

DEFYING THE DOCTRINE OF VERBAL INSPIRATION FACE TO THE HIGHER CRITICISM OR HISTORICAL CRITICAL METHOD

1. Introduction: The fundamental question of theology: Reason or Scripture?

With the theme „Defying the doctrine of verbal inspiration face to the higher criticism or historical critical method“, we stand face to the fundamental question of theology and for that reason also of Christian faith and life, namely the question how I, as a Christian, and how the Church of Jesus Christ stands concerning the Bible – is it the Word of God, inspired by His Ghost, and for that reason absolutely inerrant, absolutely true, absolutely correct and without contradictions - or is it a book as all others are too? The consequences for the use of the Bible are going very far: Can one accept it as it is written or, for the interpretation, is it under the reason and its criteria, which is acting with it like with each other ancient book? With full right Wilhelm Martin Oesch put his essay at a conference of free Lutheran churches in Groß Oesingen in 1946 under the theme: „The question of life for since 200 years: ‚Reason or Scripture? Uncertainty or divine certainty of the doctrine?‘“¹

For a Christian this question should be solved principally. Since who by the work of the Holy Ghost through the word is reborn to the saving faith in Jesus Christ, such one is by that also converted from the autonomy of reason to God and His Word, Holy Writ. For the word, by which he has received saving faith, which has enlightened his faith, that is the Word of God, the word, we have only in the Lord's Holy Scriptures, the Bible, and which not only enlightens faith, but also nourishes, strengthens and preserves it. It is by this word that God is speaking to us, gives testimony from himself. And this word has also shown itself in the sacred history to be faithful, since we do not only have many prophecies in the Old Testament, but also the exact fulfillment of them, in the Old as in the New Testament, and have the final confirmation and sealing by the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

When now we are considering the theme verbal inspiration on the one side and higher criticism on the other, it cannot be from a „neutral standpoint“. On the one side that is impossible since there are only two standpoints: under the Lord or against the Lord. There is no third area. And who isn't under the Lord, he is against the Lord. Who thinks he has to have a „neutral standpoint“ face to the Bible, as maintained and demanded by the representatives of the historical critical method (HCM)², he is totally blinded or he is sinning consciously, since he is clearly denying to bow under the word of God, is clearly denying to bow the reason under the obedience to Christ (2 Cor. 10:5), and makes himself with he blinded reason (Eph. 4:18; 5:8) judge over the Lord and his Word – which he really cannot understand, since „the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned“ (1 Cor. 2:14).

For that reason the only standpoint for us as Christians, especially as Christians of the Lutheran confession, to consider that theme can only be the one, to profess without restrictions the Bible as the Holy Writ, totally and word by word inspired and for that absolute inerrant, absolute correct, absolute true, absolute without contradictions, the Word of God, correctly understood only in its real, literal sense (*sensus literalis*), as done by the dogmatical-historical-grammatical exegesis.

A. The historical critical method or „higher“ criticism

2. Struggle with the historical critical method or „higher“ criticism

2.1 The allegorical exegesis

The historical critical method for understanding the Scriptures is not the first one in the history of theology to depart from the literal sense of Scripture. Even in the early Church the so called allegorical method was developed, coming finally from heathen philosophy, and by whose help one tried to eliminate all such things „offensive“ to reason by interpretation. Finally one succeeded in putting all that into Scripture (eisegesis instead of exegesis) one wanted. By that the Bible became an unclear, uncertain book, until the Reformation went back to the true, the literal sense of Scripture.³

¹ Hans Kirsten: *Einigkeit im Glauben und in der Lehre*. Bd. 1. Groß Oesingen: Verlag der Lutherischen Buchhandlung Heinrich Harms. 1980. pp. 205-214.

In the struggle with the HCM have a look also to the works of Eta Linnemann: *Wissenschaft oder Meinung?* Neuhausen-Stuttgart: Hänssler. 1986. (Tagesfragen. Bd. 29.); *Original oder Fälschung. Historisch-kritische Theologie im Lichte der Bibel*. Bielefeld: Christliche Literaturverbreitung; Dillenburger: Christliche Verlagsgesellschaft. 1994; *Bibelkritik auf dem Prüfstand. Wie wissenschaftlich ist die „Wissenschaftliche Theologie?“* Nürnberg: VTR. 1998

² Siegbert W. Becker: *The Historical-Critical Method of Bible Interpretation*. <http://www.wlssays.net/files/BeckerHistorical.pdf> p. 18. Such theologians maintain, one has to come to the Bible „without prejudice“, to decide, what it „correct“ or „wrong“, „a fact“ or „a fictive“. To come to a result it would have to be explored „historically“. That's always the same: Man puts himself above the Lord and His Word and determines, if and how far a history, a word of God, is faithful.

