

Reason – Made Captive to Scripture

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Introduction	3
I. God and Communication	3
II. Human Reason	4
A. The Trinity of the Soul.....	4
1. The Intellect.....	5
a. Sensation.....	5
b. Perception.....	5
c. Memory.....	5
d. Apperception.....	5
e. Imagination.....	5
f. Reason.....	5
aa. Concept.....	6
bb. Judgment.....	6
cc. Conclusion.....	6
dd. Induction.....	6
ee. Deduction.....	6
2. The Emotions (Intellectual, Esthetic, Ethical, Religious, Social, To Own Self).....	6
a. Affections.....	7
b. Moods.....	8
c. Temperament.....	8
d. Conscience.....	8
3. The Will.....	9
B. What Is Meant by Human Reason?.....	9
C. Are Scripture and Reason Contradictory?.....	10
D. God’s Reason - Man’s Reason.....	11
E. Luther on Human Reason.....	11
F. To the Full Knowledge of God.....	12
III. Reason and Logic in the Bible	12
A. Jesus the Master Teacher.....	12
B. Fundamental Principles.....	13
C. Direct Contemplation.....	13
D. Induction.....	13
E. Deduction.....	14
F. Logical Dilemma.....	15
G. <i>A Fortiori</i>	15
H. In the Question Form.....	15
I. <i>Ex Concesso</i>	16
J. <i>E Contrario</i>	16
K. <i>Reductio ad Absurdum</i>	16
L. <i>Ad Hominem</i>	16
M. Syllogism.....	17
1. Question.....	17
2. Negative.....	18
3. Inverse.....	18
4. Enthymeme.....	18

5. Sorites	19
6. Prosylogism, Episylogism	19
IV. Fallacies	19
A. False Premises and conclusions	20
B. Incomplete Induction.....	21
C. Non-sequitur.....	21
D. Supposed Dilemma	21
E. Convenience Proof	21
F. <i>In Circulo</i>	22
G. <i>Ad Hominem</i> (?).....	22
H. Begging the question.....	22
I. <i>Quaternio</i>	23
J. <i>Non Causa pro Causa</i>	23
K. Fallacy of Accent	23
L. Fallacy of Accident.....	23
M. Fallacy of many questions.....	23
N. Amphiboly	24
O. E Silentio.....	24
P. Fallacies of Circumstance.....	24
1. <i>Ad Populum</i>	24
2. <i>Ad Misericordiam</i>	24
3. <i>Ignorantium</i>	24
4. <i>Ad Crumenam</i>	24
5. <i>Ad Verecundiam</i>	24
6. <i>Ad Baculum</i>	25
V. Our Lutheran Doctrines	25
A. Direct Contemplation.....	25
B. Induction.....	26
C. Enumeration	26
D. Identification	27
E. Deduction	27
F. Their Validity.....	27
G. Toward Clearer Thinking.....	28
1. Essence and Accident	28
2. Matter and Form	28
3. Things and Words.....	29
4. Real and Potential	30
VI. Our Lutheran Practice.....	30
A. Careful in Our Deductions	30
B. The Full Truth of God	30
C. No Substitutes	31
D. Teaching and Preaching.....	31
E. The Pastor.....	31
F. Polemics.....	32
G. Politics.....	32
H. Sex.....	32
I. Different Personalities	33
Conclusion	33

Introduction

A man decided to go on a hike. He was a strong man and he had taken many hikes before. He was accustomed to traveling long distances and could ascend high mountains and descend into deep valleys. His name? His name was *Faith*: As he started on his hike, a little boy came to him and said, "I want to go along." But the man said, "No, you cannot go where I go. You just are not strong enough for the trip I am planning to take." But the boy had great confidence in his ability, and he insisted, "I am just as strong as you are. I am going along." So they proceeded on the hike. The boy even walked faster than the man and for a while walked on ahead. By the way, the boy's name? His name was *Reason*. But as they walked on and on the boy became tired of the pace. He began to slow up and lag behind and the man had to take him by the hand and help him along. Soon they came to a river. The man told the boy, "I am going to swim across the river. I have done it many times, but you stay here." But the boy boasted, "I can swim across the river just as well as you, perhaps even better." So both of them started to swim across the river. But the boy soon began to sink and to cry for help. The man swam swiftly to his side, put him on his back, and so carried him across the river. After they had again walked some distance, they came to a high hill. The man turned to the boy and said, "You had better stay here. You cannot scale the high hill." But the boy insisted, "I am just as strong as you are. I can climb the hill." So they walked up the hill, but soon the boy's little legs became weary and he could go no farther. The man picked up the boy, carried him up the hill, down the hill, and all the way home.

This parable pretty well tells the story of faith and reason. Reason makes many boasts, and has great confidence in its ability, but it is not equipped to do many of the things it attempts to do. But faith is the highest "ability" of man, all given to him by the grace of God and through the power of God. Reason in its proper sphere, and when it is properly guided, has its place, but we must remember, as the Lord tells us so often in the Holy Scriptures, that in all spiritual matters reason has been dethroned and must be made captive to Scripture. "The king is dead," namely all human reason apart from faith. But "Long live the King," the Lord, His Word, and faith which trusts this Word of our Lord.

I.

God and Communication

Of all the many qualities and attributes of God the most comforting is His abounding Love. God is the author and giver of all true love. And since God is Love, it is His nature to communicate. He is the God of communication. Many passages point this out, "God said," "The Word of the Lord came unto me," "Thus saith the Lord." God has chosen to speak, to reveal Himself, to make known His existence and His nature. He did this through creation in which heaven and earth declare His glory and show His handiwork. He accomplished this by sending "the Glory of the Lord," "the Angel of the Lord," angels, prophets, and by many other manifestations and appearances. But finally the fullness of time came and now He revealed Himself fully in His Son. Hebrews 1:1-3, "God who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son." Therefore the name *Logos*, "The Word" is also comforting, in John 1. Jesus came to reveal fully the thoughts of God for man, thoughts of peace and not of evil. And since God wishes to speak to all men, of all times, He inspired the holy writers to write down the Word of Truth for man, so that we might receive His heavenly communication and become wise unto salvation.

