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Introduction to Sacred Theology

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(62, 145), behandelte die „St. Pauler Vereinigungsthesen“ (63, 1) und die „Madisoner Thesen“, das sogenannte norwegische „Oppløs“ (63, 97). Und sein letztes Synodalreferat und ebenso sein letztes theologisches Schriftstück legen Zeugnis ab von dem großen heiligen Ernst, der ihn in dieser Sache zeit seines Lebens bewegte. Wir beziehen uns auf seinen besonders schönen, allgemeinverständlichen Vortrag auf der Delegatensynode von 1929, „Der offene Himmel“, in dem er noch einmal die *universalis gratia* und das *sola gratia* mit herzandringenden Worten bekennt (75, 196).

Das andere Dokument sind die vor kurzem in dieser Zeitschrift deutsch und englisch veröffentlichten „Thesen zur kurzen Darlegung der Lehrstellung der Missourisynode“. Wir können wohl sagen, daß er in diesen Thesen, die in den Wintermonaten dieses Jahres hauptsächlich von ihm ausgearbeitet wurden, sein letztes Bekenntnis, gleichsam sein Testament, an seine Kirche niedergelegt hat. Er war schon leidend, als diese Thesen in der jetzt vorliegenden Form von dem betreffenden Komitee angenommen wurden, ging aber mit ganzem, vollem Eifer auf diese Sache ein. Und als bei einer der letzten Unterredungen, die ich mit ihm hatte, nur einige Wochen vor seinem Tode, wir wieder auf diese Sachen kamen, die ihn innerlich immer beschäftigten, sagte er mir mit großem, heiligem Ernste, wie vor dem Angesichte Gottes, daß er sich anheischig mache, diese Thesen als genuin lutherische Lehre vor Kirche und Welt zu beweisen und zu verteidigen.

So war es ein fester, entschiedener, charakterfester Theolog, ein treu lutherischer Theolog, der uns und der ganzen Kirche in D. Pieper geschenkt war und dessen Andenken alle, die die biblisch-lutherische Lehre festhalten wollen, hochhalten werden.

L. Fürbringer.

Introduction to Sacred Theology.

(*Prolegomena.*)

The Nature and Constitution of Sacred Theology.

Primary and Secondary Fundamental Doctrines.

The fundamental doctrines of the Christian religion may be divided into *primary* and *secondary* fundamental doctrines. Also this distinction is Scriptural, practical, and useful, for it helps the Christian theologian to discriminate rightly between the fundamental doctrines themselves. As we have learned, fundamental doctrines are such as constitute the foundation of the Christian faith; yet not all fundamental doctrines constitute this foundation in the same manner. Hollaz rightly observes (53): "All the fundamental articles of faith must necessarily be known, but the grades of this necessity are different." (*Doctr. Theol.*, p. 99.) Thus the *primary fundamental articles*

are of such absolute importance that, if they are denied, there is no foundation whatever on which saving faith may rest. All the doctrines enumerated before under the heading "fundamental articles of faith" are to be classified as primary fundamental articles; for if these are given up, Christianity cannot exist. *Secondary fundamental doctrines*, on the other hand, while also serving as a foundation of faith, do not do so primarily and absolutely. Examples of secondary fundamental doctrines are those of Holy Baptism and the Lord's Supper. These two Sacraments, instituted by Christ, our Lord, are given to us as a foundation of faith besides the Gospel; for the same grace and forgiveness proffered and conveyed to us in the Word of God are proffered and conveyed to us also in them. Acts 2, 38: "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, for the remission of sins." Matt. 26, 28 (Luke 22, 19 ff.): "This is My blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." On this gracious offer of pardon, sealed by Christ in the Sacraments, the Christian faith rests, and in the same manner and to the same degree as it rests on our Lord's offer of pardon made in the Word. For this reason the doctrines of Holy Baptism and of Holy Communion are fundamental; they are the foundation of the Christian's faith. Nevertheless, a person may be ignorant of these doctrines, or he may even err with regard to them and yet be saved, provided he clings to the promise of forgiveness offered in the Gospel. The reason for this is obvious. The whole forgiveness which Christ has secured for sinners by His death on the cross is offered and conveyed to the believer in the Gospel, so that, if he trusts in the Gospel-promise, he possesses through faith all the merits of Christ, with spiritual life and eternal salvation. This does not mean that the sacramental promise is superfluous. The Christian Church can never dispense with the Sacraments since they convey the spiritual blessings of our divine Savior in a specially clear and comforting manner. The Sacraments are the *visible Word* (*Verbum visibile*) and the *individual application* (*applicatio individualis*) of divine grace. But the Christian believer, who trusts in the divine promise of pardon which is offered in the Gospel to all men, is already in possession of salvation. The Sacraments offer nothing new; they only seal and confirm the same grace and the same absolution which the Gospel announces, gives, and confers. In this sense the Sacraments are not absolutely necessary; and for this reason we call the doctrines of Holy Baptism and Holy Communion secondary fundamental doctrines. Nor should we reject this distinction; for it points out to us where we must draw the line between Christians and non-Christians. Thus the believing children of God in the Reformed churches err with regard to the *essence* and *purpose* of the Sacraments, and this error we must regard as one which is both dangerous and pernicious. Still they trust in the grace which is offered to them