³ Becker, op. cit. p. 3-4

2.2 The historical critical method

The term „historical critical method“ can lead astray, since one could think that „historical“ under these circumstances means, that the Bible is recognized as a book with historical reports, since the Lord has revealed himself in the history of man. But „historical“ in these circumstances means that the Bible is put under the understanding of historical reasoning, that is, one is looking to Scripture as a book, which came into being step by step during history, depending from place and time of each of the books, which, for that reason, also have the influences from the surroundings and time, including also the prevailing world views and errors. For that the Scripture is looked to as a „product of history“.⁴ „History“ is seen as a closed unit, since this world, this cosmos is seen as a closed unit, closed against the work of the Lord. That has for result that wonders are impossible (or are only respected as far as they can be interpreted rationally), and prophecy is denied also (what you can see i.e. in this, that it is maintained that Isa. 40 ff. would not be from Isaiah, but only written in the time of the Babylonian Exile or later; even the prophecies of Jesus regarding his suffering, death and resurrection are maintained to have been introduced by the disciples later on).⁵

There is no doubt, naturally, that the Lord's Holy Writ isn't fallen from heaven, but that the holy writers have written during history, in the context of special events of the sacred history. But since the true author of the Bible are not erroneous men but God the Holy Ghost himself, who has inspired the Holy Writ to the holy writers, word by word, 2 Tim. 3:14-17, we do not have human statements, but the Holy Ghost is speaking by them, word by word (i.e. Acts 1:16; 28:25), and so it is not a book of men, but the book of the Holy Ghost. For that it also has God's properties, that is, it is without any mistakes, without any errors, without adaption to world views or any thought of men depending on the time – since otherwise it would have mistakes, errors – and for that absolutely true, absolutely correct, absolutely inerrant in *all* of its statements, regarding theological, historical, geographical statements or those about things of nature or human sciences, since Scripture cannot be broken (John 10:35).

The term „critical“ clarifies the fundamental position of this method and its representatives regarding the Lord's Bible, since by that it is maintained that man must explore, with his reason, the Lord's Holy Writ, to define what it really is a „historical“ fact and what not, all must „critically“ be questioned.⁶ As, i.e., Edgar Krentz, a representative of the HCM, maintains, the Bible wouldn't be anything else but a „historical document“, which has to be explored like other ancient sources.⁷ It would be important, for that reason, not only to study the Bible but also in this context the political and religious history, to understand the Bible by this knowledge from outside the Bible and, by that, to determine, what is historically correct or false or a „myth“ or „product of the church“. ⁸ As a principal fact it is denied a priori that the Biblical statements are historically correct, at least it is questioned principally.⁹ So called „Moderates“ might come to the result to accept the whole Bible – but not because it is God's Word, under which they bow, but because by their method, that is, their reason, they have found they could accept it. By that it is clear, why the HCM, independent from the results it produces, is totally unacceptable to Biblical and Confessional Christians, since the HCM is a method totally inadequate to the Word of God, attacking the majesty of the living and holy God in his word, is coming from the rebellion of man against the Lord, reflecting the hybris of the creature over his creator, a method for that reason rooted in the original sin. The one who is following this method cannot any longer speak without reservation with Samuel: „Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.“, since he has made himself a judge over God and his word.¹⁰

As mentioned above, it is right that the Bible came into existence during the sacred history, but, since it is not the book of man but the book of the Lord, it is not influenced by the surroundings, the spirit of the time, the religious history of the heathens, but shaped by the holiness, righteousness, truth and faithfulness of the Lord, who does not lie (Tit. 1:2). For that it is totally false to try to understand the Bible by sciences from outside the Bible or to interpret or even to change its statements. Sciences from outside the Bible may clarify the one or other point, but they never can serve to determine the real statement of the Bible or to shape or to change it. It always has to be the highest commandment, that the literal sense of Scripture is ruling – naturally considering that there is also figurative speaking – and that Scripture interprets itself, the clearer passages the darker ones. Since the Holy Scriptures are the book of the Holy Ghost, and because for that it is absolutely inerrant, absolutely true, absolutely correct and without contradictions, we can trust its statements in all its points without reservation, even though earthly scientists are telling something other – since men have erred very often and had to correct their science, but the Lord does never err. (And: Why is it the Bible which has to depend from the pagan surroundings, regarding the interpretation by religious history? Couldn't it be the other way round, that the pagan surroundings still had some parts of original knowledge, but humanly changed?)

⁴ Faithful to Our Calling. Vol. II. St. Louis. Mo: Faculty of Concordia Seminary. no date given. p. 111, in: Becker, *ibid.*, p. 4

⁵ Becker, *ibid.* p. 31 f.

⁶ Faithful ... II, p. 45, in: Becker, *ibid.* p. 4

⁷ Faithful ... II, p. 30, in: Becker, *ibid.* p. 5

⁸ Paul Tillich: Systematic Theology. Vol. II. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1957. p. 101, in: Becker, *ibid.*

⁹ Marten H. Woudstra: Event and Interpretation in the Old Testament, in: Simon Kistemaker: Interpreting God's Word Today. Grand Rapids: Baker. 1970. p. 70, in: Becker, *ibid.*

¹⁰ Becker, *ibid.*

Some so called „Moderates“ make a difference and say, that the „theological statements“ are unchangeable, and only the „historical side of Scripture“ has to be explored (i.e. Paul Bretscher, Hartmut Günther), the „theological reality“ would be from the Lord, but the „historical reality“ from man. To the later things they also put the statements about the writers of Biblical books, statements about persons in Scripture, also the words of Jesus.¹¹ But others question all statements, also the theological ones, as Bultmann, who also denied the existence of angels, spiritis, demons, hell.¹²

