

# Agreement on the Correct View of the Authority of Scripture as the Source of Doctrine: The Way to Unity in the Church

By Dr. Adolf Hoenecke

[This article appeared in the *Theologische Quartalschrift (Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly)*, Vol. I, No. 4, pp 177–205. The translation was prepared by Prof. Martin Westerhaus.]

Of necessity previous attempts at doctrinal agreement have led to discussions concerning unity of belief in general and the interpretation of Scripture in particular. It is therefore certain that the discussions about election as such, which are contemplated for the next synodical conference and which have our complete approval, cannot lead to the desired results.

So much the more then is it advantageous to continue, in a different manner, the discussions about the principal points to which we have just referred. It is extremely important to illuminate these points themselves and the state of affairs with regard to these points from as many sides as possible. This will be done to the extent that this is possible in this present concise article. With required brevity we shall first let the Scriptures themselves speak about their authority as source of all doctrine and then, on the other hand, let the more recent, so-called “positive” theology speak by means of several noted representatives.

## I

*1. The correct view of the authority of Scripture as the sole source of all doctrine is first of all this that God Himself gives Scripture binding authority as the Word that proceeds from His mouth.*

Regarding the authority of Scripture we must first consider its essential *significance* and then the *proofs* for it.

As concerns the significance of scriptural authority, God *commands* that Scripture, since it is His Word, be considered the source of all doctrine. We are to look for doctrines about God and divine things in the Scriptures. God’s Word is the true doctrine (Ps 93:5), in contrast to all human teaching. Whoever does not hold to this Word knows nothing about divine matters (1 Tm 6:4). He also cannot teach anything that is good about it (Jr 8:9). God wants to instruct through the Word (Ps 32:8), and it is for the purpose of teaching that He has given the Scriptures (Ro 15:4), so that we should *be instructed* for our salvation (Ro 4:23–24), something that *the Scriptures* also are able to accomplish (2 Tm 3:15–16). God commands us to hold to the law and the testimony (Is 8:20) and to hear Moses and the prophets (Lk 16:29); besides these there is no help or counsel. And he who is of God also does this and hears the Word as that Word which alone teaches correctly, whereas the godless do the opposite (Jn 8:47). And if God expresses His pleasure over those who fear His Word (Is 66:2), this fearing consists primarily in awe at the Word as the perfect Word of the great God Himself, awe as before divine majesty, awe in which one from the outset takes care not to put one’s own word in place of the divine with the arrogant claim that God has spoken it (Jr 23:21), takes care not to want to improve the Word by adding to or removing from it (Dt 4:2; 12:32), both of which God threatens with His full wrath (Jr 23:28; Dt 12:32; cf. 13:5). Obedience to the doctrinal norm is what God demands (Ro 6:17). Paul pronounces the anathema upon those who preach a different gospel from his own, and he describes his own gospel as the one given in the Scriptures (1 Cor 15:1–3). According to all of this, Scripture has the divine authority to be the source of true doctrine.

But God *obligates* also all mankind to use the Scriptures as the source of doctrine. Doing so is not a matter of choice. Proof of this is at hand already as just referred to in the various statements of Scripture. We will add some more. God the Lord, the Mighty, speaks and calls the world from dawn to sunset (Ps 50:1). In verse 2 He tells us what the world is to hear: Out of Zion the beautiful splendor of God dawns. Isaiah tells us

how this is fulfilled (Is 2:3): All the heathen will run to it, and many peoples will approach and say: Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob, that He may teach us His way and we may walk in His paths. Because out of Zion the law will go forth, and the Lord's word from Jerusalem.

His Word is truth (Ps 119:86; Jn 17:17). For this reason the Savior, who Himself proclaims the truth, commands His disciples to teach all nations (Mt 28:19). God desires that all men come to the knowledge of the truth and that all the world become obedient to the truth of the gospel (Ro 1:5; 15:18; 16:26).

Thus Scripture has divine *authority* according to its own testimony. An absolute, complete authority, like God Himself. As Quenstedt very correctly says (De. IV): Essentially, there is no difference between the authority of Scripture and the authority of God; rather it is one and the same authority.—After all, the essence of Scripture consists of God's plan of salvation which Scripture as the written Word properly has the role of proclaiming but which in itself is identical with God's thoughts and with God Himself. Accordingly Quenstedt places the essence of the authority of Scripture in its ability to *move* the *intellect* of man to assent to the divine truths and in the right to place the will under obligation.

We attribute to the Scriptures the *full* authority which is theirs only when we view them as approaching us by God's command with a demand, requiring both concurrence of the intellect (*intellectus*) and obedience of the will (*voluntas*).

One *annuls the full authority of Scripture* if one places Scripture into a position of dependence. Rome makes it dependent on the church. The so-called "modernists" (*novatores*), of whom Calov reports, did the same. He dismisses them (e.g., Hornejus, and Dreier, these strange bedfellows) with the verdict: That which is immediately dependent upon God cannot depend on the church. (*System* 1. IV 7, p 583). Present-day *novatores* or modernists make the Scriptures dependent on Christian consciousness, the individual as well as the so-called general (ecclesiastical) consciousness.

Scripture has full authority among us only when it stands as that which demands with divine right: believe because I say it, that is, because God says it. This full authority of Scripture has already been annulled when Scripture appears as the *witness* which confirms the content of the believing consciousness, with the right, which must be respected, to say: This way it is right and that way it is not. Just consider to how little truth, at least essentially valid truth, the "Christian consciousness" can be reduced, and often is. Where then is the divine authority of Scripture?

Scripture has its *full* authority among us only when we see it as the place where God speaks, indeed speaks as He wishes.

Therefore one *limits* this authority if one does not want to grant Scripture freedom in what it says and how it says it. To limit a statement of Scripture means to limit its authority. And just that happens if one expects, yes demands, that Scripture must speak in this or that manner, yes, that it cannot speak differently, and even considers this expectation justified. This is the position of manifest rationalism; on the premise that Scripture was given for rational beings rationalism makes the demand that all that Scripture says must agree with man's reason. Nor does veiled rationalism take a different position. Proceeding from the premise that his faith after all has been given him by God Himself, and that his understanding has been enlightened by God to faith, he opposes this or that clear statement of Scripture with the explanation: This my faith cannot bear! But in the face of a clear statement of Scripture even the reason of one who has been spiritually enlightened has no rights. *All* reason must be taken captive under faith (2 Cor 10:5). Conflicts with clear statements of Scripture come solely from our reason. Even in believers reason cannot, for example, bear it that the mystery of conversion and non-conversion should not be solved by a preliminary autonomous decision of which man is capable. It does not frighten us when it is said that our view of the unlimited authority of Scripture would compel us to accept both positive and negative statements about the same question. For Lutherans surely do not find such direct contradictions in Scripture. And if not, then what is the purpose of this strange objection?—The full authority of Scripture is especially limited if one establishes a regulatory canon by which Scripture is, as it were, placed under guardianship in regard to what it should set forth. However, neither in His kingdom of power nor in His heavenly kingdom does God rule by means of a constitutional government so that He somehow establishes Christian consciousness or the Christian experience of salvation, etc., as an authority in

the church in addition to the authority of His Scriptures. But just this has been happening for a long time already. Man has made the Christian consciousness and the Christian experience of salvation a regulatory canon. In doing so this canon was made to include at times a larger and again a smaller complex of saving truths, and this complex was used rather superficially as a necessary *corrective* with certain doctrines or was set up with intentional consistency as a basic *principle* for the development of doctrine. This latter practice was found 200 years ago already among the so-called “Wolffians” (followers of the German philosopher, Christian Wolff, 1679–1754). An example of this is their greatest systematician Carpov, who made certainty about the reality of the divine revelation a principle from which the certainty of Scripture and of all theology is deduced, as is necessary for the scientific method, according to which only demonstrated proof, the logical deduction of one point from the other, the *nexus veritatum* is decisive.