in the Gospel, and as long as they do that, we cannot deny their state of faith. In other words, we must still regard them as Christians, though as weak and erring Christians and such as constantly endanger their state of grace by not accepting the whole Word of Christ. What has just been said of the children of God in the Reformed churches pertains also to believers in other sects and in the Roman Catholic Church. As long as a believer trusts in the grace of Christ offered in the Word, as did the thief on the cross, he is saved, even though he has never received the blessings of the Sacraments. Hollaz (51) is therefore right in saying of the secondary fundamental articles as such: "A simple want of acquaintance with them does not prevent salvation, but the pertinacious denial of, and hostility to, them overturn the foundation of faith." (*Doctr. Theol.*, p. 99.)

In his remark about secondary fundamental doctrines, Hollaz directs our attention to a very important truth. The distinction between primary and secondary fundamental doctrines must never be abused in the interest of tolerating false doctrine. A pertinacious denial of, and manifest hostility to, the secondary fundamental doctrines, as to all doctrines of Holy Scripture, must in the end overturn the foundation of the faith; for this implies resistance against the Holy Spirit. Of this we must continually remind all errorists, even if we cannot deny their state of grace. Let every Christian theologian remember: —

1. That he is commanded by Christ to teach all the doctrines of God's Word and not to ignore or deny a single one. Matt. 28, 20: "Teach them to observe all things."

2. That every departure from the Word of God is, according to God's express decree, a scandal (*σκάνδαλον*), or offense. Rom. 16, 17: "Mark them which cause offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned." No theologian can teach errors without giving offense to others; and this is a most serious matter. Matt. 18, 7: "Woe to that man by whom the offense cometh!" Cp. also Luke 17, 1; Rom. 14, 13: "That no man put a stumbling-block, or an occasion to fall, in his brother's way." 2 Cor. 6, 3: "Giving no offense in anything, that the ministry be not blamed."

3. That every one who sets aside the clear testimony of God's Word in a single point rejects the entire Word of God as the only source and standard of faith; for Holy Scripture must be believed and taught not merely in its general scope of truth, but in all its parts and words. Luther rightly says: "The Holy Spirit [speaking in Holy Scripture] cannot be separated or divided, so that He should teach and have us believe one doctrine as true and another as false." (St. Louis Ed., XX, 1871.) All the teachings of God's Word are so intimately interwoven that, when one is denied, all the rest are likewise affected by such denial, that is to say, "one error produces