But independent from that, if only a part or all is subjected to the „historical critic“: No man has the right to determine, which parts of the Bible he wants to accept and which not. Who even one statement of Scripture doesn't accept as the Bible tells it, such one rebels against the Lord, rebels against the majesty of God. It is totally false to maintain the Bible would be a theological book, not a history or biology book. No one has ever maintained that it is a book of nature sciences. But that doesn't change the fact that the statements the Bible has on historical, geographical or other items of nature or human sciences, because they are the Word of God and since the Lord knows all very exactly, also these statements are absolutely correct, absolutely inerrant.¹³ For that it also doesn't agree with the absolute inerrancy of Scripture to accept so called „small mistakes“ or to speak of an „infallibility“ of Scripture, meaning by that, that God by his word would come to his aim, his (spiritual) purpose. Also by that the absolute inerrancy of Scripture is under attack and denied. That is also the fact when, by misuse of the terms, some „Moderates“ maintain, error would only be things which would be willingly false; adaption to the spirit of time i.e. wouldn't be error.¹⁴ But in reality something wrong would be in Scripture. But the Holy Ghost does not lie, Tit. 1:2, he does not seduce man to false things, errors, no difference whether they are by knowledge or from the spirit of time, the circumstances of the time or world views. There is no adaption to the spirit of the time, to word views in Scripture – and for that also nothing false, no errors.

Some mislead the people by speaking of a „total inspiration“ of the Bible, but at the same time deny the absolute inerrancy, since the Lord would come to his aim; or by „inspiration“ they mean the working of the Lord on man by the Scriptures, to lead them to faith.¹⁵

To this also belong the maintenances Christ would have adapted himself to the the views of his time, when speaking about the writing of Moses or Isaiah or about demonism.¹⁶ That doesn't only attack the absolute inerrancy of Scripture, but also Jesus Christ and his true Godhead and for that is blasphemous.

The HCM is, as principle, against the absolute inerrancy of the Holy Writ, since it is its fundament to doubt all what is said in the Bible, all may be false. The HCM is a method of doubt.¹⁷ It is a normal consequence that the Holy Scriptures are no longer recognized as the Word of God, but one begins to distinguish between the Word of God and the Holy Scriptures.¹⁸

When adherents of the HCM are speaking about the Bible as the Word of God, they do not mean that in a direct sense, but only symbolical, as far as it is speaking from Jesus, e.g., or create faith in Jesus.¹⁹ That, naturally, is totally contrary to the verbal inspiration and suggests, that the Scriptures only had been accepted by the Lord afterwards. Extreme adherents of the HCM, like C.H. Dodd, maintain that only that could be accepted what would correspond with human reason. That is pure rationalism and subjectivism.²⁰

2.2.1. Source criticism

Source criticism is the attempt to recognize which alleged „sources“ would be the the fundament of the Biblical books, which are then thought to be compiled from many sources (redaction). It is maintained, that the Biblical books, e.g. the Pentateuch or Isaiah, are not a literal unit, but composed over a long time from several sources by editors or redactors. Regarding the Books of Moses one is speaking of an „Elohist“ oder „Jahwist“, „Deuteronomist“, „priestly scripture“ or even more. The adherents of the HCM do not agree about the alleged „sources“. Since prophesy is denied it is maintained that the Pentateuch would have been finished only during the Babylonian Captivity. None of the alleged „sources“ has ever been found.²¹

Similar to the OT also the NT was destroyed by source criticism, especially the so called synoptic gospels. It is maintained that Mark would be the original gospel, since Matthew and Luke would have much in common

¹¹ Paul Bretscher: After the Purifying. River Forest: Lutheran Education Association. 1975, p. 87, in: Becker, *ibid.* p. 6. 21

¹² Kerygma and Myth. By Rudolf Bultmann et al. Tr. By Reginald H. Fuller. Ed. Hans Werner Bartsch. New York: Harper Torchbooks. 1961. p. 4, in: Becker, *ibid.*

¹³ Becker, *ibid.* p. 21 f. Faithful to Our Calling I, S. 36, in: Becker, *ibid.* p. 26

¹⁴ Becker, *ibid.* p. 25 f.

¹⁵ Becker, *ibid.* p. 6-9

¹⁶ Becker, *ibid.* p. 10

¹⁷ Becker, *ibid.* p. 21, 6-9

¹⁸ Becker, *ibid.* p. 27

¹⁹ Becker, *ibid.* p. 29

²⁰ C.H. Dodd: The Authority of the Bible. New York: Harper. 1958. p. 233, in: Becker, *ibid.* p. 30

²¹ Becker, *ibid.* p. 11

with him, plus another source Q for the material not found in Mark, and other sources for parts special to Matthew and those special to Luke.²²

To be true, the similarities between these three gospels is less than often thought. Most parallelities you can find in the passion history, the central part of all four gospels. It is also true, that, as mentioned a few times in Scripture, the holy writers also used some existing books, but only so far as the Holy Ghost gave them to do it.

