understand the refutation of Chemnitz in regard to the Romanists insistence on the canonization of uncanonical books, it is necessary to note that he does not distinguish well between the Antilegomena and the uncanonical books, namely the Apocrypha and the Pseudépigrapha. He confuses the two when he puts the Antilegomena of the New Testament on the same level with the Apocrypha of the Old Testament. He relates that the Apocrypha of the Old Testament were separated from the canon because the Jews realized that they had not been written by divinely-appointed Prophets or because the testimony in their behalf was unsure. To place the Apocrypha books of the Old Testament into the canon, one must prove that they were actually written by the Prophets, that they do not contradict the analogy of Scriptures, and that they have divine testimonies for their authority and genuineness. Here Chemnitz departs from present custom by discussing the Antilegomena on an

119. Francis Cassilly, S.J. op. cit. p. 130.

equal basis with the Apocrypha. From the writings of Eusebius, Jerome, and Origen he shows that Hebrews, James, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, Jude, and Revelation do not have unanimous, uncontested attestations by the primitive Church. Though these books do not have the unanimous support of the ancient Church, he says, they are nonetheless useful and beneficial for reading to the people, but not for proving doctrine or for the settling of doctrinal disputes. "Nothing that is controversial can be proved from those books if other proofs and confirmations are not to be found in the Canonical books; but what is said in those books must be explained and understood according to the analogy clearly rendered in canonical books." 120

This division of Scripture into canonical and uncanonical writings at first glance seems to favor the Catholic claims. The Romanists argue as follows: it was the Church that accepted or rejected the various writings and thus it was the Church which finally gave the authority to Scripture. Thus Pighius maintained that "the Church has that power that it can impart Canonical authority to certain writings although they do not have that authority from themselves or from their own authors..."

This Chemnitz refutes on two counts: 1) even the primitive Church did not have the authority to select the books arbitrarily, 2) the Church of today

120. Preuss, op. cit. par. 19-21, p.57; 25, p. 59.

270
does not have the same right as the primitive Church
in determining the Canon of Scripture. 121

Canonical Scripture has authority as the source and norm of doctrine only because it is the actual Word of God written by men who were inspired, moved and directed by the Spirit of God. These men whom God selected God revealed and authenticated by divine miracles, so that there would be no doubt that what they wrote was divinely inspired. Thus truly canonical Scriptures could have been written only by the Apostles or by men who were intimately connected with the Apostles, and whom the Apostle approved, so that there was no doubt in the early Church as to their being inspired and directed by the Holy Spirit. Thus, Mark's writings were approved by St. Peter and Luke's writings were approved by St. Paul, perhaps in order that people might not get the impression that only those who had seen Christ in the flesh could preach and understand the Gospel. 122

Recognizing this principle, the primitive Church accepted as canonical only the writings of those men whom they knew to be trustworthy and endowed with Apostolic authority and at the same time did not contradict the teachings of other clearly established Apostolic writings. So the primitive Church could say of John in John 21:24, "This is that disciple who wrote these things and we know

121. Ibid , par. 15, p. 56.

122. Ibid , par. 8, p. 54; par. 12, p. 55.

that his testimony is true." Furthermore, well-known Apostles often testified to the genuineness of other apostolic writings, as in the case of John approving the three earlier Gospel writings and of Peter commending the letters of Paul to the Church. Jerome on the basis of Tertullian shows how much care was exercised in establishing the Canon of the New Testament. In order to leave behind a capable judge and guardian of Scripture, Jerome points out, God granted a longer life to John in order that he might prevent pseudepigraphical writings from being foisted on the Church. How this actually worked out is seen in the fact that the Apostle John indicated a certain presbyter in Asia and elicited the confession that he had written a false document and circulated it under the name of St. Paul. In this way the Apostolic Church maintained the genuineness of the Canon. ¹²³

Nor did the Post-Apostolic Church take to itself the authority to impart canonicity to those Scriptures which per se do not clearly belong in the Canon. Instead, the Church after the death of the Apostle John accepted a writing as canonical only if it had been accepted by the ecclesia primitiva, and if the doctrine in it agreed fully with those doctrines recognized by the Apostolic Church. Thus Eusebius quotes Serapion (Book 6): "We receive Peter and the rest of the Apostles as Christ himself, but we reject the Pseudepigrapha because their

123. ibid., par. 8-12, pp. 54-55.

teachings are not in agreement with those which we received from the Apostles." 124