As we now proceed to establish the divine authority of Scripture as the source of all doctrine, we wish merely to point out that on the one hand this finds its basis in God’s declaration that the testimony of Scripture about its absolute authority is the testimony which God Himself gives (Eph 3:17–18; Ps 89:35; cf. v. 26; Nu 20:24; Is 55:11; Ps 138:4; Jn 10:35f.; cf. Ps 82:6). On the other hand, it is based on the explanation that shows how the testimony of Scripture, which is given by men, nevertheless is the testimony which God gives. This is true because Holy Scripture has its origin in the special inspiration by the Holy Ghost both of all content, truths, etc., and also of all the words in which the content and truths are presented by the Holy Ghost. There is no need to enter in upon a discussion of the inspiration of the content and words of Scripture in greater detail since the synods which have been involved in doctrinal discussions until now do not disagree on this doctrine. We only needed to refer to inspiration as the ultimate basis for the authority of Scripture in the manner of the orthodox dogmaticians. For example, Calov in his discussion on revelation, *revelatio*, (I, 268): The ground of knowledge in theology is this: *The Lord has said it*. Therefore revelation, in the strictest sense inspiration, is the basic principle of religion and theology. Then we must still add that, according to the clear statements of Scripture itself, the inspiration of Scripture by the Holy Ghost is not to be understood either as an intensification of the general enlightening of the spirit of all Christians, not as a special assistance of the Holy Ghost for prophets and apostles, whereby an especially clear and, above all, essentially true expression of the truths of salvation would have been made possible for them. It is clear that every theology which denies the divinely guaranteed inherent authority of Scripture also rejects the doctrine of inspiration which has always been taught in the orthodox Lutheran church. And it is equally clear that those who adopt individual doctrinal views of a theology which is contrary to Scripture in principle finally will be driven to accept the false principle in which their individual false doctrinal views have their support *Exempla docent*, examples teach this.

2. *The correct view of the authority of Scripture as source is this, that it is the sole source of all doctrine in the manner determined by itself, one that is in keeping with its origin, its effective power, and its purpose.*

Scripture is the source of doctrine in the fullest sense. This means as a matter of course that it *provides doctrine and produces knowledge of doctrine (auctoritas causative)*. It gives that of which the heart had no inkling; it is *the* source in the sense that without it we knew nothing of divine things (1 Tm 6:4). Scripture is not merely a verification or an expansion of that which we would at least to a certain extent know already anyway. “Source” means that it is one directly. Scripture does not first become a source by means of a preceding process in that its doctrinal statements go through our consciousness and combine with it. If that were the case, according to the law of psychology scriptural truth would have to undergo a certain change through a kind of conscious humanization. This supposedly explains the diversity of views, confessional differences, etc. Scripture is thought to have come into being and the truths of salvation to have been disclosed to the disciples, in much the same way, by the merging of scriptural truth with our consciousness. This is said to explain the human side of Scripture and its present incompleteness. Although we view Scripture as source in this way that it determines the spirit and produces knowledge, we do not understand this in a deterministic-irresistible way, or in a metaphysical-mechanical one. (Lic. Koch: “*Der Ordo Salutis* der orth. DD. Berlin, 1903.”) However, that Scripture is to determine the consciousness is implied in the many passages in which God says: I want to instruct, teach you, etc. Isaiah 55 is especially clear. The Word is to accomplish that for which it is sent, exactly

like the rain. First it is to enlighten (2 Pe 1:19), that is to *determine* the consciousness, not develop what is already known of divine matters regarding salvation, for our consciousness with regard to knowledge of salvation is represented as a “dark place.” Scripture is to be the source of doctrine and of doctrinal knowledge in the fullest sense; that it can indeed be that 2 Timothy 3:15 attests. It says: Because you know the Holy Scriptures which are mighty to instruct. “Know” can only mean “are acquainted with,” not “understand,” as modern theologians take it to mean, because this would result in tautology. So Scripture is source of doctrine in the fullest sense in as far as God, according to the statement of Scripture, puts nothing before it on which its effect depends. Scripture is its own witness to instruct unto salvation. It acts without presuppositions. In the fullest sense it is the basic principle of knowledge, as Quenstedt also says (I. 47, Nota X), calling it the beginning before which nothing else stands, and from which we draw everything. Scripture is the basic principle of knowledge in that it is a complex of the first theological truths or of many divine statements, *quae dicta scripturae nihil aliud sunt quam principia propria*, which statements of Scripture are nothing else than the essential principles of the theological propositions (Nota XI). If, according to its own statements, Scripture is in the fullest sense the source from which alone doctrines come, it is so not in this manner that it sets up a basic principle, axiom, or fact from which by proper mental effort on our part, very much as in philosophy, a whole complex of doctrines, complete in themselves, *could or should be* developed. Now and then this could appear to be the case, for example, Colossians 1:19; 2:3 and 9. But it only *appears* so. More about this later. Scripture is no analytical book in the sense that all doctrine is deduced from one given main article. It is synthetic in nature, revealing an abundance of details, all of which are pointed at one *personal* object: Christ, and God in Him; and at one *material* object: Justification, adoption, and salvation by faith. Scripture then does not give us one basic principle of such a nature that from it truths and doctrinal statements can be developed, but rather, as Quenstedt also says, a complex of truths and doctrinal assertions and statements, and, indeed, a complex of established doctrines of the kind we need. After all, according to 1 Corinthians 1:5–7 the Corinthians were made rich in all doctrine (*logos* is properly translated in this way.); that is to say, in all doctrines necessary for the Christian, so that he lacks nothing in order to endure to the end. They have been made rich in all doctrine—doctrine that is complete to the smallest detail, finally established since it is forbidden to abrogate it (Mt 5:17). The total perfection of the doctrines, in the clear formulation and composition of each, is expressed in all the passages which describe God’s Word as right, pure, very pure (Ps 12:6; 19:8; 119:140). The already quoted passage, 1 Corinthians 1:5–7, testifies to the extensive perfection of Scripture as presenting doctrine in the full extent desired by God. In addition, there is 2 Timothy 3:17, according to which Scripture of itself suffices to create a perfect man. We also do not hesitate to view Scripture as that which the orthodox theologians considered it to be (incorrectly in the judgment of the more recent theologians), that is, as rule-book of the doctrines of salvation. The fact that according to 2 Timothy 2:15 the servant of the Word, the theologian, is to divide the Word rightly presupposes that the Word has divisions and parts. However, with our older theologians we do not view this division either in a mechanical sense (*dissecta membra*, with the parts separated) or in a systematic sense, as though God were concerned at all about the erection of an artistic doctrinal structure, since the knowledge of Scripture in its doctrinal arrangement rather has the practical purpose of correct application to the Christians for the purpose of salvation.

It is well known that the more recent theology proposes various sources of doctrinal knowledge, with the witness of the church usually as the first. This has some semblance of truth, especially since this testimony first comes to us in catechetical instructions. But we dare not forget that faith comes through preaching and preaching comes through the Word (Ro 10:17). In its testimony the church is constantly borne by the Scriptures. Where the Word no longer has its preserving effect there will be no faith *awakening* testimony of the church. Scripture is and remains the source from which the living waters flow. The more recent theologians constantly overlook the presence of the Holy Spirit with His Scripture wherever in the world it is found. Scripture is not a one-time *revelatum*, apart from God the Spirit, a thing severed from God, but rather something through which God the Spirit carries on a continuing *revelare*, revealing, and, as it were, keeps on revealing.

