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An Investigation of the Hermeneutical Principles Reflected in the De Iustificazione (Article IV) of the Apology in its Interpretation, Use and Application of Holy Scripture

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SHORT TITLE

AN INVESTIGATION OF THE HERMENEUTICAL PRINCIPLES INVOLVED
IN THE INTERPRETATION OF THE HERMENEUTICS OF APOLOGY IV
INTERPRETATION, AND AN APPLICATION OF SUCH PRINCIPLES

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Southern University, New Orleans,
Department of Graduate Studies
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

by
Lindell Wynn

June 1999

Approved by: *[Signature]*
[Signature]

AN INVESTIGATION OF THE HERMENEUTICAL PRINCIPLES REFLECTED
IN THE DE IUSTIFICATIONE (ARTICLE IV) OF THE APOLOGY IN ITS
INTERPRETATION, USE AND APPLICATION OF HOLY SCRIPTURE

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

Randell Tonn

June 1959

Approved by:

Hubert J. Bouman
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themselves to Patriotic and Medieval hermeneutics? 3) How do Luther's hermeneutical principles relate themselves to modern hermeneutics; specifically, modern Lutheran hermeneutics?

The investigation was motivated primarily by this writer's interest in the Confessional Symbols of the Lutheran Church and their importance as witnesses to the Holy Scriptures. Since the Lutheran Confessional Symbols are subscribed as "a true exposition of the word of God" in the case of the Augsburg Confession, and as writings which are "in agreement with this one Scriptural faith" in the case of the other symbols,¹ the exegetical theory,

¹The Lutheran Church in America, *Book of Concord*, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1958, p. 103.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this investigation is to answer the question, "What are the hermeneutical principles employed by Philipp Melancthon in his interpretation of the Holy Scriptures as these principles are reflected in the Fourth Article of the Apology to the Augsburg Confession?" Incidental to this primary question three secondary questions have suggested themselves: 1) How do Melancthon's hermeneutical principles relate themselves to his theology? 2) How do Melancthon's hermeneutical principles relate themselves to Patristic and Medieval hermeneutics? 3) How do Melancthon's hermeneutical principles relate themselves to modern hermeneutics, specifically, modern Lutheran hermeneutics?

The investigation was motivated primarily by this writer's interest in the Confessional Symbols of the Lutheran Church and their importance as witnesses to the Holy Scriptures. Since the Lutheran Confessional Symbols are subscribed as "a true exposition of the Word of God" in the case of the Augsburg Confession, and as writings which are "in agreement with this one Scriptural faith" in the case of the other Symbols,¹ the exegetical theory,

¹The Lutheran Agenda (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, n.d.), p. 105.

i.e. the hermeneutics, employed in these writings speaks to the Lutheran Church today, if not with authority, at least with relevance.

We have chosen to deal with the De Iustificatione in this study for several reasons. First, the De Iustificatione is the witness of the Church, not the work of an individual theologian. Second, the De Iustificatione deals with the doctrine which Lutheran theologians have regarded as praecipuus locus² of the Christian faith. Third, the De Iustificatione abounds in quotation of and allusion to Scripture.

We have found it desirable at several points to make use of the Elementa Rhetorices³ and the Erotemata Dialectices⁴ for corroborative material. Wherever this has been done we have tried to bear in mind that there is a fundamental difference between these works and the Apology; the difference being that the Elementa and the Erotemata are independent productions while the Apology is a Church Confession. However, we found that in some instances the Erotemata and the Elementa enunciated clearly and

²Martin Chemnitz, Examen Concilii Tridentini (Berolini: Gust. Schlawitz, 1861), p. 146.

³Philipp Melanchthon, Elementa Rhetorices, in Corpus Reformatorum, eds. Bretschneider et Bindseil (Halis Saxonum: C. A. Schwetschke et Filium, 1835), XIII, 385ff.

⁴Philipp Melanchthon, Erotemata Dialectices, in Corpus Reformatorum, eds. Bretschneider et Bindseil (Halis Saxonum: C. A. Schwetschke et Filium, 1835), XIII, 450ff.

explicitly hermeneutical principles which are only implicit in the De Iustificatione.

As we kept in mind our first secondary question, "How do Melanchthon's hermeneutical principles relate themselves to his theology?" we have tried to be aware of, or at least become aware of, the presuppositions which enter into his exegesis. Wingren has pointed out the necessity of such an awareness of the presuppositions, theological, anthropological or others, with which a theologian operates.⁵ Of course, Melanchthon does not begin his theological labors de novo with his authorship of the Apology. His personality, his theological and humanistic background, and many other factors are of critical importance and these we have sought to bear in mind.

The question, "How do Melanchthon's hermeneutical principles relate themselves to Patristic and Medieval hermeneutics?" will be particularly relevant as we examine Melanchthon's refutation of the exegesis of the passages cited by the Confutatio Pontificia.⁶

The question, "How do Melanchthon's hermeneutical principles relate themselves to modern hermeneutics,

⁵ Gustav Wingren, Theology in Conflict, translated by Eric H. Wahlstrom (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, c.1958), passim.

⁶ Confutatio Pontificia, in Corpus Reformatorum, eds. Bretschneider and Bindsell, XXVII, 100ff.

specifically, modern Lutheran hermeneutics?" is quite relevant in the light of Schlink's statement:

Bekenntnisschriften werden im eigentlichen Sinn ernst genommen erst dann, wenn sie als Schriftauslegung genommen werden, und zwar als Schriftauslegung der Kirche.

In this investigation we are not attempting a critique or defense of Melancthon or of his hermeneutics. We have established no theses for which we hoped to find support in the hermeneutical principles employed by Melancthon. We have had in mind no particular system of modern hermeneutical approach which we hoped to defend or attack on the basis of Confessional practice. Our thesis was simply to determine as objectively as possible the principles of interpretation that are explicit and implicit in the De Iustificatione.

We have examined all quotations of and allusions to Holy Scripture in the De Iustificatione as these quotations and allusions are indicated by the editors of the Bekenntnisschriften.⁸ The number of quotations and allusions is so large, that due to space and time limitations, we have discussed only a representative group of passages. We

⁷ Edmund Schlink, Theologie der lutherischen Bekenntnisschriften (2. Auflage; München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1946), p. 6.

⁸ Bekenntnisschriften der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche (3. verbesserte Auflage; Goettingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1956), p. 159.

have discussed only a small group of passages which are representative of specific hermeneutical principles, and which are most fruitful for our purposes.

The Latin text of the Apology as contained in the Bekennnisschriften der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche⁹ has been used exclusively.

All references to the De Iustificatione have been listed in the footnotes by paragraph and page reference only. Thus, for example, 9, 160 refers to paragraph nine of the De Iustificatione which is found on page one hundred and sixty of the Bekennnisschriften.

All references to the Corpus Reformatorum are indicated in the footnotes by C. R. followed by the volume number and column reference.

The references to Migne's Patrologiae: Patrum Latinorum and Patrologiae: Patrum Graecorum are referred to in the footnotes as MPL and MPG respectively.

The thesis is divided into five chapters.

Chapter I - The Introduction.

Chapter II - Theological Hermeneutics. The etymology of the term hermeneutics; the relation of hermeneutics to theology; the hermeneutical principles of Patristic, Scholastic and Medieval exegesis.

Chapter III - The Background of the Apology. The

⁹Ibid.

Augsburg Confession; the Confutation; the Apology.

Chapter IV - Grammatical Hermeneutics of the De Iustificatione. Passages in the exegesis of which Melancthon demonstrates the importance of Grammar, Rhetoric and Dialectic for a proper understanding of the Holy Scriptures.

Chapter V - Theological Hermeneutics of the De Iustificatione. Passages in the exegesis of which Melancthon demonstrates the religious or theological considerations which are involved in an accurate and trustworthy interpretation of the Holy Scriptures.

Hermeneutics and Theology

Hermeneutics has been defined as:

that branch of theology in which the principles and rules are set forth of means of which we may discover the true sense of religious and give a correct exposition of the meaning which the Holy Spirit has

CHAPTER II

THEOLOGICAL HERMENEUTICS

Etymology of "Hermeneutics"

Form has traced the etymology, New Testament usage and later usage of the word, "hermeneutics":

Das Wort Hermeneutik stammt aus dem Griechischen; das Verbum $\epsilon\rho\mu\eta\nu\epsilon\upsilon\epsilon\iota\nu$ bedeutet ersten übersetzen (so überall im N.T., Joh. 1,39,43; Hebr. 7,2; vgl. $\sigma\iota\epsilon\rho\mu\eta\nu\epsilon\upsilon\epsilon\iota\nu$ Acta 9,36), zweitens erklären, auslegen, interpretieren (im N.T. nur in substantivischer Form, $\epsilon\rho\mu\eta\nu\epsilon\iota\acute{\alpha}$, I Kor. 12,10; 14,26; vgl. $\sigma\iota\epsilon\rho\mu\eta\nu\epsilon\upsilon\tau\eta\varsigma$ I. Kor. 14,28 und das zusammengesetzte Verbum $\sigma\iota\epsilon\rho\mu\eta\nu\epsilon\upsilon\epsilon\iota\nu$, Luk. 24,47 speziell auf das Auslegen der Glossa-loalie angewandt wird). Obwohl die Ausdrücke $\epsilon\rho\mu\eta\nu\epsilon\upsilon\epsilon\iota\nu$ ($\epsilon\rho\mu\eta\nu\epsilon\iota\acute{\alpha}$) und $\epsilon\rho\eta\gamma\epsilon\iota\sigma\theta\alpha\iota$ ($\epsilon\rho\eta\gamma\eta\sigma\iota\varsigma$) in der alten Kirche beide für erklären oder auslegen gebraucht wurden, ist im kirchlichen Sprachgebrauch zu Bezeichnung des Auslegens das Wort Exegese durchgedrungen. In neuerer Zeit hat man dagegen das Wort Hermeneutik zur Bezeichnung der Theorie des Auslegens herangezogen, die man früher öfter mit dem Ausdruck ars interpretandi bezeichnete. Erst im 17. Jahrh. können wir das Wort Hermeneutik in dem jetzt vorliegenden Gebrauch nachweisen.¹

Hermeneutics and Theology

Hermeneutics has been defined as:

that branch of theology in which the principles and rules are set forth by means of which we may discover the true sense of Scripture and give a correct exposition of the meaning which the Holy Spirit has

¹Fr. Form, Hermeneutik des Neuen Testaments (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck und Rupprecht, 1930), p. 1.

laid down in the words of Scripture.²

By this definition Hermeneutics is a science, a theoretical science. However, Hermeneutics not only establishes the principles of interpretation, but it also exemplifies and illustrates those principles. Thus, Hermeneutics is also an art.

As a science it enunciates principles, investigates the laws of thought and language, and classifies its facts and results. As an art, it teaches what application those principles should have, and establishes their soundness by showing their practical value in the elucidation of the more difficult scriptures. The hermeneutical art thus cultivates and establishes a valid exegetical procedure.³

Seiler defines hermeneutics as that discipline which guides the application of human reason to the text of Sacred Scripture when he writes, "Die Hermeneutik zeigt den rechten Gebrauch der Vernunft in der Ausfindung und darstellung des Sinnes der Heiligen Schrift."⁴

The perusal of any history of dogma or a glance at the modern religious and theological scene with its tremendous diversity of cults, churches and religious organizations with their many-hued and divergent interpretations and

² [J. Fuerbringer], Theological Hermeneutics, translated from the German by translator unknown (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1924), p. 3.

