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PROLEGOMENA IN PIEPER AND AULEN

Short Title:

PROLEGOMENA IN PIEPER AND AULEN

Thesis presented to the Faculty
of Theological Studies, St. Louis
University, in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Divinity

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June 1957

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PROLEGOMENA IN PIEPER AND AULEN: A COMPARISON

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Systematic Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Bachelor of Divinity

by

Kurt E. Marquart

June 1959

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Since the theology represented by Gustaf Aulen has found a friendly hearing in some American Lutheran circles, and since, conversely, Pieper's theology is regarded as outmoded, it appeared desirable to evaluate Aulen's theology in the light of and in terms of traditional Lutheran theology, as represented by Dr. Pieper. The choice of the area of comparison grew out of the conviction that as its name indicates, prolegomena is the basic and fundamental area of theology, since all subsequent statements in theology depend on the presuppositions established in prolegomena. A mathematical example will illustrate the point: Ordinarily, when we see the numerical combination "11," we at once take it to mean the sum of ten and one. We do this because we presuppose that ten is being used as the base of the system. But suppose that someone decided to use not ten, but some other number, say five, as base. Then the figure "11," provided the same symbols were kept, would mean not "ten plus one" but "five plus one." Unless, however, we were aware of the substitution of a different base number, we would completely misunderstand the symbols of the other system and interpret them in terms of our own. In theology it is prolegomena which determines what the base of the system,

using that term broadly, is. Only if we know that can we understand subsequent statements, which will often employ the same verbal symbols which are associated with traditional Christian theology.

No attempt has been made to conceal agreement with Pieper's theology. Since this thesis cannot possibly include a complete demonstration to the effect that Pieper's theology is simply Scriptural, Lutheran teaching, this point of view must be regarded, for the purpose of this thesis, as a presupposition.

Comparing Pieper and Aulen involves (1) an exposition of both positions, and (2) a juxtaposition of the two in a way which will actually exhibit their mutual relations. Whatever is relevant to the understanding of either position in terms of thesis or antithesis is relevant to the thesis. Since this involves practically limitless source-material, a rigorous selectivity had to be exercised. Naturally this involves the element of judgment on the writer's part, since he must select what seems particularly relevant and reject what does not. This thesis does not pretend to be anything like an exhaustive treatment. It attempts merely to isolate and elucidate a few major issues of the entire complex picture.

Naturally Pieper never read Aulen, and it is always risky to assert what so-and-so would have said if he were

alive. But fortunately that is not the issue. Aulen's views are being compared not with what Pieper would or might have said, but with what he actually did say. This endeavor presupposes that Pieper and Aulen do not occupy isolated, air-tight compartments, but that their positions can be brought to a common denominator and compared. This involves, of course, the element of interpretation. While there has been a conscious attempt to be just and fair to both positions, this does not preclude the possibility that this or that might have been misunderstood. But in each particular the interpretation desires to be judged individually, on the basis of the specific supporting argumentation and documentation.

As a glance at the table of contents will show, there are three main chapters, dealing, respectively, with Pieper's and Aulen's definitions of theology, their doctrines of Scripture, and their philosophical involvements.

... of a spiritual, God-given gift, theology in every case presupposes not only natural gifts of intellect, etc., but also personal faith in Christ, i.e., trust in the forgiveness of sins by grace through faith, for the sake of Christ's satisfaction for us.

... Pieper, Christian Dogmatics (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1953), I, 44-45.

... 2. 45.

CHAPTER II

THE NATURE OF THEOLOGY

Spiritual Aptitude or Science?

Dr. Pieper is very careful to assert from the beginning that, properly speaking, theology is a spiritual aptitude, a habitus practicus, and only secondarily and derivatively is it doctrine. Theology in the subjective (proper) sense is defined thus:

Theology, then, taken subjectively, or concretely, is the aptitude . . . wrought by the Holy Ghost in a Christian to perform the functions of the pastoral office, i.e., to teach the Word of God, the Word of Scripture, in all its purity, both publicly and privately, to refute all false doctrine, and thus to lead sinners to faith in Christ and to salvation.¹

This definition already includes all the elements which Pieper details in his subsequent discussion. First of all, it is obvious from this definition that there is no such thing as a theologia irrogenitorum. Being a spiritual, God-given aptitude, theology in every case presupposes not only natural gifts of intellect, etc., but also personal faith in Christ, i.e., trust in the forgiveness of sins by grace through faith, for the sake of Christ's satisfactio vicaria.²

¹Francis Pieper, Christian Dogmatics (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950), I, 44-45.

²Ibid., p. 46.

An unbeliever may acquire a purely intellectual knowledge of Christian doctrine, and may have a natural ability to communicate such knowledge to others, but he is not a theologian in the Scriptural sense, for a theologian can be created only by the Holy Ghost.

Included in this spiritual aptitude is "the ability of the theologian to confine himself in his teaching entirely to God's Word," and the "ability to teach the whole Word of God, the entire truth of Scripture." Or, put very tersely, "subjective theology is the aptitude to teach no more and no less than God's Word,"³ i.e., Scripture.

In a separate chapter, "Theology and Science," Dr. Pieper very emphatically repudiates the notion that theology is a science, science being understood as natural knowledge, obtained not exclusively from divine revelation, but simply from human observation. Only in one sense is theology a science, namely if science is understood to denote a certain knowledge, as distinguished from mere opinion or probability. In this sense "theology is the perfect science, the only reliable science on earth,"⁴ since theology alone, resting on a supernatural, infallible revelation, has certain knowledge, while all empirical sciences rest on fallible human observations and deductions and are therefore more or less uncer-

³Ibid., p. 51.

⁴Ibid., p. 107.

tain, conjectural, and tentative.

Finally, in the derived, objective sense, theology is simply doctrine. And by "doctrine" Pieper does not mean a human interpretation or approximation to the truth, but the divine truth itself:

objective theology, theology in the sense of doctrine, is nothing more and nothing less than the presentation in oral and written form of the doctrine presented in Holy Scripture.

.....

theology is not made up of the variable notions and opinions of men, but is the immutable divine truth or God's own doctrine (doctrina divina).⁵

It is clear that Pieper is in complete agreement with Dr. Walther's judgment that theology is dogmatics, i.e., dogmatics is "completely identical"⁶ with Christian or Biblical theology. Thus Dr. Pieper approvingly quotes Dr. Walther's maxim: "only dogmatics is edifying,"⁷ that is, dogmatics as doctrina divina. The dogma, says Pieper, is the essential element, which integrates all branches of sacred theology, i.e., dogmatic, historical, exegetical, and practical. Exegesis is essentially method, not content. As soon as it produces content, i.e., teaching, dogma, then that is dogmatics. Hence nothing could be more foreign to Dr. Pie-

⁵Ibid., pp. 51-52.

⁶C, F. W. Walther, "Die falschen Stuetzen der modernen Theologie von den offenen Fragen," Lehre und Wehre, XIV (May, 1868), 135.

⁷Pieper, op. cit., p. 101.

per's view than the notion that exegesis produces Biblical teaching, while dogmatics compiles the teachings of dogmatists! Dogmatics is Biblical theology, or else it is not dogmatics but human speculation. Practical theology is the art of applying God's Word, i.e., the pure doctrine, in the work of the public ministry. Historical theology is not an "objective," "unbiased" recitation of historical events, but it is "the divinely taught art of ascertaining from Scripture God's verdict on the historical events and conditions." To describe events and positions is history; to judge these events and positions in the light of God's truth is historical theology. Without such evaluation and judgment there is no historical theology, but only secular scholarship:

When the church historian judges events according to his subjective view or any other extra-Biblical norm, church history is no longer a theological discipline. A Christian church history shows, says Luther, "how the dear Gospel fared in the world." Where things are as they should be, the Church will, therefore, elect only such men as professors of church history as are thoroughly conversant with the Scripture doctrine in all its parts, well informed in dogmatics, in order that the instruction in church history will not confuse but aid Christian understanding. The final aim of church history is not to "awaken reverence for history," but to instill and strengthen reverence for God's Word.⁸

Aulen's definition of theology is altogether different.

For him "theology" or "systematic theology" (the wider and the narrower terms are used interchangeably) is simply a science. Aulen distinguishes "the viewpoints of the reli-

⁸Ibid., pp. 100-101.

gious life and scientific research," and insists that theology belongs not in the former but strictly in the latter category. In fact, the intrusion of "subjective confession" into theology is regarded by Aulen as a positive menace, which is to be avoided by "a purely scientific and objective approach."⁹

It is clear that for Aulen theology is no spiritual, God-given aptitude, but a strictly scientific task. The faith or unbelief of the theologian is completely irrelevant. This means, of course, that Aulen affirms a theologia irrogenitorum:

In maintaining this view of the function of systematic theology, the confusing discussion about the personal qualifications of the investigator disappears. Often in the history of theology an attempt has been made to transform the scientific discussion concerning the significance of faith into a discussion about the personal faith of the theological investigator. When the task is defined as indicated in the previous paragraphs, there can be no other requirement than the demand to understand the subject under investigation. This is likewise the situation in all scientific research.¹⁰

In Aulen's system, then, "scientific method" is given the position which Pieper reserves for the Spirit-given supernatural aptitude. In view of this it is not only odd, but supremely ironic that the old, orthodox theology, represented

⁹Gustaf Aulen, The Faith of the Christian Church (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, c.1948), p. 5.

¹⁰Ibid.

by Pieper, should be decried far and wide as "intellectualism,"¹¹ and that Aulen should join with such gusto in this condemnation of the old theology!¹²

What then is the function and purpose of Aulen's scientific systematic theology? The task of theology is simply "to clarify the significance and meaning of the Christian faith with all the means at its disposal."¹³ Therefore theology is neither demonstrative nor normative, but purely analytic and critical.

Pieper, of course, would agree heartily that theology is not demonstrative. In fact he insists, with the old dogmatists, that theology is not demonstrative but exhibitiv; in other words, theology does not attempt to adduce rational proofs for its teachings, but simply asserts these teachings on the basis of the divine authority of the self-authenticating Scripture.¹⁴

But Aulen insists also that theology cannot be normative. Theology "does not write laws for faith, . . . does not determine faith, . . . cannot presume to determine what ought to be believed."¹⁵ Rather, theology merely describes,

¹¹Pieper, op. cit., p. 62.

¹²Aulen, op. cit., pp. 74-76.

¹³Ibid., p. 3.

¹⁴Pieper, op. cit., p. 104.

¹⁵Aulen, op. cit., p. 6.

objectively and scientifically, "the Christian faith as it actually exists." Such a view, evaluated in the light of Pieper, renders theology rather irrelevant and valueless to the Church. It presupposes that before theology begins its work or even can begin, the Church must already be fully equipped for its work. The Christian faith, with all that this implies, already exists, and then only comes theology, when all is ready, as it were, and proceeds merely to analyze what is already there. Theology does not determine the Church's teaching, but merely investigates "the Christian faith as it actually exists."

Such a view is obviously diametrically opposed to Dr. Pieper's teaching on the subject. For Dr. Pieper theology is precisely the determinant of "what ought to be believed." To deny this function of theology is to cut out its very heart and soul, and to make of theology an irrelevant speculation for the satisfaction of intellectual curiosity.

But if Aulen denies to theology the right to "determine what ought to be believed," does he then mean to say that there is no such determinant, no such normative discipline at all? He says: "There is really no such 'normative' science."¹⁶ Aulen here asserts explicitly only that there can be no science which could determine what ought to be be-

¹⁶ ibid.

lieved. He does not say that there might not be some other, non-scientific (and therefore non-theological) discipline, which could have this normative function. But if theology cannot exercise the normative function, what can? Aulen's concept of revelation, to be discussed in the next chapter, really eliminates the possibility of any normative determination of what ought to be believed.

But suppose there were some other discipline, beside theology, which could have the normative function which Aulen denies to theology. Suppose that this discipline, for instance preaching, declared that a given teaching, x, ought to be believed. Theology would then come along and investigate this teaching x with a view to determining whether x is genuinely Christian or not! Aulen expressly assigns this function to systematic theology: "Systematic theology must focus its attention upon what is and what is not characteristically Christian."¹⁷ Thus, for instance, Aulen expects systematic theology to examine and judge the various denominational confessions within Christendom:

The work of systematic theology involves, therefore, with reference to confessionalism a continual self-examination, far removed from all naive confessional self-sufficiency. Theology is not looking for denominational expressions of Christianity but for genuine Christianity itself; and it does not recognize a denominational expression unless it can document itself

¹⁷ibid.

as genuinely Christian.¹⁸

If this means anything at all, it surely means that systematic theology is the supreme tribunal which decides whether a given teaching is Christian or not. If a lower court, i.e., some non-scientific, non-theological discipline, or some "denominational confession" maintains something which systematic theology regards as "not genuinely Christian," the supreme tribunal simply reverses the lower court. It follows that none of the lower courts can be normative, i.e., determine "what ought to be believed." And if the highest tribunal, scientific, systematic theology itself, cannot be normative, then nothing can be normative, and the question "what ought to be believed?" simply cannot be answered.

Actually, however, though Aulen explicitly asserts the opposite, he does assign the normative function to systematic theology. For if denominational confessions can be judged by systematic theology and found to be "genuinely Christian" or not, then systematic theology is able to determine what is "genuinely Christian." But if it can determine that, then it can determine "what ought to be believed," for the two are synonymous for the Christian. But if systematic theology is the real determinant of what is "genuinely Christian," and if

¹⁸Ibid., p. 18.

there can be no other such determinant, then theology cannot come upon the scene post festum, merely to analyze an already present "Christian faith," for the simple reason that such "Christian faith" as an identifiable object of study cannot be present until systematic theology has exercised its normative function and determined what the Christian faith is, so that the question, "What is genuinely Christian?" is answerable.

A dilemma appears: Either theology is, as Aulen says, not normative, and then nothing else can be normative either, or, as it works out in Aulen's practice, theology is normative, but then theology cannot merely study and analyze an antecedent object, but must itself contribute to the forming and determining of its object of study, in which case it is no longer "scientific."

But the normative role of systematic theology according to Aulen is something far different from the normative role of Sacred Theology according to Pieper.

For Pieper, as we have seen, the normative role of theology consists precisely in this that theology teaches and presents what ought to be believed. Nor does theology merely "point to" or "bear witness" to the truth to be believed, as if this truth were some transcendental, ever-receding horizon which may be approached but never reached, but theology actually has and presents the naked, immutable, divine truth itself. For theology--and for Pieper theology is never an

abstract ideal but a very concrete reality inhering in concrete individuals--truth is a known magnitude. The whole activity of the theologian, i.e., leading people to eternal life via Law and Gospel, presupposes that the theologian himself already possesses the truth. The essence of the old concept of theology, as represented by Pieper, is the salutary dispensing and applying of the revealed divine truth. The emphasis is not speculative-scholastic, but practical, the characteristic element being the dispensing of the truth. It is clear that if theology is viewed as a dispensing of the truth, the possession of the truth is presupposed, and this necessarily, inexorably.¹⁹ Without this presupposition the entire view of theology represented by Pieper collapses.

¹⁹ A certain G. H. Muedeking, in a review of Dr. Pieper's Dogmatics, is quite correct when he says: "Dr. Pieper will not admit before he begins, that he intends to tell us what he thinks the Bible says. He expects to tell us what the Bible says." But then Muedeking calls this a wrong perspective. Scoring Pieper for his "basic distrust of philosophy," Muedeking psycho-analyzes Pieper and calls his doctrinal certainty (i.e., "the identification of his own thinking with Scripture") a "projective technique" due to Pieper's "basic unsureness"! G. H. Muedeking, Review of Christian Dogmatics, by Francis Pieper, The Lutheran Outlook, XV (October, 1950), 311-313. But unlike others, Dr. Pieper realized that his own or anybody else's conjectures as to the meaning of Scripture were of absolutely no religious value. Quoting the Apology of the Augsburg Confession to the effect that good consciences find death more tolerable than doctrinal doubt, Pieper emphatically repeats Luther's judgment that a pastor or theologian must either be sure that what he teaches and preaches is God's Word and truth, or else he should be silent. Francis Pieper, Vortraege Ueber die Evangelisch Lutherische Kirche, die Wahre Sichtbare Kirche Gottes auf Erden (St.

But in what sense does Aulen conceive of theology as normative? Aulen can indeed speak with appreciation (occasionally) of "sound doctrine." He can even commend "the intellectual approach to faith," by which he means medieval and "post-Reformation scholasticism," for its insistence on the "given" nature of the content of faith: "The weakness in the intellectual approach to faith is not that the content of Christian faith is here presented as something definite and determined. This is rather its strength." But what he appears to give with one hand, he takes away with the other, for he immediately scores orthodoxy for its "confusion of divine revelation with some given, authoritative theological system of doctrine."²⁰ In other words, the content of faith is somehow "given," but it is not a "given, authoritative theological system of doctrine." But if it cannot be "given" as doctrine, can it really be "given" at all?

The "given" magnitude, for Aulen, is the object of

Louis: Seminary Press, 1916), pp. 143ff. The spiritual superiority of Pieper's religiously serious point of view seems to be conceded inadvertently by Kuedeking, when he confesses in the above-mentioned review: "One travels the old-fashioned roads of religion in this book, when religion was the dominant interest in life, and when all opposing ideas were roundly damned, from the Athanasian Creed to some of the documents issuing from the Predestinarian controversy."