The conception of the old dogmatists of *revelatio=revelare*, of revelation equaling the act of revealing, points to this. As noted earlier, viewed externally Scripture is exhibition and representation of divine thoughts, of God's saving truth.

But we dare not posit a dead Scripture apart from the living God. We know of no extra-mundane God, thus also no Spirit who is not present with His Scriptures, His Word of truth, in all the world in a wonderful, incomprehensible manner, at all times ready to teach, to enlighten, and to bring to faith and salvation through it.

We can forego a more detailed examination of the truth that Scripture is the *sole* source of *all* doctrine and for *all* time (He 1:1; Eph 4:5; 1 Cor 1:5–7). Concerning the sufficiency of Holy Scripture (*sufficiencia scripturae sacrae*) there is after all no difference among us. On the other hand, we must consider at greater length the thesis that the correct view of Scripture as a source also consists in the correct view of the manner in which it is a source, that is to say, the manner which Scripture itself has established, in keeping with its origin, its efficacy, and its purpose. We learn to know the manner in which it is the source of doctrine in its own manner of teaching doctrine, as well as in its directives to us for teaching doctrine.

The manner of teaching doctrine in Scripture as it clearly lies before us first of all corresponds fully with its origin, that is, with the inspiration, and especially the verbal inspiration of Holy Scripture. Since the circumstances do not demand it, we will not occupy ourselves here with the presentation and proof of inspiration as principally verbal inspiration, without which inspiration is not thinkable at all. We will only call attention again to this, that, in spite of the fact that human beings were tools of the Spirit, verbally inspired Scripture is not like an oil well, whose product first needs to be purified. There is no basis in Scripture for the high opinion which contemporary theologians have of themselves, that for the benefit of these poor, incompetent people, the non-theologians, they are called to dig the kernel of divine truth out of its shell, the divine-human Scripture, which is marred by many imperfections. In keeping with inspiration, especially verbal inspiration, the Word, and first of all as individual word, is the basic element of Scripture according to the so-called external essence (*forma externa*). In order to convey ideas and truths, the Spirit conveyed and taught words; and the apostles spoke them and by means of them expressed the same subjects, ideas, and truths. The word, and this is true also of the individual word, is not only a sound, but the image, εἰκτύπον, and expression of temporal things. Thus 1 Corinthians 2:13. But just at this point the meaning of word as individual word changes in meaning to statement (*dictum*), doctrinal word, doctrinal saying. Psalm 27:8; Matthew 4:4; John 10:34; John 4:37.

Finally, the fact that “word” is used in the sense of a complex of the various words and truths which God wanted to reveal (1 Cor 1:5) and in the sense of the entire Word of God as it is before us in Scripture does not require a lot of scriptural evidence (cf. Ac 6:7; 7:38; 12:24; Ps 19; 119; 14:7; Ro 3:2). But as has been said, the basic element of Scripture is the word as individual word (1 Cor 2:13), especially the abundance of the great individual words, such as the love of God, mercy, grace, Father, Son, Spirit, Christ, heaven, righteousness, peace, joy, life, faith, etc., which shine like suns, moons, and large and small stars in the heavens. Advancing from the individual word to the word in the sense of a passage and doctrinal statement, and combining their abundance toward one goal for time and eternity and leading toward that goal with divine power—that is what Scripture teaches us. As concerns the efficacy of Scripture, reference to 2 Timothy 3:16–17; Romans 15:4; and 2 Peter 1:19 will suffice. And passages such as John 5:39; 20:31; 1 John 5:13; 2 Corinthians 1:20; 1 Corinthians 1:23; 2:2; 1 Timothy 4:16 shed light on the chief purpose of the entire Scripture; and above all they grant us the certainty that we are dealing with a thoroughly practical goal, not the theoretical goal of knowledge and science; something the old dogmatists acknowledged by conceiving theology as *habitus practicus*.

The manner of teaching doctrine in Scripture itself is in keeping with all of this. We will limit ourselves to the New Testament. If we present the Lord and the individual apostles separately here, we do not wish to posit a difference in regard to verbal inspiration, as if it did not extend to all of Scripture equally, nor do we wish to posit an essential doctrinal difference, or a doctrinal development in essentials, as if there had not always been “one faith” in the church.

The manner of teaching which our Lord Himself used displays most clearly the emphasis on the individual word. Thus, in John 10:35–36 the Lord refers to the individual word “gods,” and does this, it should

be noted, not in a context which deals with some trifle, but with a matter of paramount importance, His own divinity. There is a parallel to this in Matthew 22:43–44 where the Lord offers the single expression “my Lord” in Psalm 110:1 as evidence of His divinity. That the Lord views Scripture as a document that offers us a rich complex of individual and, in fact, fully developed doctrines is shown already in Matthew 5:17. The prohibition against rescinding, that is, annulling a commandment, even in the smallest detail, presupposes the revelation of even the smallest doctrinal detail. It shows that we are not first to develop doctrine, but rather are not in any way to annul that which has been developed. The Lord posits even the smallest detail as something plain and clear; otherwise how could one judge whether someone is annulling it? And all the Gospels show abundantly how the Lord frequently presents individual doctrines, always striving simply to lead to clarity concerning individual truths. They show how He is far from setting up comprehensive doctrinal summaries in order to attest or to illuminate doctrines; and they show how He just in the most significant instances rather sticks to an “it is written” and teaches and convinces by means of scriptural evidence (Mt 4:1–10; Mt 5; Mt 10:11; 22:29–32; 22:34–46; Lk 24:26f. Jn 7:12; etc.). Matthew 16:23 is especially instructive. Here the Lord does not dismiss Peter, who had advised that the Lord protect Himself, by explaining that sparing Himself would not agree with the whole image of a savior. Rather he dismisses him with a reference to the “divine,” that is, to the “must” of His sufferings established by Scripture, verse 21; Luke 18:31; Matthew 26:54. But all of the teaching of the Lord reveals that it is directed toward one goal, that a person recognize Him and have Him as Savior, John 5:39, as He Himself finally testifies about Himself regarding these matters, John 17:3–8.

The Apostle Paul’s manner of teaching doctrine was entirely in keeping with verbal inspiration. This is shown by his emphasis on the individual word. Thus in Galatians 3:16 he proves from the singular form in which the word “seed” is used in Genesis 22:18 that this passage prophesies of Christ. Similarly he finds the divine truth that faith comes from preaching revealed in the fact that believing is connected with preaching in Isaiah 53:1. Similarly Paul’s emphasis on the individual word would be an argument in favor of considering him the author of Hebrews. Hebrews 12:26–27, where emphasis is laid on the “once again” in Haggai 2:7; 8:13 with its emphasis on the “new” in Jeremiah 31:31ff. 4:7, with its emphasis on “today” in Psalm 95:7–8; as well as 2:18, where strong emphasis is placed on the “all” in Psalm 8:7.

In Acts 20:27 Paul says of himself that he has *withheld* from the Ephesians nothing of the *whole* counsel of God. And it is apparent everywhere in his letters that he did not do this by imparting to them a summary of the doctrine of salvation as being genuinely enlightening and authoritative, but rather through the presentation of the individual doctrines which are contained in the whole counsel of God. It is one individual portion of doctrine, the continuing conversion of Israel, that he does not want withheld in Romans 11:25ff. Likewise in I Corinthians 10:1 he does not want to withhold the single part concerning Israel’s fall in spite of the evidences of God’s grace. Likewise in I Corinthians 12:1 it is the individual portion of doctrine concerning the gifts of the Spirit; and in I Thessalonians 4:13, the single doctrine concerning those who have fallen asleep in the Lord. We need not here pursue further the fact that the presentation of the individual doctrines is introduced not only by the negative term “not withhold,” but also with the equally significant positive “I give you to understand” (1 Cor 12:1,3).