³ Milton S. Terry, Biblical Hermeneutics (New Edition, Thoroughly Revised; New York: The Methodist Book Concern, c.1911), p. 20.

⁴ D. Georg Friedrich Seiler, Biblische Hermeneutik (Erlangen: in der Bibelanstalt, 1800), p. xxv.

applications of Scripture will soon enough convince one that all too often hermeneutical principles have been vague, confused or even non-existent. In this way the statement of Scripture under consideration is placed at the mercy of the capricious interpreter. Without valid hermeneutical principles which are consistently followed, exegesis may become, as it frequently has, the process of validating the anthropological, psychological, theological, or even agnostic, presuppositions with which the individual commentator approaches Scripture.

Wingren has argued that this has been the case with Karl Barth in that, "his anthropology determines his hermeneutics."⁵ Again, Wingren attempts to demonstrate that a similar situation exists in the instance of Rudolph Bultmann, who "combines anthropology and hermeneutics so intimately that it is impossible to discuss the anthropological problem by itself."⁶

On the other hand, however, the hope or conviction that the exegete must, or even can, come to Scripture with no presuppositions cannot merit serious consideration, as Terry has pointed out:

Nor should we allow ourselves to be deluded by the idea that the human mind must be a tabula rasa in

⁵Gustaf Wingren, Theology in Conflict, translated by Eric H. Wahlstrom (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, c.1958), p. 108.

⁶Ibid., p. 45.

order to arrive at sound conclusions We cannot free ourselves entirely from presuppositions, which are born with our nature, and which attach to the fixed course of progress in which we ourselves are involved.⁷

On the problem of presuppositions in theology and hermeneutics we appreciate the remark of Karl Barth:

There is a notion that complete impartiality is the most fitting and indeed the normal disposition for true exegesis, because it guarantees a complete absence of prejudice. For a short time, around 1910, this idea threatened to achieve almost canonical status in Protestant theology. But now we can quite calmly describe it as merely comical.⁸

It would seem to this writer, on the basis of this very brief discussion, that hermeneutics and theology together have the serious responsibility of determining which presuppositions are valid and which are not. The test of their validity always being the soundness and trustworthiness of the exegesis which results from the application of principles embodying these presuppositions to the Holy Scriptures.

For an exegete trying to evaluate his own presuppositions, or those of another, this remark of Torm is a propos:

Wie ein Autor verstanden werden wollte, und wie er leicht verstanden werden könnte, sind zwei Fragen, die vom Interpreten scharf auseinander zu halten sind.⁹

⁷Terry, op. cit., p. 20.

⁸Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics, translated by G. T. Thomson and Harold Knight (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1956), II, 2, 469.

⁹Torm, op. cit., p. 6.

Patristic Exegesis

With some notable exceptions, the study of exegesis from the earliest Apostolic church fathers to the time of the Reformation is the study of allegorical exposition. The allegorical method was taken over by Christianity from the Greek interpretation of Homer, which had as its fundamental presupposition that the words contained a hidden meaning or meanings.¹⁰ This presupposition was taken into the Church by heretical Christianity. Harekleon, A Gnostic, a pupil of Valentinus, produced a commentary on the Gospel of John in which "herrscht eine zügellose allegorische Auslegung."¹¹ It was by the allegorical method of interpretation that Harekleon brought heretical Valentinianism into harmony with the Gospel of John.

The direction toward which allegorical exposition tended, and the presuppositions that could be substantiated by its application should have been a warning to the early Christian exegetes that allegory was not a valid hermeneutical approach, but as Torm poignantly remarks, "das ist indessen nicht der Fall."¹²

¹⁰ Robert M. Grant, The Letter And The Spirit (New York: The Macmillan Company, c.1957), pp. 2ff.

¹¹ Torm, op. cit., p. 236.

¹² Ibid., p. 236.

Irenaeus

Irenaeus, together with Tertullian,--two of the earliest Christian exegetes--attacked the heretics because of their abuse of the allegorical method of interpretation, but they themselves made liberal use of the method in their own exegesis.¹³

Irenaeus insists upon the hermeneutical principle that the unclear passages of Scripture are not to be interpreted in the light of those passages even more unclear and enigmatic, but in the light of what is clear and plain.¹⁴ Unfortunately, his exegesis at times falls far short of his noble hermeneutics. Thus, he asserts that there should be only four Gospels in the Scriptures because there are only four quarters of the world, four winds and four angelic forms.¹⁵ Again he insists that since the name of Jesus in Hebrew has two and a half letters it follows that Jesus is Lord of heaven and earth.¹⁶

Farrar's judgment of Irenaeus is, "Whatever may be his other gifts, he shows no special wisdom in the application

¹³Frederic W. Farrar, History of Interpretation (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1886), p. 175.

¹⁴Irenaeus, Adversus Haereticos, 2. 10. 2, in MPG, VII, 755.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 885.

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 788f.

of hermeneutical methods."¹⁷

Tertullian

Tertullian shares with Irenaeus the lack of consistency in that he did not put into practical application his professed dislike of allegorical interpretation. He had condemned the Gnostics for their abuse of allegory,¹⁸ but in his own exegesis he sees in the twelve wells of Elim, in the twelve stones of the High Priest's breastplate, and in the twelve stones taken from the Jordan River, symbols of the twelve Apostles.¹⁹

Cyprian

Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, like Tertullian whom he admired greatly, relied heavily upon tradition for guidance in the interpretation of Scripture. However, when that tradition interfered or disagreed with his a priori convictions, he did not hesitate to set it aside. He takes what we might regard as the most crass liberties with the sacred Text when, to prove the unity of the Church, he quotes the passage from the Passover commandment, "In one

¹⁷Farrar, op. cit., p. 174.

¹⁸Tertullian, De Resurrectione Carnis, 19, in MPL, II, 820.

¹⁹Tertullian, Adversus Marcionem, in MPL, I, 386ff.

house shall it be eaten."²⁰ Again, for the same purpose he cites, "My dove, my undefiled is one."²¹ The command given Rahab by the spies that she was to gather her family into one house²² gives Cyprian further assurance that the Church is one.

Alexandrian School of Exegesis

The object of the principal representatives of the Alexandrian School was "to unite philosophy with revelation."²³ Tertullian and Cyprian, it might be stated to their credit, would have no truck with philosophy. "What has the Church to do with the Academy?" was Tertullian's question. He bitingly referred to the Greek philosophers as "patriarchs of the heretics."²⁴ In anti-thesis to this outright rejection of the wisdom of the Greeks, Clement of Alexandria believed in the divine origin of philosophy, contending that it was taken from "the philosophy of Moses."²⁵ Because of his high regard for Greek philosophy, Clement adopted the Greek method of

²⁰Exodus 13:46.

²¹Song of Solomon 6:9.

²²Joshua 2:18.

²³Farrar, op. cit., p. 182.

²⁴Ibid., p. 183.

²⁵Clement, Stromateis, I, 66, in MPG, VIII, 685.

allegorical interpretation, openly insisting that all Scripture must be understood allegorically. Clement does not deny the validity of a literal interpretation of Scripture, but he does contend that it yields only a most elementary faith. "The literal sense is the milk of the word, but the esoteric vision furnishes strong meat."²⁶

It is with considerable ingenuity that Clement, as well as others, deals "with the lists of clean and unclean beasts and draws moral improvement from his meditations on the excellence of parting the hoof and chewing the cud."²⁷ According to Clement's line of reasoning, since rumination stands for thought and a divided hoof implies stability, then it follows that the "clean beasts" are the orthodox who are steadfast and meditative. The "forbidden animals" which chew the cud but do not divide the hoof are the Jews; those which divide the hoof but do not chew the cud are the heretics; those which do neither are the impure.²⁸

This lack of feeling for historical fact has called forth the remark, "With allegory you can prove anything from everything."²⁹

²⁶Farrar, op. cit., p. 184.

²⁷G. W. H. Lampe and K. J. Woolcombe, Essays on Typology (Naperville, Ill.: Alec R. Allenson, Inc., 1957), p. 31.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Wm. Dallmann, W. H. T. Dau, and Th. Engelder (editor)

Origen

Like a huge colossus, Origen stands out among the saints and theologians of the Church. Though condemned as an Arian by Jerome, and though his hermeneutics were lampooned by later exegetes, "der Einfluss des Origenes auf die spätere Auslegung war aussergewöhnlich stark."³⁰

Lightfoot has characterized Origen as:

a deep thinker, an accurate grammarian, a most laborious worker, and a most earnest Christian, he not only laid the foundation, but to a very great extent built up the fabric of biblical interpretation.³¹

Origen was the first of the Christian theologians to give systematic thought to the problem of hermeneutics. In his *περὶ ἀρχῶν* he enunciates the hermeneutical principle that the Sacred Scriptures contain more than one sense or meaning. These senses are, "eine buchstäbliche, eine psychische oder moralische und eine pneumatische oder allegorische,"³²

Origen contended for a threefold interpretation of Scripture on the basis of Plato's trichotomy of man. Since man, according to this theory, is composed of body,

Walther and the Church (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1938), p. 124.

³⁰Torm, op. cit., p. 237.

³¹Lightfoot, Epistle to the Galatians, quoted in Farrar, op. cit., p. 197.

³²Torm, op. cit., p. 32.

soul, and mind, and since the Scriptures are intended for the salvation of men, then the Scriptures must of necessity have a threefold sense which corresponds to this trichotomy.

The Antiochian School of Exegesis

The reaction to the allegorical interpretation of Scripture is found in the school of Antioch, which "possessed a deeper insight into the true method of exegesis than any which preceded or succeeded it during a thousand years."³³

The Antiochian school of exegesis was founded by Lucian whose stricter hermeneutical principles checked the allegorical and mystical tendencies so prevalent among the exegetes of the Christian Church. Lucian's methods were further promoted by Diodorus whom Socrates, the church historian, calls the author of "many treatises in which he limited his expositions to the literal sense of Scripture, without attempting to explain what was mystical."³⁴

Theodore of Mopsuestia

Theodore of Mopsuestia "was an independent critic, a straightforward, sober, historical interpreter. He had

³³Farrar, op. cit., p. 210.

³⁴Ibid., p. 211.

no sympathy with the mystical methods of the Alexandrian school."³⁵ In his commentary on Galatians Theodore used the opportunity offered by Galatians 4:24 to attack the allegorists who, in his view, perverted the literal sense of Scripture, robbing it of its contents in order to manufacture fables. "What St. Paul called allegorism, he said, was the juxtaposition and comparison of events in the past with events in the present."³⁶

Theodore likewise reacted to the mechanical view of inspiration taken by the Alexandrian theologians. Unfortunately, however, in his reaction Theodore went to the opposite extreme position and denied the inspiration of many portions of the Scriptures.³⁷

John Chrysostom

John Chrysostom is described as an exegete who:

took the Bible as he found it, and used it in its literal sense as a guide of conduct rather than an armory of controversial weapons or a field for metaphysical speculations.³⁸

The importance of Chrysostom's work for our purposes is that he develops the literal sense of Scripture by

³⁵Terry, op. cit., p. 38.

³⁶Lampe, op. cit., p. 56.

³⁷Terry, op. cit., p. 38.

³⁸Farrar, op. cit., p. 221.

studying the context and by his close attention to the usage and meaning of special words. However, in spite of his emphasis upon the literal meaning of the Scriptures, not only in theory but also in practice, Chrysostom did not rise completely above the use of allegory.

Übrigens ist hinzuzufügen, dass man selbst bei einem Chrysostomus auf allegorische Auslegung stösst, doch in milderem Grade.³⁹

The Great Cappadocians

The three Cappadocians (Basil the Great, Gregory of Nyssa and Gregory of Nazianzen) admittedly expressed an admiration for Origen as is demonstrated by their publication of his Philakalia, but generally they rejected his methods of interpreting the Scriptures.