But God has done more. In His great wisdom, power, and love He created man in His own image and bestowed upon man the ability to receive His communication and to communicate with God and with men. This distinguishes man from the animal species. The closeness of the fellowship between God and man was illustrated when God came down in the cool of the evening to talk with Adam and Eve. But when man fell into sin, he brought upon him the tragedy of broken fellowship. But so great is God's undeserved love for man that He restored this communication, now however on a different basis, when

He promised the coming of the Savior. Only redemption could again restore proper communication. In the cross of Christ this was fulfilled. And in Acts 2 it is victoriously announced and demonstrated that the problem of sin is solved, the heart of man is regenerated, and the channels of communication to God are restored through the coming of the Holy Spirit. Natural man also has eyes, ears, and all his members, his reason and all his faculties. He also with Shakespeare can speak of “Tongues in trees and books in the running brooks.” With Wordsworth he can say:

The eye – it cannot choose but see;
We cannot bid the ear be still;
Our bodies’ feel, where’er they be,
Against or with our will.

Man can accomplish great things, Enoch, the son of Cain, built a city. Jabal invented the tent, Jubal the-harp and the organ, Tubalcain was an instructor and builder of brass and iron implements. Lamech wrote poetry. But with all his abilities he falls under the judgment of God. “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.” Now the Christian alone can know the mind of the Lord, for “We have the mind of Christ,” (1 Corinthians 2:14-16). And now, knowing the blessed truth of God, and having been made free by that truth, we have the great privilege and the duty of proclaiming Gods blessed Word to all the world.

II. Human Reason

The Trinity of the Soul

“I believe that God has made me with all creatures, giving me my body and soul.” The body which God has given us is according to the Psalmist, “fearfully and wonderfully made.” It is equipped with an intricate nervous system, with glands and muscles and sense organs which all serve the soul, and in this body resides the loftiest of God’s handiwork, an immortal soul that has been equipped with the most wonderful faculties and powers. Body and soul are not intimately bound together. They together make man a human being. The soul manifests its reactions upon the body and the body upon the soul. This reciprocity between body and soul is made possible by our five senses and the human nervous system.

The activity of the soul is usually divided into three parts, the intellect, the emotions and the will. This corresponds pretty well with the division God Himself indicated in Deuteronomy and again in Matthew 22:37, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy *heart*, and with all thy *soul*, and with all thy *mind*,” Thus our souls are in reality a trinity, but these three are not three individual entities, but are rather aspects of the one and the same thing. These activities go on simultaneously. (Delitzsch in his *Biblishe Psychologie* alludes to an interesting parallel between the Holy Trinity and the trinity of the soul. Since God breathed into man’s nostrils the breath of life, He also gave man powers which correspond with Gods powers, the will is patterned after God the Father. It was the Father’s will to create the world, to send a Savior, to take us to heaven. Our intellect, reason, and knowledge refer to God the Son. God revealed all His thoughts and plans through the *Logos*. And our emotions are similar to the Holy Spirit, who brings us to faith, dwells in our hearts, and produces love and other heavenly emotions in us. Delitzsch also in this connection, referring to the seven-fold powers of the Savior, mentions that the Christian soul also has these seven powers through God, “the Spirit of wisdom, understanding, counsel, might, knowledge, fear of the Lord, and of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord,” Isaiah 11:2.) Since our human reason is an important part of the function of the soul and is

intimately connected and related to the other abilities, we should consider the amazing function of the human soul. First of all,

The Intellect

Through the organs of our senses (hearing, seeing, smelling, tasting, and touching) the soul is brought into contact with the environment. The soul thus receives impressions, retains them, arranges them, and draws conclusions from them. This activity of the soul is called the intellect. This again is divided into various steps:

Sensation:

Early in infants stimuli are recorded in the mind as he tastes, sees, touches, etc. This is called sensation.

Perception:

When he becomes conscious that this sweet taste comes from sugar, that a ball is round, that a stove is hot, then he is making a perception. Often more than one sense is used. This is called the multi-sense appeal.

Memory image, memory:

The soul not only records but also retains and registers the perceptions. It has the ability to reproduce them later on. We think of our older people who can recite hymn verses and bible passages, often at great length, and they find therein such comfort, especially when their eyes grow dim.

Apperception:

The soul makes use of the memory image also in another way, in apperception. Since the soul has certain knowledge, this can be used to acquire other knowledge. In other words, we proceed from the known to the unknown. Thus Jesus used parables, stories, illustrations, to teach spiritual truths. Paul wisely began his sermon in Athens by referring to the their inscription to the unknown God. We note the importance of audio-visual aids our teaching.

Imagination:

Our memory recalls the images as far as possible in the exact form in which they were made. Imagination recalls memory images in an altered form. Imagination may add or omit many details and thus can easily run wild. So also in religious matters. On the other hand imagination is often of a great practical value. We are planning to build a new church or school. In our mind's eye we already see the complete structure. Or when we are asked to contribute to those in need we can place ourselves into their position and this makes it easier to loosen our purse strings. The teacher and preacher can also make use of people's imagination by taking the listeners in spirit to the land of Israel, to Bethlehem, to Golgotha, to the empty tomb, and this makes our teaching more vivid.

Reason:

Man's highest intellectual ability is the power to think or reason. This distinguishes man from all animals. It is true that the higher forms of animals also have processes in their consciousness. Some insist that animals also have a soul, and if this is properly understood, this is true. A dog will connect certain activities with certain words, such as "go home," "come here," "lie down." In my school days at DMLC the story made the rounds that when students would speak to Prof. E. R. Bliefert's dog, and ask him to "Lay down," the dog did not move. But when they told him to "Lie down," then he would obey. A horse may be guided to the right and to the left, to go or to stop. We all have been amazed, at the instinct of animals. But only man has the ability to think logically, to get at the inner relation of things, to reason out cause and effect, means and purpose, genus and species, premises and conclusions. The evolutionists may try as they will but they cannot wipe out the sharp lines of demarcation between man's mental processes and those of the animals world. Luther once remarked that you might preach to

a horse or a cow for a thousand years without making an impression on them. Man alone can solve a problem such as: A group of girls is gossiping. All but two are blondes, all but two are brunettes, all but two are redheads. How many girls are in this group?

Our reasoning processes proceed along three distinct steps. They are not so separate in their actions but they operate simultaneously. They are concept, judgment, and conclusion.

Concept: Every human being tries to form a clear concept of everything with which he comes into contact. A child forms a concept of a table. It finds out that a table and a chair are different from each other. So it gains concepts of a tree, a bird, a flower. It forms a concept of God, of sin, of heaven, or eternal life in heaven.

