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Introduction to Sacred Theology

J T. Mueller

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis

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deren Bruder Absalom, von seinen Knechten, erschlagen, 2 Sam. 18, 28. Sein Sohn Chileab von Abigail, der Karmelitin, scheint früh gestorben zu sein, da er nicht weiter erwähnt wird. Absalom zeigte schon früh einen ausgeprägten Hang zum Ehrgeiz und zur Eitelkeit. Nachdem er an Amnon Rache geübt hatte, brachte er seinen Muttwillen gegen Joab zum Ausdruck, 2 Sam. 14, 30—33. Dann wurde er ein Aufseher gegen seinen eigenen Vater und beging Blutschande mit den Nebenweibern seines Vaters, und das sogar vor den Augen des ganzen Israel. Und doch trug der alternde Vater diesen Sohn auf liebendem Herzen, so daß er sogar nach dessen wohlverdientem Tode, 2 Sam. 18, 14, ihn beklagte und beweinte. Der vierte Sohn, Adonia, ließ sich gleichfalls vom Ehrgeiz wegreißen, so daß er zweimal den Versuch machte, das Königreich an sich zu reißen. Das erste Mal hatte er Joab und den Priester Abiathar auf seiner Seite; das zweite Mal versuchte er sogar mit Hilfe Bathsebas sein Ziel zu erreichen. Dieser letzte Versuch kostete ihn sein Leben, 1 Kön. 2, 15 ff.

Die Sache der Nachfolge im Königreich wurde schließlich durch David auf Vorstellung Bathsebas hin geordnet, insofern Salomo zum Nachfolger seines Vaters bestimmt wurde, 1 Kön. 1, 13. Dieser Sohn Davids war von dem Propheten Nathan erzogen worden und hatte sich auch sonst der besonderen Liebe seiner Mutter erfreut, Spr. 4, 3. Und doch ist es bedeutungsvoll, daß im Geschlechtsregister des dritten Evangelisten die Linie des Heilandes nicht durch Salomo auf David zurückgeht, sondern durch Nathan, obwohl auch dieser ein Sohn Bathsebas war, Luk. 3, 31. Es ist dem Herrn ein Geringes, die Niedrigen zu erhöhen, wie er auch die Gewaltigen vom Stuhle stoßen kann. Und derselbe Gott, der die verschiedenen Sündenfälle Davids in heiligem Eifer strafte, hat sich doch immer wieder in Gnaden zu ihm bekehrt, so daß er in seiner Familie der Träger der messianischen Verheißung wurde.

P. C. K r e h m a n n.

Introduction to Sacred Theology.

(Continued.)

The Nature and Constitution of Sacred Theology.

4. The Two Sources (*Principia Cognoscendi*) of the Existing Religions.

As we have seen, there are but two essentially different religions, the religion of faith, or of the Gospel, and the religion of works, or of the Law. So also there are but two actual sources (*principia cognoscendi*, principles of knowledge) from which these two divergent religions are taken. The religion of works is of human origin; it is a man-made religion, having its source and origin in the human heart, in which God has inscribed His divine Law, so that also the heathen,

who have not the Word of God as set forth in Holy Scripture, know "the judgments of God"; Rom. 2, 15: "which show the work of the Law written in their hearts"; 1, 32: "who, knowing the judgment of God" (*δυνατωμα*, the norm of right, *Rechtssatzung*). On the basis of the divine Law, inscribed in the human heart, conscience accuses and condemns man whenever he does wrong, and so he is burdened with the consciousness of guilt, Rom. 1, 20: "so that they are without excuse"; 2, 15: "their conscience also bearing witness and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another." Man, thus being condemned by his conscience, seeks to reconcile the Deity by "good works," such as worship, sacrifices, etc. The *Apology* rightly says: "But works become conspicuous among men. Human reason naturally admires these, and because it sees only works and does not understand or consider faith, it dreams accordingly that these works merit remission of sins and justify. This opinion of the Law (*haec opinio legis*) inheres by nature in men's minds; neither can it be expelled, unless when we are divinely taught. But the mind must be recalled from such carnal opinions to the Word of God." (Art. III, 144.) The "opinion of the Law" of which the *Apology* here speaks, namely, the erroneous view that works merit remission of sins and justify the sinner, St. Paul calls "the religion of the flesh." For to the Galatians, who sought justification on the ground of their merits, he writes: "Are ye so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?" Gal. 3, 3. Luther correctly explains the passage as follows: "Here 'flesh' is nothing else than the righteousness, the wisdom of the flesh and the thoughts of reason, which endeavor to be justified by the Law." (St. L. Ed., IX, 288 ff.) That this is indeed the meaning of the word "flesh" in this passage the context clearly proves; and the passage teaches the truth that every religion which seeks to acquire divine grace and remission of sins through human endeavors is not of God, but of man. Its source is the perverted, unregenerate heart.