The Cappadocians gave due consideration to the historicity of the Scriptures, as Weiss points out:

Nur in der heiligen und theilweise in der profanen Geschichte, in der Archäologie und den Naturwissenschaften besitzen sie beachtenswerthe Kenntnisse, von denen sie denn auch bei der Interpretation fleissig Gebrauch machen.⁴⁰

In addition to their application of the many branches of learning to the interpretation of Scripture, the importance of the Cappadocians lies in their high regard

³⁹Torm, op. cit., p. 238.

⁴⁰H. Weiss, Die Grossen Kappadocier Basilius, Gregor von Nazianz und Gregor von Nyssa als Exegeten (Braunsberg: A. Martens, 1872), p. 27.

for the individual words of the text. The most conservative of the three Cappadocians is Basil the Great, who rejects allegory, "Die Worte sollen verstanden werden, wie sie geschrieben sind (*νοεῖσθω τοίνυν ὡς γέγραπται*)."⁴¹

Of Basil's hermeneutics Weiss remarks:

Nirgends stossen wir in seinen Schriften auf eine Verwerfung oder Verdächtigung des biblischen Literal-sinns, wie bei den Alexandrinern; vielmehr ist sein fast durchgehends beobachtete Methode in Allgemeinen diese, zuerst den Literalsinn historisch-grammatisch darzulegen und daran erst die Eruirung des höhern Sinns zu knüpfen.⁴²

Jerome

Primary of the services rendered to the Christian Church by Jerome is his translation of the Scriptures into Latin. Faulty as his Vulgate was, it is "to his credit that he should have dared to translate directly from the Hebrew."⁴³

Jerome exercised great care in his attempt to develop the literal and historic sense of the text. As a guide to the significance of each book Jerome collected hermeneutic materials. Unfortunately, in Jerome's commentaries his good hermeneutical principles are vitiated by his haste in dictation which forced him into the "vacillations of

⁴¹Weiss, op. cit., p. 67.

⁴²Ibid. p. 67.

⁴³Farrar, op. cit., p. 224.

a hasty and timid eclecticism."⁴⁴

Torm concurs in the judgment that Jerome's principles are sound, when he says, "Er hat auch gesunde Auslegungsgrundsätze," but he goes on to say, "trotz der gesunden Prinzipien verschmäht auch er nicht die Allegorie."⁴⁵

Augustine

In the case of Augustine, as with Jerome, there is frequently little connection between the principles of interpretation he enunciates and the practice of exegesis which he follows.

Torm examines the discrepancy between Augustine's theory and practice, and finds the cause lies primarily in Augustine's philosophical speculations:

Aber die Ausführung entsprach nicht immer den Prinzipien.... Augustins eigene philosophische Spekulationen gewannen grösseren Einfluss auf ihn als die Worte, die er auslegen sollte. Das ist umso bedauerlicher, weil er einen so mächtigen Einfluss auf die Exegese des Mittelalters ausübte, und weil es gerade die weniger guten Seiten seiner Exegese waren, die auf die nachfolgenden Generationen am stärksten einwirkten.⁴⁶

Perhaps, for us, the most glaring of all the defects of the hermeneutics of St. Augustine is his principle, "Scriptura non asserit nisi fidem catholicam," which

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 229.

⁴⁵Torm, op. cit., p. 239.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 240.

principle becomes more prevalent in his later life, and its form is changed to, "Ego vero Evangelio non crederem nisi me Catholicae Ecclesiae commoverit auctoritas."⁴⁷

Scholastic Exegesis

With the death of Gregory the Great in 604 the productivity of Patristic exegesis came to a halt and degenerated into a stale, dry repetition of what had been said, of collecting divergent opinions into anthologies which made no attempt whatsoever to reconcile these opinions beside the aliter or potest etiam intelligi. Of this period Farrar remarks, "Hermeneutic principle there is none."⁴⁸

Venerable Bede

The Venerable Bede spent fifty-eight years of effort in the production of commentaries upon the Scriptures, but he professes only to collect passages from the Fathers, as in his Preface to the commentary on St. Luke where he admits that he has collected fragments from Ambrose, Augustine and Jerome, indicating the authorship of each clause with the initials of the writer's name.⁴⁹

⁴⁷Farrar, op. cit., p. 237.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 246.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 248. Cf. MPL, XCII, 303.

Rabanus Maurus

Rabanus Maurus explains that his commentary is the compilation of eleven Latin and three Greek Fathers.⁵⁰

Strabo

In spite of the fact that the Glossa Ordinaria of Walafrid Strabo were compilations put together without any choice, order or criticism, they attained such popularity that they were referred to as Lingua Scripturae, and even Peter Lombard appeals to them as "the authority."⁵¹

John Scotus Erigena

In Johannes Scotus Erigena we find a reaction against the authority of the patristic exegetes and the consensus of the Church. Unfortunately, with the reaction against authority we also find the emphasis that revelation must be subjected to reason. Since authority (the Fathers) is to be overruled by reason the opinions of the Fathers must only be consulted in case of necessity, for the Fathers often contradict each other.⁵²

⁵⁰Rabanus Maurus, Prol. in Mattheum, in MPL, CVII, 727.

⁵¹Farrar, op. cit., p. 251.

⁵²John Scotus Erigena, De Divisione Naturae, in MPL, CXXII, 817.

Abelard

Abelard contributed little or nothing to any hermeneutical principles or new thoughts in the interpretation of Scripture. We mention him here for his attempt to break down the authority of the Fathers as the guiding principle in the interpretation of Scripture by the publication of his Sic et Non⁵³ in which he demonstrated the unreliability of the Fathers because of their manifest contradictions of one another.

Peter Lombard

Peter Lombard, the famous "Master of the Sentences," was an important figure of the Middle Ages, "but his commentaries are little more than a compilation from Hilary, Ambrose and Augustine."⁵⁴ The Sentences became the source of truth and information for the Scholastic theologians and they were expounded more than the Holy Scriptures. Lombard's hermeneutical principle was primarily the acceptance of the consensus of the Church.

Thomas Aquinas

For his encyclopedic learning, Thomas Aquinas, as an exegete, is no more than a first rate compiler, who used

⁵³ MPL, CLXXVIII, 1330ff.

⁵⁴ Farrar, op. cit., p. 262.

no less than twenty-two Greek and twenty Latin Fathers.

"Imbued with the fatal dream of the fourfold sense of Scripture, he is meagre in the explanation of the literal sense, but diffuse in speculative discussions and dialectic developments."⁵⁵

Nicolas of Lyra

Exegetically, the bright light of this period is Nicolas of Lyra. Nicolas is a disciple of Thomas in that he accepts the remark that the literal sense develops the meaning of the word and the mystical sense the meaning of the things which the words signify. He repeats the commonly accepted definitions of the fourfold sense in the lines that are frequently attributed to him:

Littera gesta docet, quae credas allegoria,
Moralis quid agas, quo tendas anagogia.

However, in spite of this acceptance of the fourfold sense of Scripture, Nicolas:

complains that the mystical sense had been allowed to choke (suffocare) the literal; he says that when the mystical exposition is discrepant from the literal it is indecens et inepta; he demands that the literal sense alone should be used in proving doctrines. Practically, therefore, he only admits two possible senses--the literal and the mystical, and he founds the latter exclusively upon the former.⁵⁶

The influence of Nicolas of Lyra upon the hermeneutics

⁵⁵Farrar, op. cit., p. 269-70.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 276-77.

of Martin Luther has been expressed in a little jingle:

Si Lyra non lyrasset
Lutherus non saltasset.⁵⁷

Wm. of Occam

Wm. of Occam is not responsible for the promulgation of any radically new hermeneutical principles. His value for our study lies in his nominalistic views which weakened the hold of the Church upon the entire traditional system of Christianity, particularly the interpretation of the Scriptures.

The Church had maintained that apart from Realism there could be no doctrine of the Holy Trinity nor of Transsubstantiation. Wm. of Occam championed the cause of Nominalism which held that the universalia, which Platonic Realism had taught existed ante rem, were merely flatus vocis which owed their existence solely to the fertility of human reason. Thus, he helped break the sacred bonds that had for so long united theology and philosophy in an incompatible marriage.

Medieval Exegesis

Lorenzo Valla

Lorenzo Valla is one of the chief links between the

⁵⁷Terry, op. cit., p. 45.

Renaissance and the Reformation. "He had at least learnt from the revival of letters that Scripture must be interpreted by the laws of grammar and the laws of language."⁵⁸ Valla wonders why so many Scholastic theologians had dared to comment upon the works of Paul when they were so ignorant of Greek, "Quem (Remigium) et item Thomam Aquinatem . . . ignaros omnino linguae Graecae, miror ausos commentari Paulum Graece loquentem."⁵⁹

Lorenzo Valla denies the credibility of the tradition that Paul appeared to Thomas Aquinas when he says, "Peream nisi ad commenticium, nam cur eum Paulus non admonuit erratorum suorum, cum ob alia tum de ignorantia linguae graecae."⁶⁰

Lorenzo Valla also made an indirect contribution to rational exegesis when he contributed to the breaking of the authority of the hierarchy by showing the spuriousness of the Donation of Constantine.

Faber Stapulensis

Faber Stapulensis was another contributor to the effort that broke the yoke of ecclesiastical tradition

⁵⁸Farrar, op. cit., p. 313.

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 313.

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 313.

⁶²Ibid., p. 315.

that had for centuries concerned itself with no more than the compilation and renewal of erroneous exegesis compounded by an almost insane insistence upon the Latin of the Vulgate as the lingua divina. Encouraged by the bold example of Lorenzo Valla, Faber Stapulensis published a new Latin translation of St. Paul's Epistles, and in 1523 he published the first French version of the Holy Scriptures.⁶¹

Reuchlin

Reuchlin, the uncle of Philip Melancthon, made a profound impression upon Old Testament studies. As a youth he had learned Hebrew, and devoted his lifetime to the study of languages with the express intention and purpose of elucidating the Bible.

In Reuchlin's day Hebrew was a terra incognita, even among the clerics; so much so that in his grammar of the language Reuchlin had to begin with the emphatic notice that Hebrew is read from right to left. In his propagation of the knowledge of Hebrew, Reuchlin had to contend not only against ignorance, but also with ignorance's not infrequent bed-partner, blind opposition. The opposition came from the priests and theologians who had condemned Hebrew as an accursed tongue.⁶² Because of the determined opposition

⁶¹Ibid., p. 314.

⁶²Ibid., p. 315.

Reuchlin was forced to lecture on Hebrew in secret while teaching at Heidelberg.

Erasmus

What Reuchlin did for the Old Testament studies in the pre-Reformation era, Erasmus of Rotterdam did for the New Testament. It was in Erasmus that "Greece rose from the dead with the New Testament in her hand."⁶³ The contribution of Erasmus for our interest lies in his emphasis upon the study of the original language of the Apostles and Evangelists. At the urging of his friend Colet, Erasmus published his first edition of the Novum Instrumentum in 1516, which edition was the Greek text used by Luther and Melancthon in the translation of the New Testament into German.

Erasmus unhesitatingly pointed out the gross interpretative errors of the Scholastic theologians, charging that Lombard, Aquinas and others were full of mistakes and grotesque misinterpretations, and that even Augustine was not exempt from human fallibility. He expressly repudiates the power of tradition to interpret the sacred text. Erasmus set aside the exegetical infallibility of not only the Pope, but also of the Churches.