The Post-Apostolic Church, then excluded certain books from the canon because the ecclesia primitiva did not approve them and commend them to the people since the Apostolic Church could not prove that the writings in question actually had Apostolic authority; when the opinions of the early church were not unanimous, the Post-Apostolic Church also left the matter undecided. 125

It is foolish for the modern Catholic church to maintain that it has the same right as the ecclesia primitiva to consider a writing to be canonical or uncanonical, when it has been demonstrated that even the church which followed immediately upon Apostolic times did not contradict the decisions of the earlier Church in regard to the canon of Scripture. The status controversiae, therefore, is as follows: 1) Can the Church which succeeded the ancient or first Church, or the Church which exists now, declare writings to be authentic when they have been rejected and disapproved by the first Church? 2) Can the Church of succeeding years reject and disapprove writings which have the favorable testimony of the first Church? 126 From what has been demonstrated in the preceding, a negative answer in each case is ob-

124. Ibid, par. 14, p. 55.

125. Ibid, par. 22, p. 58.

126. Ibid, par. 14-15, p. 55.

viciously the only correct one. So Gerson rightly objects: "It is not the power of the pope or of a council of the Church to change traditions given by the Evangelists and by the Apostles, as some madly imagine. Nor do they have an equal weight of authority, so that they can of their own authority declare something to be pure in matters of faith." (De Vita Spirituale, Lecture 2), ¹²⁷ The Council of Trent, however, has violated this principle and exalted itself above the primitive Church in order that by inventing their own canon, they might be able to establish their doctrines from the "canon of Scripture." ¹²⁸ It is not strange, then, that the papists maintain that the pope can create new articles of faith when in this locus he does not fear to fabricate new Canonical Scripture. Consequently, it is not doubtful who it is who "as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God." (2 Thess. 2:4) ¹²⁹

127. Ibid, par. 17, p. 57.

128. Ibid, par. 25, p. 59.

129. Ibid, par. 24, p. 59.

Chapter V

Editions and Translations

The next step in the Romanist plan to retain its position intact was the rejection of all Bible versions and translations which were not in agreement with the Catholic version. In the First Decree of the Fourth Session they again let the anathema fall. This time it is directed against those who do not accept the writings of Scripture as they have been read in the churches and as contained in the Old Latin Vulgate Edition; the papists declare that of all the versions the Latin Vulgate alone is authentic. In this declaration, Chemnitz takes note of two points: 1) Indirectly this decree condemns all other translations into the vernacular languages; 2) Since the Latin Vulgate is the sole authentic edition, it dare not be rejected in preaching, lectures, disputations, or expositions, even when it is clearly in error. The refutation of these principles is the aim of this chapter.

Chemnitz first gives a general history of Scriptures to show that it had been legitimately rendered in popular versions many times before this decree was issued. The Scripture of the Old Testament, he points out, was revealed by God in the Hebrew language, because it was the mother of all languages after the flood and thus had

a close affinity to the other tongues. A number of incidents in Old Testament history could be cited to prove this. As time passed and the relation between Hebrew and the other tongues, became less and less apparent, Scripture was rendered into these other tongues, so that they would be accessible to the people. So it was that Daniel and Ezra wrote certain things in the Chaldaean language, and later the rest of Old Testament Scripture was translated into Chaldaean and Syriac. After the triumph and spread of the Greek monarchy, the Greek language became the universal tongue and the Greek Septuagint was produced to give the people the Old Testament in their own language. These translations were not illegitimate, for Christ used the Syriac language when He was on the Cross and the Apostles often used the Greek translation of the Old Testament.

In the same way, the New Testament, written originally in Greek to reach the greatest number of people (cf. Cicero, Pro Archia: "The Greek writings are read among almost all nations; Latin writings are confined to their own borders."), had to be translated into Latin language in the West, where the Roman Empire was in control. Thus it is evident that in all ages, translations of Scriptures have been made into the language of the people, in order that the reading of Scriptures, would not be confined to

130. Ibid., par. 1, p. 61.

the learned. ¹³¹

Romanists today might object that Chemnitz here is fighting a "straw man" and in support of their contention would point to the modern Translation of the New Testament published under the patronage of the Episcopal Committee of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine in 1941. Isn't this a concrete argument to prove that the Roman Church is not unfavorable to popular translations? With Cardinal Gibbons, they might claim that the only reason the Catholic Church placed restrictions on popular renditions was to combat those ... "who not only issued a new translation on which they engrafted their novelties of doctrine, but also sought to explain the sacred text in a sense foreign to the received interpretation of tradition." ¹³² Furthermore, they might direct the Protestant to the preface of the 1941 edition, in order to justify the stand of the Roman Church:

Further, the Church has always realized that Holy Scripture was committed to her charge by virtue of its very origin and object. Like the Apostolic tradition of Christ's teaching, the Bible, too, is a treasury of divine revelation. As such, it can have no rightful guardian and dispenser except that Church which Christ formed and commissioned to teach all the world the truths revealed for man's salvation. There can be no graver crime than the least corruption of that eternal truth which Christ has brought us. The Church is, therefore, watchful over Holy Scriptures; and not only over its message, but likewise over its written transmission.

131. James Cardinal Gibbons, op. cit. p. 92.

132. Preuss, op. cit. par. 3ff. p. 62.

In exercising this guardianship, the Church has given special sanction to that Latin version which, because of its common use for centuries, won the name of "Vulgate." Her intention in this is primarily to declare which of many Latin versions is to be regarded as substantially accurate and safe in all matters of faith and morals. It was from this Latin text that most of the vernacular versions of Europe were made. It was also from this text that our first printed Catholic Bible in English was taken. 133

At first glance the objection of the Romanists might appear to be well-taken; a closer examination of the problem, however, will reveal that the contentions of Chemnitz still stand. Chemnitz is fighting for the right to prepare and publish translations of Scriptures from the original languages from which modern research has made it possible to render a more accurate and errorless translation than that of the Latin Vulgate, regardless of the bland statement of the Romanists to the contrary. Because of the decree of the Council of Trent, Romanists today are bound to the Latin Vulgate as their final authority; since "misery loves company," they would like to force all Christendom to share in their unhappy situation. By showing that the Latin Vulgate has numerous mistranslations and errors, Chemnitz proves that the final authority should be the original languages of Scripture according to which the errors of all translations, the Vulgate included, should be corrected. 134

133. The New Testament, Translated from the Latin Vulgate, preface p. X

134. Preuss, op. cit. par. 11 ff., p. 63.

That the Latin Vulgate in the Psalms often renders the original meaning improperly could not be denied by Lindanus and Andrada, Chemnitz asserts. Numerous other errors could be cited of which only a few need be mentioned for illustration. Thus, in the Old Testament, Gen. 9:6, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed," the Vulgate omits "by man." In the New Testament, Rom. 4:2, where St. Paul says that "Abraham was not justified by works," the Vulgate adds "Works of the law." Many other erroneous translations could be cited, but the interested student need only consult the writings of Valla, Stapulensis, Erasmus, and others.* 135

The insistence of the Romanists on the retention of the Vulgate edition and the refusal to correct its errors in the light of the original languages is significant. "In that way they can set before the people only those things which they wish the people to know." 136 In their use of the Vulgate, moreover, they openly depart from the practice of the Apostles themselves. The Apostles, too, referred to the vulgate edition of the Old Testament Scriptures, the Septuagint; but where it disagreed with the original Hebrew, they returned to the original sources, as Jerome points out. This the papists refuse to do. In fact, the version of Erasmus which

135. *Ibid*, par. 13, p. 64.

136. *Ibid*, par. 7, p. 63.

*"In fairness, it should be noted that Chemnitz was not well versed in positive textual criticism; in several instances (I John 5:13, Rom. 11:6, Matt. 9:13), the Nestle text substantiates the vulgate translation."

approved by Leo X was placed in the Index Prohibitorum Librorum by Paul IV; thus by suppressing all editions which reveal the errors of the Latin Vulgate, the Papists hope to maintain all of their erroneous and corrupt doctrines, for as Albert Eck of Ingolstadt remarked, "In the letters of the ancient vulgate edition lie hidden many mysteries of faith, namely of the papists." Chemnitz, therefore, shows how the various false doctrines of the papists, "are supported by the incorrect rendering of the vulgate. 137

In the presentation of this material, Chemnitz again has struck at the heart of the dispute. He has demonstrated that the Council of Trent placed its seal of approval upon a rendition of Scripture which is not in agreement with the original in many instances. By referring to all of the Romanist doctrines which are supported by the inaccurate translations of the vulgate, he has revealed their purpose in insisting upon its retention. Though the discussion often reveals faulty exegesis and an unfamiliarity with textual criticism, this study, nevertheless, also shows his thorough scholarship and wide reading, as well as insight into the status controversiae.