The religion of the Gospel, or of faith, on the contrary, is not of man, but of God, who has revealed it through His inspired prophets and apostles in Holy Scripture, 1 Cor. 2, 6—10: "We speak wisdom among them that are perfect; yet not the wisdom of this world. . . . But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory; which none of the princes of this world knew. . . . But as it is written, Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man. . . . But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit. . . ." The religion of faith is therefore in the strictest sense of the term "wisdom of God," 1 Cor. 1, 24. It is "God-made," and its only source is "God's Book," the inspired Holy Scriptures, John 5, 39; Rom. 16, 25, 26; Eph. 2, 20; 1 John 1, 4. Quenstedt writes (I, 33): "The sole,

proper, adequate, and ordinary source of theology and of the Christian religion is the divine revelation contained in the Holy Scriptures; or, what is the same, the canonical Scriptures alone are the absolute source of theology, so that out of them alone are the articles of faith to be deduced and proved." Again I, 36: "Divine revelation is the first and last source of sacred theology, beyond which theological discussion among Christians dare not proceed." (*Doctr. Theol.*, pp. 27 ff.) This Scriptural truth must be maintained against every form of rationalism, by which at all times false teachers have sought to pervert the divine truth. Rationalistic doctrine (Pelagianism, Semi-Pelagianism, Synergism, etc.) is not of God, but carnal, anti-Scriptural opposition to God. Essentially it is paganism, which destroys divine truth wherever it is accepted and allowed to hold sway in theology. Quenstedt is right when he writes (I, 38): "Human or natural reason is not the source of theology and supernatural things." (*Doctr. Theol.*, p. 28.)

But neither is *tradition* a source of the Christian faith. Calov is fully in accord with Holy Scripture when he declares: "We contend that, over and above the written Word of God, there is at present no unwritten Word of God concerning any doctrine necessary to Christian faith and life, not comprehended in the Scriptures, that ever came forth from the apostles, was handed down by tradition, was preserved by the Church, and is to be received with equal reverence." (*Doctr. Theol.*, p. 28.) This is truly Lutheran and Scriptural doctrine. We are to seek God's Word only in God's Book, never anywhere else, as also Quenstedt emphatically states when he writes (I, 44): "The consent of the primitive Church or of the Fathers of the first centuries after Christ is not a source of Christian faith, neither primary nor secondary, nor does it produce a divine, but merely a human or probable belief." (*Doctr. Theol.*, p. 28.)

Lastly also we cannot acknowledge the so-called *private revelations* as sources of faith; for, as Hollaz rightly points out (63): "After the completion of the canon of Scripture no new and immediate divine revelation was given to be a fundamental source of doctrine, 1 Cor. 4, 6; Heb. 1, 1." (*Doctr. Theol.*, p. 28.)

The doctrine of a *fixed revelation*, that is, that divine revelation is given us only in the Word of Christ and His prophets and apostles, is Scriptural doctrine. Eph. 2, 20: "And [ye] are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief Corner-stone." For this reason Christian theology, on the basis of Holy Scripture, can acknowledge only one source and standard of true religion, namely, the inspired, infallible written Word of God, or Holy Scripture.