"His philological merits were of a high order, and his

⁶³Ibid., p. 316.

notes on many of the rarer words and phrases in the Greek text may still be read with advantage."⁶⁴

This writer believes that the lasting contribution of Erasmus, and of others, to the science of hermeneutics and the practice of exegesis lies in his willingness to interpret the Scriptures coram Deo, without the benefit of the self-centered authoritarianism of an ecclesiastical hierarchy. Erasmus, Reuchlin, Valla, for all the faults that may be found with them by various theological camps, set the precedent for a Martin Luther, for a Philip Melancthon, as well as for others, who have let God speak to them through the inerrant Sacred Scriptures, regardless of the theological and ecclesiastical feathers that became ruffled in the process of so doing.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 318.

CHAPTER III

THE BACKGROUND OF THE APOLOGY

Confessio Augustana

As a result of the Reformation movement in Germany Charles V, Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, summoned the Protestant Princes to the city of Augsburg for an Imperial Diet which was to consider:

how the proper provision may be made for the removal of the grievous burden and invasion into Christendom of the aforementioned Turk . . . how in the matter of errors and divisions concerning the holy faith and the Christian religion we may and should deal and resolve, and so bring it about, in better and sounder fashion that division may be allayed, antipathies set aside, all past errors left to the judgment of our Saviour, and every care taken to give a charitable¹ hearing to every man's opinion, thought and notions.¹

When the Elector of Saxony received this summons he called upon his theologians to formulate a document that might be used as a basis of their presentation before the Diet. The Lutherans had at hand the "Torgau Articles" which could be used for this purpose. En route to Augsburg with the Electoral party, Philip Melanchthon continued to work on this document, particularly in the preparation of a preface.

Shortly after arriving at Augsburg Melanchthon became

¹M. Reu, The Augsburg Confession. A Collection of Sources With an Historical Introduction (Chicago: Wartburg Publishing House, 1930), part II, p. 71.

acquainted with the Four Hundred and Four Articles for the Diet in Augsburg published by John Eck.² These Articles, which, in a letter to Luther, Melanchthon describes as containing the Σαβολότικας Σιδήσεις,³ were a collection of statements extracted from the writings of Luther, Melanchthon, Jonas and others, in an attempt to put the Lutherans into the same theological camp with the Anabaptists and the Zwickau prophets.

In connection with some of the quotations he (Eck) calls attention to the fact that it is an ancient heresy, long ago discarded and damned by the Church, which is now being warmed over again. No more effective way could be imagined to discredit the Lutherans in the eyes of the Catholics. And this is just what Eck had in mind.⁴

Melanchthon immediately realized that the "Apology" he had in hand would no longer be sufficient as an explication of the Lutheran doctrines. Therefore, he began to remold the "Apology" into a confession of faith in direct anti-thesis to Eck's slanders. Melanchthon indicated this in a letter to Luther in which he wrote, "Adversus has volui remedium opponere."⁵ This confession of faith was to include "omnes fere articulos fidei."⁶ Melanchthon used the Schwabach Articles as a basis for this Confession for

²Ibid., pp. 58ff.

³C. R., II, 45.

⁴Reu, op. cit., p. 61

⁵C. R., II, 45.

⁶C. R., II, 45.

various reasons, among them the fact that they had been formulated "to draw the line between the Lutherans and the Sacramentarians."⁷

So the shape, and largely the content, of the Augsburg Confession were determined by the Polemics that had been advanced against the Lutherans. Ellinger sums up the purpose of the Augustana as, "dazu bestimmt, von ihnen den Vorwurf der Ketzerei abzuwehren."⁸ Melancthon stressed the agreement of the Lutheran doctrine with the one, holy, ancient, apostolic Church. He cites Augustine and Ambrose "so that it may be seen that nothing new is here taught."⁹ In no less than five instances he draws the line of demarcation between the Lutherans and the Anabaptists with "damnant Anabaptistas."¹⁰

The Augsburg Confession, signed by the Evangelical Estates, was presented to the Emperor on June 25, 1530 with Chancellor Beyer reading the German version to the assembled delegates and to the large crowd of people gathered outside in the courtyard.

Because the Lutherans had validated their claim that they were in agreement with the teachings of the ancient

⁷Reu, op. cit., p. 64.

⁸Georg Ellinger, Philipp Melancthon, Ein Lebensbild (Berlin: R. Gaertners Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1902), p. 292.

⁹Reu, op. cit., p. 67.

¹⁰Rekenntnisschriften, pp. 58, 63, 67, 71, 72.

Church, and because they had successfully refuted the accusation of heresy, the Confession made a deep impression, also on some of the Romanists. It is reported that Bishop Stadion of Augsburg said, "Was hier abgelesen worden, ist die pure, lautere Wahrheit, und wir können es nicht läugnen."¹¹

The Lutherans had vindicated themselves and their teaching on the basis of the Scriptures. One report has it that Duke William remarked to John Eck, "So I understand that the Lutherans are sitting in the Scriptures and we outside."¹²

CONFUTATIO PONTIFICIA

On June 26, 1530, in accordance with the wishes of Charles V, the Romanist Estates met to consider their course of action. Their opinion, that a critique of the Lutherans' Confession be drawn up, was presented to the Emperor on the following day.¹³ Charles V requested the opinion of the Papal Legate, who in his answer dealt primarily with the proposed reply that should be made to

¹¹Karl Matthes, Philipp Melanchthon. Sein Leben und Wirken aus den Quellen Dargestellt (Altenburg: Julius Helbig, 1841), p. 119.

¹²Reu, op. cit., p. 112.

¹³Theodor Brieger, Die Reformation: Ein Stueck aus Deutschlands Weltgeschichte (Berlin: Ullstein & Co., 1914). p. 127.

the Confession in the name of His Majesty.¹⁴

Because of the Emperor's attempt to remain impartial and faithful to the terms of his Imperial Summons, he was not willing to use force against the Protestant Princes as many of the Romanists had been urging. Then the Cardinal Legate Campeggius took a hand in the preparation of a reply to the Augsburg Confession. He contacted the more than twenty Romanist theologians in attendance at the Diet, some of whom had been already active in drafting documents intended to discredit the Lutherans, both as to character and doctrine. These men, among whom were some of the most vehement enemies of the Reformation, John Eck, John Cochlaeus, John Fabri, Usinger, Wimpina and Mensing¹⁵ began to draft a reply to the Confession. Individual articles of the Confession were turned over to various Roman theologians for rebuttal. The refutation of the first three articles was written by John Cochlaeus. His reply was:

so spiteful that even the more sensible of the Catholics rejected it. Then they changed their whole plan of procedure and placed the whole matter in the hands of one man, Eck.¹⁶

Eck had hoped for an opportunity to defend his

¹⁴Text of the reply in English. Reu, op. cit., pp. 304f.

¹⁵Reu, op. cit., p. 119.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 120.

Four Hundred and Four Articles in open debate before the Diet, but that fond hope had been shattered by the Emperor's refusal to allow the spectacle of public debate to disturb the calm dignity of the Augsburg Diet. Now, having been entrusted with the responsibility of drafting the official Romanist reply to the Confession, Eck turned himself to the completion of this assignment with great delight and energy. By July 8 the work was finished, and on July 15 the Responsio Catholica was read to the Romanist Estates, a task which required eight to ten hours. The Responsio was rejected by the majority of the Romanists because of its length and malice. They ordered it recast with the most vehement expressions stricken from it. In subsequent revisions the Responsio was shortened and greatly subdued in tone. Finally, when the fifth revision was presented to the Romanist Estates, the work was found acceptable.¹⁷ This final revision is known as the Confutatio Pontificia to distinguish it from its earlier form, Responsio Catholica.

One of the primary differences between the Responsio and the Confutatio is the latter's use of Scripture:

Articles IV, VI, XVIII, XX, and XXI are nearly altogether made up of such passages . . . of Scripture

¹⁷Gustav Plitt, Die Apologia der Augustana Geschichtlich Erkläert (Erlangen: Andreas Deichert, 1873), p. 37.

as attempted proof of the Catholic doctrine¹⁸
They had learned something from the Evangelicals.¹⁸

The Confutatio Pontificia was read to all the Estates of the Empire on August 3, 1530. The form of it is "an independent imperial decision which gives a direct answer to the Lutherans."¹⁹ However, the Lutherans were singularly unimpressed by the Confutatio, as is indicated by Melancthon's letter to Luther in which he wrote, "tamen cum confutatio esset valde pueriliter scripta"²⁰
audita illa pueriliter scripta confutatione."²¹

Plitt has analyzed the purpose of the authors of this "pueriliter scripta confutatione:"

Sie erachteten es also für ihr Hauptpflicht, solche vermeintliche Verschiebung der Sachlage zu beseitigen und die Grundsätze in der Grösse und Schärfe, wie sie ihnen erschienen, hinzustellen, um damit allen Täuschungen der päpstlich gesinnten Stände vorzubeugen.²²

Even in those articles of the Confutation where the Confession was approved, the Romanists attempted to show that the Protestant Estates were not presenting their true teaching, and that the confession they had submitted was not in

¹⁸Reu, op. cit., p. 125.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 125.

²⁰C. R., II, 253.

²¹C. R., II, 254.

²²Plitt, op. cit., p. 35.

accord with what Melanchthon and Luther had written previously.²³

APOLOGIA CONFESSIOINIS AUGUSTANAE

Melanchthon was not present at the session of the Diet on August 3, 1530 when the Confutation was read, nor did the Lutherans obtain a copy of the document. However, he was supplied with the details of its contents from notes taken by Camerarius who was present at the reading. On the basis of these notes and the memory of those others who had heard the Confutation, Melanchthon began the preparation of a reply. On August 6 the Lutheran Estates announced that an answer had been prepared insofar as this could be accomplished under the adverse circumstances.²⁴

This Apology was not submitted immediately, however, for now began "die Zeit der öffentlichen Ausgleichversuche."²⁵ In these "Ausgleichversuche" the Romanists were willing to compromise in practically every area of disagreement, even in the doctrine of justification. Melanchthon reports on one discussion in which he had debated with John Eck, "denn ich habe ihn gezwungen, zu

²³Plitt, op. cit., p. 36.

²⁴Reu, op. cit., p. 133.

²⁵Plitt, op. cit., p. 40. We cannot discuss here the details nor the implications of these negotiations. On these, cf. Reu, 132ff. and Foerstemann II, passim.

bekennen, dass die Gerechtigkeit dem Glauben recht zueignet werde."²⁶

On September 22, 1530 the Recess of the Diet was read without the two opposing parties having agreed on all the articles of faith nor on the articles concerning the abuses. The Recess declared that the Confession had been given "much careful consideration" and it had been "thoroughly refuted by means of the Gospels and other writings."²⁷ The Recess gave the Lutheran Estates until April 15, 1531 to accept those articles on which there was no agreement.

The Lutheran Estates withdrew for a conference after the reading of the Recess. They returned to the assembly shortly and protested the statement that their Confession had been refuted by the Confutation. At the same time Chancellor Brueck offered the Apology to the Emperor, announcing that this was the Lutheran reply to the Confutation. "The Emperor was about to receive it through the Palsgrave Frederick, when the Archduke Ferdinand whispered something, whereupon the Emperor refused the document."²⁸

The day after the reading of the Recess the Evangelical party left Augsburg. Melancthon now turned his

²⁶Matthes, op. cit., p. 135.

²⁷Reu, op. cit., p. 391.