137. Preuss, op. cit. par. 16-18, p. 65.

Chapter VI

Interpretation of Scripture

The last blow struck at Scriptures by the Council of Trent is the restriction placed upon the interpretation of Scriptures. Not content with placing traditions above Scripture, adding books to the Canon, and limiting the use of the original languages in determining the truth of a doctrine, the papists are fearful lest someone might object that in many cases doctrines taken from tradition, from uncanonical Scripture, and from the Vulgate directly oppose and openly contradict clear statements of the Scriptures. To obviate this objection, the papists have found it necessary to decree that the interpretation given to any Scripture passage by the Church must be accepted without reservation. Thus Holy Mother Church alone has the right to judge the true sense and interpretation of Scripture and no one dares render an interpretation contrary to this decision, even if that opinion is not to be published.¹³⁸ This decree in itself could well be subscribed to even by Lutherans, providing the correct meaning of the term "Church" is inferred. If by "Church" is meant "the communion of all believers,"

138. Arnold Damien, S.J., op. cit. p. 19.

then Lutherans, too, would maintain that only the interpretation of the Church could be trusted.¹³⁹ This, however, is not the sense of the Romanists, as Chemnitz demonstrates in this chapter.

First of all, the Romanists assert that the right of interpretation belongs only to the "Church," in the sense of "the hierarchy," so that the gift of interpretation is intimately connected with the ordinary succession of bishops. Thus, the interpretation of anyone elevated to the position of bishop must be accepted and respected as legitimate and true, regardless of whatever kind the interpretation might be. The pope, moreover, as the supreme bishop has all the revelations of God in "the shrine of his own heart," so that his interpretation would be correct, even if he is of himself ignorant or forgetful. Thus when he changes the form of the sacraments, renders a doctrine which is contrary to the teachings of Paul, rejects a decision handed down by the first four councils and renders an opinion which is contrary to the Gospel, he does so because God has given him the personal power and knowledge to do so, if the Catholic claim is true. At the same time, the decision of a group of bishops assembled in a council is final in any matter.¹⁴⁰ It should be noted that the problem whether the decision of a council or of a pope is

139. Dr. J.T. Mueller, Christian Dogmatics, p. 141.

140. Preuss, op. cit. par. 4, p. 66.

supreme in any matter of faith and morals was a moot question until settled finally in 1870 when the principle of papal infallibility was established and accepted by practically all Catholics. Only a small group under the leadership of Ignaz Doellinger insisted that the councils should retain their traditional position and formed a separate group under the name of "Old Catholics." ¹⁴¹

Theoretically, then, the Catholic position today is that the right of interpretation belongs solely to the bishops, as a supreme court or final court of appeal. Actually, however, that right is finally reserved for the pope. In defending this position in their popular literature today, the Romanists start from the premise that Scripture dare not be interpreted by the individual believers, but "as the Supreme Court was established to interpret the Constitution, so the Church is to interpret the Bible." ¹⁴² Roman Catholic sources advance two arguments to prove that the Bible needs a supreme interpreter; the first is that there are more than 500 sects which are in opposition to each other and still claim to base their teachings on the Bible; the second is the passage, 2 Pet. 3:16, in which Peter says that in the Scriptures there are many things which are hard

¹⁴¹. Lars P. Qualben, "A History of the Christian Church." pp. 379-380.

¹⁴². Anold Damien, S.J. op. cit. p. 4.

to understand and which the unlearned wrest to their destruction. The discussion of Chemnitz solves these problems.

In answer, Chemnitz first declares that there are many passages in Scriptures which need no interpretation; they are so clear that they can be understood even by the simplest minds. In these passages are contained the doctrines necessary for faith and morals, so that even if we would be forced to do without an interpretation of the more difficult passages, we would nevertheless have knowledge sufficient for salvation. Lest, however, the more obscure passages be in the Bible in vain, God has given the gift of interpretation to certain men, just as he had given special gifts of healing, miracles, tongues, etc. to certain people. (I Cor. 14:5ff.)¹⁴³ The primary prerequisite for a good exegete is regeneration and personal faith, for "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God," (I Cor. 2:13) and "If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost" (2 Cor. 4:3).¹⁴⁴ Whether, therefore, a man be a bishop or the pope himself, if he is spiritually unregenerate, he is lacking the chief requirement for a sound interpretation

¹⁴³. The passage cited by Chemnitz does not apply directly, since Paul here is referring to the interpretation of the message of those speaking in tongues; however, the argument in itself is valid, that is, that certain people have greater gifts of language ability, insight, and intellectual capacities which are products of training necessary for correct interpretation of obscure passages.