Paul’s own statements repeatedly point to his practice of teaching doctrine by presenting individual doctrines and unfolding them thoroughly. According to the oft cited passage, 1 Corinthians 1:5ff., the Corinthians were made rich in all doctrine, literally “in every word (παντὶ λόγῳ).” One can scarcely believe that anyone expected the view to be taken that this should mean that they were made rich in *rhetorical ability*. After all, there is not a trace of the idea that God has in mind for Christians that they should be capable public speakers, skilled in all kinds of speaking. So the Corinthians were made rich “in all doctrine,” in all doctrine as God intended to present it to them as necessary for Christians. This expression describes both the fullness of the whole as well as its division and arrangement into individual doctrines. Again assuming Paul to be the author of Hebrews, we find this clear and already traditional popular and accepted arrangement of individual doctrines in chapter 6:1–2 of this epistle in the enumeration of a series of articles of doctrine which are to be passed over in order to discuss the difficult doctrine of Christ’s highpriestly office. To come back to 1 Corinthians 1:5 again, in the phrase “made rich” two other ideas are expressed concerning these individual doctrines, on the one hand

their perfection, that they present everything necessary concerning a point of doctrine, and, on the other hand, their inviolability, that the wealth of doctrine in each will not and dare not be diminished in any way. The phrase, “made rich in all doctrine” (*ἐν παντί λόγῳ*), has as its counterpart the words, “made rich in all knowledge” (*πάσῃ γνώσει*). One can see from the following verse 6 that the testimony (*μαρτύριον*) of Christ consisted in the presentation of all the doctrines in which they had been made rich. In a manner similar to 1 Corinthians 1:5ff., Romans 15:14f. in verse 14 refers to the whole fullness of doctrine and in verse 15 (“in some sort”) to the division into individual articles.

That Paul is extremely careful with regard to the parallelism between the doctrinal portions of the Old Testament and the testimony of the present (1 Cor 15:5–10) can be demonstrated through numerous quotations from his letters. He testifies to the Corinthians that Jesus is the Christ, Acts 18:5. We see the manner of this testimony in Acts 13:34–39; cf. Acts 2:32,36. Acts 3:25 recounts essentially the same testimony (cf. also Ac 17:3). For the doctrine of justification Paul cites the parallels of Abraham and David, Romans 4:3,6–8. Paul deduces that the gentiles also have a share in grace, not from a summary of the gospel according to which the grace of God is for all, but rather from specific doctrinal statements, Romans 15:9–11. In the way that the apostle from doctrinal passages proves the necessity of dying and rising to the Thessalonians, Acts 17:2–3, he also does to the Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 15:4. For the truth that we would still be in our sins without the resurrection of the Lord, 1 Corinthians 15:17, the apostle, by means of verse 15, points back to the testimony from doctrinal passages as he had given it, e.g., in Antioch, Acts 13:34–39. And this is important. With this his manner of teaching Paul intends to give his students an example of how to teach.

Among the evidences of how important the individual word was for the apostles in their way of teaching doctrine that of James must also be cited. In chapter 3 he warns that not everyone should venture to be a teacher. However, in the next verse he calls that person a perfect man who makes a mistake in no word. This reference, which certainly must be to the teacher who teaches God’s Word, shows how paying attention to the individual word of Scripture is the first requirement for teaching Scripture, because just the individual word which God teaches (1 Cor 2:13) is the basic element of Scripture. On a highly significant occasion, the convention of the apostles, we hear this apostle give his considered opinion concerning the reception of the gentiles into the church. Just like Paul, James does not somehow form his opinion about the gentiles sharing in salvation on the basis of the whole of the doctrine of salvation, but rather from a basic doctrinal passage (Ac 15:15–18).

Let this suffice regarding the way of teaching doctrine of the Lord and the apostles. We still wish to concern ourselves very briefly with the directives for teaching doctrine given in the New Testament. Three are clearly given. First, that above all the individual word should receive careful attention. We find this directive in Matthew 5:18–19. No one is to teach in such a way that he disregards even the smallest letter (*ἰῶτα*) or even only a tittle (*κεράλια*), the smallest part of a letter, to say nothing of a word.

Luther gave us the most wonderful example of such respectful attention to the individual word. The intricate interpretation of Scripture according to the so-called “spirit of the Scripture” does not follow his example. Christ’s Spirit is, no doubt, the right one to guide us, and we have just heard what is the proper way of dealing with that which is written in accordance with His Spirit. We have already demonstrated that also James offers a directive for teaching in accordance with this Spirit (Ja 3:2).

Secondly, it is also an expressly given directive, that one divide the word rightly, 2 Timothy 2:15. That this cannot mean that one is first to create a division, but rather that he is to use the division placed into Scripture by God, and to use it with discernment, has been said already. The division which has been placed into Scripture by God is the one according to the two chief doctrines, law and gospel, the division according to the individual portions of doctrine which belong to one or the other main doctrine, and the division according to single doctrinal passages which treat of one specific doctrine.

This was Paul’s own manner of teaching, which Timothy learned from him (2 Tm 2:15). Like Paul he was to “rightly divide” the law and the gospel (cf. Ga 3; Ro 2 and 3; 2 Cor 4:6–11). When Paul teaches one article of doctrine, he does not mix in another. He teaches well because he distinguishes well and does not make one article of faith unclear or incomplete by his teaching of another. 1 Corinthians 15 with its doctrine of the

resurrection and other portions of his letters are evidence, cf. also 1 Corinthians 2:5; Hebrews 6:1–2. This is the way Timothy—and every teacher—should teach.

When Paul uses the Old Testament Scripture to prove a point of doctrine, he does not, for example, heap up a lot of passages from one prophet that have nothing to do with the subject; nor some general statement drawn from many of the prophets, but rather those passages which treat of the subject. This is what Acts 17:3 leads us to understand; and this procedure also appears in Acts 13:34–39, Romans 15:9–12, Romans 9:25–29, and many other passages. Thus Timothy is to do, thus every teacher is to do, and, in so doing, “divide rightly.”

One additional directive is given in various forms (1 Tm 6:3; 2 Tm 1:13), but since the form used in Romans 12:6 has become so important in our day, let it be given in this form: One should teach according to the “proportion of faith,” according to the *analogia fidei*. Since the other view has not yet been generally accepted, we want to let this be understood in the objective sense in which the old dogmatists understand it. But what does it mean? Could it be that which in our day is constantly being offered as the rule and regulation for using Scripture as a source of doctrine; that is, that the analogy of faith is a summary of the evangelical truth of salvation, which ranks above the basic doctrinal statements, *sedes*, and decides what the *sedes* may say. But where is anything like this to be found in Scripture? Where is such a summary indicated? Where is it given? Where used? Where are the articles of doctrine formed according to it? Nothing that in its very nature is so untenable is to be expected in Scripture.

If someone, for example a supporter of the Union, could maintain the highly touted analogy of faith, as he tries to do, his false doctrine of the Lord’s Supper could not be condemned. Faith comes from preaching, preaching from the Word of God. One could constantly proclaim such a summary of faith in the manner of the current *analogia fidei* and even produce repentance, but certainly one could not produce a correct faith in regard to the many doctrines whose proof text is not contained in the summary of the analogy. Nor could one correct a faith that is in error, cf. 2 Corinthians 2:6; Ephesians 3:4; 2 Timothy 3:16. The whole theory bears the stamp of incompleteness; and it was, in truth, invented only for the sake of a single doctrine.