²⁰Ibid., p. 75. The implicit charge that a "normative dogmatics" is not a "biblical" idea is not new, and Pieper already refuted it. Pieper, Dogmatics, I, 45, footnote 73.

theological study, namely the content of the Christian faith:

The function of theology is to state what Christianity really is and what is genuinely Christian. This is something given once and for all in that relationship to God and that conception of God which is founded on the deed of God in Christ. In this sense "the pure doctrine" is something in principle given once and for all.²¹

Aside from the rather vague nature of the description, not to say definition, of the "given," i.e., of "what is genuinely Christian," the crucial phrase "in this sense" is characteristic. "The pure doctrine"--one notes the consistent use of quotation marks for this and equivalent expressions--is in principle given, namely in this sense, that it exists, as a theoretical ideal, but it is never really given in the sense that it can ever be attained or possessed.

"Given" does not really mean "given" at all. The so-called "given" may exist, somewhere, somehow, but it certainly never becomes truly "given," i.e., communicated. The ideal remains transcendent, and at no time does it actually become a "given." Aulen himself says this very clearly: "The object of research is an ideal goal toward which theology can only strive in its endeavor to attain to the truth."²² Any "given" involved here must be conceived fideistically.

In this sense "the pure doctrine" is something in principle given once and for all. But it is at the same time an ideal goal toward which theology must always

²¹Aulen, op. cit., p. 93.

²²Ibid., p. 19.

strive. The "teaching" of any one period in the history of the church cannot lay claim to have spoken the last word. The theological task is never finished. This is due to the fact that the object of theological study is so enormously rich that every new generation finds new treasures in it.²³

The contrast to Pieper is glaringly apparent. Whereas for Pieper the theological task is the proclamation of the "given" truth, pure doctrine, the theological task for Aulen is essentially the discovery of the truth.²⁴ The one insists that the real business of the theologian is to distribute the treasures, while the other holds that the theologian's real work is to seek the treasures. For the one, truth is the terminus a quo, for the other, truth is the terminus ad quem. For the one, truth is a knowable, attainable magnitude, for the other, truth is a limiting concept, an ideal. The issue is very basic, and as most basic issues, rather simple:

The Lord Christ did not give His Church here on earth the commission: "Go and discover the Gospel," but: "Go and preach the Gospel." This commission, given by Christ to the Church, presupposes that the Christian Church possesses the saving truth.²⁵

But if, for Aulen, "sound doctrine" is to be used only in quotation marks, if it is a magnitude which is by definition unattainable, then why carry on theology at all? Aulen tries to meet this difficulty:

²³Ibid., p. 93.

²⁴Ibid., p. 86.

²⁵Francis Pieper, Vortraege, p. 146.

The object of research is an ideal goal toward which theology can only strive in its endeavor to attain the truth. But this does not mean that we should make this limitation into a principle which would circumscribe the work. Theology cannot under any circumstances deviate from its concentration on that which is essential and genuine in Christianity since this is the whole purpose of its work and dare not be overlooked.²⁶

When Aulen says that "this limitation," i.e., the impossibility of actually attaining to the truth, must not be made "into a principle which would circumscribe the work," he seems to be giving impossible instructions. For if it is true that theology "can only strive . . . to attain to the truth," then it is not a matter of individual choice whether or not one wishes to make "this limitation" into a "principle which would circumscribe the work." If "this limitation" exists at all, then it automatically, eo ipso, is a circumscribing principle, and a rather rigorous one at that. To accept "this limitation" is to agree from the outset that no matter what conclusions are reached in theological activity, these never attain the truth, but "can only strive," etc. Nor is the problem solved by ignoring it, or pretending, in the manner of the ostrich, that it does not exist. Yet this approach seems to be suggested by Aulen's explanation that "theology cannot . . . deviate from its concentration on that which is essential," etc. In other words: Continue to seek the truth and don't be dismayed by the certainty that you

²⁶Aulen, op. cit., pp. 19-20.

shall never find it!

But obviously Aulen does find something. And if it is not truth itself, pure doctrine, doctrina divina, what then is it that systematic theology produces? Here we come to a very central concept, not only in Aulen, but in Lundensian theology generally. This is the so-called "motiv."

In discussing the critical task of theology Aulen says: "The investigation cannot stop at the surface or with the most obvious formulations.. By a critical analysis it must penetrate through shifting forms to the underlying and fundamental religious ideas" To this statement the translators append the instructive footnote: "The approach of Lundensian theology has been characterized as motivforskning, i.e., the investigation of principal ideas or themes. The important word motiv has been rendered as 'fundamental idea' or 'fundamental theme.'"²⁷

It should be noted that the motiv, the "underlying and fundamental religious idea," is something one reaches by going beyond and behind "the surface" or "the most obvious formulations," and penetrating "through shifting forms."²⁸ It is clear from Aulen's usage that by "shifting forms," etc., he means not merely terminology or expression, but doctrine itself. What for Pieper is final, authoritative doctrine, is merely "shifting form" for Aulen, a sort of raw ore which must

²⁷Ibid., p. 6.

²⁸Ibid., pp. 77, 78, 84, 93, 94.

be reduced, in the smelter of systematic theology, to the coin of fundamental, underlying religious ideas. From the point of view of Dr. Pieper's theology this perennial quest for the fundamental beneath the superficial suggests a rather dreary but chronic state of panta rhei.

Sola Scriptura: Sic et Non

Nor is this situation at all accidental. Aulen's view flows with inexorable consistency and necessity from his view of what constitutes theological authority. Aulen sees very clearly that since there are many conflicting doctrinal positions, or in his terms "multifarious conceptions of faith," each claiming to be true and Christian, there must be some standard, some "validating principle," which would determine whether a given "conception of faith" is Christian or not. If there were no such validating principle, then, argues Aulen, theology would be a "science" in which everyone may affirm whatever comes to his mind. Then the work of systematic theology is futile. "To say, as W. Herrmann does, that the function of systematic theology consists in letting each theologian express his own tenets of faith is to declare theological bankruptcy."²⁹

But what is the "validating principle," the authority,

²⁹Ibid., p. 81.

the formal principle in theology? Aulen is quite explicit in rejecting the Bible as the supreme theological authority. Sola Scriptura is clearly and vehemently denied. To validate theological positions by the appeal to Scripture is to Aulen "mechanical Biblicism."³⁰ Not only is it wrong to appeal to the entire Bible as a verbally inspired unit, but it is equally impossible "to select certain portions of the Bible as infallible authority. Even such an abbreviated Biblicism is impossible in whatever form it appears." Not even the teaching of Jesus Himself can be normative, partly because of the impossibility of ascertaining precisely what that teaching was, and partly because Jesus' teaching, too, contained dubious elements.³¹

At least Aulen is consistent and does not try very hard to hide his denial of the sola Scriptura. He sees clearly that once the infallible authority of the Bible has been denied, it is not possible to save selected portions as theological authority: "The attempt to determine beforehand by means of certain mechanical rules what passages are infallibly inspired leads to arbitrariness and absurdity."³²

Aulen sees correctly that if Scripture is regarded as authoritative, then "the task given to theology, . . . could be

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Cf. David Hedegard, Ecumenism and the Bible (Orebro: Evangelii press, 1954), pp. 187ff.

³²Aulen, op. cit., p. 83.

only to reproduce the biblical conceptions and to combine them in the best possible manner."³³ Everything then "must be appraised by its agreement with or departure from the form once and for all given and defined. The categories used are reproduction and apostasy."³⁴ But this view is at once rejected as static.

Theology must not stop with a consideration of the various forms of expression which we meet at the first appearance of Christianity. . . . It is necessary to push beyond these forms and formulas, and to reach the dynamic religious ideas, the religious themes, which are here active.

Not the forms but the underlying themes are essential.

But Aulen is careful not to reject Scripture altogether. It is still useful as a "witness."³⁵ In fact, since the New Testament is the original witness to the deed of God in Christ, it has "unique significance." Theology is "forever determined by the testimony of the New Testament." But the uniqueness of the New Testament is not due to its special, inspired nature, but only to the fact that it is the first, the original witness, among other witnesses, which however do not differ qualitatively from the New Testament, but only in point of chronology. And to the statement that the New Testament testimony forever determines theology, Aulen immediately adds:

But this does not mean that no other conceptions of faith

³³Ibid., p. 84.

³⁴Ibid., p. 66.

³⁵Ibid., pp. 90ff.

are permitted except those produced within this most ancient testimony, nor that every one of the conceptions of faith found within the New Testament should without further consideration be accepted as legitimate parts of the Christian faith.³⁶

On the basis of his acceptance of the New Testament as the first and original witness among others, Aulen is even willing to declare: "In this respect the evangelical principle of Scripture as the 'only infallible rule of faith and life' is forever valid."³⁷

For Aulen then there simply exists no external doctrinal norm or authority. To maintain such a norm would be dreadful legalism.³⁸ Of course tradition is also rejected as a validating principle.

How then does Aulen determine which "conceptions of faith" are genuinely Christian and which not? Aulen's answer³⁹ can be summarized as follows: The act of God in Christ is the fundamental and determinative fact of Christianity. All Christian affirmations must be closely related to this central fact. If they are so related, they are Christian, if not, not. This is as far as Aulen's explanation goes. To be sure, he uses mystical expressions like

³⁶Ibid., p. 90.

³⁷Ibid., p. 91.

³⁸Ibid., p. 83.

³⁹Ibid., pp. 87ff.

"inner, organic, and living connection," "inner vital connection," etc., but this does not explain anything. It appears like a vast begging of the question: Christian affirmations validate themselves as Christian by showing that they are Christian. How this all happens, remains a mystery. Take, for instance, Aulen's own formulation of the "validating principle": "Every Christian affirmation must in some way express the God-relationship which is fully defined as uniquely Christian." What can be the meaning of this? Does "in some way" mean "in any way"? Who defines the "God-relationship" which is uniquely Christian, or who decides what is "uniquely Christian"? Who establishes whether a given affirmation has or does not have (and surely they will all claim to have) an "inner vital connection" with the "act of God in Christ"?

If the act of God in Christ, through its "inner, organic, and living connection" with some affirmation validates that affirmation, someone must have already defined the meaning of the "act of God in Christ." Or are the basic affirmations about the "act of God in Christ" self-validating? This could possibly be made plausible if everyone understood the expression "act of God in Christ" in the same way. If there were some way to start out with an unquestioned, unmistakable definition of "act of God in Christ," commonly accepted as incontrovertible throughout

external Christendom, then this could be made into a common court of appeal, which could "validate" other affirmations. But this is not the case. "Act of God in Christ" means many different things to many different people, aside from the fact that this expression presupposes so much that when it has been defined, theology has been practically exhausted. To illustrate: For Dr. Pieper, "act of God in Christ" includes, for instance, the belief that God is Three Persons in One Godhead, that Christ is true God and true man, and that Christ rendered, in the place of sinful mankind, a complete satisfaction of divine justice. Aulen also says "act of God in Christ," but he means something which involves a denial of the Trinity and the deity of Christ,⁴⁰ and of the Vicarious Satisfaction.⁴¹ And these are only two examples of the many conflicting interpretations of "act of God in Christ." How does Aulen "validate" his interpretation? Apparently he doesn't. He simply assumes his own interpretation of "act of God in Christ," and then proceeds cheerfully to use this interpretation as a "validating principle" for the rest of his theology! Although his book is replete with references to the phrase "Christian faith affirms," the noticeable ab-

⁴⁰Cf. Appendix.

⁴¹Gustaf Aulen, Christus Victor (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1945), pp. 163, 164, 172.

sence of any real "validation" forces one to conclude that the phrase means no more than "Gustaf Aulen affirms." Is this sort of theology not precisely, in Aulen's words, "a 'science' in which everyone may affirm whatever comes to his mind?" and thus a "declaration of theological bankruptcy?"⁴²

For Pieper the entire matter is very clear: Theology has only one source and norm, one principium cognoscendi, namely Holy Scripture. The presupposition is that either Scripture is the only principium or it is no principium at all.⁴³ The Scripture principle cannot be coordinated with the principle of tradition, as Aulen tries to do.⁴⁴ For if Scripture must share its normative position with some other source and norm, e.g., reason, experience, the "Church," tradition, etc., then Scripture cannot be the sole and ultimate authority. Since Scripture is the only source and norm of theological knowledge, the only task of the theologian is to repeat what the Prophets and Apostles had taught. "We are catechumens and pupils of the Prophets. Let us simply repeat and preach what we have heard and learned from the Prophets and Apostles," says Luther, and

⁴²Aulen, The Faith of the Christian Church, p. 81.

⁴³Pieper, Dogmatics, I, 62. Cf. Robert Preus, The Inspiration of Scripture (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd Ltd., 1955), p. 5.

⁴⁴Aulen, The Faith of the Christian Church, p. 90.

Pieper agrees.⁴⁵ Quod non est biblicum non est theologium.⁴⁶ The only permissible theology is "ectypal theology,"⁴⁷ the theology of "repristination," i.e., that theology which merely repeats what Scripture teaches; "any other theology has no right of existence (John 8:31-32; 17:20; 1 Tim. 6:3ff.; Eph. 2:20)."⁴⁸

Naturally this does not mean that theology "must not use more words and other words than are found in Scripture."⁴⁹ But it does mean that the proper sense and meaning of the Scriptural words must be maintained in all points. "Therefore the Christian theologian renounces all speculation." And that includes Aulen's practice of "penetrating beneath the surface forms," and uncovering the "underlying themes." When Scripture teaches something, then, in Pieper's theology, this teaching is ipso facto an "underlying theme" and not merely a "shifting form." To disregard, discard, or analyze away any teaching of Scripture in favor of an "underlying theme" or some other human construct is non-theological and arbitrary. Scripture doctrine simply is what it is, and no man has the

⁴⁵Pieper, Dogmatics, I, 52.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 75.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 134.

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 57.

right to explain it in terms of some self-imagined "fundamental themes." All such efforts must result in pure arbitrariness, for what may seem an "underlying theme" to one theologian may appear as merely a "surface form" of a yet more basic theme to another theologian. The quest for the fundamental beneath the superficial, necessitated by the repudiation of the Scripture principle, in principle places doctrine and theology on an inclined plane, on which it is impossible to find rest, stability, and balance, and which leads irresistibly into the abyss of dogmatic dissolution and skepticism. As soon as the exclusive authority of Holy Scripture is rejected or limited, human subjectivism and ego-theology reign supreme,⁵⁰ tertium non datur.

Since Pieper maintains the Scripture principle, he vigorously denies that theology can be constructed as a speculative system, a development from a basic theme or motif. True, theology could be called a system, in the sense that it is not disorderly, but has a formal and a material principle.⁵¹ Nor do the individual doctrines form a mechanical agglomerate, as Aulen charges regarding

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 62.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 138.

the Orthodox view.⁵² Rather, all the articles of the faith are related to the doctrine of justification through faith, the articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae, either as antecedents or as consequents.⁵³

But Pieper absolutely rejects the idea that Christian doctrine is to be derived from some fundamental principle or theme.⁵⁴ Only the sedes doctrinae determine doctrine. Hence Pieper heartily approves of Walther's slogan for dogmatics: "Only loci!" For it "is the characteristic of revelation that we know only disconnected pieces of God's mysteries." Pieper approvingly quotes Hoenecke: "According to Walther, it is not the task of the theologian to fabricate systems, to harmonize seemingly contradictory doctrines." Rather, says Hoenecke, "he holds with Luther: 'If harmonizing were in order, we could not retain one single article of faith.'" And Pieper refutes the claim of the neologists that Luther "'genetically developed' the entire body of the Christian doctrine from the article of justification," by showing that Luther derived his doctrine exclusively from Scripture and counselled others to forget and submerge all thoughts that arise without Scripture,

⁵²Aulen, The Faith of the Christian Church, pp. 7-9.

⁵³Pieper, Dogmatics, I, 139.

⁵⁴Ibid., pp. 141, 145, 173.

as quickly as possible.

Pieper employs a striking illustration for the right and the wrong senses of "system" in theology. He contrasts railroad systems and mountain systems.⁵⁵ The former originate in the minds of the planners, and are then worked out in accordance with the predetermined specifications, while the latter simply are what they are, and can merely be described in an orderly way. In one case systematic description determines the facts, in the other case the facts determine the systematic description.

Is Aulen's system of the railroad type or of the mountain type? In all fairness it should be said that Aulen does not strive for a "rationally completed system," according to his own claim.⁵⁶ Rather he envisions a unity with inner tensions, in which the various "fundamental ideas" struggle with one another. But inasmuch as Aulen rejects the Scripture principle and "validates" self-determined "fundamental ideas" by means of a self-determined "act of God in Christ," he cannot avoid constructing a system of the railroad type.

What would Aulen think of Pieper's theology? In the light of the preceding material one can only conclude that

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 143.