¹⁴⁴. Preuss, op. cit. par. 1, p. 65.

of a given passage; on the other hand, Old Testament history shows that God often used ordinary believing priests and prophets to convey the true interpretation of His Word. ¹⁴⁵ Augustine stresses the fact that the illumination of the Holy Spirit is necessary in order to judge the true sense of Scripture. For that reason, St. Paul asks that the Holy Spirit guide and direct the believers in their knowledge and understanding of the doctrines of Scripture (Eph. 1: 17; 2: 16ff; Phil. 1; 19; Col. 1:9). Origen, Hilary, Basil, and Cyril all emphasize the fact that spiritual regeneration and illumination is necessary in sound interpretation. They, together with Augustine, also assert that those who are spiritually regenerated must be of sound mind and trained in the application of common-sense principles of language. For that reason, Augustine (De Utilitate Credendi, ch. 2) sets up four rules which must be observed in arriving at the correct meaning of a difficult passage: 1) Take the circumstances of the historical background into consideration. 2) Study it according to the meaning of the words and its context. 3) Compare it with the analogy of faith and Scripture. 4) Determine whether it is of literal or figurative significance. ¹⁴⁶ Therefore, any sincere Christian who is of sound mind and of average intelligence and is aware of the universal common-sense

145. Ibid, par. 4, p. 66.

146. Ibid, par. 5, p. 66-67.

rules of language, can safely interpret the meaning of Scriptures, The discussion of Chemnitz on this point may be summed up as follows: "Scripture is clear externally(Claritas verborum) to all men of sound minds, internally(claritas spiritualis) only to believers, and essentially(claritas rerum) the understanding of the mysteries of faith) only to the saints in heaven, I Cor. 13:12." ¹⁴⁷

The claim of the Romanists that the hierarchy has the right of interpretation would not be so shameful and ridiculous if they would not make this a dictatorial right by which they foist upon the members of the Church any interpretation they will, even when they cannot prove such an interpretation or when it conflicts with the common-sense rules of language.

It must be admitted that in the Lutheran Church, too, judgment of doctrine and interpretation of Scriptures usually is left in the hands of the formal ministry; the difference lies in this that the pastors of the Lutheran Church do not insist that their interpretation, is infallible and will change their position, if they can be shown on the basis of Scripture that their interpretation is false; for it is recognized that all Christians have the right and privilege of judging doctrine, as long as they are of sound mind, have been instructed, and apply the rules of interpretation. The papist, however, by taking

147. Dr. J.T. Mueller, Christian Dogmatics, p. 141.

the stand that the final decision on any matter rests with the bishops and the pope with one stroke free themselves of the labor of proving their doctrine and deprive the members of the Church of the right of judgment. Thus the claim that "Holy Mother Church" has the sole right of interpretation actually and finally means that the hierarchy alone has that right. 148

In the third place, when the papists render a passage of Scripture in such a way that it fits one of their false doctrines, they quote the Church Fathers who render that same interpretation; the papists then insist that such opinions of the Fathers must be accepted without reservation, even though the Fathers must not wish their decisions on any matter to be considered binding. Thus Jerome, writing to Minnerius and Alexander, suggests that only the good things should be selected and retained from the writings of the ancients, as he was accustomed to do in reading Origen, Eusebius, Didymus, and others. These he quoted only to show that others were of the same opinion as he in a matter. Even in his own writings he did not want his interpretations to be regarded as final, for he instructs the reader to judge his interpretations of the second chapter of the prophet Micah. And when Augustine rejected the interpretation which certain Fathers had given of some of the Psalms, Jerome wrote that such liberty of judging interpretations must be retained in the

148. Preuss, op. cit. par. 5, p. 66-67.

Church. ¹⁴⁹ It must not be thought that Chemnitz absolutely and completely rejected the testimony of traditions. Instead, the writings of the Church Fathers often are a great help in arriving at the meaning of certain difficult passages; moreover, he would not approve any new teaching which has no support in the writings of antiquity. He applies this in his own writings also, as may be seen from the study of this locus; he is always careful to quote the best sources of the ancient Church to show that he does not depart from the traditional view. ¹⁵⁰