another," as the history of dogma proves. If there are exceptions to this rule, they must be attributed to the wonderful sustaining grace of God alone. Due to God's grace an erring theologian sometimes, by a strange "fortunate inconsistency," does not personally believe what he officially teaches; or again, he does not, in his own life of faith, draw the deadly inferences which his rationalistic rejection of divine truth suggests. Thus many a synergist who officially affirmed man's cooperation in conversation, in his own personal dealings with God as a penitent sinner disavowed this pernicious error and trusted in divine grace alone for salvation. Again, erring theologians who publicly and officially denied the universality of divine grace yet proclaimed and asserted the universal character of divine grace and of Christ's redemption when they preached the Gospel to the common people. This fortunate retraction of error they owed to the unspeakable mercy of God, who earnestly desires the salvation of sinners. However, also this truth must not be abused in the interest of spiritual indifferentism. While we admit that there is a "fortunate inconsistency," we must admit also that there is an "unfortunate consistency" by which theologians who offend in one point are led to offend in many and even all. In other words, the proclamation of one error leads consistently to the proclamation of others and, in the end, to the denial of the entire Scriptural truth. Against this fatal consequence of denying God's Word and indulging in error, Luther earnestly warns all Christian theologians when he writes: "You must not say: I purpose to err as a Christian. Christian erring occurs only from ignorance." (St. Louis Ed., XIX, 1132.) Luther admits that there is such an anomaly as "Christian erring"; that is to say, even a true Christian at times errs due to weakness or owing to ignorance. But this "Christian erring" becomes an "unchristian erring" as soon as a person deliberately and knowingly yields to error. Such "unchristian erring" must needs overturn the foundation of faith and endanger salvation. Let the Christian theologian, then, be warned. Indifferentism with respect to the doctrines of Holy Scripture and spiritual unionism resulting therefrom are diametrically opposed to God's Word, which warns us: "A man that is an heretic, after the first and second admonition reject, knowing that he that is such is subverted and sinneth, being condemned of himself," Titus 3, 10. 11. Holy Scripture never justifies the inculcation of error, but always and most vehemently condemns it as a *σκαρδαλον*.

4. That the whole Christian Church, in order to preserve unadulterated its purity of doctrine, must continually guard against every error by which Satan would cause divisions and offenses. To this end it must rebuke even the least error and departure from the truth that is in Christ Jesus. Gal. 5, 9: "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." For it is the "little leaven" of false doctrine with

which the whole corruption of the entire Christian theology usually begins. Modernism, with its crass rejection of all the Scriptural truths, is but the result of the indifferentism of theologians and churches that allowed the "little leaven" a place in their system of dogmas. Let errorists deny the doctrine of the verbal inspiration of Holy Scripture, and the step is not far to the denial of the whole doctrine of the inspiration of God's Word. Let the *sola gratia* be removed from the *corpus doctrinae*, and the rejection of Christ's vicarious atonement will soon follow. The Christian theologian cannot err in "little things" without erring, sooner or later, also in the "great things" of salvation. That is the "unfortunate consistency" of tolerating error. How deadly it is, is known by all earnest Christians who have studied Holy Scripture and the history of the Christian Church.

Non-Fundamental Doctrines.

Non-fundamental doctrines of Holy Scripture are such as do not constitute the foundation of faith, inasmuch as they do not offer and convey to sinners forgiveness of sins and thus make them children of God through faith in Christ. Their sphere is not that of salvation, but rather the instruction, consolation, and exhortation of God's saints, who through faith in the fundamental doctrines of God's Word already possess salvation. Hollaz describes non-fundamental doctrines (53) as "parts of the Christian doctrine which one may be ignorant of or omit and yet be saved." (*Doctr. Theol.*, p. 92.) Such doctrines are, for example, those of the angels, of Antichrist, etc. As we see, these doctrines do not create saving faith in Christ, but they are given for the comfort or warning of those who already believe in Christ. This does not mean that the non-fundamental doctrines are useless; in many respects their importance is indeed very great, and so they must not be dispensed with. Thus the doctrine concerning the holy angels magnifies divine grace and strengthens our faith in God's merciful providence. Both quantitatively and qualitatively this doctrine constitutes a weighty part of Christian theology. This fact the Christian theologian must never overlook. Again, the doctrine concerning Antichrist instructs with regard to, and warns us against, the greatest fraud ever perpetrated within Christendom, and evangelical theology would suffer a most serious loss if this doctrine would be eliminated. For this reason also the non-fundamental doctrines are necessary and must be inculcated with becoming earnestness and emphasis. 2 Tim. 3, 16: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." Nevertheless, the non-fundamental doctrines are not properly the object of saving faith; for this relies on the gracious Gospel-promise of pardon through faith in the redemption of Jesus Christ; in this sense alone they are non-fundamental. Whoever