⁵⁶Aulen, The Faith of the Christian Church, p. 9.

he would reject Pieper's theology as a species of scholasticism, based on the mechanical "theory" of verbal inspiration. What, on the other hand, would Pieper think of Aulen? If Pieper's Dogmatics is any indication, the case seems clear. Pieper insists on the principle: Quod non est biblicum non est theologicum, and he allows no exceptions. Since, as was shown above, Aulen expressly rejects the Scripture principle, the following syllogism represents the judgment of Pieper's theology on Aulen's work:

Major: Quod non est biblicum non est theologicum.

Minor: Aulen's work non est biblicum.

Conclusio: Aulen's work non est theologicum.

Since Aulen's theology is in principle unbiblical, it is in principle untheological; and whatever is maintained in the Church without Scripture, is declared by Pieper to be no theology at all, but mere "matæologia (vain theology), . . . heretical, empty babbling."⁵⁷

⁵⁷Pieper, Dogmatics, I, 59.

¹Oscar Aulen, The Faith of the Christian Church (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1931), p. 25; Pieper, Christian Dogmatics (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1938), pp. 26, 43, 47, 219.

²Pieper, op. cit., pp. 287.

³Ibid., p. 293.

CHAPTER III

THE NATURE OF SCRIPTURE

What is Revelation?

That revelation and faith are correlatives is maintained by both Aulen and Pieper.¹ In other words, one's concept of faith will reflect one's concept of revelation and vice versa.

For Dr. Pieper the Bible itself constitutes revelation.² Moreover, this revelation is final and complete. With the completion of the Biblical canon "the period of divine revelation is closed." New doctrinal revelations are not to be expected, because the "revelation of doctrine has come to an end with the Word of the Apostles and Prophets."

By this Pieper does not mean to say that God never used other modes of revelation than Scripture. On the contrary, God often dealt with His people by means of oral proclamation, before Scripture was written.³ Christ and

¹Gustaf Aulen, The Faith of the Christian Church (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1948), p. 22; Francis Pieper, Christian Dogmatics (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950), pp. 64, 68, 69, 210.

²Pieper, op. cit., pp. 68ff.

³Ibid., p. 193.

His Apostles also transmitted revelation viva, voce. But Dr. Pieper emphasizes that the only revelation accessible to the Church today is the Bible, which therefore is the exclusive source and norm of doctrine.

The objection that revelation is really dynamic, i.e., consisting of acts in history rather than of words and statements, is not new to Pieper. Pieper meets it by showing that God's acts are meaningless without God's words.⁴

In his discussion Pieper very carefully limits himself to "doctrinal revelations."⁵ That "divine revelations pertaining to external events in Church or world" might be granted to individuals in our day, is readily conceded.

⁴Ibid., p. 211. The same argument is stated thus by Packer: "Indeed, the biblical position is that the mighty acts of God are not revelation to man at all, except in so far as they are accompanied by words of God to explain them. Leave man to guess God's mind and purpose, and he will guess wrong; The need for verbal revelation appears most clearly when we consider the Person and work of Christ. His life and death was the clearest and fullest revelation of God that ever was or could be made. Yet it could never have been understood without explanation. Whoever could have guessed, without being told, that the man Jesus was God incarnate, that He had created the world in which He was crucified, that by dying a criminal's death He put away the sins of mankind. . . ? And who can come to faith in Christ if he knows none of this? No considerations could show more plainly the complete inability of man to 'make do' in his religion without a spoken word from God." J. I. Packer, "Fundamentalism" and the Word of God (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1958), p. 92.

⁵Pieper, op. cit., p. 210.

But the doctrinal revelation is complete in the Word of the Prophets and Apostles, to which the Church is forever bound, according to the New Testament.⁶ No new doctrinal revelations are to be accepted, for new revelations either say the same thing as Scripture, in which case they are superfluous, or they say something else, in which case they are to be rejected.

The entire issue is really contained in Pieper's term "doctrinal revelation." For that is precisely the point, whether revelation is in the nature of doctrine or not. The neologists against whom Pieper wrote had asserted that revelation is not really an impartation of knowledge, teaching, doctrine, this being an intellectualistic view, but is rather a self-impartation of God.⁷ And Pieper shows, by means of numerous and decisive Biblical examples, that the assumed antithesis of "doctrine" vs. "revelation" is a direct contradiction of Scripture, and represents a destruction of the Biblical view of faith. To be sure, argues Pieper, revelation is God's self-impartation, but it is this only because it is an impartation of doctrine. Without the impartation of doctrine there is no divine self-manifestation. Any "manifestation" or "self-impartation"

⁶John 17:20; Eph. 2:20.

⁷Pieper, op. cit., p. 69.

of God apart from Biblical doctrine is pure illusion and cannot be the content of faith.

In presenting Aulen's concept of revelation it is much easier to say what it is not than to say what it is. According to Aulen's view Scripture definitely is not to be identified with revelation, because "the Christian faith does not conceive of the revelation of God as a point in time, nor as an isolated act of God, but rather as a continuous series of divine acts."⁸ To view revelation in the sense of Pieper, as something finished and completed at a certain point of time, is a species of static Deism. Revelation cannot be "localized in some past history." Divine revelation cannot be confused with "some given, authoritative theological system of doctrine." The New Testament is a "historical document," and as such "an object of investigation by historical criticism." But "divine revelation cannot be identified with anything historical or human," presumably because "nothing in history is ever finally and conclusively accomplished." Even what Aulen is willing to call "the Word" is not in itself revelation: "'The Word' does not become a divine revelation to man unless God, as Luther says, 'speaks it in the heart.'"

But if revelation is not to be identified with a "sta-

⁸Aulen, op. cit., pp. 33, 45, 57-58, 71, 75.

tic," finished historical magnitude, like the Bible, then what is it? Aulen says that revelation is "altogether active, it is divine activity."⁹ Revelation is the continuous realization of the divine will against competing forces in history. Revelation is an "intense drama," and "the self-impartation of God," which cannot be localized "but rather appears as a continuity extending to the end of time."

The "static" view that revelation was "finished at a certain point in time,"¹⁰ is rejected with the following argumentation: If there was a point in time at which revelation was finished, then that means that God ceased being active and withdrew, which is Deism. Therefore revelation cannot be finished. But does this follow? Pieper insists that revelation is finished, but he nowhere implies that God stopped being active, or that He "withdrew," etc. On the contrary, God very actively uses His revelation in Scripture, which is not a dead, static thing, but the ever-living and life-giving, active, powerful Word of God.¹¹ What does this view have in common with Deism?

Aulen singles out three misinterpretations, and opposes to these his "dramatic view of revelation." The first

⁹Ibid., pp. 43-45.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Pieper, op. cit., p. 315.

error is the static view, which regards the essence of Christianity as "identified with a certain historical form of Christianity,"¹² by which all subsequent developments are to be judged. The second error is an optimistic evolutionism, as represented, for instance, by Schleiermacher. And the third error, called the "metaphysical-eschatological conception," is the radical negation of the previously named optimism. The mistake of the first view is that it ignores the living, active character of revelation. The second view ignores the element of conflict, and the third view completely and radically separates revelation and history.

The solution offered by Aulen is the "dramatic view" of revelation. The essence of this view seems to be that the divine will is constantly struggling with conflicting powers in the arena of history. How or why this struggle is or becomes revelation does not become quite clear.

Since revelation takes place in history, it "makes use of historical means, persons, words, acts, and the like,"¹³ which, however, remain instrumental, and which must therefore not be confused with revelation itself. "Revelation is fulfilled in Christ, but at the same time is continually in progress."

¹²Aulen, op. cit., p. 66.

¹³Ibid., p. 45.

Regarding the nature of faith, which, being a correlative of revelation, reflects one's concept of revelation, Aulen seems to maintain two series of statements which cancel each other. One series seems to affirm that faith does involve the intellectual element, while another series of statements denies this. One hand seems to take away what the other gives. On the one hand faith is treated as affirming certain things about God, and as involving assent.¹⁴ On the other hand this is again denied. The view that "man with the help of divine revelation thinks God's own thoughts," is condemned.¹⁵ Faith is not "rationalistic," which in the context seems to mean nothing else than that faith does not involve a real knowledge. Since revelation is so vast that it "cannot be comprehended within the categories of human thought," faith's affirmations are paradoxical. But the paradoxes of faith are not logical or metaphysical, but religious, in other words, they do not lie in the intellectual realm. But if the paradoxes are not logical but "religious," is not the same true of the affirmations themselves? And if an affirmation is not in the realm of logic, is it an affirmation at all?

Aulen tries, as in so many cases, to occupy a posi-

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 46, 73, 315.

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 99ff.

tion between what he considers two extremes, intellectualism and subjectivism or psychologism. Intellectualism understands the content of faith to be primary in relation to faith, while subjectivism understands it to be secondary. Aulen cuts the Gordian knot and asserts that the content of faith is neither primary nor secondary, but "is in principle given in and with the God-relationship as such."¹⁶ That this excludes doctrine from the "content of faith" seems obvious, unless Aulen means that each Christian receives a special, immediate doctrinal revelation "in and with the God-relationship as such," a view which one would hesitate to impute to anyone. If there were a doctrine which faith believes, and if this doctrine were already present in Scripture, then the content of faith would be primary in relation to faith, and not "given in and with the God-relationship."

It should be noted that when Aulen says "intellectualism" he seems to mean not merely a position which regards faith as exclusively intellectual, but any view which maintains that faith includes a doctrinal, definitely dianoetic element. Thus Aulen condemns the old Lutheran theologians, even though they taught that faith is fiducia. Aulen caricatures the position of the old theologians of the Lutheran Church by asserting that they held that faith begins as as-

¹⁶Ibid., p. 73.

consensus and "subsequently becomes fides caritate formata or fiducia."¹⁷

Very characteristic is the following argument of Aulen: "If revelation were localized in some past history, faith would mean simply intellectual assent to a past event and an acceptance of that which once happened."¹⁸ This is then rejected because "faith means that God in the present overwhelms and dominates man." But is this argument logically valid? Certainly Pieper regards revelation as "localized in some past history." But does it follow that therefore faith is "simply an intellectual assent," etc.? By no means. Pieper explicitly teaches that faith is fiducia.¹⁹ Moreover, Pieper insists that notitia, assensus, and fiducia are not three parts or stages of faith, but are three simultaneous aspects of the same supernaturally created act of faith. Therefore, Pieper shows, Scripture uses all three, knowledge, assent, and trust as synonyms for faith. Since faith is a faith in the Gospel, and since the Gospel is not a mystical-enthusiastic magnitude, but a message in words and propositions, and thus eo ipso addressed to the intellect, there cannot be, from Pieper's point of view, any

¹⁷Ibid., p. 74.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 45.

¹⁹Pieper, op. cit., II, 427.

opposition or antithesis between "intellectual" and "spiritual." Faith is entirely spiritual and God-created, but this does not exclude but rather includes the intellect as the apprehending organ of the divinely revealed Gospel. It is this, and not the straw-man of total intellectualism, that Aulen is combatting as "intellectualism."

David Hedegard challenges Aulen's concept of faith precisely at this point:

Whence has Aulen derived this conception of faith? Evidently not from the Bible (cf. above, p. 16). The Bible nowhere states that faith "implies that man is subdued and dominated by God."²⁰

Evidently Hedegard means to challenge Aulen's denial of the intellectual, noetic element in faith, for on the page to which he refers, Hedegard says that "faith includes a certain knowledge about Christ. Cordial trust in Christ is inseparable from a certain knowledge about Christ."

The key to Aulen's concept of faith may lie in certain historical roots, which Hedegard uncovers:

Aulen from his student days was strongly influenced by Soederblom . . . and this fact has left indelible imprint on his theology. This influence can easily be traced in his most important work, The Faith of the Christian Church.²¹

And about Soederblom we read that "Sabatier markedly influ-

²⁰David Hedegard, Ecumenism and the Bible (Orebro: Evangeliiipress, 1954), p. 187.

²¹Ibid., pp. 185-186.

enced Soederblom's theology."²² Sabatier, together with Menegoz, founded the so-called symbolo-fideistic or fideistic school:

"The distinction between faith and beliefs is one of the fundamental premisses of fideism. By faith is meant the movement of the self towards God--a movement which implies forsaking sin, repentance. The man who repents and gives his heart to God is saved, whatever his beliefs may be. This statement is opposed to the old orthodoxy, which made adherence to certain official dogmas a condition of salvation." . . .

According to Sabatier "all beliefs and dogmas are only symbols." "The same truth and the same divine life may be veiled in different garments." Nathan Soederblom, who was for some years in his young days the Pastor of the Swedish Church in Paris, greatly admired Sabatier and translated one of his most important books into Swedish.²³

It seems indeed impossible to understand Aulen's concept of faith and revelation except in a fideistic sense. It should be noted that even fideism retains a semblance of the dianoetic element, but, as in Aulen, there is no real knowledge but only symbolic affirmation.

The preceding discussion reveals the real point at issue. The question is not terminological (i.e., what should be called revelation?) as if the fact of divinely given doctrine were not questioned, the only issue being whether such doctrine should be called revelation. The

²²Ibid., p. 240.

²³Ibid.

real issue is whether there is such a thing as divinely given doctrine at all. Pieper affirms it, Aulen denies it. If the fact of divinely given doctrine were conceded by Aulen, there could be no difficulty whatever in calling this "revelation." In fact, it would be rather absurd to insist on a body of divinely communicated teaching, given in the Bible, and then to maintain that this is not revelation! So the real point at issue is not the definition of "revelation" per se, but whether or not there is such a thing as God-given, authoritative teaching, doctrina divina. This in turn resolves itself into the question of the nature of Scripture: If Scripture is the divinely inspired, revealed Word of God, then there is a body of authoritative doctrine. If Scripture is not the Word of God, then it cannot transmit an authoritative body of doctrine; and if Scripture cannot offer authoritative doctrine, then for all practical purposes there is no such thing.

Aulen's View of Scripture

Although Aulen on occasion makes such strong statements about Scripture as this, "Christian faith regards the Word of Scripture as the fundamental and normative Word of

God,"²⁴ the apparent exaltation of Scripture is illusory, as other statements show. Even the statement just quoted, upon closer inspection, reveals that Scripture is not being equated with the Word of God. It is the "Word" not the words of Scripture which is the Word of God. Hence the statement is somewhat of a tautology: The Word of God, which is somehow related to Scripture, is the Word of God.

That Aulen denies the inspiration of Scripture he is at pains to make quite clear. What he rejects is, of course, "verbal inspiration," but he makes no effort to retain any sort of "inspiration" distinguished from "verbal inspiration."²⁵ Rather, Aulen sees quite clearly that if the "biblicism" involved in "verbal inspiration" is impossible, then any form of "abbreviated biblicism" is equally impossible. Hence Scripture does not differ qualitatively from other human books. The Old Testament represents a religion of the Law²⁶ and its statements cannot have the same validity for Christian faith as those of the New Testament. Even the New Testament is on the same level as tradition, but the New Testament's "testimony" is determina-

²⁴Aulen, op. cit., p. 363. 8

²⁵Ibid., pp. 81ff. 9

²⁶Ibid., p. 39.

tive in a sense, due to its historical priority.²⁷ This is followed immediately by a clear denial of the sola Scriptura, in the form of the assertion that the New Testament determines neither the maximal nor the minimal limits of the content of faith:

But this does not mean that no other conceptions of faith are permitted except those produced within this most ancient testimony, nor that every one of the conceptions of faith found within the New Testament should without further consideration be accepted as legitimate parts of the Christian faith.

And of course Scripture is not infallible, nor "is it possible to select certain portions of the Bible as infallible authority." And yet Aulen is able to declare, though with the qualification "in this sense," that "the evangelical principle of Scripture as the 'only infallible rule of faith and life' is forever valid":

Aulen's hermeneutics correspond to his estimate of Scripture. Since the Scriptural teaching is not in itself authoritative for Aulen, this being a mechanical view, the real object of interpretation is to penetrate beneath shifting surface forms and formulas to the basic, underlying ideas or themes.²⁸ Again, the kinship of this view with fideism is quite apparent. In fact, Aulen himself says that his distinction between "surface forms" and "un-

²⁷Ibid., pp. 90ff. 10

²⁸Ibid., pp. 77ff., 93. 11

derlying ideas" is a substitute for "the usual nineteenth-century differentiation between 'life' and 'teaching,'" which Aulen considers well-intentioned but expressive of subjectivism. But Aulen's substitute hardly escapes subjectivism. His constant attempt to steer between subjectivism and a "mechanistic objectivization"²⁹ is illusory, and he remains in the subjectivistic camp of Schleiermacher, whose basic orientation Aulen endorses.³⁰ If subjectivity and objectivity mean anything at all, a compromise or logical middle between the two is inconceivable.

Presuppositions of Sola Scriptura: Verbal Inspiration

Dr. Pieper teaches that the starting point of theology (taken as doctrine) is the Scripture principle, sola Scriptura.³¹ Therefore, until that principle has been acknowledged, theology cannot begin. Whatever does begin without the Scripture principle is not theology. Quod non est biblicum non est theologicum. But the Scripture principle, sola Scriptura, is not a slogan suspended in a doctrinal vacuum. Sola Scriptura presupposes at least

²⁹Ibid., pp. 364ff.

³⁰Ibid., p. 11.

³¹Pieper, op. cit., I, 51ff.

