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Luther's Exegetical Principle of the Analogy of Faith

OTTO HOF

I

It was clear to Martin Luther that what was at issue in his discussion with his opponents, with Rome on the one hand and with the enthusiasts on the other, was not so much the question of principle regarding the importance and relevance of the Bible—in whatever way and however qualifiedly its authority was on all sides theoretically acknowledged and practically brought to bear in controversy through argumentation by means of Bible passages—as rather the question concerning the correct interpretation of the Holy Scripture.¹ For this reason he was concerned

¹ WA 2, 18, 18 (Proceedings at Augsburg, 1518): But one thing of which I do not want you to be unaware is that I sought nothing in this hearing except the genuine meaning of Scripture.—18, 652, 26 (On the Bondage of the Will, 1525): If you look to Scripture, both

Dr. Otto Hof entered the service of the Lutheran Church of Baden in 1925. In 1946 he was named Kreisdekan for South Baden. In 1949, the year in which he wrote the accompanying article, he was appointed Honorarprofessor at the University of Freiburg, where he taught evangelical theology. This article first appeared in the Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirchenzeitung (Vol. 3, No. 24 {Oct. 15, 1949}, pp. 370—375) which in 1962 merged with other Lutheran publications to form the Lutherische Monatshefte. The English translation of the article was prepared by Richard P. Jungkuntz, Executive Secretary of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

to establish clearly the principles and criteria for correct understanding of Scripture; and he did this in such a way that he offered a series of exegetical rules, partly of a more formal, partly of a more material sort (although one can speak like this only through an anticipatory abstraction, since everything hangs together in the closest possible way). Formal criteria of correct Scripture understanding are for instance the propositions: the Holy Scripture interprets itself;² it is itself subject as well as object of exegesis, and an interpretation of the Scripture is correct only in that measure in which it obediently follows the Scripture's self-interpretation; every individual passage must be understood from the *tota scriptura*, from the entirety of Scripture, and dare not contradict

sides lay claim to it. Furthermore, our dispute is not merely concerning Scripture (which is somewhat deficient in clarity at present), but concerning the meaning of Scripture.—TR 2, 2136 (Tabletalk, 1531): Since both we and the enthusiasts alike make use of the Word of God and each side glories in its own interpretation, it can seem highly doubtful whence they ought to derive their certainty.

² 7, 97, 23 (Defense of all the Articles, 1520): The Scripture is by itself utterly certain, without difficulty, and plain; it is its own interpreter; and it tests, judges, and illuminates everything.—10 III, 238, 10 (Sermon on St. James, 1522). Thus the Scripture is its own light. And that is a fine thing when the Scripture expounds itself.—14, 556, 26 (The Deuteronomy of Moses with Notes, 1525): That is the nature of Scripture as a whole: It wants to interpret itself by a comparison of passages from all parts, and to be understood under its own direction.

this and dare not be played off against it;³ the dark passages must be explained by means of the clear ones and thus Scripture be interpreted by means of Scripture.⁴ Concerning the substantive viewpoints which the Bible suggests for its interpretation we shall have something to say in our sixth section.

We shall be led directly thither by the discussion of the exegetical principle of Luther which is stated in the title and at first appears to be of a formal character but which proves itself to be a material principle of great importance. It reads: all correct interpretation of Holy Scripture stands

³ 2, 361, 16 (The Leipzig Debate, 1519): That is no way to understand or interpret the Divine Scriptures successfully, when diverse statements are plucked from diverse passages with no rational connection in logic or analogy; rather that is the most notorious rule for going astray in Holy Writ. Therefore, if a theologian does not want to go astray, he must put the entire Scripture before his eyes, set contrary things in contrast, and with the two cherubim, so to speak, facing squarely against each other, find the common ground of their diversity in the midst of the mercy seat.—17 I, 374, 33 (Sermon, 1525): This word "Make etc. . ." [Luke 16:9] is not going to abolish and overthrow the entire Scripture.—26, 89, 2 (Lectures on 1 Timothy, 1528): Individual statements in Scripture must not militate against the general sense of Scripture.—Cf. also 2, 425, 13 (Resolutions on the Leipzig Debate, 1519); 18, 672, 23 (On the Bondage of the Will, 1525); 39 II, 219, 9 (Disputation, 1543).

⁴ 7, 639, 7 (On the Super-Christian, etc. Book of Goat Emser, 1521): When they [the fathers] expound a passage of Scripture, they do so not by their own thought or word (for where they do this, as often happens, there they commonly go astray), but rather they bring to it another passage that is clearer and thus illuminate and expound Scripture with Scripture.—Cf. also 8, 237, 3 (The 36th [37th] Psalm of David, 1521); 10 I, 1, 582, 9 (Church Postils, 1522); 10 III, 238, 6 (Sermon on St. James, 1522); 23, 225, 1 (That These Words of Christ, 1527); TR 1, 379 (Tabletalk, 1532).

under the rule of the analogy of faith, it must be in conformity with (the) faith.⁵ The expression is taken from the passage in Rom. 12:7 (according to another division, v. 6): "Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith"; in the Greek text: εἶτε προφητείαν [sc. ἔχοντες], κατὰ τὴν ἀναλογίαν τῆς πίστεως; the Vulgate: *sive prophetiam* [sc. *habentes*], *secundum rationem fidei*. The most pregnant and rich expositions of the meaning of this principle and of its significance are therefore also to be found in the sermons of Luther on the pericope Rom. 12:31 f., resp. 7 ff.⁶ But the formula is to be found frequently elsewhere in Luther as well. Our investigation is limited by theme and in regard to sources essentially to the expositions of Luther that deal explicitly with the phrase *analogia fidei* and to that extent offers only a selection out of a large coherent whole. Nevertheless, the individual point cannot be discussed without continually viewing the whole and also placing it directly before our eyes. Indeed, it will be shown that in truth Luther saw the "whole" in that "individual point."

II

Under the term "prophecy" in the Romans passage Luther is of course thinking

⁵ Accordingly, this principle was formulated by Luther himself and not first later on, as H. Strathmann affirms (*Theologische Blätter*, 1941, Col. 296, note 2).