declares them to be non-fundamental in the sense that they can be dispensed with denies both the divine authority and the perfection of Holy Scripture and therefore a fundamental doctrine. Baier's warning with regard to this matter is well in place. He writes (56): "At the same time [while we admit *non-fundamental* doctrines] we are to be careful in regard to this point lest by embracing or professing error we rashly sin against divine revelation and God Himself; especially, lest something be maintained, through the persuasion of others, contrary to conscience whereby the foundation and the truth of one or more of the fundamental articles of the faith are overturned. For so, as by a mortal sin, faith and the Holy Spirit may be, and are, entirely driven away." (*Doctr. Theol.*, p. 97.) This warning applies also to the historical, archeological, and scientific verities which Holy Scripture teaches. While these are not fundamental, we wickedly reject the divine authority of Holy Scripture if we presume to deny them as absolutely true; for an erring Scripture is not authoritative. Indeed, an errant Bible cannot be believed; for if it is false in non-fundamental points, how can it be true in its fundamental teachings? If we cannot rely on it while it teaches us earthly things, how shall we rely on it when it speaks of heavenly things? Hence, while the Christian theologian acknowledges non-fundamental doctrines in Holy Scripture, he believes and declares the entire Holy Scripture, in all its parts and in all its statements, to be the divine truth which must be proclaimed to men. The distinction between fundamental and non-fundamental doctrines he makes merely to distinguish clearly between those teachings of God which are the foundation of justifying faith and those which are not.

3. OPEN QUESTIONS, OR THEOLOGICAL PROBLEMS.

Open questions must not be defined as such "on which men cannot agree" or "which the Church has left undecided in its Confessions," but as matters of faith which Holy Scripture itself has left open, or unanswered. This definition of Open Questions is very important; for not human authority, but Scriptural authority alone determines what must be taught in the Christian Church. That, however, is the entire content of Holy Scripture, Matt. 28, 20; not a definite doctrinal platform which certain theologians or churches have drawn up. In other words, Holy Scripture alone is the spiritual teacher of men, not the Church or the theologian in the Church. The spirit of indifferentism and unionism has always set up false standards regarding the issue of open questions. Guided by a vicious principle of religious toleration, theologians again and again have erred on this point by exalting their reason above the Word of God and "opening" or "closing" questions at their will. Over against this unscriptural practise it must be maintained that open questions owe their origin and

existence to Holy Scripture alone and not to any fixation of doctrine by the Church or to any policy of expediency advocated by parties in controversy. Since the doctrine of Holy Scripture is God's Word, men have no right whatever to decide what to teach and what not to teach or which should be closed and which should be open questions. That is a matter outside their jurisdiction.

As we study Holy Scripture, we find that, in agreement with its scope and purpose, it does not answer every question which men may desire to have answered. For instance, it does not explain how sin originated or could originate since all creatures were originally created "very good." Nor does Holy Scripture answer the question whether the soul of a child comes into being either by creation or traduction (creationism; traducianism). Such questions on which the Word of God is silent we call theological problems, or open questions. To these questions we may add also the *crux theologorum*, which has always puzzled the minds of inquisitive theologians: "Why are some saved and others not, though by nature all men are in the same guilt (*eadem culpa*) and are saved by grace alone (*sola gratia*)? (*Cur alii, alii non? Cur non omnes? Cur alii prae aliis?*) Since God's Word does not answer these questions, the theologian neither should endeavor to solve them. All attempts to do so are both *antiscriptural*, because the theologian is to speak only as the oracles of God, 1 Pet. 4, 11, and *unscientific*, since he presumes to know what he cannot know. Divine truth is apprehended only through faith, or by simply believing what Holy Scripture teaches. John 8, 31. 32: "If ye continue in My Word, then are ye My disciples indeed." Hence, whatever doctrine is drawn from any other source than Christ's Word is not theology, but mere speculation and downright ignorance, 1 Tim. 6, 3.