(1) that Scripture is the uniquely inspired Word of God, (2) that it is completely inerrant and infallible, and (3) that it is sufficient and clear. If Scripture were not, in distinction to all other books, the inspired Word of God, but were qualitatively on the same level as other books, there would be no conceivable reason to insist on Scripture as the sole authority. The same would be the case if Scripture were not entirely inerrant, for then another principium, such as human reason, would be required to determine what is true and what is false or erroneous in Scripture. Finally, unless Scripture were clear and sufficient, other principia would be required to interpret and supplement Scripture. Sola Scriptura, then, makes sense only if its inspiration, inerrancy, sufficiency, and clarity or perspicuity are presupposed. When these are denied, Scripture cannot be regarded as the sole norm and authority, the principium cognoscendi, and any profession of "sola Scriptura" is under these circumstances either a purely arbitrary, even self-contradictory assumption, or it is nothing but the ritualistic repetition of a meaningless pious slogan "for old times' sake."

With those who deny the Scripture principle, either directly or by denying one of its necessary presuppositions, "an understanding is impossible, because there is no common ground. Contra principium negantem disputari

non potest--with him who denies the principle one cannot argue."³² Luther of course says it rather vigorously:

Therefore, if the people will not believe, then be silent; for you are not held to compel them to receive Scripture as God's book or Word; it is enough if you give the reason therefor. But if they take exceptions and say: You preach that one should not hold to man's doctrine, and yet St. Peter and Paul, and even Christ, were men--when you hear people of this stamp, who are so blinded and hardened as to deny that what Christ and the Apostles spoke and wrote is God's Word, or doubt it, then be silent, speak no more with them, and let them go. Only say: I will give you reasons enough from Scripture; if you will believe it, it is well; if not, go your way.³³

So then, to use a mathematical illustration, just as Euclid's axioms precede his geometry, so the Scripture principle with all its necessary presuppositions precedes theology in the objective sense, i.e., doctrine. Nor is this at all a contradiction of Pieper's statement that with an unbeliever we start by bringing him to faith in Christ through Law and Gospel, and not with an attempted demonstration of the authority of Scripture, which latter rests on the former.³⁴ The psychological order of events in a person being converted has nothing to do with the logical order of principles in theology, which existed centuries before the given individual was born. What one

³²Ibid., p. 154.

³³Ibid., p. 243.

³⁴Ibid., pp. 137-138.

may not expect of an unbeliever, i.e. unconditional submission to Scripture as the Word of God, one must expect of a theologian, who not only professes faith in Christ but also wishes to instruct others in the saving truth.

For Dr. Pieper Holy Scripture is unconditionally identical with the Word of God.³⁵ In maintaining this position Dr. Pieper is fully aware of the fact that he is thereby contradicting the unanimous consent of contemporary theology, not only the liberal wing, but also the "positive" or conservative, even the "extreme right" wing. Pieper cites Nitzsch-Stephan to the effect that the fault of the old dogmaticians lay in this that they did not at all distinguish between the Bible and God's Word, or else did so only imperfectly. Ihmels is quoted to the effect that the identification of Scripture with the Word of God gives revelation "an essentially intellectualistic meaning." In other words, "intellectualism" is not merely an accident, a fault to which some older theologians happened to succumb; rather "intellectualism" is viewed as inhering essentially and inso facto in the identification of Scripture with God's Word. The very acceptance of this identification, and not merely some accidental subsequent aberration, is already and per se "in-

³⁵Ibid., pp. 213ff.

tellektualism"!

Pieper is also quite aware of the fact that the neologists are perfectly willing to admit that God's Word is in Scripture.³⁶ But he is not very much impressed by this concession, since it does not entail submission to the authority of Scripture. A case in point is Theodore Kaftan, who had declared that the modern theology for which he stood "bows to no mere external authority." The "external authority" to which he will not bow, is of course Scripture, says Pieper.

And when he adds that he bows to "God's Word" "as to an authority that has proved itself, and maintains itself, in its own power," he means to say that he will accept only so much of Scripture as valid as has given satisfactory proof of being the truth before the judgment seat of his "experience" or his "pious self-consciousness."

Far from being impressed with the criticisms of modern theology (Luther: "They speak such things only in order to lead us away from Scripture and make themselves masters over us, that we should believe their dream-sermons"),³⁷ Pieper rather takes the offensive and insists that before modern theology can claim to be Christian theology, it must execute a complete about-face and again learn to identify Scripture with the Word of God.

³⁶Ibid., p. 226.

³⁷Ibid., p. 74.

What modern theology regards as a fault in the Apostolic Church, in Luther, and in the old dogmaticians--and Pieper cites neologists who admit that the Apostles, the early Church, and the Reformation identified Scripture and God's Word³⁸--is rather "the only correct position," as Pieper then proceeds to demonstrate from innumerable Scripture texts.³⁹

The identification of Scripture and God's Word is absolute: "Scripture is neither a human nor a 'divine-human' report on God's Word and the 'facts of the revelation,' but is itself the Word of God."⁴⁰ In other words, the title "Word of God" belongs to Scripture not "honoris causa," but by inherent right and merit. As John Gerhard teaches, there is no real difference but only a terminological difference between the expressions "God's Word" and "Holy Scripture," or "God says" and "Holy Scripture says." Holy Scripture and the Word of God are interchangeable terms. Hence the question whether Christ's authority is greater than the Bible's cannot even arise. Scripture's statements and authority simply are Christ's statements and authority, and there can be no appeal from

³⁸Ibid., pp. 265ff.

³⁹Ibid., pp. 274ff.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 216.

the one to the other. In the old theologians' terms, Scripture is the Word of God not improperly, not metonymically, but properly and really, simpliciter.⁴¹

Though the identification of Scripture with the Word of God is absolute, this does not mean that the Word of God is limited to the form in which it appears in Scripture. To the old theologians, for instance, "the Word was a genus and the Scripture was a species of this genus."⁴² Therefore these theologians "certainly never denied that preaching was the Word of God when and because it agreed with Scripture." In other words, Scripture is the Word of God with respect not to the words as such, which though they are divinely inspired, nevertheless remain truly human words, but to the divinely intended meaning and sense. Whatever therefore correctly presents this divinely intended meaning and sense, expressed in the divinely chosen words, is the Word of God, be it stated in other languages, or in extra-biblical terms. But, observes Dr. Preus, one cannot conclude from this that the words and phrases of Scripture merely indicate or point to the meaning or sense, which alone can be called the Word of God. No, the letters and words of Scripture "not

⁴¹Robert Preus, The Inspiration of Scripture (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd Ltd., 1955), p. 22.

⁴²Ibid., p. 19.

only signify the inspired content of the Scriptures but actually impart this divine meaning and therefore cannot be separated from it." That Pieper, too, presupposes all this when he identifies Scripture and God's Word is clear.⁴³ Hence it would be quite beside the point to urge that the identification of Scripture with God's Word in any way detracts from the viva vox evangelii, as Aulen charges with reference to the old Lutheran theology, which he again misrepresents by the accusation that the teachers of "orthodox scholasticism," in contradistinction to Luther, who "strongly emphasizes the 'spoken' and living word," "limit the Word simply to the Bible."⁴⁴

Scripture is the Word of God by virtue of its divine inspiration. The Scriptural meaning of inspiration is clear from 2 Tim. 3:16, and is thus stated by Quenstedt, whom Pieper quotes:

The Apostle does not say: "Everything in Scripture, πάντα ἐν γραφῇ θεόπνευστα" but "All Scripture, πᾶσα γραφὴ θεόπνευστος," in order to show that not only the things written about, but also the writing itself is θεόπνευστος. And whatever is said of the whole Scripture must of necessity be understood also of the words, not the most insignificant part of Scripture. For if one little word occurred in Scripture that is not suggested or divinely inspired, it could not be said that "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God."⁴⁵

⁴³Pieper, op. cit., I, 57, 343ff.

⁴⁴Aulen, op. cit., p. 355.

⁴⁵Pieper, op. cit., I, 218.

The object of inspiration are thus not merely certain subjects or basic ideas (Realinspiration) nor the persons of the writers (Personalinspiration) but Scripture itself, namely all of it without exception.⁴⁶ Therefore, since Scripture consists not of persons nor of subjects but of words, verba, inspiration means verbal inspiration, according to the teaching of Scripture itself:

As surely as 2 Tim. 3:16 predicates the $\theta\rho\omega\nu\lambda\omicron\upsilon\gamma\epsilon\tau\omicron\varsigma$ of the $\gamma\rho\alpha\phi\iota$ as subject, so certainly Verbal Inspiration is not a "subtle theory" of the old dogmatists, but the plain teaching of Scripture itself.

Dr. Pieper demonstrates from Scripture that inspiration does not apply only to the Old Testament, but also to the New. Incidentally, the fact that "Scripture" in 2 Tim. 3:16 refers probably to the Old Testament offers no comfort to the modernistic theory. Since the neologists, including Aulen,⁴⁷ are at pains to emphasize the Old Testament's inferiority in relation to the New, they cannot very well maintain that this inferior Old Testament is indeed verbally inspired by God, as 2 Tim. 3:16 teaches, but that the superior New Testament is not!

Pieper shows that any "inspiration" which is not verbal inspiration is simply no inspiration at all but mean-

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 217.

⁴⁷Aulen, op. cit., pp. 37ff.

ingless nonsense.⁴⁸ Scripture is either verbally inspired or it is not inspired at all. But it must be clearly realized that Dr. Pieper is here defining not the "how" but the "what" of inspiration. "Verbal" refers not to some mode or manner of inspiration, but to the object of inspiration, i.e., the words. Therefore any distinction between the general "fact" of "inspiration" and the particular "theory" of "verbal inspiration" is senseless. Pieper teaches the fact of inspiration, i.e., the fact that all Scripture, all its statements and words, are inspired by God. The "how" of the mystery is nowhere elucidated; in fact, such a speculative penetration into the mystery of inspiration is quite foreign to Pieper's theological habit.

Nor does Pieper teach any sort of mechanical inspiration. In his chapter on "The Relation of the Holy Ghost to the Holy Writers,"⁴⁹ which incidentally does not deal with the "how" of the mystery but solely with the twofold fact that the personalities of the holy writers were not eclipsed and that what they wrote was the pure Word of God, Pieper explicitly rejects and condemns any "mechanical or external concept of the "ἁ" of the relationship of the writers to the Holy Ghost." Pieper reiterates the Church

⁴⁸Pieper, op. cit., I, 218.

⁴⁹Ibid., pp. 228ff.

Fathers' repudiation of the notion of the Montanists that the holy writers wrote in a state of trance. No, the writers were not automata, lifeless machines, but living, personal instruments, with intellect and will, and with their own distinct style. God did not merely move their hands in a mechanical fashion, but utilized their entire psychological equipment. With Quenstedt Pieper rejects the notion "as though the holy writers had written without and against their will, without consciousness and unwittingly; for they wrote voluntarily, willingly, and knowingly." It seems highly improbable to suppose that those who talk about "mechanical" inspiration have never read such explanations and disclaimers. Rather, the derogatory epithet "mechanical" is applied simply to the identification of Scripture with God's Word per se.⁵⁰

When the dogmatists refer to the holy writers as "amanuenses, notarii, manus, calami, clerks, secretaries, hands, pens, of the Holy Spirit,"⁵¹ this cannot be fairly interpreted in a mechanical sense, says Pieper. The terms are perfectly Scriptural, as long as the point of comparison, i.e., the mere instrumentality of the writers, is

⁵⁰Supra, p. 49.

⁵¹Pieper, op. cit., I, 229.

observed:

The expressions state no more and no less than the fact that the holy writers did not write their own word, but God's Word, . . . and that is, as we have seen, the authoritative judgment of Christ and His Apostles.⁵²

All this applies also to the so-called "dictation-theory," which J. I. Packer has called "a theological mare's nest; it never existed at any time during the past century save in certain people's imagination."⁵³ To be sure, the dogmatists used the figure of dictatio, among others. That this dictatio "cannot possibly have a purely mechanical connotation" Dr. Freus demonstrates "from the fact that the dogmatists speak of a 'dictatio rerum,'"⁵⁴ i.e., a "dictation of subject matter." Furthermore, the mere use of a comparison is not yet a "theory." If one is going to speak of the "dictation theory" merely because the comparison of dictation has been employed, then, on the basis of other Scriptural comparisons, one must also speak of the "pen theory," the "mouth theory," etc.

The monergistic doctrine of inspiration represented by Pieper is frequently accused of emphasizing the divine side of Scripture to the neglect of the human side. In re-

⁵²Ibid., pp. 229-230.

⁵³Packer, op. cit., p. 179.

⁵⁴Freus, op. cit., p. 73.

plying, Pieper points out that the emphasis on the "divine side" is the emphasis of Scripture itself.⁵⁵ And the reason for this is obvious, says Pieper. After all, the "human side" is all too obvious and is in no danger of being overlooked. But because of man's spiritual blindness the "divine side" of Scripture, i.e., the fact that it is throughout the inspired Word of God, is not at all obvious, but must constantly be repeated and emphasized against the impulses of natural reason.

Presuppositions of Sola Scriptura: Inerrancy

The moderns, says Pieper, when they accuse the old theologians of overlooking the "human side" of Scripture, really do not mean the human side at all. Rather, "by the human side, about which they are so concerned, they mean the alleged errors in Scripture."⁵⁶ With Luther⁵⁷ Pieper is perfectly aware of the human side of Scripture. It is the conclusion that therefore Scripture may contain errors that both Luther and Pieper reject.

At this point Pieper's opponents seem to assume the

⁵⁵Pieper, op. cit., I, 235.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 236. Incidentally, the Christological analogy supports orthodoxy and not modernism: Just as Christ's human nature does not imply sin, so the "human side of Scripture" does not imply error.

⁵⁷Pieper, op. cit., I, 255, 278-279.

philosophical maxim, finitum non capax infiniti, while Pieper maintains that finitum capax infiniti; but in the latter case this is not an a priori philosophical assumption, but merely a taking seriously of Scripture's claims regarding itself. It is easy to see why Aulen prefers another principle, infinitum capax finiti, by which he claims to have "transcended" the antithesis between the two historic principles.⁵⁸ The Scripture, with all its alleged imperfections and errors, remains finite, but somehow the infinite Word of God is able to use this finite, erroneous record and to speak through it.

Lately it has been suggested by one who himself holds the modernistic view of Scripture that only "plenary," that is, full inspiration, which implies inerrancy, is to be rejected, but that "verbal inspiration" can be accepted in the sense that the very words of Scripture are divinely given. But, according to this view, "verbal inspiration" does not entail inerrancy.⁵⁹ This is a perfect embodiment of the infinitum capax finiti idea: The thoroughly human Bible, with all its alleged errors is nevertheless the witness and bearer of the Word of God.

Such an idea of "verbal inspiration" has only the name

⁵⁸Aulen, op. cit., pp. 57ff.

⁵⁹John Baillie, The Idea of Revelation in Recent Thought (New York: Columbia University Press, 1956), p. 115.

in common with Pieper's doctrine. "Verbal inspiration," i.e., inspiration of the words of Scripture, means nothing else than "plenary inspiration," i.e., the full inspiration of everything in Scripture. If something is inspired, if it is really the Word of God, then it cannot without cynicism be said to contain error. The concept "Word of God, which however may contain error," is for faith an impossible one. It may be a fine specimen of Schreibtischtheologie, but spiritually it is impotent and unrealistic. Pieper's quote from Luther is most a propos:

If they believed that the Word is God's, they would not play with it in such a manner, but would hold it in the highest esteem and without any dispute or doubt regard it as credible, and would know that one word of God is all words of God and all words of God are one word of God.⁶⁰

To predicate inspiration of Scripture is to predicate inerrancy of it. For Pieper inspiration and inerrancy are not separate issues, as if the affirmation of the one were theoretically compatible with the denial of the other. Any "inspiration" without inerrancy is no inspiration at all. Inerrancy is the test of any doctrine of inspiration. Thus, when in 1938 the official representatives of the United Lutheran Church in America maintained, against the Missouri Synod, that Scripture was "inspired" but not inerrant, the Concordia Theological Monthly called this "a

⁶⁰Pieper, op. cit., I, 222.

clumsy form of sophistry."

When these men declare that inspiration is a fact, they do not want to be understood as saying that there are no contradictions or errors in Holy Scripture. To say that, would be defining the mode, or manner, of inspiration. It would mean accepting the "theory of verbal inspiration. . . . the distinction between the fact of inspiration and the "theory" of inspiration (verbal, plenary inspiration, absolute infallibility of Scripture, being a mere theory) is a clumsy form of sophistry. It deals with an "in-
spiration" which is not real inspiration.⁶¹

Since "all Scripture" is inspired and inerrant, this naturally includes whatever Scripture says on any subject, including historical, geographical, and other data. The observation that the Bible is not a textbook of history, geography, science, etc., and that its statements on these subjects do not therefore have to be regarded as inspired and inerrant, Dr. Pieper styles "by no means a clever objection."⁶² True, Scripture's real purpose is to teach us the way of salvation. Nevertheless

also the historical data which are found in Scripture (for with His Word God has entered the history of mankind), though mentioned only incidentally, are inspired and infallible, because they are a part of Scripture.