2.2.2. Form criticism and redaction criticism

For the problems even HCM theologians have with source criticism, they developed their criticism in another way, beginning with the New Testament. They maintain, that the Biblical history of Jesus Christ would have been transmitted orally. And by that transmission the people would have changed the history according to their need and understanding, with the result that there wouldn't be many „real“ word of Jesus, but most would be „church theology“, and it would be the task of theology to distinguish between „real“ and „unreal“ words of Jesus.²³

Regarding the Old Testament they maintain, that there might be a historical source, but that now we would have it in the way people would have understood that history.²⁴

Yes, there also had been oral transmission, but, as we even learn in the Gospels, Jesus Christ taught his disciples in the oriental way by repetition, so that they knew the decisive parts by heart. But, and that is the most decisive, that, what we have in the Holy Scriptures, that is not that, what man wanted to have in it, but it is the book of the Holy Ghost, even though he led man, like Luke, to explore, to interview people to come to knowledge of that what had happened. But what then he wrote in the gospel, that was from the Holy Ghost.

Redaction criticism has a somewhat other emphasis, underlining that e.g. the gospels are products of literature. But still it is maintained, that we would not have reports of facts in the Bible but an edition or redaction, with a real source, but then edited and changed by the people. As is naturally, the results of these theologians from form and redaction criticism are very different from one to the other.²⁵

3. Canonical exegesis

The canonical exegesis was elaborated in the 1970s in the United States as a form of understanding the Bible and is connected with persons like Brevard S. Childs²⁶ and James A. Sanders²⁷. It is widespread among Roman Catholics but has also some adherents among Protestants (Peter Stuhlmacher, Hartmut Gese, SELK).

In difference to the HCM the canonical exegesis wants to work with the text as it exists now²⁸ – but also accepts the HCM as a step earlier to explore how the text became what it is now. Even though there are great differences within the canonical exegesis concerning the question whether the text is fixed now (Childs) or is still open for development (Sanders), more or less all adherents maintain, that the „canon“, that is the Bible as it is, would be „the first context“ for all parts of the Bible or the books of the Bible. What that means is not exactly explained, but there is the danger, that the special focus of a passage would not be realized, since the text is interpreted as part of a larger unit.

„Canon“ is not only the whole of the Bible but is understood as a description of an „inner relation“ between a religious fellowship and its texts. It is maintained that the canon is not fixed from the beginning (by the Lord) but is the result of an evolution of that „relation“ by which the texts would have been transformed into what they are now by the special understanding of the religious fellowship, dependent also from its world view and the circumstances of life.²⁹

For persons like Sanders and others who are also following modern literature philosophy (as elaborated by Hans-Georg Gadamer and further by Umberto Eco), the canon is a „dynamic term“, expression of the identity of

²² Becker, *ibid.* p. 12. Look also: Eta Linnemann: Gibt es ein synoptisches Problem? Neuhausen-Stuttgart: Hänssler 1992. (Theologie für die Gemeinde. 2.)

²³ Becker, *ibid.*, p. 13-14

²⁴ Woudstra, *op. cit.*, in: Kistemaker, *op. cit.*, p. 58, in: Becker, *ibid.*, p. 15

²⁵ Becker, *ibid.* p. 17

²⁶ Childs, Brevard S.: Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments. 1992/94. deutsch: Die Theologie der Einen Bibel. 1994/96; in: Sierzyn, Armin: Christologische Hermeneutik. Eine Studie über historisch-kritische, kanonische und biblische Theologie mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der philosophischen Hermeneutik von Hans-Georg Gadamer. (Studien zu Theologie und Bibel. 3.) LIT-Verlag. 2010. p. 69 f. http://books.google.de/books?id=ReDpOnwOKR4C&pg=PA69&hl=de&source=gbs_toc_r&cad=4#v=onepage&q&f=false His position is summarized under the term „canonical approach“. Look: Ruth Scoralick: Kanonische Schriftauslegung. In: SKZ 38/2009. p. 645 <http://www.bibelwerk.ch/upload/20091127104302.pdf>

²⁷ Sierzyn, *op.cit.* look also: Sanders: Canon and Community. 1984. also.: From Sacred Story to Sacred Text. 1987; in: Sierzyn, *ibid.* p. 70²⁰³ His position is named „canonical criticism“. Look: Scoralick, *op.cit.*

²⁸ Stuhlmacher, Peter: Der Kanon und seine Auslegung; in: C. Landmesser u.a. (Hrsg.): Jesus Christus als Mitte der Schrift. 1997. p. 275; in: Sierzyn, *ibid.*, p. 69; Scoralick, *ibid.*

²⁹ Kirchschräger, Walter: Kanonische Exegese – Was ist das? 2009 : http://www.wir-sind-kirche.at/content/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=377&Itemid=27

the religious fellowship, but still in development, since the religious fellowship is still transforming the texts and its understanding according to the circumstances of life.³⁰

Here once again you can observe the consequences of denying the verbal inspiration of the Holy Scriptures: The Bible becomes the product of human development in history; the meaning of the texts can vary by time and place. It is not surprising that Roman Catholics use it very much, also favored by Pope Benedikt XVI., since by the canonical exegesis the church is made supreme to the word, not the word master and source of the church (creatura verbi).³¹

When adherents of the canonical exegesis speak of „inspiration“ they mean the reception of the text by the religious fellowship in its way of life, by productive transforming that text (interaction between text and reader). That means, that they, like Johannes Taschner or T. Nicklas, maintain, that there isn't one fixed sense of a text (sensus literalis), but on open text which may be interpreted in varying senses (polyvalence).³²

It would be the religious fellowship which would, by its experiences, influence the understanding of the text. That means, that besides the Scriptures there are other authorities, like the church, canon as a unit, also the confessions, and, influencing the church, world views, circumstances etc.³³

Even though some try to use the canonical exegesis in a more conservative way (SELK), they do not really hinder the false doctrine and practice of that method to influence the understanding of the Bible, since they also don't have a staunch Biblical basis. But having a Biblical basis you have no need for the canonical exegesis at all, which is a wordly one, as is the HCM, now not influenced so much by historical sciences, but by literature sciences. The only positive thing is that the existing text has more relevance than by the HCM.