Judgment: After we have acquired certain concepts we form a judgment. We compare things. Some things are alike in some respects, others are different. A maple tree is a tree. A pine tree is also a tree. If the concepts are true, the judgments also will be true. When we say that a horse is a vertebrate and the earthworm is an invertebrate, then these judgments are true, but when we maintain "The whale is one of the largest of the fish family," or "The bat is a peculiar kind of a bird," then the judgments are not acceptable, because of faulty concepts. This is true especially in spiritual matters. Our human mind and reason are limited and without God's revelation we would have no clear concepts of God, of sin, of its nature, or its curse, nor of the right way to salvation. Judgments may assume various forms. They may be positive or negative, individual, particular, general, hypothetical, conjunctive or disjunctive.

Conclusion: The highest type of reasoning is achieved by man when he comes to a definite conclusion. Without this we could not lead a sensible life.

Induction: The most common way to arrive at a conclusion is the reasoning process called induction. Here we proceed from specific instances to a general conclusion. A child burns its finger on a stove. It also burns its finger on a match. He concludes that all hot things will burn your finger, therefore keep your fingers away. Jesus helped the Canaanite woman, He helped the disciples on the sea of Galilee, He helped the widow of Main. Therefore we conclude correctly, Jesus helps all those who come to Him in time of need. Such conclusions are valid however only if every single instance has been thoroughly investigated. We have found that metals, when heated, expand, and we might make the statement that all metals when heated expand. But then we may discover that one metal, antimony, does not act in this manner but rather expands when it is cooled.

Deduction: In deductive reasoning we proceed from a general statement to an individual. From the general statement that all men are mortal we conclude that since I am a man, I too am mortal. This may assume many different forms as we shall see later on.

Reasoning is the highest of man's intellectual powers. Man, even after his fall into sin, still has these powers, often to a large degree. But man's reason has definite limits. Luther put it very clearly, "I know that I cannot by my reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ my Lord, nor come to Him." The highest power of which man is capable is therefore, faith, which is a miracle of God's grace.

The Emotions (or Feelings)

If the soul's activity were only intellectual, then we would be as many modern psychologists claim, a pure machine, a computer, Then education would be nothing else but lifting man to a high intellectual standard. But without intellectual life there is intimately bound up our emotions or feelings. Our intellect tells us that things are and how they are, but we react to all the things with which we come into contact. This inner reaction we call our emotions. They are: joy, sadness, enthusiasm, disgust, sorrow, shame, pride, etc., in all possible varying shades and degrees. This is important in the discussion of human reason, for our emotions so often play a very large role and often overrule our reasoning powers. And of course so often our emotions overrule our faith. Out of fear Peter denied the Lord.

How closely the intellect and the emotions are related we see when we speak of *intellectual* emotions. We are happy when we find the answer to some distressing problem but are dejected when we fail to find the solution. Prof. John Meyer told us that often he wrestled with some outline for his sermon during the evening and just could not find one that suited him. Then after he went to bed he awakened in the middle of the night and the outline appeared to him. *Esthetic* emotions are aroused when we behold something beautiful or ugly, a beautiful landscape, strains of music, a gorgeous sunset. These give us a feeling of pleasure over God's wonderful creation. We are repulsed by sin and the effects of sin. In our *ethical* emotions we are delighted to hear about the good deed of the Samaritan. We are disturbed by the plan of the brethren to do away with Joseph. Man by nature has a 5 standards by which he judges, good or bad, but this standard has been so perverted by sin that we cannot judge correctly. Only when the cleansing and corrective power of faith pervades man's inner life, can we correctly discern between right and wrong, good and bad. The Jesuit principle, "The end justifies the means" has no place in Christianity. Only that which proceeds from the well-spring of faith in Christ is good and acceptable to God.

Among man's most important emotions are the *religious* emotions, Natural man fears God. That is the essential characteristic of all non-Christian religions. "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness," (Romans 1:15). The Christian is dismayed by his inability to satisfy the demands of God. But he rejoices in the sure knowledge that by faith he is a child of God and an heir of eternal life, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.

We also experience *social* emotions. Men must associate with his fellowmen in the family, a school, the workshop, and the church. We meet people from many walks of life, with man varying circumstances, and we will be stirred by various feelings, here may be pity, love, malice, envy, jealousy, and a long list of others. One of the outstanding emotions is sympathy. Christ wept at the grave of Lazarus. It is comparatively easy to sympathize with the unfortunate but not so easy to rejoice with the fortunate. Jean Paul said, "*Zum Mitleid genügt ein Mensch, zur Mitfreude gehört ein Engel.*" Our Lord asks us to weep with those who weep and to rejoice with those who rejoice. We must guard against the social emotions of apathy or antipathy. The priest and the Levite walked by without any feeling of pity. Our Lord sought to arouse and to guide the social emotions of His disciples. Matthew 5:43-46, "Love your enemies." John 13:34-35, "Love one another."

Then there are emotions *pertaining to our own self*. We place an evaluation upon ourselves, These may be right or wrong, they may be too high or too low. We also want others to think well of us. Thus our personal honor is bound up with our self-esteem. We must learn our honor and reputation is bound up with the honor of the home, the school, the church., the nation, and the honor of Jesus Christ. A fine example is Joseph, who refused to sin, not only because his own honor was involved but above all the honor of his Lord. Properly developed emotions bring about a keen sense of shame. A German poet aptly said; "*Ein Mensch der nicht mehr erröten kann, ist zu bedauern.*" ("A man who can no longer blush is to be pitied.") We should not blunt our sense of shame. It is of great value spiritually. Shame drove Peter to go out and weep bitterly after he had denied his Lord.

Thus our emotions play a powerful role in our lives. Man as a whole is governed more by his emotions than by his intelligence. Even whole nations, and entire Synods, can be swayed by their emotions. That is why we have bloody wars. We could also solve our synodical and intersynodical problems much easier if we were not all affected, adversely at times, by our emotions, our sense of loyalty, of a super-loyalty to men, instead of to God and His Word.

Affections:

By affections we mean emotions that stand out from the general run of emotions. They are sudden, probably violent spurts of some emotion, such as rage, rapture, extreme remorse, resentment, and the like. A violent emotion may create the greatest havoc to our physical well-being, and can upset

us mentally. It is wise to let no emotion reach the state of affection. We remind ourselves of the Scriptural injunction, “The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.”