Since it is Scripture itself that is inerrant, and not merely selected portions of it, a distinction between truth and error in Scripture is in principle out of the

⁶¹ Theodore Engelder, "'Verbal' Inspiration No Theory," Concordia Theological Monthly, X (January, 1939), 66.

⁶² Pieper, op. cit., I, 220.

question.

Pieper shows that the inerrancy of Scripture is not a mere deduction, but that Scripture itself consistently includes the inerrancy in its claim to be the inspired, authoritative Word of God.⁶³ Christ Himself declared, and with reference to a relatively minor point: "The Scripture cannot be broken."⁶⁴ The thing that cannot be broken is Scripture itself, all of it, not selected portions. Accordingly St. Paul explicitly confesses: "I believe all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets."⁶⁵ Although Pieper does not explicitly cite the following texts from the Word of God, they are nevertheless relevant at this point: According to Mark 8:38 Christ renounces those who are ashamed of Him and His words. To Nicodemus Christ said: "If you believe not Me when I tell you of earthly things, how shall you believe Me when I tell you of heavenly things?"⁶⁶ Again, it is Christ Himself who says: "If you had believed Moses, you would have believed Me, for he wrote of Me. But if you believe not his writings, how shall you believe My words?"⁶⁷

⁶³Ibid., pp. 221ff.

⁶⁴John 10:35.

⁶⁵Acts 24:14.

⁶⁶John 3:12.

⁶⁷John 5:46-47.

Aside from the fact that Scripture itself demands absolute and unconditional submission to its authority, and not a qualified acceptance which distinguishes "heavenly things" and "earthly things" in Scripture and then professes to accept the former though not the latter, the distinction itself, when employed in the interest of separating the eternal verities of Scripture from its "ephemeral elements," can lead only to complete arbitrariness. Let us grant, for the sake of argument, that Scripture is inerrant and authoritative only in its religious, spiritual, theological teachings, but not in its assertions about historical and other "secular" matters. But now the problem begins. What is definitely "spiritual" in the Bible and what is not? What orthodox theology regards as definitely spiritual, theological content, is by no means regarded as axiomatically so by others. Take, for instance, the resurrection of Christ. Is this a theological, religious teaching, or an ephemeral aspect of the historical framework? To orthodox theology it is the former, to others, the latter. There is not a single assertion regarded by orthodox theology as definitely "religious" or "theological" which cannot be reduced by one who denies the authority of Scripture in "non-spiritual" matters to a mere ephemeral "surface form" which merely symbolizes an "underlying, fundamental idea," a la Aulen. Surely there cannot be any as-

assertion more basic, more "spiritual" and "theological" to historic Christianity than the affirmation that there is a personal God. Yet for Tillich, for example, even this most basic of all assertions is merely an anthropomorphic symbol of the real "truth" that God is simply an impersonal "it" rather than a "He," a "ground of existence," or "being itself." And yet this philosopher, who asserts that "the protest of atheism" against traditional theism with its concept of a personal God is "correct,"⁶⁸ claims to represent "Biblical truth," as correctly interpreted!

One shall have to conclude that the distinction between "spiritual" or "theological" and "non-spiritual" or "non-theological" elements in the Bible is simply fallacious, and, more than that, represents, to use Facker's phrase, "a kind of impenitence."⁶⁹ The distinction is wrong not merely when "taken too far," but in principle. There is no usus of such a principle which is not at the same time an abusus. Since Christianity is a historical religion, teaching the Incarnation of God in human history, its theological content necessarily involves historical elements, which cannot be separated from the "essence" of Christianity, any more than the scientist can produce a re-

⁶⁸Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1951), I, 245.

⁶⁹Facker, op. cit., p. 21.

fined, distilled "essence" of life severed from its physical, organic basis. Both operations result not in a partial mutilation, but in a complete sacrifice in principle. What Scripture teaches is inso facto theological, spiritual, true, and certain. All contrary notions must be dismissed, according to Luther and Pieper, as carnal, unspiritual intellectual pride and blindness.⁷⁰ Christ's own "undemythologizing" regard for "ephemeral" historical "trivialities" is exemplified pointedly in His remarkable declaration concerning an anonymous woman's anointing of Him: "And truly, I say to you, wherever this Gospel is preached in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her."⁷¹

Dr. Pieper teaches not only that Scripture does not err, but also that it cannot err (infallibility). To assert merely that, as far as one can tell, Scripture does not err, but that in principle it might err, and therefore an error might be found in the future, means that one's assertion of the inerrancy rests not on Scripture's own claims but on one's own empirical investigations. Pieper makes it quite clear that the inerrancy is not an a posteriori conclusion, derived from an empirical determination of whether errors actually appear or do not appear in the

⁷⁰Pieper, op. cit., I, 252, 255, 282.

⁷¹Mark 14:9.

Bible, but that it is an a priori certainty for faith, resting solely on Scripture's own claims for itself, claims which faith simply accepts without subjecting them to an empirical verification, which would be the crimen laesae majestatis. Moreover, resting one's belief in inerrancy on an empirical verification is to believe not a doctrine, but a human opinion based on research and subject to change. In principle one has already dispensed oneself from believing the inerrancy.

Whether a person takes the Christian attitude toward Scripture and lets Scripture be the Word of God, is seen at once from the attitude he takes as to the possibility of error in Scripture. Christ very definitely rules out the possibility of an error in Scripture when He says: "The Scripture cannot (οὐ δύναται) be broken." Philippi had not yet reached the Christian attitude toward Scripture when he wrote: "We would not like to say a priori with Calov that no error can have a place in Scripture." He had reached the attitude befitting the Christian when he retracted his statement in the third edition. . . . This a priori position is Luther's position. Luther has no thought of ascertaining the inerrancy of Scripture by human investigation (a posteriori), but before all investigation he is convinced that there can be no error in Scripture.⁷²

When the moderns say that they do not have an "a priori theory" of Scripture, this "means nothing else than that these theologians do not propose to teach what Scripture says of itself."⁷³ The determining factor is not Scripture but human reason. They "refuse to believe

⁷²Pieper, op. cit., I, 280-281.

⁷³Ibid., p. 298.

what Scripture says of itself, but would determine the character of Scripture a posteriori, by way of human investigation and criticism."⁷⁴ And, applying their empirical method to Scripture, they conclude that it is not inerrant.

The terms "a priori" and "a posteriori" are of course relational. Their meaning depends on the point of reference. For Pieper the point of reference is empirical investigation. It is in relation to this that belief in the inerrancy is a priori. But this belief is not a priori in relation to justifying faith, or, for that matter, in relation to the sedes doctrinae which teach the authority of Scripture. It would be a grave misrepresentation of Pieper to say that for him faith in Scripture precedes faith in Christ. He explicitly asserts the very opposite:

In dealing with an unbeliever we cannot begin with an attempt to convince him of the divine authority of Scripture. We must first bring him to the knowledge of his sins, and to faith in Christ, the Redeemer from sin.⁷⁵

Once the Holy Ghost has created faith in Christ in a person's heart, he will accept the entire Scripture as the infallible Word of God on the authority of His Word. This faith in Scripture, then, is not a human conviction, fides humana, but a Spirit-created certainty, fides divina. It

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 269.

⁷⁵Ibid., pp. 137-138.

rests not on reasonable, rational arguments but directly on the self-authenticating Word of God.⁷⁶

Aulen repeatedly scores the "theory of verbal inspiration" because it supposedly involves "rational demonstration." With regard to this charge Dr. Hamann hits the nail on the head when he says: "The good bishop forgets that to take seriously what the Word of God declares about itself is not a 'rational demonstration,' but an act of faith!"⁷⁷ The old theologians did indeed adduce various apologetical arguments, which Pieper, too, allows,⁷⁸ but these were understood to produce only a human conviction, fides humana. Real faith, fides divina, only Scripture itself can create: "The dogmaticians all answer that Scripture itself has the power to make us divinely certain of its authority."⁷⁹ This is the testimonium Spiritus Sancti internum. This inner testimony is nothing else than faith itself.⁸⁰ It is not a special feeling of some sort, nor is it separate from the revealed Word of God, i. e., Scripture. The Spirit bears witness to Scripture truth, the whole

⁷⁶Ibid., pp. 307ff.

⁷⁷H. Hamann, "Recent Trends Endangering Sound Lutheran Theology," The Australasian Theological Review, XXV (September, 1954), 64.

⁷⁸Pieper, op. cit., I, 311.

⁷⁹Preus, op. cit., p. 108.

⁸⁰Pieper, op. cit., I, 313.

Scripture truth, and nothing but the Scripture truth. Hence any appeal from the words of Scripture to the testimony of the Spirit is in principle impossible. Aulen presents the relation of this testimonium to revelation in the same way as here indicated, but since for him revelation is not the word of Scripture, he must understand the testimonium in an essentially subjectivistic, enthusiastic sense.

The Roman and modernistic argument that the appeal to the testimonium Spiritus Sancti interni for the authority of Scripture involves reasoning in a circle, Pieper answers by quoting Philippi: "That is the same thing as when a blind man accuses his seeing neighbor of arguing in a circle, claiming that the sun shines, since he sees by its light."⁸¹ This was also the reply of the old theologians, represented, for instance, by Gottfried Hoffmann:

As the first principles are known of themselves and shine in their own light, and as in the realm of nature light bears witness of itself and has no need of an outside light, so, too, the testimony of the Holy Ghost has no need of an outside testimony, but shines in its own light and abundantly proves itself to be divine by its own divine efficacy and power, in which it rejoices, although another cannot be persuaded of this unless he himself attentively reads Scripture and thus shares in this internal testimony.⁸²

Both the inspiration and the inerrancy of Scripture

⁸¹Ibid., p. 309.

⁸²Ibid.

are ascribed by Pieper to the original text of Scripture.⁸³ These properties, which apply properly only to the original text, apply derivatively to the copies, namely to the extent that they are correct reproductions of the original.⁸⁴ That the present copies do, in fact, transmit to us the Word of God correctly, we know both a priori and a posteriori. Christ both promised His Word to the Church until the Last Day⁸⁵ and asserted the reliability of the Old Testament text which He used. Thus He applies the general principle, "Scripture cannot be broken,"⁸⁶ to a concrete text from a contemporary copy. Of those who lived hundreds of years after Moses had written, Christ said: "They have Moses and the Prophets."⁸⁷ Finally, "in His temptation (Matthew 4) Christ operates with the *λογισμῶν* as with an immovable certain text. We do not read that the devil brought up the matter of 'variant readings.'⁸⁸ Thus we know a priori, from Christ's promises to His Church and from His own normative example, that the original text of Scripture has been faithfully transmitted to us. And a posteriori we

⁸³Ibid., p. 223.

⁸⁴Ibid., pp. 343ff.

⁸⁵Matt. 28:20; John 8:31ff.; 17:20.

⁸⁶John 10:35.

⁸⁷Luke 16:29.

⁸⁸Pieper, op. cit., I, 239.

likewise see, as also neologists admit, that "not a single Christian doctrine has been rendered doubtful in any point by the 'legion' of variant readings."⁸⁹

Before closing this discussion of the inspiration and inerrancy, a few historical comments should be made. Pieper cites neologists who concede that the Church Fathers held the same doctrine of Scripture as the "older Protestant dogmaticians."⁹⁰ In a separate chapter on "Luther and the Inspiration of Holy Scripture,"⁹¹ Pieper demonstrates that what the dogmaticians taught Luther taught also--only in stronger terms; and Pieper exposes some modernistic hoaxes with regard to Luther's position. Regarding those adherents of the modernistic theory of Scripture who claimed agreement with Luther, Pieper concludes, on the basis of the evidence, that "their wish to have Luther as their protector was stronger than their sense of historical truth."⁹²

Unlike Aulen's book, which cites only a few brief, usually epigrammatic, inconclusive phrases from Luther, Pieper's dogmatics is so replete with relevant, often

⁸⁹Ibid.

⁹⁰Ibid., p. 266.

⁹¹Ibid., pp. 276ff.

⁹²Ibid., p. 297.

lengthy, specific, and therefore conclusive Luther-quotes, that the reader cannot but be impressed with the author's veritable immersion in Luther's thought. Therefore it is no wonder that Pieper reiterates Walther's claim that the theology of the Missouri Synod, though it highly values the seventeenth century dogmatists, nevertheless has its roots deeper, in the Biblical, Confessional "stream that gushed forth in crystal purity in the sixteenth century,"⁹³ and notices in the later dogmatists already a certain pollution of that stream.

With respect to the Lutheran Confessions Pieper notes that "it is generally admitted in our day that they presuppose Verbal Inspiration as an unquestioningly established doctrine."⁹⁴ Therefore, when modern Lutherans, who deny the inspiration, use one of the stock arguments of modern theology, i.e., that the Confessions contain no separate article on inspiration or revelation, Dr. Pieper is at a loss to understand how they can find comfort in that fact.⁹⁵

Regarding the Reformed position, in relation to the Lutheran, Pieper makes this illuminating statement:

⁹³Ibid., p. 166.

⁹⁴Ibid., p. 266.

⁹⁵Ibid., p. 181.

It has become the fashion to say that the difference between the Reformed and the Lutheran Church consists in this, that the Reformed Church "more-exclusively" makes Scripture the source of the Christian doctrine, while the Lutheran Church, being more deeply "rooted in the past" and of a more "conservative" nature, accepts not only Scripture, but also tradition as authoritative. But this is not in accord with the facts.⁹⁶

And then Dr. Pieper shows that it is precisely the Lutheran Church which maintains the sola Scriptura in practice, while the Reformed Church, in the points in which it disagrees with Lutheranism, sets aside the sola Scriptura in favor of preconceived philosophical notions.

For the "Fundamentalists," in so far as they oppose modernism, Pieper has nothing but praise.⁹⁷ And a present day representative of Dr. Pieper's theology observes:

"Fundamentalism" is an expression which befits the mouth of true Lutherans neither as a title of honor nor as a term of reproach. If one uses the term to belittle those who cling to the entire Scripture and to the reality of the facts of salvation, one only gives joy to the liberals, puts oneself into the wrong, and betrays genuine Lutheranism.⁹⁸

These judgments rest on the fact, admitted also, as the following quote shows, by honest and informed modernists, that in so far as "Fundamentalism" opposes modernism, it is not a recent sectarian development but simply the his-

⁹⁶Ibid., p. 25.

⁹⁷Ibid., pp. 128-129, 271-272.

⁹⁸"'Kirchenbund rechts' gegen 'Kirchenbund links,'" Lutherischer Rundblick, I, 26.

toric, traditional Christian faith:

Fundamentalism is as old as the Reformation, though the name is of recent origin. The differences that have separated the Protestant sects have been peripheral; the great doctrines of the orthodoxy have been central, held by all. About half a century ago the inroads of liberalism caused the conservative elements in all the denominations to draw together. . . . Asserting that there could be no compromise on the unchanging fundamentals of the Christian faith, they adopted as a rallying cry the name of "fundamentalist." They claimed that they were reaffirming the faith as Luther held it, and Calvin, and Knox . . . Wesley, and the great missionaries and evangelists, and most of the theologians until very recent times. And in that claim they were undoubtedly correct. The great Protestant creeds enunciated the doctrines which are now called "fundamentalist."⁹⁹

Presuppositions of Sola Scriptura: Clarity

As was shown above, even if one were to grant the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture, one still could not maintain the sola Scriptura, the Scripture principle, unless one also believed that Scripture is clear or perspicuous. The Roman Church is the perfect example of the antithesis. Maintaining the inspiration, and usually the inerrancy, Rome denies the perspicuity of Scripture in the interests of the interpretative function of "the Church," i.e., the pope. Pressed by the Lutheran theologians, Rome indeed had to concede that according to its own claims Scripture is clear and lucid; but Rome interpreted this

⁹⁹Theodore G. Soares, Three Typical Beliefs (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1937), pp. 37ff.

to mean that Scripture is clear inasmuch as "the Church" is there to explain it. But, as the Lutherans showed, such a "clarity" is meaningless: "In that way also the riddles of the Sphinx could be called clear and lucid, since Oedipus could solve them."¹⁰⁰

For Dr. Pieper the clarity or perspicuity of Scripture consists in the fact that Scripture clearly and unambiguously teaches all the articles of faith, i.e., Christian doctrine or dogma. And this is enough for the purpose of leading men to salvation. That Scripture itself claims to be clear Pieper shows from numerous texts.¹⁰¹ That there are obscure passages, not to be construed contrary to the sense of the clear texts, Pieper of course acknowledges. But the entire corpus doctrinae of Christian truth is revealed in clear texts. Nor does Pieper claim a knowledge proper only to a theologia gloriae. He rather maintains that our knowledge is partial and limited, according to the words of the Apostle: "For now we see through a glass darkly."¹⁰² This means that during our earthly pilgrimage we walk by faith, knowing God not directly but only "in the cloak of His Word," whereas in heaven faith will cease and the beatific vision ("but then face to face") will commence.

¹⁰⁰Pieper, op. cit., I, 328.

¹⁰¹Ibid., pp. 320ff.

¹⁰²1 Cor. 13:12.