B. The Verbal Inspiration and Inerrancy of the Holy Scriptures³⁴

4.1. The Word becoming flesh and the Word becoming Scripture

Thesis 1: *Christ, the Word which became flesh (John 1:14), we do not know otherwise but by the Word of God which became Scripture, the Holy Scriptures (2. Tim. 3:14 f.); Christ, the Word, which became flesh, we do not find anywhere else but only in the Word of God, which became Scripture, the Holy Scriptures. The Word of God, which became Scripture, is his speech, the doctrine of Jesus Christ, of the Word, which became flesh.*

The fact that Christ is the Word and the Holy Scriptures are the Word of God has caused false conclusions to maintain, that it is Christ we have to follow, not the Bible. But those who argue in such a way have forgotten, that we do not have any other Christ but the Christ of the Holy Writ; we do not know any other Christ and that we cannot know, believe and follow Christ otherwise but by the Scriptures (John 17:20). There is no other Christ but the Christ of the Bible. Those who want to follow Christ without following the Scriptures have another, a false Christ.

4.2. The Holy Scriptures – the inspired (theopneustos) Word of God

Thesis 2: *The Holy Scriptures are the inspired, absolutely inerrant Word of God to us, not, because Christ is its center and star, but because God, the Lord, is its only cause and author and the holy writers have written moved by the Holy Ghost (formal principle). For that the Holy Scriptures do not only content the Word of God, but they are the Word of God.*

The Scriptures came into existence totally by the willing, planning and order of the Lord through the holy writers, given to them by inspiration; they are not the result of an independent human planning, understanding, theology, redaction.

Some have maintained that the Holy Scriptures are the Word of God only because or in so far as Christ is its center and star, or in so far as it is „driven by Christ“ (canon within the canon). Others are professing that the Scriptures are the Word of God, but deny that it is inspired, word by word, by the Holy Ghost and absolutely inerrant, teaching that it is the Word of God so far as the Lord wanted the Scriptures to be as they are now (canonical approach). Even though it is true, that Jesus Christ crucified and risen again is the center and star of Scriptures (1 Cor. 2:2; Joh. 20:31; Luke 24:15; John 16:13-15), the Holy Writ is not the Word of God because it has Christ as its center, but because God the Holy Ghost is its only cause and author, who gave not only the ideas

³⁰ Sierzyn, op.cit. look also: Sanders: Canon and Community. 1984. ders.: From Sacred Story to Sacred Text. 1987; in: Sierzyn, ibid. p. 70²⁰³ His position is named „canonical criticism“. Look: Scoralick, op.cit.

³¹ Sierzyn, ibid. p. 71

³² Taschner, Johannes: Kanonische Bibelauslegung – Spiel ohne Grenzen? in: Egbert Ballhorn, Georg Steins: Der Bibelkanon. 2007 p. 38; in: Sierzyn, ibid. Nicklas is very close to the literature philosophy of Umberto Eco and also the philosophical hermeneutics of Hans-Georg Gadamer. Look: Sierzyn, ibid. p. 78

³³ Taschner, op.cit., p. 42 f.; in: Sierzyn, ibid. p. 78

³⁴ The theses are taken from: Roland Scerl: Die Bibel – Gottes heiliges, irrumsloses Wort an uns. Dürmersheim 1999. The explanations are a summary of the text of that booklet. The background of the theses and that booklet is: Melvin J. Grieger, Vernon S. Grieger, Clarence R. Priebbenow: The Word Shall Stand, Our Evangelical Lutheran Confession. Dorchester, Victoria, Australia: Luther Rose Publications 1990. (Timely Essays. No. 2.) and: Adolf Hönecke: Ev.-Luth. Dogmatik. Vol. 1. Milwaukee, Wis. Northwestern Publishing House 1909.

of what to write, also not only the themes about which to write to the holy writers, but the very words they should write, the plan and concept of each book (plenar inspiration or inspiration of the words; 2 Tim. 3:14-17; 1 Cor. 2:13; 2 Peter 1:20). This is meant in regard of the original text. The translations are not inspired. For that reason the Holy Scriptures have also the character and properties of its divine cause and author: absolute inerrant, absolute correct, absolute true.

The Holy Scriptures have a „human side“ only in so far as the Lord is speaking to us in human language, that we might understand him, and because he used for that the holy men als his writers, pencils, accomodating also to their style, their way to speak and to write – since they were his creatures – and accomodated the style also to the content. It was not accidental which language the Lord used, a reason why the original texts are the foundation for theological work.