Moods:

Those are more or less permanent states of emotion. They are an emotional upset that may last for hours, days, even weeks. At the bottom of moodiness there may sometimes be a physical ailment, often nothing more than poor self-discipline, and of course so often it results from spiritual problems. The person who is a child of God will find the reading of the Bible and prayer a powerful antidote against moodiness, and this will help him to do some God-pleasing task which will help to dispel his moodiness.

Temperaments:

Emotionally we are not all alike. We usually divide people into four groups:

Sanguine – easily swayed, ready to act, and then the let-up. Peter and Martha were like that.

Choleric – Not so easily brought into action, but once set into motion it carries on. John.

Phlegmatic – Very slow to act and with little persistence to carry on. Laodiceans.

Melancholy – Very slow to react but once aroused it carries on. These prefer to occupy themselves with inner things. Introvert.

Most people have a combination of the above. It is so important in our dealings with people that we take into consideration their temperament. A man may be patient by nature. This may not be a fruit of faith. When treating an impetuous man like Peter we may have to use a different approach than with a man like the Apostle John. For this reason also we do not dare to prescribe the exact fruits of faith a man should produce. Every Christian will produce fruits. We all need encouragement to produce them in greater measure, but we dare not lay down rules regarding the exact deeds each must bring forth.

Conscience:

In studying the trinity of the soul we should also refer briefly to our conscience. The conscience is a combination of the intellectual and the ethical emotions and it directly affects the will. The word “conscience” (Latin *conscientia*, Greek *Syneidesis*, and *syneidos*, and the German *Gewissen*), mean “knowledge together with myself.” 1 Corinthians 4:4, “I know nothing by myself.” This means that I know something, and also that I am aware of the fact that I know it. It is not merely the knowledge that I have but also the awareness of that knowledge. This is not merely an intellectual consciousness but rather a moral consciousness. In Romans 2:14-16, Paul speaks of the heathen and distinguishes between the natural knowledge of God which they have by nature and the voice of their conscience. Thus conscience in the strict sense of the term is the voice within all of us which acts like a judge, determining whether we are guilty or not guilty. It will do this before, during, or after the act. We must distinguish again between this judge, our conscience, and the knowledge (natural) we have of moral and religious matters. It is the same difference as between a judge and the laws on the basis of which he judges the case. The judge, our conscience, does not make the laws, it merely renders decisions on the basis of the knowledge we have. Man however does not only have natural religious knowledge. He also has acquired religious knowledge. The heathen has his heathen religion, the Catholic his Catholic religion, the Lutheran his Lutheran religion. Now our conscience will function on the basis of this knowledge too. When the Catholic prays to Mary, his conscience will commend him. There is nothing wrong with his conscience as such. It is his knowledge which is wrong. When the Catholic does not pray to Mary, his conscience will accuse him, and rightly so. Therefore we should never force anyone to do anything against his conscience. It can be correctly understood when we are asked to “respect” someone’s conscience. We should not try to change the function of the conscience as such, but our task is to change his knowledge. Actually the terms “doubting conscience,” “erring conscience,” “probable conscience” are misnomers. It is not the conscience that doubts or errs but the knowledge is wrong. What is the solution? Hebrews 9:14, “The blood of Jesus Christ will purge your conscience.” 1 Peter

3:21, “Baptism doth also now save us ... the answer of a good conscience toward God by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” The only cure is the Balm of Gilead, the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Will

The emotions cause us to take an attitude toward those sins which the intellect presents. But the soul does not stop there, but it reacts upon what the emotions have evaluated. Either it strives after a given object or it removes itself from it. This reaction in man we call the will. It is in regard to the will that sin has wrought its greatest havoc. Before the fall of man, Adam’s will was in every respect in perfect accord with the will of God. After the fall, men’s wills are directly opposed to God’s will. We who have been regenerated will find both conditions obtaining within us. There is an ever-present controversy between the Old Adam and the new man. Paul speaks of this in Romans 7:18ff., “And I know that in me, that is in my flesh dwelleth no good thing, for to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would, I do not, but the evil which I would not, that I do.” And in v. 24, “So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.”

When our wills are frequently fulfilled we develop what is called a *habit*. When these habits become evil it will happen that our intellect will reason with us not to desire it, but it often does not prevail. The results may be *passion*. Thus it is with the man who is enslaved by drink, sex, narcotics, etc. His reason will tell him that he is ruining his health, his reputation, his family’s happiness, but all reasoning is in vain. The difference between the will of the unbeliever and the believer is shown first of all in Luke 16:1-9. The unjust steward is concerned only about providing for his future. The fact that he is cheating his master does not bother him. But when Peter and John were commanded to desist from any further preaching in the name of Christ, they refused to obey, even though their intellect might call their action foolish. Now their will was guided by their faith. Their reason was made captive to Scripture.

When a person has been repeatedly called upon to decide for or against a certain matter, then his decisions will gradually establish within him principles or maxims. These principles of course must conform to the Word of God. The result is *character*. Only the Christians can really build solid character. To that end we need to pray constantly, “Not my will but Thine, O Lord, be done!”

As we consider the amazing function of the trinity of the Soul, we cannot help noting the tremendous accomplishments of which man is capable with his intellect, his emotions, his will, but all of this amounts to nothing unless he has faith in Christ, faith built upon the solid ground of God’s Word. Only then will his soul be acceptable to the Lord and serve Him to His glory. Our confessions reveal how faith alone must permeate and guide the trinitarian functions of the soul when it states, “Faith is not only knowledge of the intellect, but also confidence of the will, that is, it is to wish and to receive that which is offered in the promise, namely, reconciliation and remission of sins” (Apology, Art. III).

What Is Meant by Human Reason?

When the term “human reason” is employed, it may refer to a number of things. First of all human reason can mean everything that man knows about God and divine things, outside of Scripture. In other words, it is *man’s natural knowledge of God*. This is called the *magisterial or judicial use (usus rationis magisterialis)*.

Secondly, human reason refers to *the means by which man perceives and thinks*. This is the *ministerial use (usus rationis ministerialis)*.

We also speak about *enlightened reason*. This is also known as Christian consciousness, Christian experience, Christian conviction, Christian assurance. The Christians reason is enlightened and illumined by the Holy Spirit through faith in God’s Word. The Formula of Concord states: Although God does not force man to become godly, yet God the Lord draws the man whom He wishes to convert and draws him in such a way that his darkened understanding is turned into an enlightened one, and his

perverse will into an obedient one. And this is what the Scriptures call *creating a new heart*, Ps. 51, 10” (*Triglotta*, p. 905, paragraphs 59, 60).