The religion of faith dates back to the beginning of the Old Testament, since it was revealed to Adam and Eve immediately after

the Fall, Gen. 3, 15. It was afterwards proclaimed continually by the holy prophets and was truly believed by all the Old Testament saints. Gen. 15, 6: "And he [Abram] believed in the Lord; and He counted it to him for righteousness." In the New Testament both Christ and His apostles constantly pointed back to the promises of faith revealed in the Old Testament. Luke 24, 27: "And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." Acts 10, 43: "To Him give all the prophets witness that through His name, whosoever believeth in Him, shall receive remission of sins." Rom. 3, 21: "But now the righteousness of God without the Law is manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the prophets." Rom. 4, 3: "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto Him for righteousness." All these passages confirm the truth that also in the Old Testament men were saved alone through the true religion of faith in Christ. The divine Law never had the function to save sinners, but only to convince sinners of their sin and guilt. Gal. 3, 24: "Wherefore the Law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ that we might be justified by faith."

5. The Cause of Divisions in Christendom.

Since all non-Christian religions are man-made, having their source in the human endeavor to earn remission of sins by works, it is not strange that they should appear in many and diverse forms. The *Apology* writes: "And because no works pacify the conscience, new works, in addition to God's commands, were from time to time devised [the hypocrites nevertheless used to invent one work after another, one sacrifice after another, by a blind guess and in reckless wantonness, and all this without the Word and command of God, with wicked conscience, as we have seen in the Papacy]." (Art. III, 87). This statement the *Apology* applies, first of all, to the papists, but it holds true with respect to all the religions of works. Just because the old works never pacify the guilty conscience, new works must be tried to effect a cure of the sin-troubled conscience, and so in all man-made religions there is an endless multiplication of "good works."

However, while thus divisions may be expected among the adherents of man-made religions, one preferring this good work and another that, so that each pagan sect has its own forms of worship as also its own gods, there ought not to be any divisions among the adherents of the religion of faith, since this religion has only *one source of doctrine*, namely, Holy Scripture, which by its divine message of grace satisfies the human heart and appeases human conscience by offering freely remission of sins to all who believe in Christ. In other words, Christians having the one Word of God and holding to the one faith in Christ ought not to be split into factions,

or parties. In addition to this, Holy Scripture most earnestly condemns all divisions, demanding that all believers should "endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," Eph. 4, 3. The reason for this demand St. Paul states very clearly when he writes: "There is one body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in you all," Eph. 4, 4-6. The divisions existing at Corinth so horrified Paul that he wrote: "Is Christ divided?" 1 Cor. 1, 13. All believers in Christ are equally members of His body, and so there is no cause whatever for any possible division in the Christian Church.

Yet such divisions exist, and they have existed since the first proclamation of Christianity, so that there always have been sects within the visible Church. These divisions have been variously explained by climatic or racial differences under the plea that the peoples of the various zones of the earth are variously affected in their religious emotional response. However, all these explanations are inadequate and even false, being disproved by the simple fact that true believers in Christ who actually do keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace are found the world over, no matter what kind of climatic or racial differences may exist among men. No indeed; the divisions within Christendom owe their origin and existence to more serious causes. According to Holy Scripture they are due to false prophets and apostles, who, unfaithful to the pure Word of God, disseminate, in the name of the Christian religion, their own perverse notions and discard the specific beliefs of Christianity, above all, the fundamental doctrine of the Gospel that man is justified by grace, through faith, without the deeds of the Law. Such pseud-apostles troubled even the very churches founded by Paul and his collaborators. Rom. 16, 17: "I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them." 1 Cor. 14, 37: "If any man think himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord." Gal. 1, 6-8: "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from Him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel. . . . But there be some that trouble you and would pervert the Gospel of Christ. But though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." Phil. 3, 18: "For many walk of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the Cross of Christ." The ungodly endeavors of such pseud-apostles to pervert the Gospel of Christ, in particular, the special doctrine of salvation by grace alone, through faith in the vicarious atonement of the divine Redeemer, explain to the end of time the existence of divisions within Christendom.