The human writers hadn't been unconscious, also weren't in ecstasy, also not without knowledge about all they wrote, but the Lord used them also with their knowledge, also led them in their exploring facts (Luke 1:1-4). But what they really wrote, that was what the Holy Ghost gave them to write, His very words. The inspiration of the words by the Holy Ghost are the cause of the Holy Writ, not the knowledge, the exploration, the planing, the will of the human writers. Even when the holy writers used other yet existing books, as it is mentioned a few times, they did it by inspiration and guidance of the Holy Ghost.

Even though the Lord is speaking to us in human language, wrote His Bible by human writers, he has not accomodated himself to sin or the consequences of sin, like faults, errors. For that he also didn't take over false things, false world views, ideas of the spirit of the time, since God does not lie, Num. 23:19; 1. Sam. 15:29; Tit. 1:2.

Since the Holy Scriptures are the inspired Word of God there is no mixture of God's word and word of man in the Holy Writ, but there is God's Word alone.

4.3. The Holy Scriptures are absolutely inerrant

Thesis 3: *Because the Holy Scriptures are the inspired Word of God they are also absolutely inerrant, without any contradictions, absolutely correct and authoritative in all its statements, may they concern sacral or profane things, since Scripture cannot be broken (John 10:35).*

Some maintain that, because Jesus Christ is the center and star of the Holy Writ, Scripture would have divine authority only in so far as it is teaching about things concerning our salvation; that Scripture, since it isn't a historical book or a book of nature or human sciences, would be inerrant only in so far it is speaking about things in regard of our salvation, while statements on historical, geographical or other things would be in accomodation to the thinking of the time and the surroundings.

But since the Holy Scriptures are the Word of God, inspired word by word by the Holy Ghost to the holy writers, and since for that the Lord is the only and real cause and author of the Holy Writ, and does not lie and is opposed to all sin, all consequences of sin, all faults, the Holy Scriptures are absolutely inerrant, absolutely correct, absolutely true, without faults, errors in anything they are speaking, without contradictions, authoritative and binding us in all it is teaching, may be in sacral or profane things. There is nothing incorrect in Scripture, in no areas of knowledge and science, nor errors, even not small errors, but the Scripture is faithful in all it is saying.

4.4. Revelation of the Lord and Holy Scriptures

Thesis 4: *While in earlier times, those of the prophets and the apostles, the revelation of God was more than the Scriptures, since the Lord spoke directly to the men of God, since the time of the Apostles, we have the revelation and the word of God only in the Holy Writ as the revelation of the Lord to us.*

There are some who maintain that there might be word of God outside the Holy Scriptures, some question the limits of the canon of the Bible. Some go even further and maintain that God might be found independent from His Scriptures also in his working in history, that there might be special ‚points of time of God' in the history (kairos theology); some even maintain that there are revelations of the Lord even today.

Others (HCM) deny that the Lord is working in this world and in the history and is fulfilling His Word; that there might be prophesy as the foretelling of things to come later on; that the Holy Ghost is the cause and author of the Holy Scriptures. By denying that they also deny the connection between inspiration, inspired writers and the canon.

We have to confess that since the time of the Apostles we have no promise for any direct speech or revelation of the Lord but he is only speaking to us by His Holy Scriptures, the word of the prophets and Apostles, Joh. 17:20; Eph. 2:18-20. Christ and his gospel you can find only in the Holy Writ and nowhere else, 1. Cor. 2:13, while the law is also written in the heart of man, even though very unclear only since the fall of man.

Our faith is bound to the word of the prophets and Apostles, Eph. 2:18-20; John 17:20; God has spoken to us by the prophets in former times, but in the last time He has spoken to us by His son, Hebr. 1:1. That means: There are no more revelations after Christ and His Apostles. The word of the prophets and Apostles, with Christ as the corner stone, is the fundament of the church, and nothing else.

Even though it is true that the Lord is working in history, history is not a way to interpret Scripture or to look for new revelations or new tasks of the church in history. Otherwise we have to examine all what happens by the

word of God to recognize the signs of the time, Matth. 24. We have to observe the distinction between the two kingdoms of the Lord, Matth. 22:21 and to recognize that the one office of the church is mission, the pure teaching of the word and the administration of the sacraments according to Christ's institution, Matth. 28:18-20. Awakening by repentance and faith is worked by law and gospel only and is not to be awaited by outward circumstances in history or society.

The canon is a fixed number of books within the Holy Bible. They do not have their authority for the reason the church has accepted them to be canonical, but otherwise: The church recognized them to be canonical because the church recognized them to be the inspired word of God, to have divine authority. The question of the canonicity of a book was bound to the inspiration to the writer (for that reason too the person of the writer of the books is a dogmatical question), the orthodoxy of the book, and the testimony of the divine authority and spiritual power by the book itself. It was not to the church to make a book canonical but only to recognize if a book is canonical or not. Since in some areas of the early church there had been some questions concerning several books (antilegomena), the testimony for all books wasn't equal in all times. But it is fixed now which books are canonical and which not (apocryph scriptures).