The master of the magisterial or judicial use of reason is Satan. He told Eve, “Ye shall be as gods,” and this seemed reasonable to Eve. So Satan entered King Saul’s heart and mind and gave the excuse that he should spare the animals contrary to God’s command but use them for sacrifice. This seemed perfectly reasonable to Saul. This use of reason, also called *organon kritikon*, calls God’s command to destroy all of Canaan as morally wrong. God is accused of being unfair to labor when one works twelve hours and another one hour but both receive the same wages. This perverted use of reason insists that Balaam’s ass did not speak, Mary could not become a mother without a husband active in conception, and that the world came into being by evolution.

The ministerial use of reason however has a legitimate and necessary place in theology, since the Holy Spirit implants and preserves saving faith through the Word of God, which is received into the human mind. Romans 10:14ff., “How shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed...” John 5:39, “Search the Scriptures.” Matt. 2:15, “Who readeth let him understand.” Luke 2:19, “But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart.” This also includes a study of the language, and in particular logic and grammar, because the Holy Spirit accommodates Himself to the laws of human thought and speech. Luther said, “God is incarnate in Holy Scripture,” and the Lutheran dogmatists averred, “Theology must be grammatical.” This instrumental use of reason is most necessary.

Thus God knew what He was doing when He created man a rational being. An irrational man could not sin, nor be held accountable for sin. An irrational man could not be punished, could not be saved, reborn, nor sanctified. We of course do not fully understand the minds of the infants, which are not fully developed. But the Lord addresses us and says, “Blessed are they that hear the Word of God and keep it.” We too are asked, “Understandest thou what thou readest?” We are to use our mind and our memory, “Remember the Sabbath Day,” “Do this in remembrance of Me.” Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 10:15, “I speak to wise (sensible) men. Judge ye what I say.”

Are Scripture and Reason Contradictory?

The blessed Truth of God is fixed, it is always the same for time and eternity. When perverted reason assumes and presumes to be an arbiter in matters lying beyond its specific domain, then there are contradictions and there must be. God says, “in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” Satan asserts, “Ye shall not die.” Thus for the orthodox the truth is the *terminus a quo*, the starting point, the indispensable prerequisite. For the moderns truth is the *terminus ad quem*, the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow, always unattainable.

But the articles of faith are not contrary to the ministerial use of reason, but they are *above* reason. We cannot for instance with our mind harmonize universal grace with the doctrine of election. Actually to the Christian, faith and reason are not incompatible but they are *complementary*. The believer is to use his reasoning powers, to “Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you,” (1 Peter 3:15). To “try the spirits whether they are of God,” (1 John 4:1). To “prove all things and hold that fast which is good,” (1 Thessalonians 5:21). The Christian should not have a “Koehler faith” (Koehler said, “I believe what the church believes and the church believes what I believe”). We should not remain in a state of spiritual babyhood. God expects and offers maturity. How happy Jesus was to point out John the Baptist, not as a reed shaken by the wind, but a man founding his faith on God’s Word.

While our reason is unable to comprehend these doctrines such as the Holy Trinity, the two natures of Christ, etc. it is still able to *apprehend* them, that is, it is able to appropriate the words of the doctrine. Faith then takes over and reaches into heaven.

Luther had some words on this subject. “If, for instance an unbeliever reads Romans 3,22-24 and carefully marks the meaning of every word as St. Paul uses them, observes the context, and makes use of his normal processes of reason, he will have to say, even though he refuses to accept these truths,

where Scripture teaches that all men are of themselves under condemnation before God, and that justification in His sight is a pure gift of God's grace for Jesus' sake." And another, "For even if I were a Turk, a Jew, or a heathen, who thought nothing of the Christian faith, and yet heard or read this Scriptural account of the Sacrament, I would still have to say, 'I do not believe the Christian doctrine, but this I must admit, if they wish to be Christians and maintain their doctrine, then they must believe that Christ's body and blood are eaten and drunk in the bread and wine.'"

God's Reason and Man's Reason

The question arises whether the principles of reasoning which govern us here on earth also pertain to God. That of course cannot be proved. It is true that God has given us these principles, and that Jesus while on earth, employed them, but He Himself is not governed by them nor tied to them.

God's reason is eternal and without bounds. Ours is earthly, temporal, and has definite limits. God is eternal, almighty, all-wise, omnipresent. To Him a thousand years are as a day and a day as a thousand years. God is pictured as seeing, hearing, feeling, and He has ideas, thoughts, emotions, but these are anthropomorphic and anthropopathic terms. We do not even know what eternal, almighty, all-wise, and omnipresent mean. "Who has understood the mind of God?" For us one and one is two. With Him it is one. We know in one way, God in another. We know mediately. He knows immediately. We know in part. He knows entirely. What may seem to be a contradiction to us is not necessarily that to the Lord.

In this connection it could be mentioned how little we actually know with our reason even in regard to earthly things. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, but thou canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth." What is life? What is consciousness? What makes a violet blue, a rose red, and a calendula yellow? Yes, as far as the heavens are above the earth, so far are His thoughts above our thoughts.

And whenever two statements of Scripture seem to contradict each other, we should remember the words of Prof. John Schaller, which are so important in the study of the interpretation of Scripture, "It is a divine and Lutheran rule of interpretation that when Scripture reveals two doctrines which we with our reason cannot coordinate, then we do not strike the one nor explain away the one with the other, but we humbly believe both doctrines."

Luther on Human Reason

"The field which God has assigned to reason is the affairs of this life, things pertaining to a person's physical welfare, gainful occupation, trades, and industries, social, economic, hygienic matters, travel, science, and arts, government and the like."

"Reason also knows something about God, knows that there is a God, that He is mighty and wise, also that He is good and kind, also to some extent demands of us, and that we are accountable to Him.

"Although reason knows that there is a God, it does not know who He is, least of all does it know how we may have a favorable God, one with whom we are at peace."

"The things which God has revealed about Himself in the Scriptures our natural reason ridicules as foolish and rejects as utterly unacceptable. It does not know, and cannot know, that God is triune, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. It does not know and cannot know that God out of unspeakable love sacrificed His only-begotten Son to redeem us. It does not know and cannot know that we cannot do anything to merit God's good will, or to pay Him for it."