²⁸Ibid., p. 134.

attention to rewriting the Apology and preparing it, along with the Augsburg Confession, for publication. At this time Melanchthon came into possession of a copy of the Confutation.²⁹ Reading the entire document increased his original impression of its character. He expresses his disdain for it in the Preface of the Apology, "adeo insidiose et calumniose scriptum, ut fallere etiam cautos in certis locis posset."³⁰

The Apology was published in April/May 1531, along with the Augsburg Confession, in only the Latin text.

The Apology to the Augsburg Confession has been characterized as:

brave confessing of the truth, a fearless exposing of the mistakes of the opposition, a successful stand against their scholastic craftiness, a fearless holding to the public view the often obscure doctrines of the opposition, an emphatic, often satiric, rejection of their ignorance and the injustice of measuring the church fathers with a different rule than the one used for Luther and his friends.³¹

That the Apology is the most learned and scholarly of the Lutheran Symbols is pointed out by Richard when he writes, "Seldom has a man shown greater strength of conviction, or more translucent skill as a theologian, than

²⁹Plitt, op. cit., p. 93.

³⁰Bekenntnisschriften, p. 143.

³¹Reu, op. cit., p. 135.

Melanchthon did in the elaboration of the Apology."³²

The "profound as well as scholarly understanding of the gospel"³³ exhibited in the Apology is well attested to by the fact that when the Jesuits later on produced a fierce attack upon it, the Apology was simply reprinted without comment as an adequate answer to the charges.³⁴

Schmauk points out that the Apology served a double purpose, "Technically, the Apology was a controversion of the Confutation of the Augustana. Substantially, it was the Augustana's confirmation."³⁵

In the Apology we have explicit as well as implicit enunciation of Lutheran hermeneutics in conflict with the hermeneutics of the Romanists. The Romanist theologians quoted Scripture frequently in the Confutation, as Plitt remarks, "Es fehlte ihnen nicht an einem Schriftbeweise, der freilich in hohen Maasse ungeschickt ausfiel."³⁶

³²James William Richard, Philip Melanchthon. The Protestant Preceptor of Germany (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, c.1898), p. 217.

³³Willard Dow Allbeck, Studies in the Lutheran Confessions (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, c. 1952), p. 142.

³⁴Joseph Stump, Life of Philip Melanchthon (New York: Pilger Publishing House, c. 1897), p. 120.

³⁵Theodore E. Schmauk and C. Theodore Benze, The Confessional Principle and the Confessions of the Lutheran Church as Embodying the Evangelical Confession of the Christian Church (Philadelphia: General Council Publication Board, 1911), p. cvi.

³⁶Plitt, op. cit., p. 39.

In spite of the frequency of Scripture quotation in the Confutation, the statement can be made, "the Apology was designed to show how unscriptural is the Confutation."³⁷

Allbeck comments upon the Romanist exegesis:

The faults in the Roman system were that it took preconceived notions into its interpretation of Scripture, and that it took verses out of their context to use as proof-texts. Either of these would have been sufficient to produce erroneous results.³⁸

Melanchthon is quick to point out the errors of the method and the "erroneous results" to which it inevitably led. In this lies the great strength of the Apology, that it successfully defends an evangelical interpretation of the Holy Scriptures.

³⁷Allbeck, op. cit., p. 145.

³⁸Ibid., p. 156.

CHAPTER IV

GRAMMATICAL HERMENEUTICS OF THE DE IUSTIFICATIONE

Of the De Iustificatione Plitt writes, "Der vierte Artikel bringt den Kernpunct des Lehrunterschiedes der streitenden Parteien."¹ This article presents the Lutheran antithesis to the Romanist Semi-Pelagian doctrine of salvation and justification. In the formulation of their respective doctrines of salvation the Romanists and the Lutherans had appealed to the same Bible, and in many instances, to the very same passages of the Bible, but the two groups had arrived at diametrically opposed theological positions. The solution to this situation lies in the hermeneutical principles that are applied in the interpretation of Scripture. Much of this article of the Apology is a successful effort on the part of Melancthon to show, "wie unrichtig und willkürlich die Schriftbenützung der gegnerischen Theologen ist."²

With the Reformation there is a fundamental break with the past in hermeneutics, as Torm points out, "Aber es ist erst die Reformation, die der Exegese und damit auch die

¹Gustav Plitt, Die Apologia der Augustana Geschichtlich Erkläert (Erlangen: Andreas Deichert, 1873), p. 109.

²Ibid., p. 118.

hermeneutischen Theorien in ganz neue Bahnen leitet."³

Many efforts of the Reformers were expended in an attempt to demonstrate to the Romanists that an understanding of the Scriptures is possible if only the proper methods of interpretation are applied.⁴

One of the first considerations in the "proper methods" of Scripture interpretation emphasized by the Reformers is that the letter, the littera, of Scripture must be understood and taken seriously before the Scriptures can be understood theologically. Torm summarizes this emphasis:

"Littera" ist und bleibt die Grundlage. Der Weg zum religiösen Verstaendnis eines biblischen Textes geht durch seinen Buchstaben, -- nicht über ihn hinweg.⁵

For Melanchthon the littera is vital to an understanding and a correct interpretation of the Scriptures. "Melanchthon finely observed Scripture cannot be understood theologically if not first understood grammatically."⁶

Berkhof has commented similarly of Melanchthon's hermeneutics:

In his exegetical work, he (Melanchthon) proceeded

³Fr. Torm, Hermeneutik des Neuen Testaments (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1930), p. 33.

⁴Ibid., p. 34.

⁵Ibid., p. 25.

⁶Wm. Dallmann, W.H.T. Dau, and Th. Engelder (editor), Walther and the Church (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1938), p. 124.

on the sound principles that: a) the Scriptures must be understood grammatically before they can be understood theologically. b) the Scriptures have but one certain and simple sense.⁷

The Roman Confutation had quoted Luke 11:41 (Date eleemosynam et omnia erunt munda) in support of its contention that good works are contributing cause to the justification of the individual.⁸ In reply, Melanchthon charges that they have not paid sufficient attention to the universal particle, "omnia" which, he says, they have translated "ad unam partem."⁹ In so doing they missed the meaning of the passage which should read, "tunc omnia erunt munda, si intus eritis mundi, et foris dederitis eleemosynam."¹⁰ Melanchthon emphasizes this that if this one particle, "omnia," is taken into consideration, as it certainly must be, this passage does not at all teach a justification by the outward ceremony of alms-giving, but it refers to a double cleansing of the individual--internal as well as external. To apply the phrase "omnia erunt munda" only to ceremonies and not to the inward cleansing of the heart is, for Melanchthon, poor exegesis because it does not take seriously all that Scripture says.

⁷L. Berkhof, Principles of Biblical Interpretation (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1950), p. 159.

⁸C. R., XXVII, 122.

⁹283, 216.

¹⁰283, 216.

CONTEXT

In a second discussion of Luke 11:41 Melanchthon applies the hermeneutical principle that no passage of Scripture can be understood apart from its context. Melanchthon charges that this passage can be used by the Romanists only because they have quoted it out of context (citatur mutilatus).¹¹ From the context it is obvious that Christ is rebuking (obiurgat) the Pharisees who considered themselves justified by the multiplicity of outward observances (crebris ablutionibus). Against this opinion of the Pharisees Christ speaks of a double cleansing. He commands that they should be cleansed inwardly and then concerning the outward cleansing He adds, "date eleemosynam." From this context it should be apparent, says Melanchthon, that with these words Christ requires faith.¹²

In his discussion of Tobit 4:11, which the Romanists had cited in the Confutation to support their position on good works, Melanchthon again charges that they have disregarded the context:

Sed adversarii nostri, suaves homines, excerpunt mutilatas sententias, ut imperitis fucum faciant. Requirendi igitur sunt integri loci, quia, iuxta vulgare praeceptum, incivile est, nisi tota lege perspecta, una aliqua eius proposita, iudicare vel

¹¹218, 215.

¹²219, 216.

respondere. Et loci integri prolati, plerumque secum afferunt interpretationem.¹³

This passage does not at all support the Romanist doctrine, says Melanchthon, "Ac tota concio Tobiae inspecta, ostendit ante eleemosynas requiri fidem."¹⁴ He goes on then to quote from the context, "Omnibus diebus vitae tuae in mente habeto Deum" and "Omni tempore benedic Deum et pete ab eo, ut vias tuas dirigat."¹⁵ These passages, observes Melanchthon, plainly deal with that faith which believes that it has a gracious God (placatum Deum) by His mercy, and desires to be justified, sanctified and governed by Him.¹⁶

When he takes up Acts 15:9 (fide purificari corda) Melanchthon shows that, if the context is considered (totus locus inspectus), this statement will be found to be in agreement with the rest of Scripture in its teaching on faith and works.¹⁷ Considering the wider context of Scripture Melanchthon reminds the Romanists that some exhortations of Scripture deal with works, while others deal with faith. "Nec est candidi lectoris excerpere

¹³280, 215.

¹⁴279, 215.

¹⁵Tobit 4:6; Tobit 4:20 respectively.

¹⁶279, 215.

¹⁷284, 216.

praecepta operum, omissis locis de fide."¹⁸

In their exegesis of Romans 3:28 the authors of the Confutation had interpreted the "non ex operibus legis" as pertaining only to the works of the levitical ceremonies.¹⁹

Melanchthon rejects this interpretation on the basis of the wider context of the Epistle, "At Paulus non tantum de ceremoniis loquitur, sed de tota lege. Allegat enim infra de Decalogo: Non concupisces."²⁰

When Melanchthon takes up the Romanists' insistence upon eternal life as the reward which man merits de condigno by good works,²¹ he grants that eternal life may be called a reward (merces).²² However, he censures the Roman theologians because they do not consider those passages of Scripture where eternal life is called a gift:

Nam doni vocabulum omittunt, omittunt et fontes totius negotii, et excerpunt vocabulum mercedis idque acerbissime interpretantur non solum contra scripturam, sed etiam contra sermonis consuetudinem.²³

In his exposition of I Peter 4:8 (Universa delicta

¹⁸C. R., XXVII, 122.

¹⁹279, 215.

²⁰87, 178-79.

²¹C. R., XXVII, 101.123.

²²356, 227ff.

²³356, 227.

operit caritas),²⁴ Melanchthon says the passage is taken from Proverbs 10:12 (Odium suscitatur rixas, et universa delicta tegit dilectio), where the antithesis to these words clearly indicates how they are to be interpreted. If the antithesis to "universa delicta tegit dilectio" is properly evaluated it becomes evident that dilectio here is that love which makes for peaceful relations between people.²⁵ Peter, therefore, is not saying that our love merits the forgiveness of sins before God, but that love among men maintains "domestic tranquillity." It is not by accident (temere) that the Apostles frequently enjoin this function of love which is called by the philosophers, ἡ εὐεχέουσα.²⁶

Augustine, in his exegesis of Romans 4:1,6, said that Paul was speaking of tota lex and not just the ceremony of circumcision; to this interpretation Melanchthon gives his approbation.²⁷ If there were one work that could justify man, this ceremony of circumcision would surely have been it, for it had a specific command of God. But, insists Melanchthon, Paul is talking about tota lex and not just a

²⁴This passage is not quoted in the Confutation; However, Cf. B. Herborn, Enchiridion II, Corp. Cath., p. 21.

²⁵242, 207.

²⁶243, 207. "ἡ εὐεχέουσα ist die freie, sinnvolle Erfüllung des Gesetzes." Bekenntnisschriften, p. 103, n. 4.

²⁷87, 179.

ceremony. This point the Romanists have missed simply because they have fragmentized the Scriptures and have not given the proper attention to the immediate and the wider context of Scripture.