4.5. The Holy Scriptures have divine authority

Thesis 5: *The Holy Scriptures as the inspired Word of the living God are the only authority in the church, the rule and standard and the right test-stone for all doctrine, teachers, and practise in the Church of Jesus Christ, Isa. 8:20; Joh 8:31-32; Matt. 28:18-20; Eph. 2:18-20; 2 Thess. 2:15; Röm. 16:17-18.*

The Lord in His Word demands obedience from us regarding to His Word, He wants to teach us, Ps. 25:9; 32:8; 94:10; Isa. 48:17; by His Word, Ps. 94:10-12; Isa. 8:20; John 20:31; 2 Petr. 1:19; Rom. 15:4; Luk. 16:29-31. He demands strict obedience to His Writ, His doctrine even by threatening His punishment, Isa. 8:20; Prov. 4:20 ff.; Deut. 5:29 ff.; Isa. 30:20-22; Hos. 4:6; Rev. 22:18-19; 1 Sam. 15:23; 2 John 9. For that reason the Holy Scriptures of our Lord are the only authority in the Church of Jesus Christ, the only rule and standard and the only right test-stone to judge all doctrine and teachers and all practise in all parts of the church, Isa. 8:20; Eph. 2:20; 2 Tim. 3:14-17; 2 Thess. 2:15; John 20:31.

This divine authority of the Holy Writ is preserved only then when the the Holy Scriptures are not submitted in its interpretation, directly or indirectly, to other authorities and when those authorities are also not put on the same level as the Holy Scriptures, may it be tradition, sciences, history, psychology, reason, philosophy etc.

The divine authority of the Holy Writ is also preserved only then when the Holy Scriptures are interpreted according to the literal sense.

The divine authority of the Holy Writ and its correct interpretation is also only preserved when the Christ for us, and by that the doctrine of justification by grace, for Christ's sake, through faith, is the center and star of the Scripture and with the right distinction of law and gospel the key for the right understanding and interpretation of the whole Scriptures and all doctrinal articles.

The authority of the Holy Scriptures is limited, when special parts should be binding only for special times (dispensations); or when the existence of prophecies is denied; or when the christological parts of the Old Testament are denied or only taken as typology; or when it is maintained that there are different theologies in the Bible; or that there are different ways of salvation in the Bible. We have to confess that the fact whether a passage is limited in its meaning to a special time only or not is to taken directly from Scripture, from that passage in question and its narrower and wider context. We also profess that the Old Testament often speaks directly of Christ, the Messiah of Israel, not only typologically. Since the Holy Ghost is the only cause and author of the Holy Writ, there are no different theologies of men in the Holy Scriptures.

Even though Christ is not a new lawgiver as had been Moses, the natural law, which is binding all men of all times, is still valid.

The authority of the Holy Scriptures is also unter attack by those who maintain that the Holy Ghost or Jesus Christ or the holy writers would have accomodated themselves to the thinking of their time, their people, the world view of their time, or that, for that reason, the Holy Scriptures might be inerrant, but only relatively, not absolutely. The authority of the Holy Scriptures is also under attack when it is maintained that the meaning of Scripture must correspond to inner worldly experiences (correlation), it must be possible that events could be repeated, or when it is maintained that the world is a closed system, into which nobody could work from outside, or only at special points (also not the Lord). The authority is also limited and under attack, when it is maintained, that the Holy Scriptures are to be interpreted in the context of the time of its coming into being, or of the context of the time of the reader, changeable with the time, surroundings, world view, knowledge, culture, race, class, history.

Against that we have to profess that the Holy Scriptures as the inspired Word of God are in no way accomodated to any world view, time, history, culture, class, race, tradition, science, ideology or what else, also not to faults, errors of any man, but are, als the Word of the Lord, absolutely inerrant, absolutely correct, absolutely true and without contradictions and for that reason to interpret in the literal sense according to the dogmatical-historical-grammatical way of interpretation. The almighty and allwise Triune Lord is not limited to any limits pretended by men and their ideology, Ps. 115:3; 135:6.

The authority of the Holy Scriptures and the majesty of our Lord is also under attack by those who pretend that concerning the binding of the statements of Scripture, especially regarding church fellowship, one should distinguish between essential and non essential articles. Against that we have to profess that the divine truth is one, unchangeable and not divideable, and that all articles of the divine Biblical doctrine are binding, especially also regarding church fellowship, Matt. 28:18-20; Joh. 8:31-32; Rom. 16:17-18; 2 Cor. 6:14-18; 1 Tim. 3:15; 2 John 8-11; Rev. 22:18-19.

4.6. The Lord's purpose with the Holy Scriptures

Thesis 6: *The Holy Scriptures, the inspired Word of God, are given, that the sinners receive from them the saving knowledge for eternal life by the saving faith in Jesus Christ, the crucified and risen one, and that faith too, worked by the Holy Ghost by means of the gospel. Center and star of the Holy Scriptures for that is Christ for us, central doctrine and the right light for the understanding of the Scripture ist he doctrine of justification, John 5:39; 20:31; Rom. 10:14-17; 15:4; 1 Cor. 2:2; 1 John 5:13; 2 Tim. 3:14-17.*

Center and star of the Lord's Holy Scriptures, its main and true content, yeah, the right purpose of Scriptures, is the gospel of Jesus Christ for the salvation of the sinners. For that reason all in Scripture is tearing to Christ or at least is preparing our heart for him, Joh. 5:39; 1 Cor. 2:2; 2. Tim. 3:16; Rom. 1:16; 10:14-17; John 20:31; 1 John 5:13. Contrary to that the honour of the Lord, the sovereignty of the Lord and His demand for obedience, the participation in the divine life or a Kingdom of God on earth or a better world are not the main or central theme of the Holy Writ. God's Holy Scriptures are written for us for teaching, 2 Tim. 3:16; Rom. 15:4; for admonishing, 1 Cor. 10:11; for the knowledge of sins, Rom. 7:7; for salvation, John 5:39; 20:31, for consolation, Rom. 15:4.