But this does not militate against the clarity of Scripture at all. However limited the knowledge given in Biblical dogma may be, it is nevertheless real knowledge. As for the mysteries of the articles of faith, e.g., the Trinity, Personal Union, Real Presence, etc., which Erasmus had urged against Luther's doctrine that Scripture is clear, these do not at all prove Erasmus' point. Scripture clearly and unambiguously reveals the "that" of these mysteries, and faith maintains the "that." But the "how" is neither revealed in Scripture, nor fathomed by faith, nor necessary to know. Surely Pieper would endorse Nagel's judgment:

In the smoke-filled contemporary dialectic and abstruse humbug a keen gust of Knoxian clarity is most bracing. "Orthodox theology is not easily intelligible, for on the face of it it passes man's understanding. But however difficult it may be to fathom, it can be stated on a half-sheet of note-paper."¹⁰³

Sola Scriptura Applied: Hermeneutics

In order to maintain the sola Scriptura principle it is not enough to grant the presuppositions of inspiration, inerrancy, and perspicuity, but it is necessary to insure the practical application of sola Scriptura by insisting on the canon: Scriptura Scripturam interpretatur,

¹⁰³N. Nagel, "Anglican Christology of the Upper Stream From Lux Mundi to Essays Catholic and Critical," Concordia Theological Monthly, XXVI (June, 1955), 419.

Scripture interprets Scripture.¹⁰⁴ God's Word must interpret itself, and no human interpreting agency, such as Church, Confessions, tradition, exegetes, "regenerate ego," etc., can be allowed to usurp the self-interpreting function of Scripture, which would be a denial of the sola Scriptura.¹⁰⁵

If Scripture is to interpret itself, this must be safeguarded by means of correct hermeneutical principles. Though Pieper treats this matter in his dogmatics, he covers it more thoroughly in a series of lectures delivered to the student body of the St. Louis Seminary. In these lectures Dr. Pieper reiterates and discusses Dr. Walther's theses on the Lutheran Church as God's True Visible Church on earth. Especially relevant are the following theses:

The Evangelical Lutheran Church recognizes only the literal sense as the true sense.¹⁰⁶

The Evangelical Lutheran Church maintains that the literal sense is only one.¹⁰⁷

The Evangelical Lutheran Church recognizes that the literal sense can be the improper as well as the proper; but she does not depart from the proper meaning of a word or sentence, unless Scripture itself

¹⁰⁴Francis Pieper, Vortraege Ueber die Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche, die Wahre Sichtbare Kirche Gottes auf Erden (St. Louis: Seminary Press, 1916), p. 58.

¹⁰⁵Pieper, Dogmatics, I, 359ff.

¹⁰⁶Pieper, Vortraege, p. 70.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., p. 72.

demand this: namely, either the circumstances of the text itself, or a parallel passage, or the analogy of faith.¹⁰⁸

"Analogy of faith" here naturally does not mean some human construct, some mystical magnitude like the "whole of Scripture" as distinguished from specific texts, an idea which Pieper, with Kliefoth, calls an "inconceivable concept."¹⁰⁹ Rather, the "analogy of faith" is nothing else than the clear Scripture texts themselves, which deal of the various doctrines.¹¹⁰ According to these principles the task of exegesis is not to penetrate beneath "shifting forms" to "underlying ideas," but to set forth the literal sense of the Scriptural statements and to abide thereby.

The crucial importance of these hermeneutical principles in Dr. Pieper's theology can be appreciated by reflecting on the consequences of their denial. Suppose someone claimed that he accepted Scripture as inspired, inerrant, sufficient, and clear, but then maintained that one does not have to abide by the literal, proper sense of Scripture, but may depart from it even without intra-Scriptural reasons, simply on the basis of the demands of human scholarship. If the Genesis account of the creation and fall cannot in its literal form be conveniently reconciled

¹⁰⁸Ibid., p. 78.

¹⁰⁹Pieper, Dormatics, I, 201.

¹¹⁰Ibid., p. 361.

with current scientific notions, such as the theory of evolution, then Genesis must be understood figuratively, even though neither the text, nor the context, nor the analogy of faith demand the figurative sense. And if the principle applies in one part of Scripture it must apply in another. If Genesis may be taken figuratively, without any intra-Scriptural grounds, then the same may be done with the words of Institution of the Blessed Sacrament, "This is My body." For does not the literal sense become impossible since it contradicts what we know about the nature of bodies, etc. ? And then follow all the rationalistic arguments of the Reformed, and preconceived human notions and philosophical assumptions cancel the sola Scriptura. Not a single doctrine is safe from this dissolving process. Scripture becomes as obscure as a Delphic oracle and everyone is free to import his own meanings into it at will. No matter what grandiloquent titles of honor are still bestowed upon Scripture, in reality it is no longer the norm and authority, but a mere waxen nose, arbitrarily manipulated by autonomous man in accordance with the dictates of his reason, namely the usus rationis magisterialis. Scripture then is supreme no longer in fact but only in name. It no longer rules but it merely reigns, i.e., its formal, de jure authority is used to give a semblance of legitimacy and validity to the actual or de facto doctrinal authority of the theological "expert."

These hermeneutical principles are directly related to

the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture. When Pieper teaches the inerrancy of Scripture, he affirms this of the literal sense, as defined in the above theses. A moment's reflection will show that if inerrancy applied to some sense other than the literal, it would be quite meaningless, for absolutely any human writing, including Aesop's fables, would be "true" or "inerrant" at some level of generalization. Once the literal sense is given up, everything is "true," provided one advances far enough up the ladder of generalization and abstraction. Either the Bible is inerrant in its literal sense, or it is no more inerrant than other books. It is clear then, that for Pieper the principles of hermeneutics are not a department by itself, a separate, minor side-issue which does not materially affect the doctrine of Scripture itself. No such air-tight compartmentalization is possible. Unless the proper hermeneutical principles are maintained, all professions of "verbal inspiration," "inerrancy," "sole Scriptura," etc., are quite meaningless, since the meaning of these terms is absolutely dependent on the definition of what constitutes the sense of Scripture.

Sola Scriptura and Creeds

The underlying, fundamental issue to be considered under this heading is whether Scripture truth can be restated

in non-Scriptural terms and still remain Scripture truth. With Luther, Pieper answers affirmatively.¹¹¹ If it were not so, what would be the point in God's giving of an inspired and inerrant Scripture, if its teachings cannot be brought into any positive relation with the rest of human thought, if, in other words, Scripture's meaning remains obscure and unattainable? Pieper approvingly cites this significant quote from Quenstedt:

Although some points belonging to the Faith are not expressly, according to the letter, or in so many words contained in the Scripture, yet it is sufficient that they are found there according to the substance or sense, so that they may be derived and deduced therefrom by means of a correct and obvious deduction. . . . For deductions properly drawn from Scripture are God's Word according to the substance and sense, though not according to the letter or sound. "What is properly . . . deduced from Scripture is equal to that which is written," as Gregory of Nazianzen says in the 37th speech in the 5th question about theology.¹¹²

In other words, as long as the sense of Scripture is preserved, the terms may be extra-Scriptural. This does not render such formulations mere "human formulations," interpretations, etc., which are not quite true. Scripture truth remains Scripture truth even when it is restated. The dogmatists referred to this as the unity of the Word of God.¹¹³ They taught that the Word of God was the same

¹¹¹Ibid., p. 57.

¹¹²Pieper, Vorträge, p. 92.

¹¹³Preus, op. cit., pp. 17ff.

whether it existed in the mind of God, in the minds of the sacred writers, or in the minds of the blessed in heaven or the believers on earth. In this view the individual words of Scripture are not viewed in a mystical-magical-mechanical way.¹¹⁴ Rather the emphasis is on the meaning and sense of the divinely chosen words.

For Pieper orthodox Creeds and Confessions and other formulations are not merely historically-conditioned approximations to a transcendent truth which can never be reached, but they are simply restatements of clearly revealed Scripture truth. Theological formulations can and must be nothing else than doctrina divina itself.¹¹⁵ This means that just as faith in Scripture is not an implicit Koehlerglaube but a belief of definite doctrine, so also the Confessions of the Church are viewed not as mere "doctrinal bases" to be construed by individuals,¹¹⁶ but as actual doctrine, as specific doctrinal positions, which are not esoteric but knowable and subject to restatement.

The distinction, which Pieper shows to be thoroughly

¹¹⁴Cf. infra, pp. 109ff.

¹¹⁵Pieper, Dogmatics, I, 52.

¹¹⁶The Lutheran World Federation had declared, through the Secretary of its Executive Committee, that the Federation had merely a doctrinal basis, but no actual doctrine. Regarding such a view of the Confessions Dr. Cesch observes in an open letter to Dr. Lilje: "The Lutheran World Federation has evaded the Confessional question with modern elegance." Wilhelm M. Cesch, "Offener Brief an Bischof D.

Scriptural,¹¹⁷ between theologia ἀρχίτυπος and theologia ἑκτύπος is relevant here. The former, archetypal theology, is God's knowledge of Himself, while the latter, ectypal theology, is man's knowledge of God and divine things. Ectypal theology is revealed theology. It must correspond to the revealed truth, i.e., Holy Scripture. "Christian theology must be ectypal; it cannot be anything else than an exact replica of the divine doctrine contained in Scripture." Whatever does not conform to the original (archetypal theology), is not theology at all, in the Scriptural sense, but is mataologia, a heretical, empty babbling. And whatever is clearly revealed in Scripture is ipso facto binding Church-doctrine, and not an open question, even though the Confessions of the Church do not mention the matter.¹¹⁸

For Aulen such a view is in principle impossible, because Scripture itself is not regarded as the truth, but as merely a human "testimony" to some transcendent truth. And if Scripture itself is not doctrina divina, God's own teaching, then much less can any restatement of Scripture be this. There simply is no real doctrinal authority, and

Lilje, " Lutherischer Rundblick, IV (Juni, 1956), 35.

¹¹⁷Pioper, Dogmatics, I, 58.

¹¹⁸ibid., pp. 93ff., 174.

consequently no real truth, doctrina divina, is available to man. Therefore Aulen is forced to speak of a "penetration" through "shifting forms" to "underlying religious themes," a position of eternal skepticism.

For Dr. Pieper the sola Scriptura principle means that truth can and must be known and confessed in the face of heretical and sectarian opposition. This means that the individual theologian can and must be certain that his theological position is in complete accord with the Word and truth of God.¹¹⁹ Koehlerglaube, i.e., implicit belief in whatever Scripture says, without knowing what in fact it does say, is spiritually valueless. Certainty, resting on the inner testimony of the Holy Spirit, i.e., the self-authenticating nature of Scripture, embraces definite doctrinal positions and is not merely a non-intellectual impression of having encountered God in an actualistically-fideistically understood revelation, as Aulen pictures it.¹²⁰

That all this has clear ecclesiological implications, is evident both in Aulen and in Pieper. Aulen indeed lists "the Word" as a constitutive factor of the Church; but since he understands "the Word" non-doctrinally and therefore fideistically, he cannot but regard doctrinal uniformity as

¹¹⁹Ibid., pp. 110ff.

¹²⁰Aulen, op. cit., pp. 112ff.

a false, mechanical objectivization, which is not determinative for the Church's unity.¹²¹ Since no one denominational confession is identical with "the faith of the Christian Church,"¹²² a kind of Deistic ecclesiology results: There is not a True Visible Church and false churches, but all denominations are more or less groping in the twilight, supplementing each others' partial "insights": "The various denominations are all members in that one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church, because and in so far as the constitutive factors are active in each one."¹²³ The Church is frankly equated with the aggregate of the empirical denominations. With the rejection of the possibility of doctrina divina and of the corresponding concept of the True Visible Church, the conclusion becomes inevitable that all the groping denominations need each others' "partial truth," and thus the theoretical foundation for the "Ecumenical Movement" is laid.

For Dr. Pieper the teachings of the Lutheran Confessions are identical with "the pure divine truth, as it is revealed in God's infallible word."¹²⁴ Thus Lutheranism is not one among many sects, each adding its own super-

¹²¹Ibid., p. 341.

¹²²Ibid., pp. 16ff.

¹²³Ibid., p. 346.

¹²⁴Pieper, Dogmatics, I, 185.

structure to a common core of "generic Christianity." Rather, Lutheran doctrine is Christian, Scriptural, catholic doctrine and vice versa. The Reformation did not in any way change the Christian doctrine, but simply recovered the Apostolic doctrine in its pristine purity,¹²⁵ a view which Aulen explicitly rejects as "absurd."¹²⁶ There is no epistemological cynicism, nor the corresponding ecclesiological Deism, in Pieper, but only the clear conviction of faith that God is near to His Church:

The talk common in our day that all church bodies stand on Scripture and differ only in their interpretations of it is not in accordance with the facts. The Roman Catholic Church does not stand on Scripture, but on the papal interpretation of Scripture. The Reformed Churches, as far as they differ from the Lutheran Church, do not stand on Scripture, but on Zwingli's, Calvin's, etc., interpretation of Scripture. The Lutheran Church, however, does not stand on an interpretation of Scripture, but on Scripture itself. This is not a mere assertion. It can be proved by induction in the face of universal contradiction.¹²⁷

¹²⁵Ibid., pp. 131-132.

¹²⁶Aulen, op. cit., p. 67.

¹²⁷Pieper, Dogmatics, I, 367.

CHAPTER IV

SO-CALLED PHILOSOPHICAL PRE-SUPPOSITIONS

Faith and Metaphysics

It is quite possible, on the basis of wrong or ambiguous definitions, to proceed to "liberate" theology from philosophy in such a way that in the end theology is "liberated" from everything except empty verbal husks, i.e., certain traditional words, all vital content and meaning having been drained off under the pretense of removing "antiquated philosophical pre-suppositions" or "thought-forms." A good illustration of this is Joseph Sittler's Christology.¹ Alleging that the Nicene Christology is based on an antiquated, "static" view of essences, Sittler proceeds to remove this defective philosophy and to substitute modern, "relevant," "dynamic," "functional," etc., categories, while insisting that he is preserving the "religious intention of Nicea" and leaving the theology entirely unchanged. When this operation has been accomplished, the following Christology is left: Christ has only one nature, namely the human. This is perfectly sufficient from the Hebraic and the modern points of view. Only Hellenic thought considered the one human nature inadequate and had

¹Joseph Sittler, "A Christology of Function," The Lutheran Quarterly, VI (May, 1954), 122-131.

to add yet another, the divine nature. The pre-existence of Christ means that God from all eternity foreknew this person, Jesus, who, however, did not exist as a person before his birth in Bethlehem. This is said to correspond to Hebrew thought-forms, according to which whatever God intends and foreknows, may already be said to possess actual existence. In other words, here we have a total denial of the deity of Christ and of His pre-existence. Yet our traditional terms remain, with reinterpretations of course, and we are told that the theology has not changed at all, but that only certain antiquated philosophical elements have been removed. By means of such a theological evaporation process theology is left holding empty verbal bags, while all substance and content has been eliminated as "philosophy." This example illustrates the need for great care in defining what one means by "philosophy" as distinguished from theology.

For Dr. Pieper, as has been shown in the previous chapters, whatever Scripture teaches is ipso facto theological, even though it may also belong to such areas of human knowledge as history, geography, and, by the same token, philosophy. The pronouncements of Scripture on any subject are ipso facto authoritative and binding for the theologian. And philosophy does not constitute a special sanctuary or haven of refuge, which is not subject to the jurisdiction of Scriptural authority. No area of knowledge is exempt

from the correction of sacred, i.e., Scriptural theology, and no human assertion gains special immunity by being assigned to "philosophy." Thus Pieper does not hesitate to enter the field of cosmogony: "Concerning the creation of the world and man the Christian theologian teaches what God has told him in Genesis 1 and 2 and elsewhere in Scripture; and so his doctrine is divine doctrine."² And later he remarks with what in the light of modern theology can appear only as studied nonchalance: "Thus Scripture gives us reliable information on the metaphysical problems concerning the nature and the origin of things (Col. 1:16-17; Gen. 1: 11-12), for which the philosophers have not yet found a satisfactory answer."³

For Aulen this view is the height of heresy. He asserts again and again that metaphysical statements have nothing to do with the statements of faith, that there is no connection whatever between the two kinds of statements.⁴ Revelation simply is not the sort of thing which can correct or supplement or in any other way be related to rational or empirical knowledge.⁵ Aulen's ostensible rejection of meta-

²Francis Pieper, Christian Dogmatics (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950), I, 53.

³Ibid., p. 103.

⁴Gustaf Aulen, The Faith of the Christian Church (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1948), pp. 95ff.