⁶ We are dealing here with the following sermons: 17 II, 38—40 (Lenten Postils, 1525); 34 I, 104—107 (1531); 41, 510/11 (1536); 45, 2—4 (1537); 49, 681—685 (1545). Passages from these sermons are cited only according to their location in the Weimar Edition; in the case of all other citations also the writing or sermon, etc., from which they are taken, as well as the year, is indicated. . . .

also of the announcement of future events; but primarily he understands by it (with appeal to 1 Cor. 14:5) the interpretation of Scripture.⁷ If the exegetical working with the Bible is identified as prophecy, then this points not only to the high value of such work but also to the difficulty of this very responsible task. It can easily happen that in the act of interpretation the Scripture is arbitrarily given a new meaning, and its content and sense are distorted.⁸ Therefore one cannot simply believe all interpreters, not even when they cite the Bible's words and make the claim to understand them correctly; and the hearer dare not be satisfied with the mere quotation of "Scripture" and with getting it in "interpreted" form. Rather in every instance the decisive question must be asked, whether the teaching is actually in accordance with Scripture and whether the interpretation of Scripture is correct.⁹ It is correct only then when it occurs *secundum analogiam fidei*. That is the kind of Scriptural interpretation at which all interpreters must aim.¹⁰

Luther has various renderings at hand for translating and explaining the expres-

⁷ 17 II, 39, 26: The interpreting of Scripture, that is the noblest, highest, and greatest gift of prophecy. — 34 I, 104, 16: Prophesying does not mean [to speak] as the prophets once did of future things but to interpret the Prophets, the Psalms, as we have done here in Wittenberg; we are prophets.

⁸ 41, 510, 36: One can make a waxen nose of it.

⁹ 17 I, 55, 30 (Sermon, 1525): One must not say: He adduces Scripture, therefore it is correct. You must see whether he adduces it rightly. — Cf. also 34 I, 105, 11; 41, 511, 20; 45, 3, 7.

¹⁰ 41, 510, 29: Let all interpreters strive for this, that their prophecy agree with faith. If it does not, it is not prophecy.

sion *analogia fidei*. When he simply translates, he says: The interpretation of Scripture or doctrine must be similar to,¹¹ or in accordance with, the faith,¹² it must harmonize with the faith,¹³ it must be in agreement with it,¹⁴ it must be subject to it and be judged and directed according to it,¹⁵ must submit to it.¹⁶ When Luther expresses himself more generally, he says that (the) faith is or should and must be: goal, measure, and rule;¹⁷ yardstick and scale;¹⁸ angle iron;¹⁹ tribunal;²⁰ lord, master, and judge of all doctrine and Biblical interpretation;²¹ Lord and God over all teachers.²² From all these expressions and circumlocutions it becomes clear that with the principle of the analogy of faith in Luther's sense there is given a supreme criterion for all exegesis and theology and the firm limit set to all arbitrariness.

¹¹ 14, 424, 10 (Genesis-sermon, 1524); 17 II, 38, 24; 41, 511, 22; 45, 2, 28; 49, 682, 7.

¹² 17 II, 39, 3; 30 III, 375, 16 (Commentary on the Alleged Imperial Edict, 1531).

¹³ 14, 424, 25 (Genesis-sermon, 1524); 17 II, 39, 6; 29, 376, 12 (Sermon, 1529); 34 I, 105, 6; 41, 268, 26 (Sermon, 1535); 41, 510, 30; 45, 3, 9; 49, 682, 8.

¹⁴ 34 I, 106, 8. To be in keeping (*zutreffen*) with the faith: 49, 682, 8. To agree (*consentire*) with the faith: 26, 75, 38 (Lecture on 1 Tim., 1528); 34 I, 105, 12; 49, 682, 8. To accord (*convenire*) with the faith: 14, 424, 26 (Genesis-sermon, 1524); 34 I, 106, 4; 43, 228, 37 (Lectures on Genesis, 1535—45); 49, 683, 1.

¹⁵ 17 II, 40, 2.

¹⁶ 49, 684, 8.

¹⁷ II, 40, 2; 41, 510, 35; 45, 2, 32; 49, 685, 4.

¹⁸ 49, 685, 1.

¹⁹ 49, 684, 1.

²⁰ 45, 3, 21.

²¹ 17 II, 40, 1; 49, 683, 25; 684, 1 and 25.

²² 17 II, 40, 7.

III

But what is now meant with the "faith," which is supposed to be the teacher and supreme master and judge in the interpretation of Holy Scripture? Some sentences in Luther's development of our theme sound as though he is here thinking primarily or indeed exclusively of faith in the subjective sense, the personal posture of faith, respectively the act of faith on the part of the interpreter (*fides qua creditur*). He says that the interpreter must have faith and must do his work *summa fide*,²³ and he denies to those who do not have faith the ability to interpret Scripture.²⁴ This corresponds to the many other passages in which Luther says that personal faith and illumination through the Holy Spirit are necessary for the correct understanding and interpretation of Holy Scripture.

But the enthusiasts also appealed to their posture of faith and possession of the Spirit. And it is very significant that when Luther is setting forth and inculcating the principle of the analogy of faith, he sets it up specifically and expressly to ward off those who want to justify their exegetical dreams and fancies,²⁵ with which they dis-

²³ 17 II, 40, 3: Notice therefore whom Paul regards as "doctors" in the Holy Scripture, namely, all who have faith, and no one else. — 45, 2, 23: Let those who are called to expound Scripture . . . direct their thought toward doing this with utmost faith.

²⁴ 34 I, 106, 13: They do not have the analogy of faith; they do not even have faith. Therefore it is impossible for them to be able to interpret Scripture, no matter who they may be.

²⁵ 34 I, 107, 5: But if they have a dream, they say: I have the Spirit, a vision. — 45, 2, 35: If a striking, lovely thought occurs to one, that is what catches my fancy, indeed it is super-majestic.

tort the Scripture, by the appeal to their possession of the Spirit and to the "inspiration of the Holy Spirit."²⁶ Such an appeal to the Spirit counts for nothing.²⁷ All heresy begins in this way.²⁸ No personal Christian faith in and of itself, to say nothing of some arbitrary subjective credulity, is secure against the danger of making a waxen nose out of Scripture. Thus no subjective insight of faith dare lift itself above the Scripture; it must be called to subordination under the Word.²⁹ This points to the fact that the analogy of faith has to be thought of as an objective court

²⁶ 30 III, 374, 19 (Commentary on the Alleged Imperial Edict, 1531): [The pope] wants to be the judge and master over all other teachers, and also that he alone be heard above the Gospels and Holy Scriptures. That is why this edict has been boastfully proclaiming the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and the new "gospels" with which they have refuted our confession. — 34 I, 105, 7: Enthusiasts take the Scripture and make it refer to what they are doing and boast of the Holy Spirit. — 41, 510, 31: Fighting and speaking against this are the sectarian rabble and enthusiasts, who boasted of themselves that they were filled with God. — 49, 681, 30: That has at all times been the devil, in the church especially, that everyone wants to be the organ of sight, have the Spirit, and be prophecy and prophet. . . . Therefore each one seeks and aims to be teacher. That is the greatest misfortune in the church with regard to the understanding of Scripture.

²⁷ 34 I, 107, 2: Whoever is supposed to set forth Scripture, let him direct his thought toward staying on the side of faith; let him not go farther; let him not say that the Holy Spirit has spoken to him, that He has appeared to him, that he has seen Him; that counts for nothing.