The truth of this assertion becomes obvious when we examine the major divisions existing within Christendom: the Romanistic division, the Reformed division, various divisions within the general Lutheran Church, and the modern rationalistic schools of theology with their endless party divisions.

The Roman Catholic Church, while acknowledging in principle the divine authority of Holy Scripture, nevertheless insists that the Bible must be interpreted in the sense of the Church, which, in the final analysis, is that of the Pope, who, as Luther points out in the *Smalcald Articles* (Part III, Art. VIII, 4), claims to have all rights within the shrine of his heart (*in scrinio pectoris*). The result of such interpretation of Holy Scripture according to the sense of the "holy Mother Church" (*sancta mater ecclesia*) is that the cardinal article of the Christian faith, the doctrine of justification by grace alone, through faith in Christ, is not only rejected, but expressly anathematized, so that all true Christians who base their hope of salvation alone in Christ Jesus, and not also in their works and the merits of the saints, are pronounced accursed. (Council of Trent, Sess. VI, Can. 11. 12. 20.) Thus the Romanistic division, or sect, deprives the Christian religion of its specific content, and its whole theology is, as St. Paul styles it, a "religion of the flesh." Romanism is built upon two fundamental errors, which Holy Scripture most earnestly condemns: the infallibility of papal authority in religion and the meritoriousness of man's "good works." If these two errors were weeded out of the theology of the Roman Catholic Church, the Romanistic sect would disappear within Christendom.

The Reformed denomination likewise acknowledges the divine authority of Holy Scripture in principle. In fact, over against Lutheranism the Reformed party claims to be "more exclusively Scriptural" than the Lutheran Church, since the latter has always been inclined to be "historical" and "conservative," in accord with the principle that church traditions and customs may be retained wherever they can be reconciled with the Word of God. But this distinction between Reformed and Lutheran theology is not based on facts. Reformed theology is not "more exclusively Scriptural" than Lutheran theology. On the contrary, as Romanistic theology demands the interpretation of Holy Scripture according to the *sancta mater ecclesia*, so Reformed theology insists that the Bible must be interpreted according to human reason, or according to rationalistic axioms.

Thus, guided by its rationalistic axioms, Reformed theology rejects, first of all, the doctrine of the means of grace, that is, the doctrine that the Word of God and the Sacraments are the divinely ordained means by which the Holy Ghost works directly regeneration, conversion, and sanctification. The doctrine of the means of grace

is clearly stated in Holy Scripture, Rom. 1, 16; Titus 3, 5, 6; Acts 2, 38, etc. But over against this Scriptural truth Reformed theology asserts the rationalistic axiom that "efficacious grace works immediately." In other words, Reformed theology separates the sanctifying operations of the Holy Ghost from the means of grace under the plea that the Holy Spirit needs no vehicle by which to enter the hearts of men. (Zwingli, *Fidei Ratio*; Calvin, *Inst.*, IV, 14, 17; Hodge, *Syst. Theol.*, II, 684; etc.) It was this rationalistic axiom, consistently and strenuously applied, which caused the division between the Lutheran Church and the Reformed sects. Against Romanism, Luther had to defend the truth that the Word of God must not be perverted by the rationalistic views of the "Church"; against Zwinglianism he had to defend the truth that the Word of God must not be perverted by the rationalistic views of individual theologians.

Again, Reformed theology applies a rationalistic principle when treating the doctrines of the Person of Christ and of the Lord's Supper. Reformed theology emphatically denies the real presence of Christ's body in the Lord's Supper, claiming that Christ's sacramental presence is only spiritual, that is, a presence through the faith of the believer. In other words, Christ is present in Holy Communion only in so far as the believing communicant is united with Him through faith. This denial of the real presence is manifestly in opposition to the clear words of Christ's institution of the Holy Supper: "Take, eat; this is My body." It rests alone on the rationalistic principle that Christ's body, being a truly human body and having as such only a visible and local mode of presence (*visibilis et localis praesentia*), cannot be present in the Lord's Supper since it is enclosed in heaven. In other words, moved by human reason, Reformed theology denies the illocal mode of presence of Christ's body, taught in such passages as John 20, 19: "When the doors were shut, came Jesus"; Luke 24, 31: "And He vanished out of their sight." This illocal presence of Christ's human nature Holy Scripture ascribes to the God-man by virtue of the personal union with its resulting communion of the two natures and the communication of attributes. But on grounds of reason Reformed theology denies the communion of the natures and the communication of the attributes. It claims that the "finite is not capable of the infinite." From this rationalistic principle follows another, namely, that Christ's body cannot have an illocal presence and is therefore, after the ascension, enclosed in heaven. To the maintenance and defense of these two rationalistic axioms the split between Zwinglianism and Lutheranism must be attributed. Luther was unable to extend to Zwingli the hand of Christian fellowship at Marburg (1529) because the latter showed a "different spirit," namely, the spirit of rationalism, which is dia-