⁵Ibid., pp. 14, 96, 108.

physics⁶ suggests very much the same thing as the example of theological evaporation adduced from Sittler. The suspicion is strengthened by Aulen's obviously derogatory reference to "the metaphysical formulas of ancient Christology,"⁷ and is completely confirmed by a perusal of what Aulen actually teaches about Christology and the Trinity.⁸

But what is the meaning of "revealed knowledge" in the face of the metaphysics-faith antithesis? Only an actualistic, fideistic understanding of revelation, to the exclusion of the intellectual, dianoetic, doctrinal element seems to fit the formula. For if faith involves any kind of knowledge communicable in propositions, then the propositions which impart this knowledge must either remain unintelligible (in which case there is no knowledge in the proper sense of the word), or they must proceed from the known to the unknown and thus use concepts already familiar from other areas of human experience. In that case, how-

⁶Aulen's own use of the term "love" (cf. Appendix) seems no less metaphysical than concepts like "essence," "being," etc. Aulen's rejection of metaphysics is of course mere illusion, the only alternative to metaphysics being bad metaphysics. Says Aristotle: "You say one must philosophize. Then you must philosophize. You say one should not philosophize. Then, to say this, you must philosophize. In any case you must philosophize." Aristotle, Protreptikos, quoted in Jaroslav Pelikan, From Luther to Kierkegaard (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950), p. 15.

⁷Aulen, op. cit., p. 54.

⁸Cf. Appendix.

ever, the affirmations of faith are very firmly tied to the rest of human knowledge, i.e., to metaphysics, or so-called "rational" or "theoretical" knowledge. But what can be the meaning of "non-rational" or "non-theoretical" knowledge, i.e., a "knowledge" which excludes the dianoetic element? In any case, either there is a connection between the affirmations of faith and those of metaphysics, or the affirmations of faith are not really affirmations in the proper sense, since they do not communicate any knowledge properly so called. Since Aulen denies that there is a connection, he must deny the possibility of real theological knowledge, though he may use the term in a figurative sense.

This interpretation is corroborated by Aulen's insistence that all statements of faith, without exception, are of a symbolic nature, and that if these statements are not regarded as symbolic, as has occurred in the past, it is a sure sign that the statements of faith have been transformed into metaphysical statements!⁹

Let us examine the statement: "Christ's body and blood are eaten and drunk in the Holy Sacrament." What is symbolic about this statement of faith? If, as Pieper, does, one accepts Scripture as ultimate authority, there can be nothing symbolic about this statement, at least nothing any

⁹Aulen, op. cit., pp. 96ff.

more symbolic than is found in any statement on anything. But even if it be granted that in some theological propositions certain terms are symbolic and represent, to an extent, unknown magnitudes, this does not mean that some very precise and literal affirmations may not be made about this "unknown magnitude." One may, for example, make some very precise, literal, non-symbolic affirmations about the relations of unknown magnitudes to known magnitudes or even to other magnitudes of unknown nature. Given the facts, for instance, that x and y are unknown magnitudes, and that $3x$ equals y , one has a literal, precise assertion about the relation, or one of the relations, obtaining between the unknown magnitudes x and y .

Now, however, let us analyze Aulen's own statement:

Since God is the whole content of Christian faith, and since the expressions which must be used in faith's affirmations about this God belong to this finite world, the affirmations are necessarily of a figurative or symbolic character.¹⁰

First of all one would ask, from Pieper's point of view, what Aulen means when he says that "God is the whole content of Christian faith." How else can this be understood, especially in the light of what follows, except as fideism and mysticism, to the exclusion of the doctrinal, dianoetic element in both faith and revelation? Secondly, let us take the statement that "the affirmations are necessarily

¹⁰Ibid.

of a figurative or symbolic character." Now, is this statement itself an affirmation of faith? Or does not "faith" realize that its affirmations are strictly symbolic? Or, if "faith" realizes this, does it simply agree to ignore this inconvenient circumstance and proceed as if this were not so? Evidently, however, faith knows, for Aulen says that the symbolic nature of faith's affirmations is something of which "faith itself is quite conscious."¹¹ So then the statement "the affirmations are necessarily of a figurative or symbolic character" is itself an affirmation of faith. And if so, then this statement itself is "of a figurative or symbolic character," in which case, however, it seems quite meaningless, for of what would it be a figure or symbol? If, on the other hand, this one affirmation of faith is not symbolic, why should it be the lone exception? In point of fact Aulen does not regard that statement as symbolic at all. He takes it quite literally. And the same is true of countless other statements in his book. Take, for example, this sentence, selected at random: "divine revelation cannot be identified or confused with anything historical and human."¹² Which word or words are symbolic here? Even "divine revelation" is previously

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ibid., p. 57.

defined quite non-symbolically as "the activity of the divine will in history."

Or are none of the above statements "affirmations of faith"? If this is the case, what are they doing in a book entitled "The Faith of the Christian Church"? Or are they simply "theoretical" statements? If so, they evidently claim to assert something about "religious statements," i.e., the "affirmations of faith." But if the affirmations of faith have nothing whatever to do with metaphysical or "theoretical" affirmations, as Aulen urges repeatedly, then there cannot be any relation between the two kinds of statements, and the concept "theoretical statements about religious statements" is by definition a self-contradiction. How can "theoretical" statements (or any kind of statements, provided there are non-theoretical statements, which however seems like a contradiction in terms) possibly assert something about an object which has no relation whatever to them? Again, the only way out is the fideistic-mystical dissolution of the dianoetic element in faith and revelation e limine. The so-called affirmations of faith are seen to be no authentic affirmations at all, in any genuine, dianoetic sense.

In order to understand what Aulen means by an affirmation of faith, as distinguished from "theoretical" or rational-metaphysical statements, one should look at Wingren's analysis of Aulen's fellow-Lundensian, Anders

Nygren.¹³ According to Wingren, Nygren's theology has the following philosophical starting point:

Nygren analyzes human culture in terms of three basic categories, the theoretical (truth), the ethical (goodness), and the aesthetic (beauty). Next Nygren performs what he calls the transcendental deduction of the validity of the religious category, which deals with the issue of eternity. The three categories of human culture, argues Nygren, presuppose a fourth one, namely the religious category, which alone can give validity to the other three. If therefore the other three categories are valid, then the religious one is valid also.

But "validity" here means nothing positive or real. It is only an "if . . . then" proposition. Furthermore, the separation of the theoretical and the religious categories means that the question of truth is completely bypassed, for "religious" statements are excluded from the realm of the "theoretical," i.e., truth. Religious statements are neither true nor false but simply religious. They are the answers of the various historically given religions to the philosophically posed question of the religious category. Hence the task of theology is simply descriptive. It does not seek to answer the question of truth, but it

¹³Gustaf Wingren, Theology in Conflict (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1958), pp. 3-22.

limits itself to the description of a historical religion in terms of its basic "motifs." As Wingren puts it, theology consists of theoretical statements about religious statements.

Aulen takes positions in his book which make it difficult if not impossible to avoid the conclusion that he shares Nygren's approach and system. In the very beginning Aulen says: "Systematic theology is differentiated from philosophy of religion, which aims to establish the specifically religious 'category' and its place in the life of the human spirit."¹⁴ The same is said even more explicitly a little later, and the three categories of Nygren are listed. The task of theology is defined as purely descriptive. "Faith" is contrasted with theoretical knowledge.¹⁵ All the essential features of Nygren's system are thus represented also in Aulen.

Most revealing is a comparison of Pieper and Aulen on the matter of natural theology. Pieper, on the basis of Romans 1:20, asserts that man can and does by nature know that there is a personal God, the Creator, before whom man is morally responsible.¹⁶ Aulen, on the other hand, rejects

¹⁴Aulen, op. cit., p. 3.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 95.

¹⁶Pieper, op. cit., p. 371.

post-Reformation natural theology as "metaphysics."¹⁷ Although Aulen recognizes "traces of a divine revelation" in nature, he maintains that the God "demonstrated" by natural theology has "only the name in common with the God of faith." The reference is to the various arguments for the existence of God.¹⁸ The phrase "God the Creator" does not refer to the origin of the universe at all, since that would be metaphysics or theoretical knowledge.¹⁹ Rather, "creation is that work of divine love through which this love appears as the sovereign power in relation to existence." Not only can nothing really be known of God by nature, but even faith affirms nothing more meaningful about God's relation to the universe than that somehow "divine love"--apparently a meaningless expression, for about the Subject of that love, that which renders the love "divine," nothing is known--manifests itself in the universe, or rather in existence.

But if there is no real natural knowledge of God, then there cannot be any real revealed knowledge of God. For revelation must either use known or unknown concepts. If it uses known concepts, then there must be a previous natural knowledge which provides the Anknuepfungspunkt, and up-

¹⁷Aulen, op. cit., pp. 13, 32.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 182.

on which revelation can build. But if revelation uses unknown concepts, then it is meaningless, and hence is no revelation at all, at least in the traditional sense, which involves the noetic element. Therefore, either Aulen's denial of natural knowledge is an illusion, or he operates with a strictly fideistic notion of revelation, to the total exclusion of any real knowledge.

Aulen's thinking is mirrored rather interestingly in the following argument regarding the deity of Christ, which, as is clear from the entire presentation, he denies:

The question about the "divinity" of Christ cannot . . . be put in such a way as to imply that God is the known magnitude and that with this given concept of God we can measure the divinity of Christ.²⁰

It is only in Christ that we see "what kind of being God is," namely that he is simply love. But to ask, is this Jesus the eternal God, who created the universe? is to have pre-conceived metaphysical notions of God. But if "love" is the known and God the unknown, is not "love" used as a metaphysical concept? And does not the formula "love is God" do more justice to the situation than "God is love"? Does God, in fact, even exist, namely as a personal Being? Aulen answers that the "term 'person' with reference to God, is a figure of speech,"²¹ and that "God's power is nothing else than the power of love." It is dif-

²⁰Ibid., p. 214.

²¹Ibid., p. 159.

difficult to see how this can be reconciled with Christian theism, which to Aulen must be a species of "metaphysics."

Epistemology

The entire previous discussion is but one aspect of the entire matter of the relation of reason and faith. Pieper's view may be summarized very briefly as follows:²² Truth is one, and therefore right reason and right theology cannot contradict each other. Since after the Fall human reason is blind in spiritual things, and since Scripture is God's authoritative revelation and the only source of Christian doctrine, reason must be subjected to Scripture. Here a twofold use of reason must be distinguished: Reason as arbiter and purveyor of truth, as judge, as doctrinal content (usus rationis magisterialis), and reason as pure instrumentality, as mental receptivity (usus rationis ministerialis sive instrumentalis). And just as the legitimacy of the former, when exercised upon Scripture, must be categorically denied as a violation of the sola Scriptura principle, so the latter must of necessity be maintained as the only means of apprehending or receiving the divine revelation given in human language and hence addressed to man through his intellect.

The usus instrumentalis includes

²²Pieper, op. cit., pp. 196ff.

also the observance of the laws of language (grammar) and the laws of human thinking (logic) as used in Scripture, for God has adopted the human tongue and the human manner of thinking.²³

The argument retains its full force if one substitutes for the traditional definition of logic as the science of the laws of thought, the modern one, which regards logic as the science of implication and leaves the "laws of thought" to the psychologists:

The logical distinction between valid and invalid inferences does not refer to the way we think--the process going on in someone's mind. The weight of evidence is not itself a temporal event, but a relation of implication between certain classes or types of propositions. Whether, for instance, it necessarily follows from Euclid's axioms and postulates that the area of no square can be exactly equal to that of a circle is a question of what is necessarily involved in what is asserted by our propositions; and how anyone actually thinks is irrelevant to it.²⁴

The usus ministerialis, then, is a necessary corollary of the belief in verbal, propositional, doctrinal revelation, such as we have it in Scripture. Hence the realm of logic is not something foreign or extraneous, non-theologically "philosophical," sort of a private domain of Aristotle (who after all did not invent logic but merely systematized it). If the laws of logic are involved in understanding Scripture, then these same laws were involved in writing it

²³Ibid., pp. 197-198.

²⁴Morris R. Cohen and Ernest Nagel, An Introduction to Logic and Scientific Method (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1934), p. 18.

in the first place. Hence Packer writes: "Moses, the prophets, Christ, the apostles, all spoke God's words to men; and what they said took the form of statements and inference, argument and deduction." And in a delightful little accompanying footnote Packer quotes Kamm:

With reference to logical forms our Lord used analogy, Luke xi. 13; reductio ad absurdum, Matt. xii. 26; excluded middle, Matt. xii. 30; a fortiori, Matt. xii. 1-8; implication, Matt. xii. 28; and law of non-contradiction, Luke vi. 39.²⁵

In point of fact, logic cannot even be denied without assuming it! For to deny anything, or even to state anything, is to presuppose the law of non-contradiction; and the denial of this law is self-contradictory.

It has become the fashion to distinguish an intellectualistic-rationalistic Orthodoxy from a Biblical-dynamic Reformation, especially with respect to the use of reason and the doctrine of Scripture. Emil Brunner,²⁶ for example, asserts this conflict, and insists that the old Orthodox doctrine of Scripture, i.e., Verbal Inspiration, is no longer tenable in the light of modern knowledge. Not infrequently the supposed untenability of Orthodoxy is linked with the

²⁵J. I. Packer, "Fundamentalism" and the Word of God (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1958), p. 93.

²⁶Emil Brunner, Religionsphilosophie Evangelischer Theologie (Muenchen: Leibnitz Verlag, 1948), pp. 13-15; Emil Brunner, Offenbarung und Vernunft (Zurich: Zwingli Verlag, 1941), pp. 150ff., 191ff., 269ff.

name of Immanuel Kant. Thus, according to John Baillie, it was Kant who undermined Orthodoxy's foundation.²⁷ A particularly concise and relevant instance of this tendency occurs in a relatively recent volume, in the form of the remarkable assertion that

a repristination of classical Lutheran Orthodoxy was impossible after Kant; he had destroyed the epistemological presuppositions upon which Orthodoxy had built its system. For that reason the attempts that were made to repristinate Orthodoxy failed to produce a lasting theology.²⁸

According to this statement Dr. Pieper's theology either (1) is not a repristination of classical Lutheran Orthodoxy, or (2) is not a "lasting theology," its epistemological presuppositions having been destroyed by Kant. Since the theology of Walther and Pieper claimed to be and was recognized as "a repristination of classical Lutheran Orthodoxy," one must assume that the latter alternative is intended. The subsequent discussion will concern itself not with the "classical Lutheran Orthodoxy" of the seventeenth century per se, but only with Orthodoxy as "repristinated" by Pieper.

What are Pieper's "epistemological presuppositions"? As has been shown above, Dr. Pieper proposes to use reason strictly as instrumentality, not as content. All content is already given in revelation. And the fact that this rev-

²⁷John Baillie, The Idea of Revelation in Recent Thought (New York: Columbia University Press, 1956), p. 11.

²⁸Jaroslav Pelikan, From Luther to Kierkegaard (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950), p. 113.

elation takes the form of Scripture, which consists of words and statements and is thus addressed to man through his mind, brings with it ipso facto the methodological necessity of the instrumental use of reason.²⁹ As has been shown in the previous chapters, Dr. Pieper presupposes, not indeed arbitrarily but in obedience to Scripture's specific demands, that the Bible is God's Word and revelation, that it is entirely infallible, that it is clear and sufficient, so that its meaning can be determined with certainty and precision.

Viewed with respect to subject matter, many of Pieper's

²⁹It is clear that Pieper views language and logic not as arbitrary, subjective accidents in a universe governed by chance, but as objectively valid. One's view of language, logic, and mind will naturally reflect one's belief about the nature and origin of the universe. If the observable universe is viewed as essentially self-generated, if man is but an accidental, ephemeral, and infinitesimal excrement of matter-energy evolving by blind chance, then man's mind, reason, and language are but tokens of the evolutionary organization of matter and reflect nothing more than a passing stage of man's progressive adjustment to those conditions which happen to prevail in his tiny speck of the space-time continuum. If, on the other hand, one believes that the universe was created by a personal, intelligent, purposeful, and all-powerful Being, God, if this God is not "wholly Other" from man, but rather One who has created man in His own likeness (Genesis, chapter one), if God has endowed man with an immortal moral and rational soul, and if God employed and still employs rational language to communicate with his rational creatures, then language and logic will be viewed not as mere conventions but as in principle objectively valid by virtue of the Creation. This view, rooted in the Creation and ignoring neither the event of Babel nor that of Pentecost, is naturally incompatible with all cynical-nihilistic-relativistic notions and theories.

theological positions belong to philosophy, in the sense that they address themselves to the same questions which philosophy investigates; for epistemology, logic, cosmogony, etc., are areas of philosophical interest. With respect to source or authority, however, Pieper's theological positions have nothing in common with philosophy, for they are accepted by faith, on the authority of divine revelation, while philosophy knows no authority except natural reason and constructs its tenets on that basis alone. If, because Pieper employs logic, articulates an epistemology, etc., it is asserted that Pieper's position involves "philosophy," this cannot be challenged if the same thing is understood of Scripture itself, in fact; of anyone who says anything on these subjects. But "philosophy" in this sense is not an antithesis to theology,³⁰ and must be distinguished from philosophy as human speculation or rationally demonstrated knowledge.