Literal Meaning

If the Romanists would take the Scriptures literally and seriously as they stand, such passages as Acts 13:38 (Natum igitur sit vobis, viri fratres, quod per hunc vobis remissio peccatorum annuntiatur et ab omnibus, quibus non potuistis in lege iustificari. In hoc omnis, qui credit, iustificatur)²⁸ they would see, states Melanchthon, that Paul is saying that the law does not justify, but that Christ came into the world so that we should believe that we are justified through Him by faith. Melanchthon is exasperated at the unwillingness of Roman exegetes to see this as he asks, "Quomodo potuit clarius de officio Christi et de iustificatione dici?"²⁹

When the Scriptures are interpreted, close attention must be given to what they do not say. The Romanists err in their interpretation because they have read into the text ideas and thoughts that are not there.³⁰

²⁸97, 180.

²⁹97, 180.

³⁰254, 210.

It is only because of this "eisegesis" that they imagine that such passages as Luke 6:37, Isaiah 58:7, Daniel 4:24, Matthew 5:3, Matthew 5:7 contain teachings irreconcilable with the Lutheran doctrine of justification by faith.³¹ If careful consideration is given to what these passages say, and especially to what they do not say, it will be apparent that, "Neque vero adscriptum est peccata remitti sine fide, aut ipsa opera propitiationem esse."³² Therefore, Melancthon can say, "Hae sententiae etiam nihil haberent incommodi, si nihil affingerent adversarii."³³

Unus, Simplex Sensus

Although we find no specific example of this principle in the De Iustificatione, one of Melancthon's important hermeneutical principles is his rejection of the fourfold interpretation of Scripture, and his insistence that the Scriptures have but one certain and simple sense.

Melancthon speaks disparagingly of the fourfold interpretation of Scripture in the Elementa Rhetorices:

Quidam enim inepte tradiderunt quatuor esse scripturae

³¹254, 210.

³²256, 210.

³³255, 210.

sensus: Literalem,³⁴ Tropologicum,³⁵ Allegoricum³⁶
 et Anagogicum.³⁷ Et sine discrimine omnes versus
 totius Scripturae quadrifariam interpretati sunt.
 Id autem quam sit viciosum facile iudicari potest.³⁸

Rather than seeking "sine discrimine" a fourfold
 interpretation of all the verses of the Scriptures, only
 one, simple and certain sense is to be sought:

Haec duxi hoc in loco, de quatuor sensibus dicenda
 esse, ut admonerem unam aliquam, ac simplicem, et
 certam sententiam in singulis locis quaerendam esse,
 quae cum perpetuo contextu orationis, et cum cir-
 cumstantiis negotii consentit. Nec ubique licet
 allegorias quaerere, nec temere aliud ex grammatica
 sententia ratiocinandum est, sed videndum, quid in
 unoquoque loco deceat, nec pugnancia fingenda sunt
 articulis fidei.⁴⁰³⁹

The one, simple and certain sense of the Scriptures
 is to be found by the application of the rules of dial-
ectica, rhetorica and grammatica. The following is

³⁴"Primum historiam aliquam quaerebant." C. R., XIII,
 467.

³⁵"Sed quaecumque historiam affinxissent, deinde add-
 edbant τροπολογίαν, quae transferbat historiam ad
 mores." C. R., XIII, 467.

³⁶"Tertio loco allegoria sequebatur, quae pertinebat
 ad Ecclesiam, aut si quis dexterius tractabat ad Christum,
 ut; Tu Christe es sacerdos secundum ordinem Melchisedech,
 referebantque id tantum ad coenam Domini." C. R., XIII, 467.

³⁷"Quartus locus addebant ἀναγωγία, quae erat inter-
 pretatio de coelesti statu. Tu eris sacerdos, id est,
 pius erit beatus in coelo, Deum tanquam sacerdos cele-
 brabis.

Errant autem et in hac voce, cum dicunt ἀναγωγία pro
 feritatem morum, ab ἀναγωγός, quod est intractabilis
 et petulans." C. R., XIII, 467.

³⁸C. R., XIII, 472.

³⁹C. R., XIII, 472.

Melanchthon's comment from the Elementa:

Caeterum nos meminerimus unam quandam ac certam et simplicem sententiam ubique quaerendam esse iuxta praecepta grammaticae, dialecticae,⁴⁰ et rhetoricae.⁴¹ Nam oratio, quae non habet unam ac simplicem sententiam, nihil certi docet.⁴²

This rule applies to the Law as well as to the Gospel:

Itaque plerumque uno sensu grammatico contenti esse debemus, ut in praeceptis et promissionibus Dei.⁴³

Allegory

Along with his insistence on the one, simple sense of the Scriptures Melanchthon explicitly rejects allegorical interpretation in the Twenty-fourth Article of the Apology, when he says, "non pariunt firmas probationes."⁴⁴ While

⁴⁰"Dialectica est ars seu via, recte, ordine, et perspicue docendi, quod fit recte definiendo, dividendo, argumenta vera connectendo, et male cohaerentia seu falsa retexendo et refutendo." C. R., XIII, 513.

⁴¹"Rhetorica vero est ars, quae docet viam ac rationem recte et ornate dicendi. Voco enim Rhetoricen haec praecepta, quae pueris traduntur, quorum cognitio, etsi necessari est ad eloquentiam, tamen eloquentia praeter hanc artem, alia multa adiumenta, tum naturae tum doctrinae requirit." C. R., XIII, 419.

⁴²C. R., XIII, 468.

⁴³C. R., XIII, 469.

⁴⁴Bekennnisschriften, 35, 360. Cf. C. R., XIII, 469.

"Si omnia sine discrimine velimus transformare in varios sensus, nihil habebit certi Scriptura. Itaque iure reprehenditur Origenes, qui omnia quantumlibet simpliciter dicta, tamen in allegorias transformat. Haec interpretandi ratio maxime labefacit ratio auctoritatem Scripturae."

we find no similar statement in the De Iustificatione, this writer feels that his rejection of allegorical interpretation, at least in principle if not always in practice, is so important that we cannot consider the hermeneutics of the Fourth Article of the Apology without at least mentioning it.

Figures of Speech

Melanchthon mentions several figures of speech in the course of his exegesis in the De Iustificatione. Before turning to a consideration of these, we draw from the Elementa Rhetorices where he discusses the interpretation of figures of speech:

Si quae figurae occurrent, hae non debent multos sensus parere, sed iuxta consuetudinem sermonis unam aliquam sententiam, quae ad caetera quadret, quae dicuntur. Et ad hunc usum haec pueris doctrina de figuris et omni ratione dicendi reputa est, ut discamus iudicare de sermone, ut unam aliquam ac certam sententiam, ex qualibet oratione colligere.⁴⁶

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"Ceterum nota est consuetudo sermonis, quod interdum eodem verbo causam et effectus complectimur *κατὰ συν-εκδοχήν*."⁴⁷ Thus, when Christ said of the woman,

"Remittuntur ei peccata multa, quia dilexit multum," and interprets these words Himself with "Fides tua salvam te

⁴⁶C. R. XIII, 468.

⁴⁷152, 189.

fecit,"⁴⁸ Melanchthon says that "dilexit multum" is, *Kατά οὐκ εὐκροχῆν*, an expression which indicates both her faith and her love for Christ. Her love, according to Melanchthon, is that she came to Christ with the sure faith that the forgiveness of sins was to be sought from Him.

"Hic cultus est summus cultus Christi. Nihil potuit maius tribuere Christo."⁴⁹ Melanchthon concludes that Christ uses the words "dilexit multum," not for the woman's sake, but as a criticism of the Pharisees, because He is comparing the total cultus of the Pharisees with the cultus of this woman. In making this comparison Christ criticizes the Pharisees because they, doctors of the law, did not believe, did not seek forgiveness and salvation from Him, but this woman in faith sought of Him the remission of sins. "Sic igitur totum cultum laudat, ut saepe fit in Scripturis, ut uno verbo multa complectamur."⁵⁰

Using the same principle, Melanchthon says of Luke 11:41 (Date eleemosynam, et omnia erunt munda), "Non tantum eleemosynas requirit, sed etiam iustitiam fidei."⁵¹

The Confutation had cited Daniel 4:24 as teaching the

⁴⁸152, 190.

⁴⁹154, 190.

⁵⁰155, 191.

⁵¹155, 191.

meritoriousness of good works.⁵² Melanchthon rejects the Confutation's exegesis by showing how it has overlooked the fact that Daniel is using the figure of synecdoche. "Non enim volebat Daniel regem tantum eleemosynam largiri, sed totam poenitentiam complectitur."⁵³ The words of Daniel, "Redime peccata tua eleemosynis," are tota poenitentia, one part of which is the promise of the forgiveness of sins. Thus, by synecdoche, "Redime peccata tua eleemosynis" means, "Redime peccata tua mutatione cordis et operum."⁵⁴ The promise contained in the proclamation of tota poenitentia is not the preaching of the law, but it is truly the prophetic and evangelical voice announcing the forgiveness of sins which must be accepted, and can only be accepted, by faith. In his discussion of the passage Melanchthon substitutes the word iustitia for eleemosynis,⁵⁵ and since he defines iustitia as fides in corda, this expression is an exhortation to faith.

Melanchthon condemns the Roman exegesis of this passage that "propter opera contingat remissio" as a "humanam opinionem."⁵⁶ The text simply does not say this,

⁵²C. R. XXVII, 93ff.

⁵³261, 211.

⁵⁴261, 211.

⁵⁵262, 212.

⁵⁶262, 212.

but rather this text requires faith, for wherever there is a promise, there faith is required.

Melanchthon specifically rejects Jerome's translation of the Hebrew with "forsitan" stating:

Hieronymus hic praeter rem addidit dubitativam particulam, et multo imprudentius in commentariis contendit remissionem peccatorum incertam esse. Sed nos meminerimus evangelium certo promittere remissionem peccatorum.⁵⁷

ἄνυλστρέφον

Luke 17:10 (Cum feceritis omnia, quae praecepta sunt vobis, dicite, servi inutiles sumus), according to Melanchthon, plainly teaches that God saves us by His mercy because of His promise (per misericordiam et propter suam promissionem).⁵⁸ However, the authors of the Confutation had commented on this passage:

Si factores inutiles dici debent, quanto magis his, qui solum credunt, dicere convenit: Si credideritis omnia dicite: servi inutiles sumus.⁵⁹

Melanchthon sarcastically rejects this interpretation, "Videte, quam delectet adversarios puerile studium sophistices," and accuses them of being guilty of an ἄνυλστρέφον.⁶⁰ He considers their sophistry unworthy of

⁵⁷264, 212.

⁵⁸334, 225.

⁵⁹C. R. XXVII, 101.

⁶⁰336, 225.

a reply, "tamen paucis respondebimus."⁶¹

First, the Romanists equivocate on the word "faith" in their interpretation. If by "faith" nothing more were meant than that knowledge of history which also the devils have, then the Confutation's exegesis would be correct. However, faith is more than notitia historiae, it is also "fiducia promissionis et misericordiae Dei."⁶² It is possible to say, "Cum credideritis omnia, servi inutiles sumus" if by that it is meant that our works are useless, for this is what the whole Church teaches, i.e. that we are saved by grace, says Melanchthon. However, if the Romanists say, by analogy (ex simili), "cum feceris omnia, noli confidere operibus tuis, ita credideris omnia noli confidere promissione divina," this does not follow. This is an ἀντιθετικόν, because the two statements are dissimilar. In the first statement fiducia is in our own works or merits. In the second statement fiducia is in the divine promise. Christ condemns any fiducia in our own works, says Melanchthon, but He does not condemn fiducia in the divine promise. He summarizes by saying, "Promissioni gratiae confidendum est, non naturae nostrae."⁶³

⁶¹337, 225.