²⁸ 45, 3, 5: That is how all heresies have arisen; they have beautiful thoughts, and insist on being called prophecy.

²⁹ 27, 44, 8 (Sermon, 1528): Faith should ground itself on God's Word, not contrariwise the Word of God on faith. The Word of God is not to be altered according to the faith of this one or that one.

of appeals (*Instanz*), to which the personal faith is referred and according to which it norms itself in its understanding of Scripture.

IV

On the other hand Luther also knows of "faith" as an objective quantity (*fides quae creditur*), with which all Biblical interpretation and doctrine must be in accord. It is the received doctrine of the church, which as "the genuine cabbala" offers the key to the understanding of Holy Scripture.³⁰ In the sermons of Luther that are being treated here the reference to this "faith" appears in this form, that Luther's hearers, who are supposed to test the Biblical interpretation offered to them at the hand of the analogy of faith, are concretely directed by him to ask whether the explanation of Scripture and doctrine that has been presented to them is in agreement with the creed of the church, with the confession of faith, with the catechism.³¹ Else-

where he refers to the "articles of faith," in other words more or less to what we are accustomed to call the confession or confessions of the church, as that whereby one can know and test whether an interpretation of Scripture is correct. They are drawn from Scripture and offer a brief compilation and summary of the Holy Scripture.³² As such formulations of the central content of the Bible, the articles of faith have a determinative significance for the interpretation of Scripture: They serve the correct understanding of the individual passage from the point of view of the *tota scriptura*; they can even, according to Luther, under certain circumstances compel one to interpret a passage otherwise than the literal wording would at first suggest.³³

the bread is the body of Christ. These articles have stood against the Arians and others, and have endured. . . . Thus the faith should be a picture according to which the teaching should gauge and conform itself.

³⁰ TR 1, 1207 (Tabletalk, 1531/36): Faith is the key to Sacred Scripture and the true cabbala, namely, the faith which has been handed down and which we have received.

³¹ 41, 510, 37: Which faith? Ask the children. "I believe etc." There must be agreement with baptism, the sacrament, absolution; with the doctrine. 511, 29: You, layman, look at the symbol, at the Lord's Prayer. 33: This means to put false teachings and ideas over against the catechism, and this will make you a judge so that you are able yourself to prophesy and to judge all prophets. 37: The catechism alone is enough for us to oppose false prophecies etc. — 49, 682, 21: Certainly one must know that we have been baptized in the name of the Father, etc. Likewise one must believe in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. I believe the forgiveness of sins, the catholic church, the resurrection of the dead, the life everlasting. Teach this well. If anything contrary is taught, hold it against him, etc. 685, 10: This is no waxen nose: I have been baptized, I believe in the Father. Likewise

³² 41, 275, 29 (Sermon, 1535): The prayer or confession [viz., the creed] was not made or devised by us, and not by the previous Fathers either; rather as a bee draws the honey together out of various gay and lovely flowers, so too this symbol [has been drawn] from the books of the dear prophets and apostles, that is, from the entire Holy Scripture, and in a fine way briefly summarized for the children and simple Christians. — 47, 541, 34 (Sermons on Matt. 18—24, 1537—40): . . . in the Symbols . . . which are drawn from the Bible and set forth in a brief summary, what otherwise is copiously comprised in the Holy Scripture.

³³ 11, 436, 21 (The Adoration of the Sacrament, 1523): One should permit every single word to stand in its natural meaning and not abandon this unless faith compels it. — 14, 97, 21 (Genesis-Sermon, 1523): We shall stay with the simple understanding. In fact that is what must be done by all who want to occupy themselves with the Scriptures, namely, that they stay with the simple understanding unless some article of faith compels otherwise. — 17 II, 76, 32

This does not mean, however, that the church's dogma should be set as the supreme norm over the understanding of Scripture and that the analogy of faith should be understood as agreement with the tradition, as is still the case today in

(Lenten Postil, 1525): [in the Exposition of Matt. 8:10 Luther wants to] stay with the Lord's words as they read and not abandon them. And this, in the first place, because it is not contrary to any article of faith that this faith of the centurion had no match either in the apostles or in the mother of God. Now where Christ's words do not plainly contradict any article of faith, one should let them have their literal force.—18, 147, 23 (Against the Heavenly Prophets, 1525): Where the Holy Scripture establishes something for believing, there one should not veer from the words as they read, nor from the sequence as it stands, unless an express article of faith compels one to interpret or to arrange the words differently; otherwise what would become of the Bible? Cf. also 180, 17.—18, 700, 31 (On the Bondage of the Will, 1525): Rather let this be our conviction: That no "implication" or "figure" may be allowed in any passage of Scripture unless the context of the words and the absurdity of their apparent sense, as violating an article of faith, should demand it.—23, 93, 25 (That These Words of Christ, 1527): Anyone who ventures to interpret words in the Scriptures any other way than as they read, is under obligation to prove this from the text of the very same passage or by an article of faith. Cf. also 26, 331, 24; 403, 26; 447, 7 (Confession Concerning Christ's Supper, 1528).—30 III, 122, 10 (Marburg Colloquy, 1529; Report of Hedio): It is of the essence of faith (*summa fidei*) that the proper thing for us is not to furnish glosses for the Word of our dear God unless an absurdity contrary to the faith or to the articles of faith compels it.—At the time of the Diet of Augsburg Luther repeatedly asserted with pride that the opponents themselves had been obliged to confess that the doctrine of the reformers, to which they had testified at Augsburg, was "not opposed to any article of faith nor opposed to the Holy Scripture": 30 III, 280, 17 (Warning to His Dear Germans, 1531); 31 I, 394, 11 (The 111th Psalm, 1530); 32, 358, 6 (Midweek Sermons on Matt. 5—7, 1530—32).

the Roman Catholic Church.³⁴ Such a view Luther opposed in every form when he says: For the interpretation of Scripture and doctrine one needs wise and understanding persons who know about the analogy of faith and who are able to handle this principle when testing and judging [interpretation and doctrine]; this gift, however, the papists lack precisely because they "do not have the Word, but their traditions."³⁵ From this it follows that the

³⁴ Among the principles of Biblical interpretation established by Pope Leo XIII, in the encyclical *Providentissimus Deus* of Nov. 18, 1893, there is included also the following: "As for the rest, the analogy of faith is to be followed; and the Catholic doctrine, as received from the authority of the Church, is to be employed as the highest norm" (*Sanctissimi Domini nostri Leonis divina providentia Papae XIII Epistolae Encyclicae, Series quarta*, Freiburg i. Br. [Herder], o. J., p. 125). This is confirmed by Pius XII in his encyclical *Divino Aflante Spiritu* of Sept. 30, 1943, where we read: "Moreover the interpreters of Holy Writ, mindful that what is at stake is the divinely inspired Word, whose guardianship and interpretation has been entrusted to the Church by God Himself, are to give no less attention to the explanations and declarations of the Church's magisterium, and likewise to the exposition furnished by the holy fathers, and also to the 'analogy of faith' as Leo XIII most wisely observed in the encyclical letter *Providentissimus Deus*" (*Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, Vol. XXXV, No. 10, p. 310).