It is certain that, viewed objectively, that which is required for teaching in Romans 12:6 as “the proportion of faith” is also demanded in other forms in other places. For example, 1 Peter 4:11 requires that one teach as God’s Word. Here everything that is written is given as a norm. 2 Timothy 1:13 requires that one hold to the standard of sound words, here those about faith and love. Here there already is a clear reference to individual doctrines, but not to a summary of the analogy of faith, and certainly not a summary of the gospel. 1 Timothy 6:3 requires that one stay with the wholesome words of the Lord. By no means can this be a reference to an *analogia fidei* as the term is being used.

Hebrews 11:1–3 is very instructive. Here in verse 1 faith, that is, subjective faith, is described as to its essence. Verse 2 speaks of the “good report” by faith. But then verse 3 speaks of this with reference to doctrine, and reference is made to the creation of the world as a normative standard, in order to lead to the certainty of faith in this life, to confidence in God over against everything that can lead to doubt. For this verse was not intended to take up the subject of the doctrine of the apostles. Since, as far as doctrine is concerned, only he teaches and confesses in conformity with the faith who believes as verse 3 tells us, and as we by faith get out of God’s Word the correct understanding about all the individual points of doctrine, something that truly no one can deny, so on the basis of Scripture, conformity with the faith generally can be simply understood only as conformity with all the articles of faith as the Scripture teaches them in the passages that deal with them. After all, this is without question the practice in Scripture. One has only to peruse Scripture to determine whether it contains the theory of the analogy of faith and its use which we reject.

Let us test this out briefly with several of the chief epistles of Paul, since it is in his Epistle to the Romans (12:6) that the above named theory is said to have its basis and support. In chapter 1:16 the Epistle to the Romans presents the great theme of the gospel of Christ, which reveals the righteousness that avails before God. Then follows (in chapters 1, 2, and the beginning of 3) the presentation that apart from Christ only the wrath of God is revealed upon heathen and Jews alike. Then, in the second half of chapter 3, the righteousness through faith is presented and confirmed by the scriptural evidence concerning Abraham and David, about both of whom Scripture speaks for our sake. In chapter 5 there is mention of peace, the fruit of justification, and its



solid foundation in the atoning death of Christ. Then, after the *sedes doctrinae*, the basic doctrinal passage, on the Fall and its consequences, there follows the glorious parallel between Christ and Adam. Then, in chapter 6, in connection with the fellowship which Christ established in baptism, the need for sanctification is carried out, and the great difference between slavery under sin and the service of righteousness is explained.

Chapter 7 shows how sanctification is possible only in the new nature born of the Spirit, not in the old nature born of the letter. It also describes how the Christian's struggle for sanctification can lead to the most dreadful agonizing of the soul. In this struggle, however, there is comfort again and again through the gospel (8:1), the "law" of the Spirit. Through this "law," by means of a spiritual attitude and the urging of the Spirit, a holy life is achieved here along with the constant hope of eternal life. In the process sufferings must be endured, but these can only help the elect to attain the eternal inheritance of glory (v. 28), as the apostle explains in a veritable song of triumph (vv. 31–39), after he has presented the counsel of special election.

In considering an Israel which for the most part is hardened it might seem now as though the statement that God has chosen Israel is no longer valid. In rejecting this idea, the apostle first explains that this election does not extend to each individual. Then he presents a discussion of God's free decision of grace on the basis of examples. This discussion climaxes in the mighty words of verse 18. With the following statement about the vessels of wrath which have been prepared, but not by God, and the vessels of grace, which God has prepared, the apostle returns to the thought that the Word is not invalid in that he adds that God calls vessels of grace from among the heathen and the Jews (v. 24); and he documents this with Bible passages for the one group (vv. 25f.) as well as the other (vv. 27–29).

Finally, to summarize very briefly once more, he shows in the case of the heathen how they are vessels of free grace, and in the case of a hardened Israel, that it brought about its own fall (vv. 31–33).

The last words of verse 33 again open the possibility of the salvation of at least a portion of Israel (v. 29). To be sure (ch. 10), for the moment Israel is completely blind (taking up the thought of ch. 9:1). They do not understand the righteousness which avails before God (vv. 3–12), and this is not God's fault since He has given them the message (vv. 14–18). Indeed, He has sought to help especially Israel to a right understanding (vv. 19–21). That there still is hope for a portion of Israel rests (ch. 11) on the immutability of the election, by reason of which there is a remnant which God saves for Himself (vv. 4–5); and these elect attain salvation. The others are hardened, as Scripture has foretold (vv. 8,9). Then, after a word of warning to the heathen, the apostle closes with a very specific prophecy about the salvation of all of Israel that has been elected by God, the entire number of the elect from Israel (vv. 25–27), on the premise that "God's gifts and call are irrevocable"; and that one must judge the whole mysterious matter not according to one's own ideas, as in verses 19–20, but rather, according to the revelation, that God has concluded everything under sin, in order that he might have pity on all; and then the whole lofty doctrinal statement on election closes with a hymn of praise (vv. 33–36).

In 1 Corinthians, after referring to the disputes in the congregation in chapter 1, the apostle discusses the thought that the preaching of the cross appears to be foolishness to the world, but is the highest wisdom, concerning which reason has not the slightest inkling (ch. 2); wisdom which God revealed through the Spirit, who also teaches the words in which they as messengers of God preach it (ch. 2:13).

To be sure, there is a difference between them in their work as messengers of God; but in the essentials their work is one and the same thing: to build on the foundation which was laid by God Himself. Therefore one ought not glory in himself as a worker, but rather in the Lord, to whom we all belong.

In this connection chapter 4 brings further instruction concerning the preaching ministry, and then a personal vindication which reaches a high point in the lofty statement that they could have had ten thousand instructors but surely not many spiritual fathers such as he, who had begotten them through the gospel.

In chapter 5 the apostle deals with the highly offensive case of the sin of one of the members; to this he adds a sharp rebuke about the lack of discipline in the congregation. This continues on into chapter 6 and leads to the explanation in verse 12 that there are adiaphora, but adultery certainly is not one of them.

Chapter 7 follows with instructions concerning marriage, malicious desertion, an evaluation of the married state in difficult and oppressive times; and, in chapter 8, instructions concerning sacrifices to idols.

Chapter 9 again begins with an accounting by Paul concerning the conduct of his office, and proceeds to an admonition to sanctification which continues in chapter 10 and again takes up and concludes the doctrine concerning adiaphora with the admonition (10:31) to do all to the glory of God.

The eleventh chapter deals first with practical questions with regard to the dress of women and the external form of the Lord's Supper and adds the matchless instruction concerning the Lord's Supper itself (vv. 23–34). Chapter 12 deals exhaustively with spiritual gifts and their divinely intended value for the whole congregation. With its reference to the best gifts chapter 13 brings the stately hymn about love. Chapter 14 offers further instructions concerning the spiritual gifts of prophecy and tongues. Finally, concluding the doctrinal portion, chapter 15 presents the doctrine of the resurrection from the dead.

We must close this analysis of these epistles. As far as it has been carried out, it shows that everywhere the doctrinal materials are simply presented and are developed only as far as the purpose for which they have been presented requires, or, if the presentation of a definite doctrine itself was the purpose, then it is carried out to its finest detail. This is the way it is in all of Paul's epistles; this is how it is in the Scriptures as a whole. Where is there even a trace of the idea that any doctrine, for example, one presented by Paul himself, in some way is laid out according to a canon or rule, such as is set up today in the *analogia fidei*, and is clearly, recognizably presented or above all evaluated according to that rule, and, in order that it may not be misunderstood, but understood correctly, is judged by and placed under that rule?