"Reason does not understand, that to hear and believe the Word of God is the greatest service to God, but it is of the opinion that these things which we choose ourselves and do with "good" intentions must please Him. Faith, however, slays this beast, our reason."

To the Full Knowledge of God

Paul's prayer for the Ephesians is our prayer too, "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith, that ye, being rooted and grounded in love with all the saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height. And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God." But how can this be attained? We must continue to confess as our Seminary cornerstone proclaims, "*Sola gratia, sola scriptura, sola fide.*" ("By grace, by Scripture, by faith alone.") By the grace of God alone, God has given us the holy Scriptures which are the full truth of God. When He, by grace, grants us faith, this saving knowledge is brought to the soul. This is true also of an infant. In fact God sets up the Christian infant as a model, for the essence of faith is trust in God. This trust remains also when we are asleep, are unconscious, become senile or even insane. But, although we are to remain as little children as far as our trust is concerned, we are to grow in knowledge, we are to become mature, and therefore God has also given us our human reason, but now made captive to Scripture. Faith includes knowledge, assent, and confidence of the heart.

If we therefore ignore our reason entirely, we become fanatics. So Karlstadt and the radicals said, "All learning is superfluous and unnecessary, for the Spirit will provide everything." If we use reason alone, we become rationalists. We need both. Revelation is the sole source of all knowledge. By faith we embrace that knowledge and it becomes a saving knowledge, but we use our reason, now enlightened and to Scripture to know to comprehend, to organize, teach the truth and to defend against all error.

It is true of course that there are differences in people. Not everyone has the gift of a clear and lucid mind. Some have greater gifts in this regard than others. There will always be some difficulties which will remain unsolved. Luther used expressions like, "This I do not understand and no one has ever interpreted it." "This point I leave to the grammarians." "I will permit each to decide this as he pleases." And sometimes with a humorous twist, "This I leave to the learned heads."

Our prayer is, "Grant unto thy servant an understanding heart, that I may discern between right and wrong."

III.

Reason and Logic in the Bible

Jesus, the Master Teacher

Jesus, the creator of all the forms, norms, and methods of reasoning, used them freely in His teaching. He came from heaven to bring to all men the full and complete salvation. To this end He testified the wonderful truth of God. Some came to faith, others believed later on, and still others did not believe, but they could never escape the words nor the power of the words which Jesus spoke to them.

When He dealt with people, He began by making a *point of contact* with them, as He dealt for instance with the woman of Samaria, when He asked her for a drink of water. He made us *apperception*, proceeding from the known to the unknown. Thus he used the *concrete* (actual water) and proceeded to the abstract (living water). He used *motivation* in awakening interest. He *impressed* and he secured *expression* from his hearers. Like every great teacher Jesus had certain *aims*. Among them were: to do His Father's will, to be accepted as the Messiah, to bring people to repentance, to win and train witnesses, to fulfill the law, and to destroy the works of darkness. The Lord made liberal use of *questions*. Bacon said, "The skillful question is the half of knowledge." Thus He utilized the Socratic method. Socrates believed that in teaching one should not start with a pupil's ignorance but with his knowledge. Jesus *answered* questions. At times He replied "Yes" or "No" but usually His questions and answers encouraged them to do their own thinking but basing their thoughts on God's Words. Jesus made generous use of *figures of speech*. These flash-word pictures vitalized His language. Note also how He employed the *demonstratio ad oculos*. In Matthew 18:2, He set a child in the midst of the disciples and taught them an important lesson. So also Paul in Acts 21:24.

Jesus made use of many *different methods* in His teaching: the story method, the lecture or preaching method, the conversation method, the suggestion method, the analytic and synthetic methods. Sometimes He combined the two. He used induction, deduction, and the inductive-deductive method, syllogisms, and many others. Often we are amazed at the words of our Lord. We sometimes wonder why He said this or that, or why He did not say this or that but the more we study His words, the more we realize, He was indeed the Master Teacher of all.

Fundamental Principles

In all clear thinking there has to be something positive, something definite, something that is indisputably true. This is called *apodictic*, something that is absolutely true without any doubt. Although the only really absolute truth is the Truth of God, there are four universally accepted principles or laws of thought.

The Law of Identity: A thing is identical with itself. All things being equal any one thing cannot be what it is and at the same time not be what it is. Iron is iron. Socrates is Socrates. A is equal to A.

The Law of Contradiction: “This is A and This is not A” cannot both be true. This is the axiom of consistency.

The Law of Excluded Middle: One or the other must be true. There is no middle term, no intermediary. “He had to either jump from the window or perish in the flames.” There was no other way.

The Law of Sufficient Reason: Every judgment must be based upon some satisfactory ground which fully justifies it and must be the adequate explanation.

For the Christian there must follow also two *Fundamental Principles of Interpretation*.

The Bible is a Human Book, written by men, for men, in human language and in human style. Therefore we should accord it at least the same consideration given others books and other speakers.

The Bible is a Divine Book, written by God Himself. Therefore we with our finite minds will not be able to fully understand everything that is said. We should approach the Bible with a holy awe. “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (Proverbs 1:7).

Direct Contemplation or Intuition

Many of the statements in the bible are stated directly. We hear or read the words, and this knowledge is simply transferred statement by statement, word by word, from the Word of God into our receiving mind and heart. When Moses states in Deuteronomy 4:35, “The Lord, He is God, there is none beside Him” then no inference, no deduction, is necessary. Here is the plain *a priori* statement of God’s unity. When the Psalmist in 90:2 declares that God is “from everlasting to everlasting” the infinity of God is clearly stated. Genesis 1:1 is clear, “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth,” and so are the words of the Father, “This is My Beloved Son.” Many of the statements of Scripture are clearly stated. Without any need of *a posteriori* reasoning the words are merely received. Even the unbeliever and the atheist will agree that this is what the Bible says. He may reject it, but the fact that this is what the Bible states is and should be clear to all who have a normal mind.

Induction

The most common way to arrive at a conclusion is the reasoning process called induction. This process proceeds from specific cases to a general statement, a generalization. Columbus studied many individual facts then came to the conclusion that the world was round.