³⁵ 31 II, 178, 23 (Lectures on Isaiah, 1527 to 1530): They are wise who know the analogy and rule of faith. Those who with keen judgment test and distinguish teachings have understanding if with reverence they test all things according to the analogy of faith. The impious lack these gifts, they have neither knowledge nor faith, but continually keep snoring away in their own security. Such are the Jews and especially the papists who in their security boast solely of their own church in opposition to the whole of Scripture and to the principle of faith and love . . . and when they are going to be most wise, they will be most impious; thus, just when they want to be most intelligent, then they are most stupid; because they do not have the Word, but their own traditions.

principle of interpreting the Scripture in accordance with the Credo of the church and the articles of faith dare not be understood in the traditionalist sense, and that Luther does not think of identifying the rule and analogy of faith with the traditions of the church and of placing them over the word of Scripture. The fact is that the articles of faith which one makes use of in connection with exegesis and which should lead to the correct understanding of Scripture must themselves be gained from and grounded in Scripture alone;³⁶ that the church with its entire system of doctrine remains subordinate to the word of Scripture; that all doctrine must be established by the Bible's clear word and tested by means of the word of Scripture.³⁷ In the relational, dynamic vis-à-vis and constantly new encounter of Biblical word and articles of faith the self-interpretation of Scripture takes place.

³⁶ 10 I, 1, 564, 10 (Church Postils, 1522): What the Divine Scripture does not establish need not be regarded as an article of faith. — 50, 206, 26 (Smalcald Articles, 1537/38): This means that the Word of God shall establish articles of faith and no one else, not even an angel.

³⁷ 7, 317, 5 (Defense and Explanation of all the Articles, 1521): For this reason necessity compels us to run to the Bible with the writings of all teachers and there gain our judgment and decision, for it alone is the true Lord and Master over all writings and teachings on earth. — 18, 656, 25 (On the Bondage of the Will, 1525): All the articles to which Christians hold should be such as are utterly certain to themselves, and also supported over against others by such plain and clear Scriptures as to stop all their mouths, so that they can say nothing in contradiction. — 40 I, 120, 4 (Lectures on Galatians, 1531): Paul simply takes the whole bundle — himself, an angel from heaven, teachers on earth, and any other masters whatever — and subjects them all to Sacred Scripture. . . . This [queen] everyone must obey and be subject to her.

V

We come to what is decisively important as we direct our attention to how Luther in his expositions of the question of the analogy of faith defines the content of the articles of faith, with which all interpretation must agree. For him it is fundamentally a question of *one* article, in fact uniquely *the* article of faith. In the sermons with which we are dealing we repeatedly encounter statements that are introduced with the formula "the faith says" and which are then always followed by the same assertion: that we do not get to heaven through our own works but alone through the work of Christ, that if we wish to gain forgiveness of sins and salvation we should believe in Him alone who was born, died, and is risen for us and who sits at the right hand of the Father.³⁸ It is the Gospel, it is the *message of justification* with the *solus Christus* and the *sola fide*, which here stands in the center and is the *criterion of correct Scriptural interpretation*.

³⁸ 34 I, 105, 14: What faith says is this: You do not reach heaven through your own works, but through Christ's baptism and blood. — 41, 511, 5: . . . with faith, which says: 1. One must believe in Jesus the Son of God, who etc.; through Him I find remission of sins and all things. (Line 13): What faith? I believe in Jesus Christ, etc., the Father: if you believe in Him, you shall be my son. — 45, 3, 10: Faith says that we are conceived in sin, etc., and the whole world is guilty before God, and no one is able to save himself, much less others, but must crawl to the Cross and call upon Christ. . . . Faith says: Through the Son of God and His works. Our works are poison; through Him we become saved; our sins are upon Him, Is. 53. — 49, 683, 1: Faith says that one must believe in the Father and in the Son, through whom I have remission of sins. 684, 22: Let each one learn his faith for himself: I believe in God; the Son was born, suffered, sits at, etc.

In accordance with this, Luther also states explicitly that when he demands that the interpretation of Scripture be *secundum analogiam fidei* he has in mind the article of justification *sola fide* as the objective point of reference (*Bezugspunkt*). The analogy of faith is expressed in the central Biblical statement concerning salvation in Christ alone.³⁹ The question whether the interpretation of a Scripture passage is analogous to faith is identical with the question whether it leads me to Christ.⁴⁰ Correct interpretation of Scripture, also the allegorical, has as its characteristic the fact that it relates everything, not to works, but to faith;⁴¹ that it does

³⁹ 43, 229, 1 (Lectures on Genesis, 1535 to 1545): But the analogy of faith is this (Acts 4): "There is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

⁴⁰ 16, 73, 6 (Sermon on Exodus, 1524): Does it lead me to Christ? Is it the analogy of faith?

⁴¹ 13, 603, 17 (Lectures on the Minor Prophets, 1524—26): For what must be shown in every allegory is its conformity to faith, that is, that it applies to faith or to the ministry of the Word. Those allegories which are applied to works are worthless—16, 77, 2 (Sermon on Exodus, 1524): When I use the [Biblical] narratives to oppose works, everything falls into place so that faith is promoted. Paul [says]: Sarah was the woman who has the Word of God, Hagar etc. In this way he bent it to the Word of God and the analogy of faith.—8, 154, 11 (Concerning Confession, 1521) Luther concludes an exegesis (which does not—with the Roman Church—employ the passage in Luke 17:14 as a basis for the practice of confession, but which rather finds in it a portrayal of the praise of Christ—who is signified by the priest) with the comment: "That is the true meaning, which relates it to faith, not to works; to Christ, not to men."—It is instructive at this point to place before one's eyes, as a radical contrast, what Kant designates as the supreme criterion and principle of all Biblical interpretation; "Even the reading of these Holy Scriptures or the investigation of their content has as

not contend against the Gospel of the redemption, which Christ alone has brought.⁴² For his interpretation of the First Book of Samuel, Justus Menius receives the praise that he has therein shown in an exemplary way how one must handle the sacred narratives in accordance with the analogy of faith, by the fact that he has taught how the saints' faith in God is brought to the fore in them.⁴³ Contrari-

its final aim to make better people; the historical, however, which contributes nothing to this, is in itself something quite indifferent, concerning which one may hold as he pleases. . . . If then a literary document is accepted as divine revelation, nevertheless, the supreme criterion for it, as such, will be: 'All Scripture, inspired by God, is useful for teaching, for reproof, for improvement, etc.' And since the last-mentioned, namely, the moral improvement of man, constitutes the actual purpose of all rational religion, it follows that this also comprises the supreme principle of all Biblical interpretation. This religion is 'the Spirit of God which leads us into all truth.' But this Spirit is the one who, as He instructs us, at the same time also vitalizes us with principles for action; and He applies everything else which the Scripture may contain in regard to historical faith entirely to the rules and motives of the purely moral faith. In every churchly faith this alone constitutes that which is actually religion. All study and interpretation of Scripture must proceed from the principle of finding this spirit in it, and 'one can find eternal life in it only insofar as it bears witness to this principle.'" (*Religion Within the Bounds of Pure Reason*, 3, 1, vi).