The proper attitude of the Christian theologian toward open questions or theological problems is therefore that of confessing that he is incapable of solving them since the source of his faith, Holy Scripture, furnishes him no data. Reusch very rightly says: "*Inutilis est eorum cognitio, et vanae sunt de eisdem disputationes.*" (*Annotationes in Baieri Comp.* 1757, p. 52.) However, such disputations are not only useless, but directly dangerous. Of this Luther reminds us when he says that the Gospel is hindered mainly by two things, namely, first, by teaching sinners to trust in their good works, and secondly, by propounding useless questions over which the chief parts of the Christian doctrine are neglected. (St. Louis Ed., IX, 863 ff.) Open questions are certainly not "open" in the sense that the Christian theologian may allow his imagination to run wild on matters which God has wisely refused to reveal. If he indulges in speculations, these must always be kept within the bounds of the analogy of faith, or the clear revelation of God's Word. But it is

safer and better for a theologian not to speculate at all, since his own views may easily lodge in his theological system and be taught as a part of divinely revealed truth. Let the Christian theologian learn to say "*Nescio*" wherever Holy Scripture does not speak with clearness and definiteness, remembering that both in God's revelation and in the withholding of His truths He had in mind our spiritual welfare and salvation.

In this connection we may discuss also the paramount question: "What are articles of faith?" Articles of faith, as our dogmatists have always affirmed, have their origin solely in Holy Scripture. That means that the Christian Church accepts and believes only such doctrines as are unmistakably taught in Holy Scripture. Hollaz describes articles of faith as "a part of the doctrine revealed in the written Word of God concerning God and divine things and proposed to the sinner to be believed for his salvation" (43). However, since it is true that some articles of faith contain truths also known from man's natural knowledge of God and the contemplation of God's works in nature, as, for example, those concerning the existence of God, articles of faith have been divided into *mixed articles*, that is, such as are manifest also from the light of nature, and *pure articles*, or such as are known only from Holy Scripture. (Baier, 43.) But also the former, the mixed articles, are articles of faith only inasmuch as they are directly taught in God's Word. The true Christian theologian recognizes no source of divine truth other than the Bible.

12. The Church and Its Dogma.

Since the Christian theologian is to teach only what Holy Scripture teaches and nothing else, the question has been raised whether creeds, dogmas, or confessions are rightfully entitled to a place in the Christian Church. The question has been denied by both conservative and modernistic theologians. Modernistic theology favors a creedless, or undogmatic, Christianity. Its plea is that the real function of the Church is to spread the "social gospel," and not the supernatural Gospel of Christ with which our present advanced age is no longer in sympathy. Modernistic theology is therefore absolutely worldly, not otherworldly. It proposes a theology for this life, not one for the life to come (*eine Diesseitigkeitstheologie, nicht eine Jenseitstheologie*). This theology, so it is claimed, is one of good works, to be done now, and not one of comforting words with respect to a possible future existence. Because modernistic theology is so constituted, it regards creeds, dogmas, and confessions not only as unnecessary, but also as injurious. Creeds are said to impede the free progress and development of the Church and its activity. Thus modernistic theology must needs be opposed to dogmas. Modern theologians of a more conservative type oppose creeds for a somewhat different reason. Their

claim is that dogmas and confessions prevent the necessary "progress of theology" (*Lehrfortbildung*), which must take place if the Church is to remain a living organism. In fact, this type of theologians holds that the doctrines of the Church are ever-living and expanding factors, forever subject to change as newer, fuller, and deeper revelations are given to men. For this reason the Church must not be fettered to the chains of definite creeds, since these prevent the requisite progress, or development, of doctrine. As we see, in the final analysis, the difference between the two types of theologians is not so very great. It is a difference in degree, not in kind. Both reject Holy Scripture as the sole rule and norm of faith and enthrone reason or science in its place.

From the objections just now considered it is obvious that the animosity of modern liberalistic and rationalistic theology is not primarily directed against the creeds, or dogmas, themselves, but against Holy Scripture. These rationalists object to creeds because they object to divinely revealed, supernatural truths. Their creedless theology is tantamount to a theology without the Holy Bible. They want to follow their own words, not the Word of God.

This hatred against Holy Scripture is, however, found also in churches that favor creeds. Roman Catholic theology, for example, is built up entirely upon definite creeds. In as far as these creeds are the ancient confessions of the unadulterated Christian Church, we still acknowledge the Church of Rome as within the pale of Christianity. But the papistical Church has hedged in these ancient creeds by later and antichristian creeds, which actually make void what the ancient Christian confessions declare. Moreover, these specifically papistical creeds are in direct opposition to Holy Scripture; they reject it as the sole authority of divine truth and flatly contradict its central doctrines. They affirm that the Pope as the head of the Church is the infallible norm of faith, that a sinner is justified by works, that the doctrine of justification by grace through faith in Christ is anathema, that the merits and intercessions of the saints avail for salvation, and so forth. Such creeds quite obviously do not deserve a place in the Christian Church; for they are not Christian, but antichristian. But also in the Calvinistic churches we find creeds that stand in opposition to the pure Word of God. The specifically Reformed creeds deny the universality of God's grace and of Christ's redemption, the efficacy of the means of grace, the true and substantial presence of our Lord's body in the Holy Supper, the communion of natures in the person of Christ and the resulting communication of attributes, etc. Such creeds must not be tolerated in the Christian Church, for they are unscriptural and rationalistic.