Since all of Pieper's supposedly philosophical asser-

³⁰A writer in The Christian Century, following Gabriel Hebert, charges that belief in the complete infallibility of Scripture involves "philosophy," i.e., what he calls the "materialistic notion of Truth." Martin E. Marty, "Fundamentalism and the Church," The Christian Century, LXXIV (November 27, 1957), 1412. With regard to the distinction between truth in the ordinary, propositional sense, and "Religious Truth," cf. Gordon H. Clark, "The Bible as Truth," Bibliotheca Sacra, 114 (April, 1957), 157-170; Kurt E. Marquart, "Truth--What Is It?" Seminarian, I (November, 1958), 5-14.

tions rest not on rational demonstration but on revelation alone, they are situated quite securely beyond the reach of Kant or any other would-be "destroyer." Kant challenged not theology based on supernatural revelation, but merely rational speculation, by unaided human reason, in the realm of the supernatural. Felikan himself admits this and says quite correctly:

Kant's criticism does no harm to Luther's view of faith. For Luther did not accept Christ as his Lord on the basis of rational evidence or proof. . . . Luther's personal experience of God was too vivid and too intense for him to concern himself with the question of whether reason can prove Him to be real.

But he adds immediately:

In contrast to this stands Melancthon's intellectualism, for which the constructs and discoveries of the reason were important factors in the religious life. It was their function to provide the mind with certainty about the validity of Christian doctrine and to weave that doctrine into a comprehensive whole.³¹

In other words, if one's theology rests on faith rather than on rational demonstration, Kant is irrelevant. But the implication is that for the representatives of "Classical Lutheran Orthodoxy" and their "repristinators" faith rested on rational demonstration; else they would be as free of Kant as Luther is. It has been shown in the previous chapters that for Pieper theology rests entirely on faith in the Word of God, and not on rational demonstration. That Scripture is the Word of God no one can demonstrate rationally.

³¹Felikan, op. cit., pp. 98-99.

It can only be accepted by faith. Thus, according to Pelikan's own argument, the theology of Pieper, the "re-pristinator" of "classical Lutheran Orthodoxy," is as little affected by Kant as Luther's.

As for the attempt to introduce a schism between Luther and Melancthon in the area of Prolegomena, and then to place subsequent Lutheranism, i.e., "classical Lutheran Orthodoxy," into Melancthon's camp, three observations must be made with reference to Pieper. Firstly, as was shown before, Pieper explicitly rejects the idea that doctrine is to be woven into a "comprehensive whole," i.e., a system. Secondly, Pieper does indeed teach that the mind must have "certainty about the validity of Christian doctrine," and his many Luther-quotes prove that he is merely repeating softly what Luther had asserted with his characteristic vigor and boldness in the face of all doctrinal skepticism; doctrinal certainty was precisely a characteristic of Luther, not of the vacillating Melancthon.³² Thirdly, Pieper never bases any doctrine on rational demonstration, but on the contrary, insists that this cannot be done, and that the truth of God's Word can be accepted by faith alone. And that Spirit-created faith is certainty. Here applies with full force what Dr. H. Hamann says of Aulen's claim

³²Pieper, op. cit., pp. 110ff.

that the "theory" of Verbal Inspiration involves rational demonstration: "The good bishop forgets that to take seriously what the Word of God declares about itself is not a 'rational demonstration,' but an act of faith!"³³ Likewise Dr. Pieper's doctrinal certainty is not a matter of rational demonstration but an act of faith, and hence, according to Pelikan's own logic, one would have to conclude that if Luther escapes unscathed from Kant's razor, then so does Pieper, the "reapistinator" of "classical Lutheran Orthodoxy"!

But Pieper escapes, if indeed he needed to escape, by a different route than a "new reference to the centrality of faith rather than of reason in theological thought."³⁴ For Pieper this is not a valid antithesis, as far as the instrumental use of reason is concerned. Faith uses reason as the apprehending organ of divine revelation--nothing more. Nor is this at all different from the position of Luther, who, as Pelikan rightly states, albeit in a footnote, "endorses Aristotle's logical writings,"³⁵ and used them. If, therefore, Pieper's theology or his so-called

³³H. Hamann, "Recent Trends Endangering Sound Lutheran Theology," The Australasian Theological Review, XXV (September, 1954), 64.

³⁴Pelikan, op. cit., p. 99.

³⁵Ibid., p. 125.

"epistemological presuppositions" are to be "destroyed" by Kant, this destruction must take place in the area of logic, i.e., the instrumental use of reason, since the magisterial use of reason is rejected by Pieper himself. Has Kant, then, destroyed logic, as classically formulated by Aristotle, for instance? Nothing could be further from the truth, according to Kant himself:

That Logic, from the earliest times, has followed that . . . secure method, may be seen from the fact that since Aristotle it has not had to retrace a single step, unless we choose to consider as improvements the removal of some unnecessary subtleties, or the clearer definition of its matter, both of which refer to the elegance rather than to the solidity of the science. It is remarkable also, that to the present day, it has not been able to make one step in advance, so that, to all appearance, it may be considered as completed and perfect.³⁶

"Platonism" vs. "Aristotelianism"

From the preceding discussion relative to Aulen's position it would appear that he distinguishes two kinds of truth unrelated to each other, "theoretical" truth on the one hand, and the "Truth of revelation" on the other. And by his consistent use of Luther he implies the claim of having Luther on his side. But Bengt Haeggund has studied the matter rather carefully, and concludes that although the contrary is popularly claimed because of a

³⁶Immanuel Kant, Critique of Pure Reason (New York: Macmillan, 1896), p. 688.

superficiality of understanding, Luther did not believe in a double truth, but believed that truth is one, and that there can be no real contradiction between true philosophy and true theology.³⁷ The book, incidentally, also shows how important, rather indispensable, the dianoetic element in faith is for Luther, who was thus by no means a fideist.

In another book, on the doctrine of Scripture found in John Gerhard, as representative of Lutheran Orthodoxy, Haeggglund shows that Gerhard is very far from any mantic or mechanical doctrine of inspiration, and this not in spite of, but partly because of his Aristotelianism!³⁸

Haeggglund points to a fundamental difference between the Aristotelian and the Platonic views of the nature and function of words. Whereas for Plato words are "instrumenta naturalia," i.e., symbols existing in the external world and used by man to designate things, the Aristotelian view-point sees words as something created by the human will to express precisely what the mind wishes to express.³⁹ Thus it is characteristic of the Aristotelian view to emphasize always the conceptual content, the meaning, the signatum, rather than the external symbol, the signum, which

³⁷ Bengt Haeggglund, Theologie und Philosophie bei Luther und in der Occamistischen Tradition (Lund: C. W. K. Gleerup, 1955), pp. 87ff.

³⁸ Bengt Haeggglund, Die Heilige Schrift und Ihre Deutung in der Theologie Johann Gerhards (Lund: C. W. K. Gleerup, 1951), pp. 123ff.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 79.

by itself, apart from its specific signatum, has no mystic-symbolic significance. At the same time signum and signatum are seen as closely related and inseparable. "The subject matter (Dinge) signified by the words may never be separated from the latter as an independent area, which is only partially attainable through the words."⁴⁰ It was with this basic orientation that the old Lutheran teachers predicated divine inspiration of the Bible and identified Scripture with the Word of God.

But if the old teachers of the Church were Aristotelian in approach, then the moderns are Platonic. Haegglund asserts that the entire modern understanding of Scripture is dominated by a separation of signum and signatum, and that it therefore separates divine revelation from the words of Scripture, the divine Word beyond Scripture from the human words in Scripture.⁴¹ Scripture thus is seen as merely an instrument of the communication of truth, a pointer away from itself to "revelation." At the bottom of this view of modern theology is a more Platonic notion of words, which causes it to regard the eternal truth of the Word of God as eternally transcendent and as only mediately and in principle imperfectly reflected in Scripture.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 78.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 80.

A further characteristic of the Aristotelian approach is its empirical inclination, which is connected with a strong sense of the limitation of human knowledge. The Aristotelian knows that he cannot comprehend all, and so he is content to describe and analyze particulars. Unlike the implied antithesis, Platonism, the Aristotelian approach does not try to construct a systematic, comprehensive world-view which would embrace all of reality and exhibit its essential unity. And this epistemological humility of Aristotelianism is mirrored in the loci-method of the old dogmatists.⁴²

If, with regard to a specific issue, "Platonism" and "Aristotelianism" are so construed as to form two mutually exclusive positions, which at the same time exhaust the alternatives, so that, with respect to that specific issue a man must be either a "Platonist" or an "Aristotelian," tertio non date, then it is quite conceivable that Scripture, which makes pronouncements on subjects considered philosophical, may require one to be a "Platonist" or an "Aristotelian," with regard to a specific issue. Under such circumstances it is not a matter of philosophical tastes and preferences; rather the one is theologically right and the other wrong. In such a case, to be an "Aristotelian" or a "Platonist" does not mean that one has

⁴²Ibid., p. 18.

departed from theology into philosophy, and that one's position is human, philosophical speculation rather than divine, Biblical truth. If, as Pieper maintains, truth is one, and if, as Aristotle maintains, all men must philosophize whether they will or not, then at least two things follow. Firstly, the issue is never a choice between "philosophy" or "no philosophy," as if Scriptural, theological tenets did not involve philosophy; the only question is, "which philosophy among the various possibilities?" Secondly, Scripture and theology may require one to endorse certain tenets of a historic philosophy and to reject others. When that happens, one is not imposing philosophical tenets upon Scripture, but merely recognizing that on a given point a given philosopher was right and found part of that truth which is one.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The difference between the theology represented by Pieper and that represented by Aulen has been shown to be a basic and fundamental one. Pieper's theology, based on supernatural revelation, inculcates Scriptural truth for the purpose of bringing people to salvation. Aulen's theology is strictly "scientific" and does not recognize any revealed truth, in the sense of doctrine. The two positions are antipodal and mutually exclusive.

It has been shown that for Dr. Pieper Scripture and not any kind of philosophy, determines theology. The sole Scriptura principle, moreover, is not an empty slogan which can be combined with all sorts of positions, but it definitely presupposes inspiration, inerrancy, sufficiency and perspicuity, and requires adherence to rigid hermeneutical canons. Resting firmly on divine revelation, and not on rational demonstration, Pieper's theology is immune to Kant's critique, and is indeed a "lasting theology," not outmoded as long as Scripture is not outmoded.

But if Pieper is not "old," Aulen is not new. The latter's basic tenets, i. e., that Scripture is not God's Word, that the identification of Scripture and God's Word or revelation is mechanical, intellectualistic, etc., that

revelation is activity and not doctrine, were quite familiar to Pieper. According to Pieper there are only two kinds of possible theologies, i.e. sola Scriptura theology and ego-theology or pseudo-theology. Since Aulen's theology is confessedly not in the former, it is clearly in the latter camp. Aulen's views are but a variation on the same basic ego-theological theme, which was so familiar to Dr. Pieper and against which he protested so earnestly.

From the point of view of the theology represented by Dr. Pieper one can only agree with the severe but documented judgment of Dr. David Hedegard, a Swedish theologian, who has a high regard for Dr. Pieper and repeatedly cites him as a representative of Biblical truth:¹

the Lundensian theology, like Barthianism, represents a real nihilism in regard to truth. And, like Barthianism, the Lundensian theology is not a new orthodoxy. It is actually a new and worse form of modernism.²

¹David Hedegard, Ecumenism and the Bible (Orebro: Evangeliiipress, 1954), pp. 193, 242.

²Ibid., p. 57.

APPENDIX

The Deity of Christ and the Trinity According to Aulen

The subsequent analysis, too lengthy to be included in the body of the thesis,¹ is intended to show what Aulen means when he eliminates "metaphysics" from Christology.

In his section on the "Religious Significance of the Confession of Faith in Christ,"² Aulen presents the following Christology:

The meaning of the Incarnation is that "the 'substance' of the Father is 'incarnate' in Christ." But who then became incarnate, the Father or the Son? The answer lies in Aulen's definition of "substance": By "substance" Aulen means nothing more than love:

The Christian confession of faith in Christ is essentially a confession of faith in the incarnation of divine love, of God; in the man Jesus Christ, . . . Incarnation affirms that the "essence" of God, or in other words the divine and loving will, 'dwells' in Christ (John 1:14). . . . It declares that no one but God, or divine love itself, dwells in Christ and performs the work of redemption. . . . It is important to emphasize that for faith the incarnation means the incarnation of divine love. When the idea of incarnation has sometimes led to ambiguous interpretations of the nature of divine revelation, the reason has been that the "essence" of God has been understood in a more or less "physical" sense. . . . Luther: "We

¹ Cf. supra, pp. 25, 90.

² Gustaf Aulen, The Faith of the Christian Church (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1948), pp. 210-215.

find the heart and will of the Father in Christ." Therein lies his "unity of substance with the Father." . . . The religious intention in the confession of faith in Christ is obscured as soon as something other than God's "disposition of heart" becomes essential and as soon as the idea of a more or less "physical" unity of substance appears. . . . God's essence is his loving will, not some obscure "substance" behind this will. . . . If we should speak of a substantial unity which would mean something other than this unity of disposition, we would thereby assert something less rather than something more;

In other words, the human being Jesus of Nazareth had the same loving disposition as God, and therein lies the "unity of substance with the Father." What became incarnate was not really a "He" but an "it," i.e., "love." Christ's "divine nature" is only a matter of disposition or attitude, a function of a no more than human person. The "Son" then is not divine at all. How else can one understand Aulen's odd remark that "the statement that the Spirit proceeds from the Son cannot be interpreted to mean that the Spirit is not altogether a divine Spirit"?³ In point of fact, Aulen explicitly rejects "all attempts to identify Christ with God and thus view him as a god visiting this world (theophany)."⁴ "He is not identical with God, but he and the Father are 'one' (John 10:30); one in will, in heart, in purpose, and in work."⁵

³Ibid., p. 254.

⁴Ibid., p. 210.

⁵Ibid., p. 213.

Regarding the Holy Spirit, one finds, inter alia, the peculiar assertion that "Christian faith uses interchangeably these two expressions, Kyrios-Christus and the Spirit."⁶

What then becomes of the doctrine of the Trinity? Aulen maintains that the expression "three persons in one Godhead" endangers the unity of faith in God and contains "the seed of tritheism."⁷ Aulen asserts that the ancient Church understood the term "person" in an "indefinite and vague sense," and that if "we" were to explain to the old church fathers "our" concept of "person," they "would no doubt deny us the right to use their trinitarian formula according to our concept of person; they would brand us as tritheistic heretics." Under these circumstances, says Aulen, it would be contrary to the original intention of the ancient Creeds "to repeat verbatim the trinitarian confession of the ancient church, 'three persons in one Godhead.'"⁸

The understanding of Aulen's Christology presented in this paper, though developed without a knowledge of Dr. David Hedegard's critique, proved, upon subsequent comparison, to be identical with Hedegard's estimate. After

⁶Ibid., p. 251.

⁷Ibid., p. 256.

⁸Ibid., p. 257.

citing substantially the same excerpts from Aulen as those selected as significant for this paper, Hedegard comments:

It should be pointed out that these statements imply a definite denial of the true deity of Christ. The Bible and the ancient creeds testify that Christ is truly God, an eternal divine Person. When from of old they spoke of His essential unity with the Father, the reference was to the Biblical truth that from eternity He existed as a divine Person. But Aulen has no room for this truth. To him, thus, Christ is only a man whose will is one with the Father's will.

.....

In the passage quoted above, Aulen also refers to Luther. Does he really mean to say that according to Luther, Christ is only a man whose will and heart reflect God's will and heart? Everyone who is in the least acquainted with Luther's doctrine knows that to Luther Christ is eternal God, the second Person of the Trinity (cf. Pieper, Christian Dogmatics, I, p. 371ff.; II, p. 59ff.).

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A well-known Swedish liberal, Dr. J. Lindskog, wrote an article on Aulen's theology many years ago (in the Quarterly Religion och Kultur, 1934, pp. 7-15). He pointed out that Aulen rejects all metaphysical miracles connected with the person of Christ, and added: "The liberals must be satisfied with [Aulen's Christology] because in it the miraculous metaphysical element is eliminated from Christianity." He quotes Aulen's words: "Christianity is God's work of love in Jesus, our crucified and exalted Lord, this and nothing more." Lindskog comments on these words as follows:

If I were an African negro I would certainly say about David Livingstone just what Aulen here says about Christ. . . . Most of what has been said here about Livingstone, a pious Hindu would certainly say about Gandhi.--

Dr. Lindskog's account of Aulen's Christology is quite correct. All that Aulen teaches about Christ could be said about a Christian like David Livingstone, or about a pious heathen like Gandhi. It may

be added that Dr. Lindskog was a prominent man in the Ecumenical Movement.⁹

Such radical conclusions are reached not only by unsympathetic observers. Edgar Carlson says quite forthrightly: "The identity between God and Christ is an identity of will and disposition. Swedish theologians avoid a metaphysical interpretation of the Trinity."¹⁰

Nels F. S. Ferre reports an illuminating incident, though, regrettably, he does not identify the theologian involved, except to say that he is a "younger" one:

In a recent discussion, a Lundsian thinker, when pressed by the author, declared that Sabellianism was really no heresy; that the Trinity can be explained chronologically rather than analytically; that God the Father came down and became God the Son.¹¹

⁹David Hedegard, Ecumenism and the Bible (Orebro: Evangeliiipress, 1954), pp. 192-194.

¹⁰Edgar M. Carlson, The Reinterpretation of Luther (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1948), p. 122.

¹¹Nels F. S. Ferre, Swedish Contributions to Modern Theology (New York: Harper and Bros., 1939), p. 229.

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