God, who wants to rule our spirit, heart, and will by His Scriptures, has, in doing so, not arranged matters in regard to the Scriptures in the manner of many a secular government, that is, that he established a lower house and an upper house, the lower house consisting of the large number of the proof passages (*sedes, dicta probantia*), and the upper house, the *analogia fidei* in the sense current today, as a small collection of the principal truths of salvation. A theory which makes Scripture a source of doctrine in this way clearly does not originate in Scripture itself. A statement such as the following is entirely the result of an arbitrary decision: "For Christians, especially for theologians, the doctrines of Christianity form a recognizable, organic whole or system, which is taken and compiled from the completely clear passages of Scripture. This *organic whole* stands as the highest norm for the interpretation of Scripture even above parallelism or the comparison of the Scripture passages which treat of the same doctrine. In other words, it forms the analogy of faith."

It has already been pointed out earlier, that this statement is unclear in itself, and the purest instance of putting the cart before the horse. Christian doctrines, if they are to form a *whole*, must have been taken from the clear passages, in other words from the *sedes*, e.g. Ephesians 1 and others (Or are these unclear passages?). Otherwise, how would they form a harmonious whole? But now the whole, the product, is to be above the producer, the *sedes*, and as the *analogia fidei* the whole is to be the norm which stands above all. Such a self-contradicting theory clearly bears the mark of originating not in Scripture, but somewhere else.

## II

Among the oldest Lutheran theologians the *analogia fidei* plays no significant role, although Flacius, Chemnitz, and others do give short definitions of it. But these are still considerably different from those of the much later theologians who are referred to as authorities today. Even the later dogmaticians do not understand the *analogia fidei* in this way, although they emphasize it more and define it at greater length and have a variety of things to say about *summa, systema, harmonia, consonantia*, and other similar terms. In the later period a differentiation is also made between *analogia fidei* and *parallelismus scripturae*, but no sharp distinction is arrived at, at least not in the orthodox camp. Instead Calov shows convincingly that in the later period of Orthodoxy, the period of the great systematians, the *analogia fidei* was not understood in the sense that it should correct the legitimate conclusions from the individual *sedes* as a doctrinal *summa*. Nor was the *analogia* understood to mean that from the very outset the *sedes* were not to speak, but something else was to be set above them. Yes, he shows that for these systematians the *analogia fidei* does not at all play as highly significant a role as some would have us believe. Calov presents the principles of exegesis and lists 17 points. The second of these states that one is to apply *Scripturae lectio attente*, that is, one should read that which is

written, not read between the lines. The third states that the meaning of the Scriptures is not to be dragged in, as happens through the application of an *a priori* rule such as the *analogia fidei*; but rather it is to be extracted from the Scriptures. The fifth states that *the force and significance of the words is to be carefully considered*, just as the apostles deal with the Old Testament; the tenth, that one is to note the *scopus* (purpose, intent) conscientiously (*pie*). The eleventh states that the parallel passages are to be compared, so that Scripture is explained by Scripture (*Scriptura per Scripturam explicetur*), and only the twelfth, that all interpretation is to be analogous to the rule of faith (Ro 12:6). What this implies is told in the thirteenth point, that the obscure passages are to be explained by the clear passages. To avoid the misuse of the *analogia fidei* as being superior to the *sedes*, the fourteenth principle tells us that *one is to judge concerning each doctrine on the basis of its own proof passages (de unoquoque dogmate ex propria sede judicandum)*. If there are seemingly insoluble problems, the fifteenth point says: All reason is to be brought into obedience to faith; and one should not depart from the rule of faith because of the judgment of reason (2 Cor 10:5); and here he quotes Anselm of Canterbury: “If a person can understand it, let him thank God; but if he can’t understand it, he should not raise his head for battle, but rather bow his head in worship.” But the *intuitus* according to today’s *analogia fidei* is something very self-evident to reason, indeed a very self-evident explanation (Syst. I, 472,73). In addition, even the later dogmatists, when they do make the *analogia fidei* as a comprehensive summary of doctrine a criterion for doctrine and interpretation, are far removed from understanding this in any other way than of the individual articles which have been summed up. Listen, for example, to B.A. Pfeiffer: “The analogy of faith or the form of sound words is the series or summary of the heavenly doctrine about that which we are to believe, or concerning the articles of faith, as it is taken from such Scripture passages where the Holy Ghost expressly or at any rate by general agreement deals with it, and that with clear, simple, humble, incontestable words.... Now the question is, how one can be certain beyond all doubt *what the analogy is which is to be observed in the interpretation of the Scriptures*. The answer is as follows: *one must judge concerning the analogy of faith from the Scriptures, and above all from the original and actual proof passage for the article of faith in the Scriptures*; because there is in the Scriptures no article of faith which is necessary for salvation which is not presented somewhere intentionally and expressly in clear and plain words.” (Herm. s.p. 168–170.)—Likewise in *Thes. herm.*: “The analogy of faith is to be judged out of the specific proof passage for an article of faith.”—And nothing else should be expected; because regardless of how even the latest dogmatists may express themselves about the harmony, etc., present in the analogy of faith, they consistently retain the sound attitude toward the Scriptures, that where doctrine is involved they let themselves be directed only by the *sedes*. Thus, even though they already advance the idea of distinctions between *analogia fidei* and *analogia scripturae* or *parallelismus scripturae*, the fully developed theory of placing an *analogia fidei* as a ruler over the *sedes* does not originate from them, but from the Pietists. What the latter say about *analogia fidei* already sounds quite different from what was said earlier, e.g., in Zierold (+ 1731), who in his Romans commentary (1702) takes the *analogia fidei* to be the harmony, the interrelationship and harmony of the divine Scriptures, in which as its goal and purpose the closely knit total of the articles cohere. This is also recognizable for the believer, so that we all can judge everything according to it. Essentially this is what is constantly being presented to us as *analogia fidei*.

Also the further development of the difference between the *analogia fidel* and the *analogia scripturae* or *parallelismus scripturae* originates with the Pietists. To be sure, A.H. Francke says (Prael. herm. 187) that the greatest similarity exists between the two with reference to the interpretation of the Scriptures, (with the orthodox dogmatists both actually amounted to the same thing). But he says, there is a difference, first, with regard to the immediate purpose because in the case of the parallelism of Scripture what is aimed at is not the analogy of faith. If one thinks particularly of real parallelism, this certainly is a greatly changed position from that of the orthodox dogmatists. Then the second difference was said to be this, that they differed as the broader concept (parallelism) is different from the narrower (analogy). Interpretation according to the analogy, to be sure, is said to develop out of parallel passages, not the opposite, so that every interpretation proceeds from parallel passages to analogy—a quite superfluous distinction because actual parallel passages, and only such actually come into consideration, always lead to the analogy.