The Christian Church, which for its source of faith has only the infallible Word of God (Eph. 2, 20), must under no condition acknowl-

edge as right and legitimate any dogma, or doctrine, which is not a clear teaching of Holy Scripture. Or we may say: The dogma of the Christian Church is the doctrine of the Holy Bible. Whatever the written Word of God declares and teaches is *eo ipso* a church dogma, no matter whether it is especially formulated or not. The question is not: Is this or that doctrine clearly stated in the Confessions? but: Is this or that doctrine set forth in God's Word? If it is set forth in Holy Writ, it is for this reason a church dogma, even though not a word is said about it in the Confessions of the Church. The reason for this is not difficult to ascertain. The Christian Church is not the lord of God's doctrine, but rather its servant. Its paramount purpose is not to create doctrine, but to preach the doctrine which its divine Lord has given to it. Matt. 28, 20: "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." Luther's dictum applies here with full force: "*Ecclesia Dei non habet potestatem condendi ullum articulum fidei, sicut nec ullum unquam condidit nec condet in perpetuum.*" So also Quenstedt rightly says (I, 36): "Divine revelation is the first and last source of sacred theology, beyond which theological discussion among Christians dare not proceed." (*Doctr. Theol.*, p. 28.) This does not mean that the Church should not have any articles of faith, or any confessions, but it does mean that all its articles of faith must be in deed and truth "declarations" of the faith that is delivered to it by God in His holy Word. Thus Christians universally accept the ancient Confessions of the Christian Church because these profess and defend nothing but Scripture doctrine. This is true even though the technical theological terms which they employ to express the doctrine of God's Word, such as "Trinity," "consubstantial," etc., are not found in Holy Scripture. So also the specifically Lutheran Confessions, which were added at the time of the Reformation and after Luther's death to defend the doctrine of the Word of God against Romanism, sectarianism, and enthusiasm, profess only Scripture doctrine. We say this not in the spirit of carnal pride, but in the holy conviction of that loyalty to Christ and His Word which He demands of His disciples. Confessions, creeds, and dogmas have a rightful place in the Christian Church provided they teach the doctrines of God and not of men. If, however, they set forth doctrines in opposition to God's Word, they must be renounced and rejected. For the Christian Church must teach the Word of its divine Lord, nothing else.

What has just been said of creeds and dogmas in general applies with equal force to the theological treatises of individual teachers of the Church. No theologian should be listened to in the Church, and no dogmatic treatise should be regarded as worthy of consideration, unless they profess and defend the truth which is in Christ Jesus. The dogmatician who draws his teachings from any other source than

Holy Scripture perpetrates an inexcusable fraud upon the Church and deserves excommunication from the Church as a pseudopostle, Rom. 16, 17; 2 John 10, 11; 1 Tim. 4, 16. God's earnest and persistent demand is: "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God," 1 Pet. 4, 11. This applies also to ministers and teachers who have been called to instruct the Christian people in general. Christian ministers, teachers, and missionaries must proclaim to their hearers God's Word, not their own, so that in the whole Christian Church, in its schools and colleges, in its churches and homes, not one doctrine is taught which is not in agreement with Holy Scripture.