Finally, in reserving to themselves the right of interpretation, the papal hierarchy claim that even in the clearest passages of Scripture, the papists have the right to deviate from the simple and direct meaning of the passage. Since many doctrines of the Catholic Church are taught without proof from the Scriptures and often directly against clear Scripture proof, the papists, Andrada in particular, insist that the members of the Church must have implicit faith in the doctrines of the Church. Understood correctly, the term implicit faith might be used even in the Lutheran Church, Chemnitz suggests. Thus there are many truths which lie hidden in Scriptures and cannot be reasoned out by our own intellect; these, therefore, must be accepted and believed implicitly without logical proof and demonstration. This has been twisted by

149. Ibid, par. 7, p. 67.

150. Ibid, par. 2, p. 66.

Andrada and all other papists to mean that even those things which the Roman Catholic Church teaches contrary to the Bible and without Biblical proof must be accepted as true by implicit faith. In compliance with this principle, Erasmus often points out that the opinion of the papists does not have the certain and sure testimony of Scripture, but that more suitable deduction could be made from the Word of God, and then adds, "Nevertheless, if the Church has decided this, I will believe it. For I will take my intellect captive in obedience to the Church." This, however, as Chemnitz points out, is not true faith but only servile obedience to the opinions of fallible men, obedience to propositions not taken from the Word of God but simply accepted on human authority. ¹⁵¹

By using the device of "implicit faith," therefore, the papists are able to elude all the clear passages of Scripture which refute their own position of justifying faith, original sin, good works, free will, the mediation of Christ and so forth. When Scripture comes into conflict with any of their doctrines, they reject the simple and direct words of Scripture in favor of their own doctrines, fully aware that the principle of "implicit faith" in the judgment of the "Church" will not permit their own people to object. So when Christ says, "Drink ye all of it," they say, "Not all, but only the priests." When Paul says, "Marriage is honorable to all," they say,

151. Ibid, par. 8-9, pp. 67-68.

"Not to all, but only to the laity." Paul says, "To avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife." They limit the term "every man" to certain classes of men. Christ said, "Kings rule, but ye are not so." It is a wonder how the Romanist get around that. Paul condemns as doctrines of devils the commands to abstain from meats and the forbidding of marriage, and though these words are clear as a crystal, the Romanists disregard them. All this they can do with impunity, because they have blinded their people with this principle, "If anyone has the interpretation of the Roman Church, even if it does not agree with the words of the Scriptures, nevertheless he has the true Word of God."

at every turn the Romanists are running directly counter to the silver directions and commands of God through the Prophets of the Old Testament and the Apostles of the New Testament, in fact, against the commands of Christ Himself, when they insist upon the acceptance of traditions, of the apocryphal books, of the Latin Vulgate, and of their own erroneous and arbitrary interpretation. All this they do in spite of the fact that the teachings of the Prophets, of the Apostles, and of Christ Himself insist upon the acceptance of their own teachings, and the rejection of all additional or contrary teachings. On the other hand, with themselves the Lutheran Church today stands firmly on the principle of sola scriptura as the only true and

Conclusion

When Arnold Damien, S.J. attempted to convince his "Protestant friends" that "private interpretation of Scripture cannot be the guide and teacher of man," he asked, "Is anyone foolish enough to believe that the changeless and eternal holy Ghost is directing those five hundred sects, telling one 'yes' and another 'no', declaring a thing to be black and white, false and true, at the same time?"¹⁵² Those very words can be turned more effectively against the position of the Roman Church in their use of Scripture to establish their false teachings; at every turn the Romanists are running directly counter to the clear directions and commands of God through the Prophets of the Old Testament and the Apostles of the New Testament, in fact, against the commands of Christ Himself, when they insist upon the acceptance of traditions, of the uncanonical books, of the Latin Vulgate, and of their own erroneous and arbitrary interpretation. All this they do in spite of the fact that the teachings of the Prophets, of the Apostles, and of Christ Himself insist upon the acceptance of their own teachings, and the rejection of all additional or contrary teachings. On the other hand, with Chemnitz the Lutheran Church today stands firmly on the principle of sola scriptura as the only true and

152. Arnold Damien, S.J. op. cit. p. 4.

God-given source and norm of doctrine. It is that principle, the adherence to the pure Word of Scripture and the rejection of all other norms, which has restored to the church today the other great truths of sola gratia and sola fide. Thus through Martin Luther and Martin Chemnitz, God has restored the teachings of Christ and the Apostolic Church.

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