metrically opposed to the Christian faith. If Reformed theology would surrender its rationalistic axioms, the Reformed division would disappear as readily as the Romanistic division.

Lastly, Calvinistic theology denies the universality of divine grace (*gratia universalis*) and teaches that divine grace is only particular (*gratia particularis*); that is, divine grace does not embrace all men, but the elect only, while all others are eternally predestinated to perdition. This doctrine is in direct opposition to Holy Scripture, which throughout affirms the universality of God's grace and, besides, asserts that the damnation of any sinner is not due to any failure in God to provide for his salvation, John 1, 29; 3, 16 ff.; 1 John 1, 2; 1 Tim. 2, 4-6, etc. On what grounds, then, does Reformed theology deny the universality of divine grace? Also here it employs a rationalistic axiom as a premise on which to rest its false doctrine. The rationalistic principle is: "We must assume that the *result* is the interpretation of the purpose of God." (Hodge, *Syst. Theol.*, II, 323.) Reformed theology reasons thus: "Since actually not all men are saved, we must assume that God did not mean to save all." In this way Calvinistic theology rejects Holy Scripture in favor of an argument drawn from reason, or a rationalistic axiom; and on this departure from the Word of God and its consequent enthronement of reason the Reformed division, as a separatistic sect, is founded. Just as soon as its theology would cease to be rationalistic, it would cease also to be separatistic.

Within the pale of the Reformed denomination the strict Calvinistic doctrine of the particularity of divine grace has been emphatically denied by the separatistic sect of the Arminians. Arminian theology denied the Calvinistic error that God from eternity has reprobated a certain number of men to damnation. However, on the other hand, Arminian theology erred by denying that grace alone (*sola gratia*) saves sinners. Over against the doctrine of *sola gratia*, so clearly taught by Luther, it reasoned that man's conversion and salvation depends, at least to some extent, on his cooperation and the exercise of his free will. Calvinism limits the *gratia universalis*, while Arminianism limits the *sola gratia*. Thus also Arminianism is a departure from Holy Scripture, which ascribes man's conversion exclusively to divine monergism, Eph. 1, 19; Phil. 1, 29; 1 Cor. 2, 14; 1, 23. Arminianism simply revamped the error of Erasmus, who, as Luther said, "seized him by the throat" when he taught that man by nature has the ability to apply himself to divine grace (*facultas se applicandi ad gratiam*) and thus to cooperate in his conversion.

What has just been said of Arminianism applies also with regard to synergism [an error taught within the general Lutheran Church], which likewise denies the *sola gratia* and affirms, in opposition to Holy Scripture, that man's conversion depends, in part, on his right conduct, self-decision, lesser guilt, etc. Synergism was introduced

into Lutheran theology by Melancthon, who maintained that there are three causes of salvation: the Holy Ghost, the Word of God, and man's assenting will. This doctrine is distinctly antichristian and will, if consistently believed, prevent the sinner's conversion, since saving faith is engendered only in a contrite heart, which trusts for salvation alone in divine grace. If synergists are actually saved, it is only because they give up their false doctrine and cling solely to God's grace in Christ Jesus while smarting under the terrors of conscience (*terrores conscientiae*). Of Melancthon it is said that he personally did not believe his false doctrine; for invariably, when imploring God as a penitent sinner, he appealed exclusively to divine grace for salvation. Nevertheless this influential teacher, by teaching his synergistic errors, caused divisions within the Lutheran Church that did incalculable harm and are still troubling the Church in large areas. Thus also the divisions within Lutheran Christendom have been caused by a serious and unjustifiable departure from Holy Scripture.