If the creeds and dogmas of the Church are truly and absolutely Scriptural, they are of great value also for preserving the inner connection of the various theological disciplines and securing their truly theological character. Commonly we speak of theology as dogmatic, historic, exegetic, and practical. This division is both practical and useful. It assists the theological student in distinguishing one theological discipline from the other and prevents confusion as he takes up the study of theology. Nevertheless, in the final analysis, the purpose of the various theological disciplines is absolutely the same; each is to teach God's Word in its specific application. The dogmatic theologian inculcates with special emphasis the several doctrines of Holy Scripture; the exegetic theologian sets forth the same doctrines on the basis of the text of Scripture; the historic theologian exhibits the same doctrines as they react upon men in history; and the practical theologian applies the same doctrines to the special needs of the Christian Church. While, therefore, the four theological disciplines may be distinguished from one another by their particular scope, they all center in the one paramount purpose of proclaiming, expounding, and defending the Word of God; and this one purpose, the teaching of God's Word, preserves their inner connection, unifying the whole course of theology. At the same time this one purpose of inculcating God's Word preserves also the truly theological character of each discipline. It is this factor that makes "historic theology," or "exegetic theology," or "practical theology," *theology* in the true sense of the term. If historic theology goes beyond the Word of God, it is no longer theological; and the same is true also of dogmatic, exegetic, and practical theology. In short, these disciplines are theology only in as far as they teach and expound the Word of God set forth in Holy Scripture. As soon as theologians divulge their own views, they are teaching philosophy or speculation, not theology; for this is as much the Word of God as it is the word about God.

In view of the general apostasy among theologians to-day, the truth just stated certainly requires great emphasis. The crisis that troubles the Christian Church to-day calls for renewed loyalty to the Word of God. If the Church is to be healed from its manifold ills,

it must apply the age-old precious panacea which God has ordained for the salvation of men, the unadulterated Word of God. Christ's command is: "Preach the Gospel," Mark 16, 15. That divine injunction binds all Ohristians, and in particular all Ohristian teachers, to the Word of God for all time. "*Quod non est biblicum, non est theologicum.*" This is an axiom which the Ohristian Church must ever respect and heed; unless it does this, it is an apostate Church and disgraces the divine Lord, who built His Church on the foundation of the prophets and apostles, He Himself being the chief Cornerstone.

JOHN THEODORE MUELLER.

(To be continued.)

Die Sakramente in ihrer Beziehung zur Gemeindeorganisation.

Die Lehre von den beiden Sakramenten, Taufe und Abendmahl, wie sie gewöhnlich in den dogmatischen Vorlesungen vorgetragen wird, macht in der lutherischen Kirche wenig Schwierigkeiten. Die Beweismstellen aus Gottes Wort sind so einfach und so klar, daß der Nachweis der Richtigkeit der lutherischen Lehrstellung von der göttlichen Ordnung der Sakramente, von ihrem Gnadenmittelcharakter, von ihrem Gebrauch, von ihrer Materie, von ihrer Notwendigkeit und andern Fragen fast schon mit der Annahme der Göttlichkeit der Heiligen Schrift gegeben ist. Selbst die Teile des corpus doctrinae, die in einigen Stücken auf logischen Schlußfolgerungen beruhen, wie z. B. die Frage von der Kinder- taufe, von der Form der Taufe (inkl. des Bekenntniswertes der Ab- weisung des Untertauchens) und etliche andere Punkte, lassen sich in der Regel so darlegen und verteidigen, daß man an ihrer Übereinstimmung mit der Schrift nicht rütteln kann.

In gegenwärtiger Abhandlung kommt die Lehre von den Sakra- menten, wie das auch schon in der Überschrift angedeutet ist, nur indirekt in Betracht. Es handelt sich um praktische Erwägungen, um Fragen, die zum Teil die Administration der Sakramente betreffen, nicht nur um kirchliche Gebräuche, die zum Teil durch die Liturgie festgestellt sind, sondern auch um das Verhältnis der Sakramente zur Gemeinde- organisation, zu der Gemeinde als bestehender Gemeinschaft oder Körperschaft. Fragen, die hier in Betracht kommen, berühren Punkte wie diese: die Weise der Aufnahme in die Gemeinde als äußeren Ver- hand, Zugehörigkeit zur Gemeinde vor Menschengen und nach mensch- lichen Regeln, gemeinschaftliches Bekenntnis und gemeinschaftliche Praxis mit andern Gemeinden und Körperschaften. Während derartige Fragen die Grundwahrheiten des Christentums höchstens streifen, kann doch der usus auf diesem Gebiet nicht ohne weiteres zu den Mittel dingen ge- rechnet werden, obgleich die Betonung der einschlägigen praktischen Er-