Of the Pietists, Rambach most fully developed the theory of the analogy of faith as being a theological system (Inst. h.s. II, 1–2): All truths that we know have a certain connection with each other so that one can develop many special truths from one general truth. If from these *principiis*, or general truths, other special truths are derived, this is called a *systema doctrinae*, a doctrinal system; and if the latter fit well together with the former, the conclusions with the *principiis*, this is called an *analogia doctrinae*, an analogy of doctrine. *Now such a nexus, relationship, is found also in the revealed truths*, so that a system can be made of them in which again *conclusiones* or more specific truths are derived from certain fundamental doctrines.—Among the Pietism the whole theory is only carried out half way, mostly in the interest of unionism. We do find it developed with deliberate consistency among the Wolffian theologians. Their greatest systematician, J. Carpov, in his Theol. dog. T. 240, par. 334 says: The combination (*nexus*) of the articles of faith which are necessary for salvation is called *analogia fidei*. When he speaks of the combination of truths (*nexus veritatum*), he means that one contains the basis of the others, or that the relation of one to the other is that of general truth and derived truth (*principium et principiatum*). Then he quotes Buddeus, who in former years was considered a good Lutheran in this country. He offers the intriguing definition: The connection, consonance, and summary of those articles which provide the precepts according to which all matters are to be researched and presented. Carpov offers an example of *nexus*, viz. (par. 395): From the divine origin of Scripture follows its infallibility and from this its reliability; from the purpose of Scripture follows its clarity and sufficiency. As surely as there is an interrelationship of truths, so surely is there an *analogia fidei*. Then all it took was to drop the thin pretense of concern for Scripture, which concealed what really was *decisive*, and veiled rationalism became unveiled rationalism.

It would not be without profit for shedding light on the present-day theological situation to trace the further development of views on the analogy of faith and their significance. But we must desist out of consideration for the space allotted this article. Nevertheless, we cannot pass up the opportunity to make at least one dogmatician of recent times the object of our scrutiny, one who also here among us has been acknowledged as a Lutheran dogmatician by a Lutheran periodical. He is Prof. Dr. von Oettingen. We are concerned here with the first volume, *Fundamental Principles*, of his *Lutheran Dogmatics* (1897). Here we have something that is almost universal in German theology, a development of dogmatics out of the Christian consciousness. Thereby the authority which God Himself gave Scripture is abandoned from the very outset. This, together with its consequences, will be dealt with later. Naturally the basis for the divine authority of Scripture, inspiration, is disavowed. What our theologians teach, that “the Bible may be described as the dictation of the Holy Ghost, as a letter of God to mankind,” is emphatically denied on page 283. The scriptural, orthodox doctrine of inspiration is not only denied (after all, it is found in Scripture, 1 Cor 2:13), but is even made to appear ridiculous on page 286: “Letters, words, and sentences cannot be thought of as ‘inspired’ if one does not wish in a mechanical manner to ascribe the work of a prompter or dictation to the Holy Ghost.” In saying this one is also poking fun at the psalmist (Ps 45:1). Von Oettingen rejects the inspiration of Scripture. He knows only of an “inspiration of persons” which differs from the illumination of all Christians only in degree. Scripture is not to be equated with the supernatural revelation of God; and as the revelation of God at once sets in motion the principle of becoming, so also the purely human side of Scripture must be taken into account and occasional imperfection and obscuring of the truth must be recognized (p 282).

With reference to the authority of Scripture von Oettingen says on page 26: “Here, that is, in doctrine, we cannot and will not rely on any historically present or externally given authority, even if that be the biblical revelation in Scripture, which we believe in as divine.” One must build upon a principle, a fundamental idea (which then is not Scripture). For von Oettingen this is “Christ in us.” “For the theologian the determinative point of view is the Christocentric one.” “Salvation in Christ becomes the fundamental idea” (p 80). This is what Chr. von Hofmann describes as the *Schriftganze*, “the totality of Scripture.” This is the center from which dogmatizing moves outward ever further toward the periphery. Von Oettingen says exactly the same thing: “In the circle of his research the dogmatician moves from this center (the fundamental Christocentric idea) toward the periphery” (p 406). An enormous illusion. As if one of these gentlemen would deduce doctrines such as that of the Lord’s Supper from the given Christocentric fundamental idea and thus make them scientifically certain.

Von Oettingen feels this too, and he says at one point that the dogmatist does not dogmatize entirely without presuppositions. Naturally not. First he fills his pockets with doctrines from the Bible, and then he carries on the entirely unreal work of producing the doctrines from this center. Von Oettingen wants absolutely nothing to do with the equating of revelation and Scripture on the part of the orthodox dogmatists (*revelatio sive scriptura*). Because the revelation of Scripture is not a part of the revelation principle (p 103). Worthless hair splitting! Because this is certain, if God had wanted to do so, He could have completed all revelation without Scripture. It is strange how theologians like von Oettingen and likewise Frank in their discussion of revelation and Scripture reveal their doubts about the independent effectiveness of Scripture (actually: their downgrading of Scripture) in the distrust they display toward various mission stories concerning the effect of Scripture *without ecclesiastical, oral proclamation of salvation*.

Scripture and revelation then do not coincide; Scripture is only documentary testimony, only a lasting *memorial* of the revelation of salvation (p 282). Above all, Scripture should not be a source book in the way the orthodox dogmatists understood it, especially not on the basis of special revelation. Von Oettingen declares it to be a fundamental principle not to equate “*inspiration*” with the “*inspiration of Scripture*” and to conceive of it as a “special act of the dictating Holy Spirit, the writing of divinely revealed thoughts through human secretarial assistants” (pp 282–3). “That would result in a mechanical verbal inspiration that would be *unworthy* of the living God who reveals himself in the history of salvation.” God preserves us from this by “embodying His Spirit again and again creatively and newly creatively in the human word.” This ongoing revelation of the salvation of God in the church (and, to be sure, precisely not through the authority and power of the *Scriptures*), this is the true magic wand of the more recent theologians. The continuing revelation of salvation, the constant testimony concerning salvation by the church in its living experience of salvation also is the *criterion* in the use of Scripture. It is then the task of dogmatics “through the *systematic development* of the evangelical truth of salvation to *set forth aright* for us the peculiarly divine-human nature of the inspiration of the word of Scripture over against the superstitious doctrine of inerrancy” (the dogmatical theory of certainty, that is, the orthodox Lutheran manner of dogmatizing out of the Word, as it, by virtue of inspiration, stands inerrant, p 292).

But is Scripture not to have any authority? Certainly, von Oettingen says. But not, as in the case of the orthodox on the basis of mechanical verbal inspiration, a sterile authority, which never produces the true piety of faith. Strange! Paul considers precisely this verbally inspired *Scripture* to be effective for teaching and for building up in the faith. So he must have considered it a *living* authority anyway. It is also strange that if God speaks through instruments in a manner understandable to the unlearned and commands men firmly to trust in the Word as infallible and inerrant and commands them to be satisfied with this, theologians like von Oettingen call that “unworthy of God.” Naturally. After all, God is the *original theologian*. So... We ask: When does Scripture become living authority? This becomes apparent from what von Oettingen says about “scriptural proof.” Dogmatics must in the early Christian spirit supply the *so-called* scriptural proof (here the reference is to proof passages and the *sedes*) in the sense of a continual control over the documentary evidence for safeguarding its doctrinal development (in accordance with the so-called analogy of faith) (p 287). For this purpose Holy Scripture will not be a decisive criterion (*norma normans*) as a dogmatic source book of doctrine (*something it simply is not*), nor as the actual source of scientific doctrinal proof (*which it also is not*), but rather as the divinely sanctioned seal for the truth of salvation in Christ which is to be developed out of the experience of faith, and by this the narrowest complex of the gospel is meant. Similarly in the treatment of the certainty of salvation (pp 282–283): “In the light of the *context* of salvation history, when it is rooted in Jesus’ own testimony concerning himself, holy Scripture will have to prove itself to the *Christian as well as to the theological scholar*” (p 283). The “miracle and prophecy pictures” of Scripture would be pure illusion if what we say about them, and must *prove* by means of dogmatics *in a scientific-systematic* framework, were *not vouched for* by the *documentary* Scripture.—How then must one use Scripture? “As Christ and His testimony concerning Himself bear the stamp of pedagogical wisdom and gradualism, so also does the *totality of Scripture*, the key to which is given us in the *gospel of Christ* (the doctrine of salvation in the narrowest sense).” God has given the Scriptures in a human manner, so that the absolute truth is concealed in them. If only out of this human covering, out of the transitory and fragile *shell* (NB: which therefore surrounds Holy Scripture), the