⁴² 26, 75, 38 (Lectures on 1 Tim., 1528): Words of faith are words that are the analogy of faith or agree with faith, so that they do not militate against piety and the doctrine (*locus*) of redemption.

⁴³ 30 III, 539, 26 (Preface to the Book of Menius, 1532): Menius . . . brings everything back to the fount and source and teaches how the saints' faith in God stands out in the [Biblical] narratives. 540, 6: Therefore, let the pious reader gain from this little book not only, as we have said, the true understanding and use of the sacred narratives, but also an example of how to handle them rightly (as Paul teaches)

wise it holds good that every alleged interpretation of Scripture that directs men to their own works instead of to Christ does not correspond to the analogy of faith.⁴⁴

Twice Luther illustrates this in the sermons on Romans 12 with the same two examples. First:⁴⁵ the enthusiasts and anabaptists hold the opinion that one dare not preach only about faith but must also tell a man that for God's sake he must suffer something, go into the desert, forsake father and mother, wife and children, wealth and property, etc.; and the pope commands pilgrimages to Rome or Jerusalem; and they all say this with the intention of thereby showing a man the way to be saved. One who speaks in this way seems to be a true prophet because he can

according to the analogy of faith. — Cf. also 8, 17, 9 (German Exposition of the 67th [68th] Psalm, 1521). — In addition, reference should be made here to a few passages in which Luther says that the interpretation of the Old Testament must agree (*sich reimen*) with the New Testament: 19, 139, 34 (Epistle of the Prophet Isaiah, 1526); 34 I, 374, 9 (Sermon, 1531); 54, 44, 22; 55, 13 (Concerning the Last Words of David, 1543).

⁴⁴ 41, 511, 1: The Pope issues a bull and indulgences with a seal and red wax and says: If it is in St. James etc., it is prophecy. Where did he get this? From Scripture. And he says that good works must be done, that pilgrimages and penances must be performed; and with this he has filled the whole world. What does this prophecy lack? It does not agree with faith, which says: (1) One must believe in Jesus, the Son of God, who, etc.; through Him I find remission of sins and all things. Christ I do not find in St. James. — 45, 3, 34: Listen whether that thought is analogous to faith. It is not, because it leads me away from Christ to trust in my own works and suffering. 4, 8: When I must trust in something else than Christ, it does not agree [with faith], because I must heed and let my heart trust Him alone.

⁴⁵ For what follows cf. 34 I, 105, 7 — 106, 2; and 45, 3, 1-4, 4.

quote Scripture (e. g., Matt. 10:37; 19:29; Luke 14:33) for himself. But does such teaching also agree with the faith? "No, rather with the devil from hell."⁴⁶ For faith says: We are conceived and born in sin and together with all the world guilty before God; we can therefore not save ourselves through our own works but must crawl to the cross of Christ and in faith cling to Christ alone, who has taken all our sins upon Himself.⁴⁷ Because the former teaching leads away from Christ and faith and directs us to our works, therefore it is false and not analogous to faith.⁴⁸ If one wishes to remain in the analogy of faith, then one dare not understand such words of Jesus as a directive for a better life and for being saved.⁴⁹ On the contrary, they mean to affirm that if the Christian is pressed toward the denial of Christ and of his faith, he should be prepared to give up everything and let himself be strangled rather than to forsake Christ. Second:⁵⁰ In support of the invocation of Mary and the saints appeal is made to Ps. 150:1, "Praise the Lord in His saints." As a matter of fact this word actually occurs in the Scripture. But the interpretation of the passage as referring to the invocation of the saints does not agree with the faith.

⁴⁶ 34 I, 105, 13.

⁴⁷ 45, 3, 10 (See note 38 for the wording).

⁴⁸ 34 I, 107, 1: Therefore the papists and the Anabaptists have fallen headlong from the faith. — 45, 3, 23: Here the pope and his followers go too far, because he directs me to the devil's hind end; directs me away from Christ to Rome or Jerusalem.

⁴⁹ 45, 3, 29: Not in order that in some corner you begin developing a better character and [want] to be saved thereby.

⁵⁰ For the following cf. 34 I, 106, 3-12; and 45, 4, 4-10.

For the latter says that Christ, but no saint, not even Peter and Mary, has shed His blood and died for me in order that for this reason I should place my trust in Christ alone. Therefore that psalm passage "must" have another meaning, and one must "handle" (*hæbren*) the passage in such a way that it agrees with the faith.⁵¹ It can therefore have only this meaning: I praise God for the saints in the same way as at mealtime I give thanks for food and for all the gifts of God; so I also thank God for this, that He created Mary and appointed Peter to be an apostle.

With this it has become evident that Luther's exegetical principle of the analogy of faith is totally determined by the Biblical justification-faith (*Rechtfertigungsglaube*). In accordance with the analogy of faith is that kind of speaking which corresponds to the message of Holy Scripture that we become righteous before God only through faith in Christ, who has redeemed us through His death and not through our own works. Whatever is contrary to this proposition is not analogous to faith, not even if it presents itself as Scriptural doctrine and is adorned with Biblical quotations. Therefore this proposition concerning the righteousness of faith must be employed as criterion, as judicative verdict against all interpretation of Scripture that leads to work righteousness.⁵²

⁵¹ 34 I, 106, 9: Therefore the text "Praise the Lord in His saints" must have another meaning. (Line 7): Therefore handle the text so that it agrees and accords with the faith, or else desist.—The same expression also in 27, 299, 15 (Sermon, 1528): Now we must handle the text so that it does not contradict this foundation.

⁵² 17 I, 55, 30 (Sermon, 1525): One must not say: He adduces Scripture, therefore it is correct. You must see whether he adduces it rightly; you must have clear passages so that

Thus Luther formulates Paul's meaning, which is also his own, in Rom. 12:7 as follows: "Those who have the grace to interpret Scripture should see to it that they interpret it in such a way that it agrees with the faith and does not teach contrary [to the faith] nor otherwise than faith holds. . . . In this way all teaching and interpretation of Scripture is mightily overthrown that directs us to our own work and under the name of faith makes false Christians and workrighteous people. For that which teaches us to banish sin and to be saved or become pious and have a good conscience before God in another way than alone through faith without any works, that is at once no longer analogous to faith and does not agree with it."⁵³ To him who does not know that only that faith justifies which rests on nothing else but on Christ's righteousness—to him God's Word is a closed book.⁵⁴ To him who knows it, the Scripture stands open.⁵⁵ The doctrine of justification "alone opens the door to the entire Bible," as the Apology (IV, 3) says in agreement with Luther. Luther wants to put this understand-

your conscience can be certain. "Righteous by faith." If anyone says he is justified by works, I take my yardstick and I pass judgment on whatever they propose.