When Jesus was asked by the disciples of John the Baptist, “Art Thou He that should come or do we look for another?” He might have replied, “Yes, I am.” But He wanted John and the disciples to use

not only their faith but also their mind, their reason, their memory, their knowledge of the scriptures, and their knowledge of what Jesus had done, He led them into the Scriptures (Isaiah 35:5-9; Isaiah 61:1). They should recall the miracles Jesus had performed, healing sickness, raising people from the dead, and the preaching of the Gospel to poor sinners, and then the conclusion, “Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in Me.” In other words, “I am the Messiah.”

Similarly in John 4, Jesus wants the woman of Samaria to know and to believe in Him as her Savior. He does not begin His conversation with the announcement that He was the promised Messiah. First He must break down the many barriers in her heart, so He points out individual facts: He spoke to her, He referred to living water, this would still her thirst forever. He is greater than her forefather Jacob, and finally the one conclusion on v. 26, “I that speak unto thee am He.” After the many specific cases comes the *generalization*.

No doubt if someone would have told the centurion under the cross that Jesus of Nazareth was the Son of God he would have laughed in his face. It was highly unreasonable that this pitiful spectacle on the cross could be God. But the centurion heard the words of the Lord during the six hours, he beheld His majestic bearing, he noted the miracles that attended His suffering and death. There could be only one answer, “Certainly this is the Son of God.”

So also Nathanael came to faith. So Andrew and John were convinced that they had found the Messiah. In induction we also may use an *analogy*. In 1 Corinthians 2:11, Paul refers to the spirit of a man and reminds the hearers that as no one knows what is in the mind of a man except his spirit, so no one knows what is in God’s mind except the Spirit of God.

The reference to manna in John 6 is analogous to The Bread of Life. The same is true in 1 Corinthians 10:1ff., the cloud, manna, the rock refer to baptism, to Christ, to the spiritual food God gives us. Also Galatians 3:15.

Sometimes we may make use of *cause and effect*. Aristotle said, “The cause and effect relation is the essential basis of proof.” The streets are wet in the morning. Was this caused by rain, snow, dew; were the streets sprinkled? A person may observe that he gets restless as the temperature rises. He may then draw the conclusion that the heat makes him restless.

When Jesus revealed in Luke 7 that much was forgiven the woman, “For she loved much” we note that her love was the effect not the cause of her forgiveness. Our sanctification is the effect of the cause, our justification. In Luke 11:19, Jesus asserts, “And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your sons cast them out?” He reminds them that identical effects prove the identical cause.

Luke 11:34, “The light of the body is the eye, therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light, but when thine eye is evil, thy body also is full of darkness.” Here He proceeds from cause to effect, a single eye makes the whole body full of light. In 1 Corinthians 10:17, the cause – one bread as the communion of Christ’s body – leads to the effect, the many communicants made one body.

In Luke 11:36, the effect points to the cause. “If the whole body therefore be full of lights having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light.” The body full of light is due to the candle.

Deduction

In deduction we start with a general statement or judgment and then move to individual or specific judgments. The Bible, the eternal truth of God, brings us many general statements. God deals with us as adults. Now we are to intake deductions from them. Here we could class the “I am” statements of our Lord, He is the Good Shepherd, the Light of the world. Now from these statements He deduces and wants us to deduce what this means for us. In John 15:20, Jesus reminds His disciples, “The servant is not greater than his lord.” Now the deduction, they too would be hated and persecuted like their Lord. In Galatians 6:7, Paul gives the universal principle. “Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap.” This helps us to examine the seed that we are sowing and then the inevitable conclusion about the harvest, “Will it be corruption or life everlasting?” Also Luke 8:17.

Jesus makes it very clear however that only those deductions may be made which agree with Scripture completely. He Himself gave us the principle “*Scriptura ex Scriptura explicanda est*,” (“Scripture must be interpreted from Scripture”). So Jesus answered Satan who also quoted the Bible but drew false conclusions, “Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.” “It is written.”

In Luke 20:37-38, the Sadducees drew a false deduction from Deuteronomy 25:5 concerning the Levirate marriage, and ridiculed the doctrine of the resurrection. Jesus also quotes from the Old Testament but He draws a true and valid conclusion, that God is the God of the living.

Logical Dilemma (Tertium non Datur)

This is the either/or of logic. No third possibility exists. It is the law of the excluded middle. Matthew 12:28, “But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you.” Either there is a connection with God or with Satan. Jesus has already exploded their contention as absurd and impossible that Jesus had performed miracles through Satan, v. 25-27. Matthew 21:25, “The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven? or of men?” The sanhedrists are compelled to choose one of the two horns of the dilemma and thus impale themselves. In Romans 3, we hear that we are saved either by faith or by works, one or the other. In Galatians 3:2, Paul asks us to decide once and for all between “the works of the law or the hearing of faith.” Also Romans 6:16, “Of sin unto death, or the obedience unto righteousness.” Matthew 6:24, “Treasures on earth or in heaven.” Of Mark 3:4; Matthew 9:5.

A Fortiori

In deductive reasoning we need to make comparisons. An *a fortiori* argument is a conclusion that is even more certain when compared with another. It means “with greater force.” Examples are, “If a large man can safely cross a bridge, how much more can a small man.” “Kindness even to dumb animals is a duty.”

An argument may proceed *from the greater to the lesser (a majori ad minus)* or *from the lesser to the greater (a minori ad majus)*.

Romans 5:9,10, “Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled by God by the death of His Son much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.” Ephesians 2:3, if even Israel is subject to this law, then the Gentiles are too. Luke 12:3, “The life is more than meat, and the body than raiment.” Luke 12:28, “If then God so clothe the grass which is today in the field, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, how much more will He clothe you, o ye of little faith.” Also v. 24, “If you then being evil give good gifts, how much more shall your heavenly Father?”

a majori: Luke 12:23; John 7:23; John 13:14; 1 Corinthians 6:3, 9:11

a minori: Luke 15:3-4; John 7:23; 1 Corinthians 6:7; Luke 11:8, 11:11; Hebrews 12:9; James 3:3; Matthew 8:9

In the Question Form

The conclusion may be in the form of a question. In John 4, when Jesus had referred to the water He could give the Samaritan woman, she asked, “Art Thou greater than our Father Jacob?” It really involved a negative answer, “Certainly Thou canst not mean to say that Thou art greater than Jacob?” Her conclusions are altogether sound and yet remain false, but the question form holds her mind open, even asks for further instruction. Her conclusion and her question are her reaction to Jesus’ words.

Argumentum ex Concesso

Matthew 12:11, “What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it and lift it out?” No one present would let even the one sheep lie in the pit, no matter how much work and exertion it entailed, and would not consider it a transgression against the Sabbath. This had to be conceded.