lifegiving *kernel* of the enrapturing truths of salvation in Christ comes to light, then Scripture is rendering a real service to the theologian (p 285). Naturally Luther again must have something similar in mind (p 453) because he also speaks of the kernel and star of Scripture. But, when two people say the same thing, it still may not be the same thing. Luther is certainly not a witness for a position such as von Oettingen's, that the decisive point of view for establishing doctrine is not: "It is written," or "this is what the infallible Holy Scriptures say" (p 436). "Christ in us" in a "living, inward connection" alone is "the sound fulcrum for convincing argumentation." And "the fact that something is found in Scripture, (that is perhaps a series of proof texts) does not of itself make it true dogmatically and clear systematically. For that a convincing proof of the inner connection of the individual doctrine with that central salvation experience is necessary" (p 436). Let it be noted: The absence of such an inner connection would be grounds for the rejection of the individual doctrine. Likewise page 452: That which is *decisive* for an inner understanding and *Christian evaluation* of individual doctrinal statements (in other words, acceptance of their correctness) is *demonstration of their organic connection* with the salvation principle." In this way the individual doctrines become in a proper manner evident sources (*loci*), members (*articuli*), of a harmoniously functioning body. The living connection with the basic idea is decisive. (Where does that leave the individual doctrine?)

From the previous quotations it is already clear that von Oettingen has a tremendous abhorrence of two things. First of this that Scripture should have authority such as we grant it. He declares (p 433) that he does not care to inscribe the letters of Scripture or their biblical canon (to put it bluntly: the Bible) on his banner as the only inerrant Word of God. In other words, he does not want to view the Old Testament as Christ does in John 10:35, or as Paul does in Galatians 3:16. Dr. Tholuck called something like John 10:35 and Galatians 3:16 rabbinic hair splitting. "They praise," von Oettingen says (that is, in the camp of the orthodox where von Oettingen does not pitch his tent), "the ability of the revealed Word to interpret itself, by means of the analogy of faith contained in its most important didactic passages." However, to do what has just been described, according to von Oettingen, causes mischief. Then one is paying homage to "*reformed Biblicism*." One is creating a "paper pope." And as was said by a voice from Germany reproduced in a local Lutheran paper concerning the Detroit conference, such a position toward Scripture in spite of all the reverence for the same in truth amounts to a tearing apart of that which God joined together, or as von Oettingen expresses it (p 434), that "*one atomizes the organism of Scripture which is full of life and developed over the course of history, that is, knocks it into unrelated pieces and tears apart that which God joined together.*" Von Oettingen becomes very indignant and calls such a handling of Scripture "unevangelical," yea, even "unchristian." Thus what the local paper, which reproduces the voice from Germany, says is correct: that no theologian of note in Germany stands where we do. Yes, spoken correctly and very naïvely, since no renowned theologian over there does accept inspiration. Much more could be quoted from von Oettingen that would fit here. Thus on page 443 it is said: "Individual quotations from the Bible (that is *dicta probantia, sedes*) would only disturb the unique nature of dogmatic development and its use for proof." Yes, we believe that, too, regarding that kind of dogmatics. According to von Oettingen, Scripture passages cannot be the starting point for providing decisive demonstrations of the truth in the sense of being an *authoritative guarantee*. They cannot prove the "*inner truth*" of that which is *set forth in dogmatics*. "After all, only dogmatics itself can do that. The dogmatic proof for the organic unity of the truths of salvation (in von Oettingen's sense, the analogy) can pave the way for an understanding of Scripture" (p 445). This already is complete dogmatic megalomania.

Secondly, von Oettingen has a powerful aversion to what he calls the inerrancy point of view which sees the Bible as "a dictation of God," as a "letter from God to mankind," and lets it be an "inspired book of magic fallen from heaven." This last blasphemy von Oettingen equates with the other two important assertions. The infallibility position, that one views the Bible as God's infallible Word, is "superstition" according to von Oettingen (p 291), and even doubt is to be preferred to this infallibility position because skepticism is not as dangerous an opponent as superorthodoxism (that is, all who with Luther and the orthodox Lutheran church view the Bible as infallible)—and it is more honest. There we have his judgment of us, one, to be sure, that we have been accustomed to hear for a long time. That is the current way of putting it: Whoever still accepts inspiration in the orthodox sense either is narrow-minded or lacking in a feeling for the truth. So: anything is

better than holding the infallibility point of view and wanting to draw forth already established doctrine! How could we then change ourselves? Here von Oettingen gives us the formula (p 37): To acknowledge unsolved problems and open questions is proof of his *scientific education* for the teacher of dogmatic principles, and of *genuine Christian modesty*.—And the duplicate of this formula (p 407): A living consciousness of unsolved problems, *respect for open questions* is a sign of a *scientific attitude* and *dogmatic erudition*. So—just don't think that *you have a lease on the truth as a divine monopoly* and rest on an inherited possession. (The lovable German theologians like to call us lazy intellectually, p 409). Now, I always thought that our dear Lord Christ through His Word had given this divine monopoly of the knowledge of the truth precisely to us, John 8:31–32. That is sufficient for us orthodox people even if it annoys the admirers of scholarship who in spite of all their modesty with regard to open questions still want to be the indispensable ones.

It really gives one an uncanny feeling of familiarity, like something heard over and over again, when a person hears the catchwords from a dogmatics text as von Oettingen offers them: Context—connection—totality of Scripture—kernel of salvation-truth as analogy of faith—understanding of the Scriptures in the individual doctrines according to this analogy—harmonious structure of doctrine—guarding against a mechanical authority of Scripture—rejection of the view of Scripture as a source book of individual doctrines and of the inherent and inerrant validity of the *dicta probantia*, the *sedes*—charge of atomizing Scripture and that which God joined together—rejection of the point of view that certainty is possible and relaxing on fixed doctrine—recognition of problems and open questions with regard to doctrines—yes, we have heard the like of this often enough here. To point this out seemed to us to be of importance. It is significant that so much of what is brought up against and in opposition to us was not supplied by Scripture or the Confessions, but rather by the modern, so-called positive theology of Germany. And for those who accept the like of this there is a no little danger. First one makes individual results his own, but, and this is inherent in the demands of theological erudition, finally one makes the principles upon which those results rest his own also. The varied individual views which we have cited from von Oettingen's *Dogmatics* are after all results completely consistent with his teaching concerning principles, which in its essence is also that of many others. So the acceptance of the results such as are found in von Oettingen and the present-day German dogmaticians in general leads inexorably to the acceptance of their basic principles. And that almost as surely as the acceptance of the basic position of any of the outstanding theologians eventually leads to the acceptance of many an individual result of theirs as well. What is called the development of doctrine out of the believing consciousness was almost universally accepted from Schleiermacher, but one was not at once equally ready to accept his view on many doctrines which in the highest sense were fundamental articles. Still, in the course of time it has come to pass, for example, that by a large number of German theologians the doctrine of justification, the concept of imputation, compared with the old Lutheran doctrine, has been radically changed. So, too, the views concerning Scripture, even of the New Testament, have been entirely transformed. The principle of constraint is in evidence here. It leads from the acceptance of a principle to results that are its logical conclusion, and from the latter back to the former. That is how it is in the area of human thinking. Thus, if God's Spirit unites us Lutherans here in the correct view of the authority of Holy Scripture in its fullest sense, in the main full doctrinal unity as such will have been given to us.