⁵³ 17 II, 39, 5 and 11.

⁵⁴ 31 II, 65, 10 (Lectures on Isaiah, 1527 to 1530): For him who does not know what faith is, the Word of God is a closed book. In Gal. 2 Paul says, "I live, yet not I, but Christ in me." I do not rely on my own righteousness nor on that of the Pharisees, but only on Christ's. . . . He who does not know or do this is striking against the Word of God, even if he uses the greatest words of Christ.

⁵⁵ 34 I, 106, 15: Therefore this article must be preserved as chief above all others; if I know what faith is, the Scripture will stand open and agree with the faith.

ing into serious practice in exegesis, even if this has far-reaching consequences. If, as we have heard, he wants to "handle" (*fuehren*) a Scripture passage in such a way that it does not depart from the analogy of faith, that is, does not contradict the doctrine of justification *sola fide*, then this takes for granted that there are passages in the Holy Scripture in which justification by works seems to be taught and which accordingly do not seem to stand within the analogy of faith. Luther in fact had had such passages held against him and had himself found such in the Bible; he called them the *loci de operibus*. And now he is prepared and determined to interpret them in accordance with the rule of the analogy of faith. Concerning the story of the woman with a bloody flux, who according to Jesus' own assertion (Matt. 9:22) had received the grace of healing through faith and not through merits, Luther remarks that one must always and everywhere urge such *loci fidei* over against trust in works.⁵⁶ When one encounters *loci de operibus* in the Scripture, they are to be set in relation to the *loci de fide* and to be understood in the light of the latter.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ 38, 488, 18 (Annotations on Some Chapters of Matthew, 1536): These faith-passages must always and everywhere be urged in opposition to trust in works. (Line 29): And these examples are recorded so that grace may be preached in opposition to works, even though works are afterwards not to be omitted. Therefore we, too, must urge them in opposition to works. For the words are clear: your faith has saved you; works have not.

⁵⁷ 9, 382, 24 (Scholia on the Book of Genesis, 1519—21?): They collect certain passages of Scripture where mention is made of works, as when it is stated in Matthew that God will require works of love from us on Judgment Day — failing to understand that these and similar passages must be referred to the passages on faith. Hence one who is learning Holy Writ

Only such interpretation of Scripture is given by the Holy Ghost and dares to make its appeal to Him; for He says only that which is in accordance with the analogy of faith, because it is His office to glorify Christ.⁵⁸

must see to it that he begins his plan of study with those Scriptures which contain a discussion of faith and works, such as the Epistles of Paul to the Romans and Galatians.—15, 424, 14 (Sermon, 1524): . . . As do our doctors when they raise the objection: Do you not see the passages of Scripture regarding works? What shall we answer? . . . One cannot tolerate understanding them as pertaining to works; it must be grace.—30 II, 660, 4 (Concerning the Doctrine of Justification, 1530): To all statements of Scripture in which a righteousness of works seems to be set up, you will respond with this word from Hebrews 11: "By faith."—34 I, 375, 1 (Sermon, 1531): One must deal throughout the Scripture in such a way that there is agreement herewith and not the contrary. (Line 13): Paul is not able to preach about good works without bringing in faith. (Line 16): If I do not at the same time bring in the chief article, it will be preaching that causes people to stumble.

⁵⁸ 34 I, 107, 8: If you deliver a prophecy, see that it is in conjunction with faith. If it is not, you must say: This was preached by the devil. The Holy Spirit says He reveals that which agrees with faith.—41, 268, 26 (Sermon, 1535): It should not be disjoined from prophecy, contrary to and divergent from faith. Where preaching is about Christ so that all doctrine aims at this that He be believed and honored, there is the Holy Spirit.—49, 682, 12: If it is the Holy Spirit who makes you a prophet, He will not set you on the wrong track, but will teach that which agrees with faith in Christ. When the Holy Spirit was promised to the apostles, [Jesus] said: "When the Comforter comes, He will guide you into all truth"; "He will glorify me." The Holy Spirit indeed has various revelations, but they should all agree with the faith, which is that the Holy Spirit glorifies the Son of God.—It should be mentioned at the end of this section that Luther's basic intention has been strongly and clearly taken up by P. Althaus in section 18 of his work on Dogmatics, *Die Christliche Wahrheit*. See especially p. 211.

VI

It would now actually be in place and necessary to demonstrate by means of concrete examples from Luther's exegesis how he proceeds and to what consequences he comes when he interprets the Scripture according to the analogy of faith and in so doing comes upon *loci de operibus*. But whoever would want to show this would have to write a book in order to do justice to the abundance of material and to draw out of this an analysis of Luther's typical exegetical methods of procedure.⁵⁹ Here there is room for only a few basic observations.

One has to reckon with the fact that in opposition to Luther, who establishes the principle of the analogy of faith for exegesis, doctrine, and preaching and operates in accordance with it, the suspicion and charge is raised that he does violence to Holy Scripture by everywhere drawing his doctrine of justification into it.⁶⁰ Over against this one may recall first of all the fact that Luther had a clear eye for the danger of an interpreter's drawing an individual sentence out of the Scripture and unjustifiably making it an exegetical presupposition or of taking a preconceived idea and attaching it to the Scripture and in both instances completely misinterpreting it;⁶¹ and apart from this, the fact that

⁵⁹ I have offered a small example in my essay, "Luthers Auslegung von Lukas 16, 9," *Evangelische Theologie*, 1948/49, No. 4, pp. 151 to 166.

⁶⁰ Cf. the (cautious and carefully considered) critical comments of K. Barth regarding Luther's exegesis in *Kirchliche Dogmatik* I/2, pp. 340 and 536 f.