⁶²337, 225.

⁶³341, 226.

Hyperbole

The reference to hyperbole in the De Iustificatione is an interesting one. The authors of the Confutation had used Tobit 4:11 (Eleemosyna ab omni peccato et a morte liberat) to show that such works as alms-giving merit the forgiveness of sins and justification. In his refutation of this position Melancthon says this passage ought to be interpreted as an hyperbole. However, he dismisses this method of interpreting the text and reiterates the principle that "doctrina legis sine Christo non prodest,"⁶⁵ and concludes his discussion of the passage with, "placent igitur eleemosynae Deo, quae sequuntur reconciliationem seu iustificationem, non quae praecedunt."⁶⁶

Ἄνα κόλουθα

The Confutation had contended that "vitam aeternam vocari mercedem, quare necesse sit eam de condigno mereri per bona opera."⁶⁷ On the contrary, says Melancthon, even though eternal life may be called a merces, it is a gift. To conclude, as the Romanists do, that because the word merces is used, eternal life is the payment (pretium) for

⁶⁵277, 215.

⁶⁶278, 215.

⁶⁷356, 227.

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our works, that our works are worthy of eternal life, and that there is no need of grace or Christ our mediator or faith, is untenable. This kind of reasoning is plainly a new dialectic.⁶⁸ They hear the word merces and immediately they draw the conclusion that Christ and the faith by which we have access to God through Christ are to be denied.

"Quis non videt haec esse ἀνακόλουθα?" asks Melancthon.⁶⁹

Sorites

Melancthon charges that the Romanists have constructed a sorites⁷⁰ in support of their doctrine that eternal life is the reward of our merits, and that furthermore those who have more merits than they need can give them to others.⁷¹ Of this Melancthon remarks, "Mane lector, nondum habes totum soriten."⁷²

⁶⁸358, 228. Cf. the note on dialectic supra, p. 53.

⁶⁹359, 228.

⁷⁰361, 228. "Sorites est argumentatio, in qua praedicatio primae propositionis aliud praedicatum attribuitur necessario cohaerens." C. R. XIII, 624f.

⁷¹360, 228.

⁷²361, 228.

CHAPTER V

THEOLOGICAL HERMENEUTICS OF THE DE IUSTIFICATIONE

Law and Gospel

Brunstäd has said:

Gesetz und Evangelium ist das Grundthema der Reformation Wer die Rechtfertigung als die Tat Gottes versteht, wird auf Gesetz und Evangelium als das zweifache Handeln Gottes gewiesen.¹

The Formula of Concord refers to the "discrimen legis et evangelii" as the "magna et clarissima lux" of the Reformation.² The distinction between the Law and the Gospel is the theological approach of Melancthon to the interpretation of Scripture in the Fourth Article of the Apology. He writes, "universa scriptura in hos duos locos distribui debet: in legem et promissiones."³ In the entire Scriptures, Old and New Testament, these two loci are to be found. There is Law in both the Old and New Testaments; there is Gospel in both Testaments. The proper distinction between the Law and the Gospel serves that "der heiligen Propheten und Apostel Schriften eigentlich erkläret und verstanden."⁴

¹Friedrich Brunstäd, Theologie der lutherischen Bekenntnisschriften (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1951), p. 85.

²Bekenntnisschriften, p. 950.

³Bekenntnisschriften, p. 159.

⁴Bekenntnisschriften, p. 950.

The reason that the Romanists have miserably polluted the doctrine of justification and cannot properly understand, "quid remissio peccatorum, neque quid fides, neque quid gratia, neque quid iustitia sit,"⁵ is that from these two doctrines they consider (sumunt) only the Law and seek in it justification and the forgiveness of sin.⁶

When Melanchthon uses lex in the De Iustificatione he refers to the "Decalogi praecepta De ceremoniis et iudicialibus legibus Moisi in praesentia nihil loquimur."⁷

More specifically, as Brunstäd observes, lex in the De Iustificatione refers primarily to the first table of the Law:

Es geht ja nich nur um die zweite Tafel, legt die Apologie dar, die mag die Vernunft noch verstehen und einigermaßen halten, sondern um die erste Tafel, sie ist ja Grund und Gehalt auch der zweiten.⁸

Melanchthon draws from Jeremiah 31:33 and several other passages to show that the Law speaks not, "de ceremoniis, sed de illa lege, quae praecipit de motibus cordis, videlicet de Decalogo."⁹ It is this Decalog, specifically the first table, which requires, according to

⁵3, 159.

⁶7, 160.

⁷6, 160.

⁸Brunstäd, op. cit., p. 88.

⁹123, 185.

Melanchthon:

non solum externa opera civilia, quae ratio ubicunque efficere potest, sed etiam requirit alia longe supra rationem posita, scilicet vere timere Deum, vere diligere Deum, vere invocare Deum.¹⁰

Here lies the fundamental error of Romanist exegesis, i.e. they imagine (affingunt), "quod ratio sine Spiritu sancto possit diligere Deum supra omnia."¹¹ This opinion, Melanchthon points out, disregards the testimony of the Fathers as well as the plain words of Scripture which state, "Sensus carnis inimicitia est adversus Deum."¹²

The implications of this statement are spelled out:

Si sensus carnis est inimicitia adversus Deum, peccat caro etiam, cum externa civilia opera facimus...vere peccant homines etiam cum honesta opera faciunt sine spiritu sancto, quia faciunt ea impio corde.¹³

Because the "sensus carnis est inimicitia adversus Deum," these things, "quae sunt proprie legis divinae, hoc est, affectus cordis erga Deum, quae praecipuntur in prima tabula," cannot be done without Christ or without the Holy Spirit.¹⁴ Melanchthon charges the Romanists with disregard of this statement of Scripture when they imagine that the outward actions of fulfilling the second table of

¹⁰8, 160.

¹¹9, 160.

¹²32, 166. Quoted from Romans 8:7,8.

¹³33.35, 166.

¹⁴130, 186.

the Law justify:

intuentur praecepta secundae tabulae, quae iustitiam civilem continent, quam intelligit ratio. Hac contenti putant se legi Dei satisfacere. Interim primam tabulam non vident, quae praecipit ut diligamus Deum.¹⁵

Anyone who thinks that the external and civil works of the second table fulfill the Law of God is deceived or is a hypocrite.¹⁶ Such a belief is a veil that hangs over the face of those who do not understand that by the Law God shows us our uncleanness (immunditiam) and the greatness of our sin.¹⁷

The people of the Old Testament¹⁸ deceived themselves into thinking that by their sacrifices they could placate the wrath of God. Such passages as, "Non in sacrificiis arguam te"¹⁹ and "Non praecepi in holocaustomatibus"²⁰ are not a condemnation of the sacrifices which were commanded as "externa exercitia in hac politia,"²¹ but they are a condemnation of the people's opinion that these works ex opere operato placated the wrath of God. Because of

¹⁵34, 166.

¹⁶133, 186.

¹⁷135, 187.

¹⁸207, 199. An unusual use of lex: populus in lege.

¹⁹Psalms 50:8.

²⁰Jeremiah 7:2.

²¹207, 199.

this false belief about the meritorious character of sacrifices they rejected (abieiebant) faith,²² and for this rejection they were chastised by the prophets.

To teach a justification on the basis of the Law is to misuse the Law and to obscure the Gospel of Christ.

The function of the Law, for Melanchthon, is this: "Lex semper accusat nos."²³ Even the Law which has the promise of God's mercy to those who love Him and keep His commandments²⁴ is a Law and a promise of the Law that must be interpreted in the light of the Gospel promises de Christo,²⁵ for the Law accuses the conscience and makes it aware that it has not kept perfectly the Law of God. The accusations of the Law result in that, being terrified by them, the conscience flees the judgment and punishment of the Law.²⁶ Melanchthon here does not see in the Law more than that which commands, terrifies and finally destroys those who do not trust in the Gospel promises. Even though there is an element of persuasion to encourage fulfillment in the promise, this promise must always be reckoned as promissio legis (and not as promissio

²²208, 200.

²³319, 221.

²⁴Exodus 20:6. Cf. 270, 214.

²⁵270, 214.

²⁶270, 214.

evangelii or as promissio de Christo) which is and remains a promise which man cannot appropriate to himself outside of the Christ as mediator. So the Law's promise is completed only in those who are in Christ by faith.²⁷

Man usually reacts to the Law in one of two ways. He either in pharisaic security condemns the judgment of God, or in fear of punishment flees from and hates God. Because of this fear of punishment a contempt of God, doubt of the Word of God remains in human nature even when man does "good works," since he does these "good works" from an unbelieving heart. Where the person has not been reborn through the acceptance of the promise of forgiveness, there all actions spring from an unbelieving heart.²⁸

When the Apostle Paul writes, "Lex iram operatur"²⁹ Melancthon interprets this passage to mean that the conscience which is terrified by the Law flees from the judgment of God and does not try to justify itself on the basis of the Law. The Law does not justify because the conscience flees from it. By the Law, then, comes the knowledge of sin and the realization that God's wrath rests upon that sin.

²⁷270, 214.

²⁸35, 166.

²⁹38, 167.

33, 206.

Lex Non Fit Sine Christo

Melanchthon repeatedly rejects the interpretations of the Confutation because they exclude Christ, and base a doctrine of justification on the Law. Melanchthon's principle of interpretation of the Law is, "Quoties autem fit mentio legis et operum, sciendum est, quod non sit excludendus Christus mediator."³⁰

When Melanchthon discusses Peter's statement, "Universa delicta tegit dilectio"³¹ he writes, "Petrus igitur non hoc vult, quod dilectio coram Deo mereatur remissionem peccatorum, quod sit propitiatio excluso mediatore Christo."³² To interpret the love to which Peter refers as a propitiatory love without the mediatory Christ is to misinterpret Peter's words. Peter does not say that our love conquers sin and death, nor that love is a propitiation by which we are reconciled, nor that our love is righteousness, for this would be a righteousness of the Law and not of the Gospel.³³ The subjective fulfillment and realization of the objective promise of the Gospel is dependent upon the faith (si credamus) that propter

³⁰ 372, 230.

³¹ I Peter 4:8.

³² 242, 207.

³³ 238, 206.

Christum the Father placatus sit and that the merits of Christ are imputed (donentur) to us.³⁴ The works of the Law, i.e. dilectio, have no place in this promise, the content of which is reconciliation and righteousness without any condition of meritorious works. On Peter's words, "Qui crediderit in eum, non confundetur," written in the context of the above quotation, Melanchthon comments:

Dilectio nostra non liberat nos a confusione, cum Deus iudicat et arguit nos. Sed fides in Christum liberat in his pavoribus, quia scimus propter Christum nobis ignosci.³⁵

When Melanchthon discusses Isaiah 58:7, a passage cited by the Confutation against the Lutheran doctrine of justification, he rejects the interpretation given the passage by the Romanists as a perversion of the Scripture because they have not interpreted it Christocentrically:

Haec sententia semper in conspectu esse debet, ut opponi possit his, qui abiecto Christo, deleto evangelio male detorquent scripturas ad humanas opiniones,³⁶ quod remissionem peccatorum emamus nostris operibus.

Outside of Christ, the lack of fulfillment of the Law is absolute. To our Lord's words, "Sine me nihil potestis facere,"³⁷ Melanchthon comments, "Manifestum est et hoc, quod sine auxilio Christo non possimus legem

³⁴239, 206.