For that reason the Holy Scriptures can be rightly understood only by the gospel, by the doctrine of justification. The one who does not understand it from this center, will understand it totally false and will have another Christ, another gospel, another faith, another religion, Gal. 1:3-10 and has, as consequence, another Bible.

That does not mean, that each doctrinal article has to be dedicated from the doctrine of justification, but each article has its own main point in Scripture. But without a right understanding of the doctrine of justification the other articles too cannot be understood correctly.

Thesis 7: *As it isn't the autopisty that makes the Holy Scriptures to be the word of God or is giving it power and validity, so the knowledge of the essence and properties of the Holy Scriptures isn't absolutely necessary for the saving faith, since the gospel has the power in itself, independent from the reader of preacher, Isa. 55:10-11; John 6:63; Rom. 1:16-17; 1 Pet. 1:23; Jam. 1:18.*

4.7. Perspecuity of the Holy Scriptures

Thesis 8: *Since the Holy Scriptures, die inspired Word of God, say about itself, that they can bestow on a man die knowledge necessary for salvation, the Holy Scriptures are clear, Ps. 19:9; 119:104,105,130; 2 Pet. 1:19; 2 Tim. 3:15; John 5:39.*

The Holy Scriptures have the efficacy in itself to enlighten, to make wise, to be a light on the way, that is, the Holy Scriptures teach the salvation, have and give eternal life, Rom. 1:16-17; 10,14-17; 1 Pet. 1:23; Jam. 1:18. For that reason, everybody is called to read the Bible, 1 Tim. 4:13, to search the Scriptures, John 5:39, to hear the teaching from the Scripture, Luke 8:18, that the Lord may do, by His Word, in which the Holy Ghost is present working, His saving work, Isa. 55:10-11; Rom. 1:16-17; 10,14-17.

But nobody can understand the Scriptures of the Lord by himself, but the true or spiritual inner understanding of the Scripture is a work of the Holy Ghost, who is working in man, 1 Cor. 2:14; Luke 24:47, but in a manner, man can resist that work, Matt. 23:37-39.

Even though the Holy Writ is clear, not all parts of the Scripture are clear on the same level; some are clearer, some are less clear. But all those teaching a doctrine are clear; and the less clear passages are to be interpreted by those more clear.

Thesis 9: *Since the Holy Scriptures are clear, they are also their own interpreter. The right sense of the Scripture can be recognized only when Scripture interprets itself.*

Since the Scriptures are clear, a biblical word can have only one meaning, otherwise Scripture would be made unclear, Ps. 119:105; 2 Pet. 1:19; 2 Tim. 3:15. The Scripture is a sure word, 2 Pet. 1:19. This one, true sense of a biblical word is the literal, grammatical and dogmatical sense, given by the word itself by the meaning of the word and the rules of grammar, context and purpose of the text, also by the unity of Scripture (*analogia fidei*) and that there isn't any contradiction within the Holy Writ. All certainty of faith is based on the fact that Scripture is clear and has one sense only.

This one true sense of Scripture is given to us by Scripture itself. The Holy Ghost, as the true author of Scripture, is also its true interpreter. The Scripture has no need for a light from outside, but the other way round does enlighten those, who read it under prayer, ready to hear the Lord speaking to them. There is no work of the

Holy Ghost but through the Word. For that reason we are pointed to the Word, John 17:20; 5:39; 2 Tim. 3:15; Luke 16:29-31.

4.8. Sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures

Thesis 10: *The Holy Scriptures contain all that is necessary to achieve the aim and purpose of our Lord, to teach us, to save us and to preserve us for eternity, 2 Tim. 3:14-17.*

Since the Holy Scriptures are efficacious to work all the Lord wants to achieve, there is no need for further revelation or tradition or special pronouncements of Popes, developments of doctrine, but also no need to support the work of the Holy Ghost by the Word by any other secular things, sciences, human forces (psychology, entertainment etc.). We also shall not look to any other things, signs, wonders, experience for founding or strengthening our faith, but shall search Christ in the Scriptures only, Luke 16:29.

4.9. The Holy Scriptures are unchangeable

Thesis 11: *The doctrine and the message of the Holy Scriptures are unchangeable, not depending from time, people, culture, race, social class to which it is taught and preached. What has to be the content and the center of doctrine and preaching that is taught in Scripture without doubt, by the living Lord himself: Law and gospel, and it is not dependent from the needs and views of men or to change the like. That does not contradict to the fact that law and gospel are to be used correctly, the law primarily for the staunch, the gospel for the repentant sinners, 2 Tim. 2:15; Zech. 11:10 ff.*

The doctrine of the Holy Writ, the sense of the Scripture texts, are unchangeable. They do neither depend of the understanding of the readers (or hearers) and their world views, circumstances (reception, l. canonical exegesis), nor from the needs of the people. We have not right to change the message to make it easier for the people to accept it. Contextualization must not change the doctrine nor the message but only the way it is brought to the people, but looking for points in their culture for transporting the message (l. St. Paul in Athens, Acts 17).