⁶¹ I cite only a few passages out of a great number. 57, 181, 12 (Lectures on Hebrews, 1517/18): Because twisting the plain words of

in many passages he expressly stated that every single word in Scripture is important and that not one dare be altered;⁶² even

Scripture into a different meaning is dangerous, this must not be lightly permitted, lest finally the authority of the entire Scripture be shaken. — 14, 650, 4 (The Deuteronomy of Moses with Notes, 1525): Well known is the stupidity of the ostrich, which thinks it is totally covered when its head is covered with some branch. Thus an impious teacher seizes upon some individual statement of Scripture and thinks he has a beautiful notion, but fails to see that he is making his claim as one who is naked and defenseless on every side. — 18, 701, 10 (On the Bondage of the Will, 1525): I have noticed that all heresies and errors in regard to the Scriptures have come not from the simplicity of the words (as is claimed almost throughout the world), but from disregarding the simplicity of the words and from a fondness for figures and implications that come out of men's own heads. 703, 1: For it is not left to our discretion (as the Diatribe persuades itself) to fashion and refashion the words of God as we please; otherwise what is left in the entire Scripture? — 30 II, 390, 19 (Disavowal of Purgatory, 1530): No doubt one can (if anyone wants to) make a lie out of the entire Scripture. — 27, 56, 9 (Sermon on Baptism, 1528): Their basic position is this: Something external cannot be useful for salvation. Having laid down this principle, they take their stand on it, and explain away all Scripture passages that are offered in opposition. They establish a basis out of their own conjecture and then charge ahead and explain all the Scriptures away. — 47, 367, 4 (Sermon on Matthew 18—24, 1537—40): Then the pope charges ahead and declares that the Scripture cannot be understood without his explanation; since it is contradictory, therefore one must follow his explanation. Not yet, dear pope; you dare not play master over the Scripture, nor dare I, nor anyone else, according to our own notion. To the devil with that! We should let the Scripture rule and be master over us.

⁶² 4, 318, 40 (Lectures on the Psalter, 1513 to 1515): Every passage of Scripture requires boundless understanding. — 57, 233, 22 (Lectures on Hebrews, 1517/18): The words of Holy Scripture are not to be handled negligently. Since they are the Spirit's words, they must be fraught with importance and majesty. —

as in his own exegesis he does not pass over a single *locus de operibus* but honestly exerts himself to expound its meaning.⁶³ But with these indications the matter is indeed not yet disposed of. It really cannot be overlooked that Luther's warnings against the misinterpretation of Scripture in the name of a preconceived principle and against the cavalier bypassing of clear Scripture statements and their verbatim text were essentially directed to the address of the papists, the enthusiasts, and the opponents in the Lord's Supper controversy, while he himself here and there adopted an exegetical procedure which formally did not seem to be distinguish-

12, 235, 17 (To the Knights of the Teutonic Order, 1523): Why do they not believe the Scripture, when a single passage counts for more than all the books in the world?—23, 105, 24 (That These Words of Christ, 1527): If they were not such frivolous despisers of the Scripture, then one clear passage from it should move them as much as if the world were full of Scripture, as is indeed the case. For to me it is as if each passage made the world too small.—26, 450, 19 (Confession Concerning Christ's Supper 1528).—26, 566, 11 (Report to a Good Friend, 1528): Whoever wants to alter or nullify a single commandment or word of God, can also nullify them all; if he does not want to alter or nullify all of them, then he may alter or nullify none. Because they are all of equal honor; one as much God's Word as another. . . .—54, 39, 12 (On the Last Words of David, 1543): The Holy Spirit is no fool or drunkard, that he would speak a syllable, to say nothing of a word, in vain.—If one holds these statements alongside, say, 39 II, 219, 15 ("one word counts for little with the Holy Spirit"), and the other statements of Luther cited in note 3, one senses immediately something of the force of the tension within Luther's stance toward the Scripture. On this cf. Althaus, "Gehorsam und Freiheit in Luthers Stellung zur Bibel," in Vol. I of his *Theologische Aufsätze*, 1929, pp. 140—152.

⁶³ In support of this let me refer again for example's sake to my essay mentioned in note 59, especially sections III and IV.

able from that criticized in others. Or could one not flatly characterize Luther's exegesis in accordance with the analogy of faith with the words which we just heard from his own mouth as a criticism of the Anabaptists: they lay a foundation and then stand upon it, and to all Scripture passages that one brings up against them they give a "gloss"?⁶⁴ But Luther does not shrink from the fatal proximity to the criticized procedure of others; he does what is apparently the same and—is certain of his case. For the former lay a foundation *ex suo captu*—he does not!

One makes it obviously too easy for himself, if one says—and those who so argue dare not be allowed to get away with it: Luther reads "his" doctrine of justification everywhere into the Scripture. H. J. Iwand has stated very nicely what needs to be observed on this. He calls the article of justification *sola fide* the immovable center of Luther's theology and adds the comment: "This article of the justification of a man before God is something more and something totally other than a doctrinal point in his system, it is the center, which not Luther—but which another has laid down. It is laid down with the revelation of God in Jesus Christ himself."⁶⁵ The doctrine of justification is

⁶⁴ We place alongside each other two passages already cited (notes 61 and 51) from sermons of the year 1528. Luther's opponents: "They establish a basis out of their own conjecture and then charge ahead and explain all the Scriptures away" (27, 56, 11). Luther himself: "Now we must use the text so that it does not contradict the foundation" (27, 299, 15).

⁶⁵ H. J. Iwand, "Glaubensgerechtigkeit nach Luthers Lehre," *Theologische Existenz heute*, 75 (1941), p. 5. Cf. also Paul Schempp, *Luther's Stellung zur Heiligen Schrift*, 1929, pp. 25—26: At every point the Scripture wants to direct us to the central point, and "this central point is

indeed nothing else than the explication and application of the kerygma of the cross. Luther's firm and unshakable theological point of departure is that which stands in the center of Scripture and which Scripture itself designates as its center: the Gospel of the grace of God which in Jesus Christ, who on the cross accomplished the all-sufficient work of salvation, unconditionally espouses the cause of the sinner and requires nothing of him than that in glad faith he submits to such gracious love. That is the very heart of Luther's understanding of Scripture. His principle that the Scripture is to be interpreted according to the analogy of faith is only a further but identical form of the *one* material norm of Scripture interpretation, which he can also formulate as follows: The Holy Scripture must be understood in the knowledge of the distinction between Law and Gospel;⁶⁶ or: it can only then be rightly interpreted when it is referred to Christ and interpreted *pro Christo*, when Christ thereby is "urged" and alone receives all honor.⁶⁷ Only such exegesis

Christ, or" — it is not Luther's interpretation, but the clear self-interpretation of Scripture that justifies this 'or' — "the Gospel of the sinner's justification by grace without the Law."

⁶⁶ 18, 680, 28 (On the Bondage of the Will, 1525): Tell me, please, what can a man do in the realm of theology and Holy Writ, if he has not even reached the point of knowing what is Law and what is Gospel; or, if he does know, scorns to observe the distinction? He is bound to mix up everything, heaven with hell and life with death, and will make absolutely no effort to know anything about Christ.