Lastly we may speak of the divisions within Christendom that owe their origin to modern "scientific theology." Modern rationalistic theology, which dates back to Schleiermacher and Ritschl, denies the Christian doctrine that Holy Scripture is God's own, infallible Word and hence discards it as the only source and norm of doctrine. Thus it rejects the only principle by which the Christian Church may preserve its inherent and essential unity; for the unity of the Church does not consist in external forms, but in doctrinal agreement, which needs must cease where Holy Scripture is rejected as the only *norma normans*. Modern theology suggests as norms of faith the "Christian experience", "Christian consciousness," "the regenerate heart," etc.; but all these "norms," in the final analysis, coincide with carnal reason, which by its very nature is in opposition to divine truth. This is conclusively proved by the results, found everywhere where the "norms" just named have been adopted. Thus modern rationalistic theology unanimously denies the cardinal doctrine of justification by grace through faith, teaching in its place the paganistic doctrine of salvation by work-righteousness. Again, it denies the fundamental Christian doctrine of the divine inspiration of Holy Scripture and consequently also its inerrancy. Thus it rejects the two distinctive articles of the Christian faith and causes divisions and offenses contrary to the teaching of Christ and His apostles. Of modern rationalistic theology the Christian Church demands that it must surrender its opposition to Holy Scripture as the only source and norm of faith and to the vicarious atonement of Christ as the only means of a sinner's justification. Unless these demands are honestly complied with, the hand of Christian fellowship must be denied to all who maintain and defend modern rationalistic theology. The point, then, is clear:

Divisions within Christendom owe their origin and existence to actual departure from Holy Scripture and its divine doctrines. Wherever they exist, they may be traced to the perversion and rejection of divine truth and must be condemned as the vicious work of Satan and his false prophets.

The confessional Lutheran Church itself has by non-Lutheran writers been styled a "sect" within Christendom. But no charge is more unjust than this. That the charge is made is due to a thorough misunderstanding of the Reformation. The Lutheran Reformation was not an effort to found a new "sect," or "division," but to restore the corrupted Church to its ancient apostolic purity in doctrine and practise. The confessional Lutheran Church is therefore the ancient Church of Christ and His apostles, purified and restored on the basis of Holy Scripture. Its character is truly ecumenical; for its doctrines are not peculiar views and tenets, distinct from those of the apostolic Church, but the very doctrines in which the ancient ecumenical creeds of Christendom center. Its theology is that of the Holy Bible, and of the Bible alone; and its doctrine is the divine truth of God's Word. The Lutheran Church is therefore the orthodox visible Church of Christ on earth. This is both its claim and its boast, and it challenges every charge of sectarianism made against it.

Of course, we freely admit that also within the general Lutheran Church divisions have been caused by departure, both in doctrine and practise, from Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions. Hence, when we employ the expression *Lutheran Church*, we do not include these divisions, or parties, but refer exclusively to that Lutheran Church or to those Lutheran churches which are thoroughly Scriptural and thoroughly Lutheran both in doctrine and practise. In other words, the Lutheran Church is that Church which stands four-square on the principles of the Reformation.

With regard to Christian unity it must be emphatically stated that this is not the work of man, but of divine grace, John 17, 11—15. 20. 21; Ps. 86, 11, etc. Human influence, wisdom, and ingenuity do not suffice in preserving the unity of faith or doctrine. That precious boon is the gift of the Holy Spirit, who graciously bestows and maintains it through the Word of God. For this reason all Christians must diligently pray for the unity of the Spirit and zealously use the means of grace, by which alone it is preserved. For wherever the Word of God is despised or rejected, no true unity of faith can prevail. Christians remain united in the faith only as long as united they stand upon God's pure Word.

JOHN THEODORE MUELLER.

(To be continued.)