³⁵239, 206.

³⁶260, 211.

³⁷John 15:5.

facere."³⁸ The implications of this statement are that whenever or wherever mention is made of the Law or of works of the Law they are not to be interpreted in such a way that Christ who is our mediator is excluded. The works commanded or accomplished never become a mediator, they are never to be considered, "per sese dignum."³⁹ Therefore, the Pharisaic opinion which interprets the Law in such a way that it obscures the glory of Christ is to be rejected and condemned.⁴⁰ Christ must not be excluded from the doctrine of justification for He Himself is the finis legis.⁴¹

When Melancthon takes up the fourth commandment which offers a reward, "ut sis longaevus super terram,"⁴² he concludes that the impletio legis does properly merit a reward, for reward properly belongs to the Law.⁴³ However, the merces of the Law must be interpreted in the light of the Gospel which freely offers justification for Christ's sake. "Nec legem prius facimus aut facere

³⁸ 315, 220.

³⁹ 372, 230.

⁴⁰ 269, 214.

⁴¹ 30, 165.

⁴² Exodus 20:12.

⁴³ 367, 229.

possimus, quam reconciliati Deo, iustificati et renati sumus."⁴⁴

The "lex non potest fieri sine Christo. Item lex non potest fieri sine Spiritu sancto."⁴⁵ God cannot be loved as long as the human heart perceives that He is wrathful and oppresses us with temporal and perpetual calamities. God cannot be loved, as the law demands, unless we have taken hold of God's mercy and His promise by faith. The promise of Christ and the Holy Spirit can be accepted only by faith.⁴⁶ When the heart apprehends the mercy of God by faith, then God can be loved. Then God becomes an obiectum amabile.⁴⁷

In his discussion of I Corinthians 3:8 Melancthon grants that the merces is reckoned on the basis of merit, but then he goes on to point out to the Romanists:

Sed qui hanc merentur, prius iustificati sunt, quam legem faciunt. Itaque prius sunt translati in regnum filii Dei, ut Paulus ait, et facti coheredes Christi.⁴⁸

He rather sarcastically rejects the exegesis of the Romanist authors of the Confutation who, according to

⁴⁴368, 229.

⁴⁵126ff, 185.

⁴⁶127, 185.

⁴⁷129, 186.

⁴⁸366, 229.

Melanchthon, completely misinterpret the concept of reward:

Sed adversarii, quoties de merito dicitur, statim transferunt rem a reliquis praemiis ad iustificationem, cum evangelium gratis offerat⁴⁹ iustificationem propter Christi merita, non nostra.

The merces of the Law is an inducement to the fulfillment of the Law, but this hermeneutical principle must be kept clearly in the foreground, "lex non fit sine Christo." The reward of the impletio legis is interpreted by Melanchthon in terms of the Gospel promise in the same way as the demands of the Law are.

Even after the person has come to faith, Melanchthon insists, Christ must remain the mediator:

Non igitur placet illa inchoata legis impletio propter se ipsam, sed propter fidem in Christum. Alioqui lex semper accusat nos. Quis enim satis diligit, aut satis timet Deum? Quis satis patienter sustinet afflictiones a Deo impositas? Quis non saepe dubitat, utrum Dei consilio an casu regantur res humanae? Quis non saepe stomachatur, quod impij fortuna meliore utuntur quam pii, quod pii ab impiis opprimuntur: Quis satisfacit vocationi suae? Quis diligit proximum sicut se ipsum? Quis non irritatur a concupiscentia?⁵⁰

Since the Law accuses even the conscience of the person who is in Christ the Romanist doctrine of justification leaves the conscience in doubt.⁵¹ As long as the caro of man, which is the inward disposition,

⁴⁹367, 229.

⁵⁰167, 194.

⁵¹319, 221.

continues to lust against the Spirit there could be no peace of conscience if that peace depended upon works and not upon Christ.⁵²

When Isaiah preaches repentance (Quiescite agere perverse, discite bene facere, quaerite iudicium, subvenite oppresso, iudicate pupillo, defendite viduam, et venite et exostulate mecum: si fuerint peccata vestra ut coccinum, quasi nix dealbabuntur)⁵³ Melancthon says that it would be stupidity to believe that Isaiah is speaking only of the outward acts that are listed. The opening words of this quotation, "Desinite agere perverse," are an attack upon the impiety of the people's hearts (ubi taxat impietatem cordis) and they require faith. The works which follow upon that faith are the evidences of the new life. Since there is also a promise added by the prophet, faith is required.⁵⁴

This passage from Isaiah and others, which were misconstrued by the Confutation,⁵⁵ cannot be properly interpreted is the principle that "propter Christum peccata remittantur et quod fide in Christum consequamur remissionem peccatorum" is lost sight of.

⁵²320, 221. Cf. Romans 5:1f.

⁵³Isaiah 1:16-18.

⁵⁴258, 211.

⁵⁵C. R., XXVII, 516-24.

The great hermeneutical error that Melanchthon finds in the Romanists' exegesis is their failure to interpret the Scriptures Christocentrically:

In doctrina adversariorum de iustificatione non fit mentio Christi, quomodo ipsum debeamus opponere irae Dei.⁵⁶

And again, Melanchthon writes:

Si excludunt adversarii a praedicatione poenitentiae evangelium de Christo, merito sunt iudicandi blasphemii adversus Christum.⁵⁷

Scriptura Sacra Sui Ipsius Interpres

Neben das Prinzip des einen Schriftsinnes stellten die Reformatoren einen andern Grundsatz, der bereits 1519 von Luther folgendermassen formuliert worden ist: scriptura sacra sui ipsius interpres.⁵⁸

This principle, that Scripture must be interpreted in the light of Scripture, plays an important role in the hermeneutics of Melanchthon in the De Iustificatione. The one key passage of Scripture that interprets Scripture for Melanchthon is, "Sine fide impossibile est placere Deo."⁵⁹ This statement interprets the whole law. Although works are commanded, although there are rewards offered to the

⁵⁶300, 219.

⁵⁷257, 211.

⁵⁸Fr. Torm, Hermeneutik des Neuen Testaments (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1930), p. 229.

⁵⁹133, 210. 148, 214. 251, 230. Hebrews 11:6.

fulfillment of the Law, these must be understood and interpreted in the light of, "Sine fide impossibile est placere Deo." Melancthon takes the Romanist authors of the Confutation to task because they have not considered this passage, but they choose only the doctrine of the Law, and omit the doctrine of the Gospel. In the praedicatio poenitentiae, says Melancthon, "non sufficit praedicatio legis seu verbum arguens peccata . . . quis conscientiae nunquam acquiescunt, nisi audiant vocem Dei, in qua clare promittitur remissio peccatorum."⁶⁰

This is not to set up a conflict between the Law and the Gospel for "doctrina legis non vult tollere evangelium, non vult tollere propitiatiorem Christum."⁶¹ To interpret the Law in such a way that it eliminates or vitiates the Gospel is a pharisaic opinion which does not take seriously the promises of Scripture, deprives Christ of His glory, and regards works of the Law as propitiatory.

The Confutation's quotation of Luke 11:41⁶² is a mutilatus quotation, charges Melancthon, for they have not paid attention to the Context of reliqua scriptura, such as Acts 15:9 (Fide purificari corda), which plainly teaches that Christ is the mediator. The Scriptures

⁶⁰257, 210.

⁶¹269, 214.

⁶²G. R., XXVII, 122.

contain many exhortations, some of them to works, some are to faith. It is fatal, exegetically, charges Melanchthon, "excerpere praecepta operum, omissis locis de fide."⁶³

The statement of Paul, "Factores legis iustificantur," does not contradict the rest of Scripture in its teaching on justification, because Melanchthon understands "factores legis" as those who believe God from all their heart and thereafter bring forth the fruits that are pleasing because of faith. If these words of Paul are taken as they stand, "nihil habent vitii."⁶⁴ It is only when the Romanists distort them by adding their own impious opinions that these words come to be in conflict (vitium) with the other teachings of the Scriptures. It does not follow from the words of Paul that the works referred to merit the remission of sins without the propitiation of Christ. To make such a conclusion on the basis of his words is to play fast and loose with the words and context of Scripture (impudenter ratiocinantur).⁶⁵

Melanchthon asserts that faith is not an obscure doctrine of the Scriptures, but it is very much (ubique) in evidence. Thus it is all the more strange (mirium) that the Romanists diminish its importance in their theology

⁶³284, 216.

⁶⁴252, 209.

⁶⁵252, 209.

and do not consider it central in their interpretation of the Scriptures:

plerosque locos citant truncatos, quod omissis clarissimis de fide tantum excerpant ex scripturis locos de operibus eosque depravent.⁶⁶

When the Romanists had cited James 2:24 (Videtur igitur, quod ex operibus iustificatur homo, et non ex fide sola)⁶⁷ Melancthon replies that this passage, "Magis contra adversarios facit, quam contra nos," if only it is interpreted correctly. The reason the Romanists use this passage is that they fill James' words with their own pre-suppositions, i.e. "quod per bona opera mereamur remissionem peccatorum, quod bona opera sint propitiatio ac pretium propter quod Deus nobis reconcilietur," ⁶⁸ But of these things, says Melancthon, "nihil venit in mentem Iacobo, quae tamen omni nunc defendunt adversarii praetextu sententiae Iacobi."⁶⁹ Then he goes on to show how the Romanists have distorted the words of James by not interpreting them in the light of the larger context of Scripture:

Quanto melius docet Iacobus, qui fidem non omittit, non subicit pro fide dilectionem, sed retinet fidem,

⁶⁶286, 217.

⁶⁷C. R., XXVII, 98.

⁶⁸244, 207.

⁶⁹244, 207.

ne propitiator Christus excludatur in iustificatione.⁷⁰

Secondly, asserts Melancthon, James "hic de operibus dici, quae fidem sequuntur, et ostendunt fidem non esse mortuam, sed vivam et efficacem in corde."⁷¹

Thirdly, James also teaches that justification takes place "per evangelium" and cites James 1:18 (Volens genuit nos verbo veritatis, ut nos essemus primitiae creaturarum eius) and adds his comment, "Cum dicit nos evangelio renatos esse, docet, quod fide renati ac iustificati simus."⁷²

Melancthon stresses the need of interpreting passages like James 2:24 in the light of those that teach a justification by faith, and they must be interpreted without the presuppositions that the Romanists have, which presuppositions result in a perversion of the doctrines of Scripture. "Si non assuant adversarii suas opiniones de meritis operum, Iacobi verba nihil habent incommodi."⁷³

Because of their refusal to interpret the Scriptures in the light of the context of the Gospel promises of God, Melancthon can say of the total Roman doctrine, "Tota enim doctrina adversariorum partim est a ratione humana sumpta,

⁷⁰₂₄₅, 208.

⁷¹₂₄₆, 208.

⁷²₂₄₇, 208.

⁷³₂₄₄, 207.

partim est doctrina legis, non evangelii."⁷⁴

Human nature always wishes to justify itself on the basis of its own works and does not understand faith (fides non intelligit neque considerat), it imagines that its own works justify and gain the forgiveness of sins. But, says Melancthon, "revocanda mens est ab huiusmodi carnalibus opinionibus ad verbum Dei."⁷⁵ This "verbum Dei" is always to be interpreted in the light of this statement, "Cum igitur lex praedicatur, cum praecipuntur opera, non est repudianda promissio de Christo."⁷⁶

⁷⁴287, 217.

⁷⁵265, 213.

⁷⁶265, 213.

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