⁶⁷ 14, 400, 14 (Sermon on Genesis, 1524): A preacher must discern and recognize Christ, and be experienced in the Scripture, and refer all Scripture to Christ; for in this way he will accomplish something and thus become a mighty preacher. For all the statements of Scripture have to do with that Man who is called Christ. — 14, 348, 5 (Sermon on Genesis, 1523):

stands in obedience to the self-interpretation of Scripture. For the latter speaks of Christ *per contentionem et antithesin*, i. e., it so speaks of Him that beside Him nothing matters; it testifies to His sole and all-sufficiency.⁶⁸ Here lies the difference in

Here you must find Christ: If you don't, it is not a true text of Scripture. — 39 I, 47, 3 (Theses Concerning Faith and Law, 1535): Scripture must be understood in favor of Christ, not against Him. For that reason it must either be referred to Him or not regarded as true Scripture. (Line 19): Therefore, if the adversaries urge Scripture against Christ, we urge Christ against Scripture. We have the Lord, they the servants; we have the Head, they the feet or members, over which the Head must dominate and take precedence. If one of them, Christ or the Law, had to be let go, the Law would have to go, not Christ. — 1, 219, 21 (Penitential Psalms, 1517): If someone were to say to me: Are you able to talk about nothing but human righteousness, wisdom, and strength; always to be interpreting the Scripture with reference to God's righteousness and grace; and thus do nothing but fiddle on one string and sing only one song? I answer: Let everyone look to himself. As for me, I confess: As often as I have found less than Christ in Scripture, I have never yet been satisfied; but as often as I have found more than Christ in Scripture, I have never been poorer; so that to me this also appears true, that God the Holy Spirit neither knows nor wants to know anything more than Jesus Christ.

⁶⁸ 18, 782, 21 (On the Bondage of the Will, 1525): Scripture everywhere proclaims Christ both by affirmation and by antithesis. 779, 17: If all the things that are said of Christ and of grace were not said by way of affirmation, so that they may be contrasted with their opposites — such as, outside of Christ there is nothing but Satan; outside of grace nothing but wrath; outside of light nothing but darkness; outside of the way nothing but error; outside of truth nothing but a lie; outside of life nothing but death — of what use I ask you, would all the apostolic discourses be and, indeed, the entire Scripture? They would all be written in vain, for they would not compel the realization that men need Christ; yet this is their greatest concern. — 15, 527, 35 (Sermon, 1524): Scripture ought not to be interpreted in any other way than that man is nothing and Christ alone is everything.

understanding of Scripture between Luther and his opponents, with whom he had in common the formal principle of Scripture (cf. n. 1): they do not deal seriously with the *solus Christus* of the Scripture, whereas he in all exegesis holds this steadfastly in view and consistently brings it to effect.⁶⁹

When Luther interprets the Scripture in accordance with the analogy of faith and demands such interpretation, when he urges the *loci de fide* against the *loci de operibus*, when he handles individual Scripture passages in such a way that they do

⁶⁹ 20, 216, 7 (Sermon, 1526): Today we are all thus minded: we all — papists, heretics, Christians — confess that the Scripture is God's. But where the true and false scholars part company is at this point: The papists also preach about the Christian stance, that one must believe in Christ. We Christians object, "If it is faith that does it, then it is not works." Christ is something else than my works; and in this way we keep faith pure. They say, "Yes"; but they take from faith its power, saying, "But it doesn't do it alone, you must also perform works"; and with this they destroy it. Just as the Pharisee used to have the Scripture but not its power and understanding, so also these people. They have the husks of faith, but they squeeze out the kernel and the juice, because they say that faith is dead without works, and hold only to the letter of faith and not its power, namely, that Jesus is our righteousness. — 34 I, 151, 1 (Sermon, 1531). — 14, 37, 2 (Sermon, 1523): We should let Christ alone be the one who takes away sins. Therefore, whoever tries to take away sins by his own works is denying Christ: he confesses Christ to be Lord, but they do not perceive Christ's nature and quality; they recognize the husks, but not the kernel. — 27, 20, 21 (Sermon, 1528): It is a denial of Christ when I deny His chief doctrine, that no one is saved by his own works. Whoever does away with this doctrine, does away with Christ. — TR 1, 270 (Tabletalk, 1532): The Pelagians and the pope are highly disguised heretics. Regarding Christ, they assent to the fact that He is God and man, but the use of Christ they deny, namely that He is our righteousness without our works. — Cf. also W. Elert, *Morphologie des Luther-tums*, I, 1931, p. 167.

not contradict the *sola fide*, when he does not permit words of Scripture to be employed for the purpose of binding the grace of justification in spite of everything to all sorts of pre- and post-conditions, and of directing man, instead of to Christ (or: besides Christ, also) to himself and his work and his performance — then he does this not in order that he might be right after all with "his" doctrine of justification but in order that thereby the Gospel of the sole efficacy of grace and the all-sufficiency of the work of Christ might remain inviolate and unabridged and that thereby comfort may not be lacking for the sinner, who can become righteous alone through faith. All the "*fuehren*" and "*wurgere*" of Luther, also when it occurs against the letter of the Scripture, is nothing but the obedient carrying out of the self-interpretation of the Holy Scripture, which designates salvation in Christ alone as its central meaning and content — it is nothing else than obedience toward Christ, who is the *autor* and *rex Scripturae*.⁷⁰ Upon the article of justification *sola fide* and upon its pure proclamation depends, as Luther concisely declares in the Smalcald Articles, the very existence of the church. The latter is alive and well-ordered precisely in the degree that this doctrine holds good in her midst and is actually confessed

⁷⁰ 40, I, 458, 8 (Lectures on Galatians, 1531): I shall rather stay on the side of the Author of Scripture. Nevertheless, it is impossible for Scripture to be opposed to Him, except at the hand of men who are blind and ignorant of Scripture. But if you are unable to reconcile Scripture [with Him] and they keep stressing Scripture —: I stress the Head of the family, the King of Scripture, who has become the price of my salvation. — Cf. also 39 I, 47, 19 (see note 67 above); 41, 692, 31 (Sermon, 1536).

and preached as the center of her proclamation.⁷¹ For such preaching, however, there is need of correct interpretation of Holy Scripture. In this task the exegete, following Luther's direction, will take heed that he does not play master over Scripture with theological opinions, that he does not bypass a single word that "stands written," that he places the *loci de operibus* in the right context and preaches them in their right "use," and—he is not obliged to take over every individual exegesis of Luther himself. But he must also let himself be

forbidden to listen to a localistic and literalistic Biblicism, which fancies itself especially true to Scripture when it mingles the *loci de operibus* in the doctrine of justification, and with his stipulations turns the Gospel into Law; *Urget scripturam contra Christum!* Contrariwise he can learn through Luther to interpret the Scripture correctly, namely, in such a way that Christ alone has the glory of bestowing on us through faith the righteousness before God—that is, to interpret Holy Scripture according to the analogy of faith.

⁷¹ See also the fine essay by H. Dietzfelbinger, "Die Rechtfertigungslehre als die Mitte der Verkündigung," *Jahrbuch des Martin Luther-Bundes*, 1948, pp. 96—100.

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