Argumentum a Contrario

“For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans do the same?” This is even a double *contrario*. The disciples as sons of God could not maintain their position if they refuse to show love like that of their Heavenly Father. Luke 6:32-33, “For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? For sinners also love them which do even the same.” Some find another example in Romans 9:17, but this is doubtful.

Reductio ad Absurdum

In Mark 8:43-48, Jesus uses powerful logical sequences in speaking to His disciples. They are seeking to excuse themselves in doing sins as if this could not be helped, since we are constituted as we are. If we had a physically diseased hand, foot, or eye, we would have to have it removed. So one after another member would have to be amputated until the whole body is gone. This finally reaches absurdity. Spiritually the same is true. There must be some other way. It is not stated here but is mentioned in many other places, the heart must be changed.

In Matthew 22:25, (also Mark 12:23; Luke 20:29) the Sadducees felt they were presenting a ludicrous situation when they told the story of the seven brethren, all of whom in turn married one woman. Jesus exploded the supposed *ad absurdum* with the announcement, “Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God.”

Some call Paul’s logic in 1 Corinthians 15 a *reductio ad absurdum*, as he relentlessly presents a logical chain of deductions starting with their assertion that there is no resurrection from the dead. Others however call this a misconception, since the end of Paul’s chain is not an absurdity but a tragedy.

Argumentum ad Hominem

There is some difference of opinion regarding the definition of an *argumentum ad hominem*. Webster defines it as, “An argument directed at or appealing to one’s passions or prejudices rather than to one’s intellect.” This definition is quite prevalent. Thus it is described as an attack on the opponent’s character instead of an answer on the subject under discussion. There are others who disagree violently, including R. Lenski. These insist that such “arguments” are not arguments at all but the abandonment of all argument, and an open admission of defeat. The Standard Dictionary defines it as “An argument proving a conclusion from the principles and practices of an opponent himself, often by showing them to be contrary to his argument.” The International Cyclopaedia agrees with this definition.

From these two variant definitions it seems therefore there is a more proper and legitimate use of this argument and one that is not as legitimate.

It helps us a great deal in our study of the Scriptures to note that Jesus employed this argument quite often, with telling effect. Some of these passages are difficult to understand until we recognize Jesus’ legitimate and rightful use of the *argumentum ad hominem*.

In Matthew 9:12, (also Mark 2,17; Luke 5,32) Jesus replied to the Pharisees who had asked, “Why eateth your Master with publicans and spinners?” with the words, “They that be whole need not a physician but they that are sick.” He answered them from their own premises. They imagined they were strong and healthy. Jesus, the great Physician, has to be with publicans and sinners. They are in great

need of Him and recognize their need. The Pharisees feel they are well and do not need Him, yet they reject His healing power. Also in v.13, "I am not come to call righteous but sinners to repentance."

In Mark 9:43-48 (Luke 11:19), Jesus is speaking about cutting off diseased members of the body. He is taking the disciples at their own words who would excuse their sins by acting as if this were inevitable. He tells them "cut it off," "pluck it out." Now do this spiritually too.

Luke 10:28 has presented problems for the teacher and pastor until he recognizes this argument. A certain lawyer tempted Jesus saying, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus replied and asked, "What is written in the law?" The man answered, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbor as thyself." Now Jesus answered with the argumentum ad hominem, "Thou hast answered right: this do and thou shalt live." Jesus tells him, keep this law, keep it perfectly, keep it without interruption, and thou shalt live. The answer intended to show him his fatal mistake regarding the law as a means to obtain eternal life.

In Luke 13:15, he uses this argument again. "Thou hypocrite, doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall and lead him away to watering?" Also Luke 15:3; Acts 17:28.

Logical Syllogism

The most common form of reasoning is the syllogism. In this method of reasoning we deal with two judgments called premises. The first is a very comprehensive statement or a universal judgment. This is the major premise. The second is an individual judgment or the minor premise. The conclusion is another individual or specific judgment. An example:

All men are mortal.
Socrates was a man,
Therefore, Socrates was mortal.

We note that the concept "man" is to be found in the major and minor premises. This term "man" is called the middle term. It dare only occur in the promises but never in the conclusion. When we take away from the premises the middle term, then the remaining parts give us the conclusion. Scriptural examples which really are syllogisms are:

John 15:19 The world hates all who believe in Jesus.
You believe in Jesus,
Therefore, the world hates you.

Matthew 12,12 Is it lawful to work on the Sabbath day?
Even the enemies would draw a sheep out of the pit,
Therefore, it is lawful to do good to a man even on the Sabbath day.

Galatians 3:6 These are the true sons of Abraham who believe in Christ.
The Galatians believe in Christ,
Therefore, they are the true sons of Abraham.

John 10:34 The Scriptures cannot be broken.
The Scriptures call men commissioned by God "gods,"
Therefore Jesus sent into the world by the Father is God in a much higher sense.

Also 1 Corinthians 3:17; John 9:30; Hebrews 4:6-7; Luke 11:21.

Conclusion in the Form of a Question

Matthew 12:25-26 A kingdom divided against itself cannot stand.
If Satan drives out Satan he is divided against himself,
Therefore, how shall his kingdom stand.

Negative Syllogism

John 8:47 He who is of God, hears Gods words.
 You do not hear Gods words,
 Therefore, you are not of God.

Also 1 Corinthians 15; John 8:38-40; Galatians 3:12; John 8:53; Hebrews 12:8.

Inverse Syllogism

Sometimes the conclusion is stated first, then the premises:

Galatians 3:12 By the law no one is justified. (Conclusion)
 The righteous one shall live by faith, (Major)
 The law does not belong to faith. (Minor)

Enthymeme (or Condensed Syllogism)

Syllogisms may appear in a condensed or abridged form. This is called enthymeme. If the major premise is omitted it is an enthymeme of the first order, if the minor premise is lacking it is an enthymeme of the second order, and if the conclusion is not stated, it is an enthymeme of the third order.

Therefore the statement “The earth, being a planet, obeys the laws of gravity” would read in its complete form:

The planets obey the law of gravity.
The earth is a planet,
Therefore, the earth obeys the law of gravity.

In John 8:39-40 the conclusion is not stated but is implied strongly:

Abraham’s true children do his works.
You by trying to kill me are not doing his works,
Therefore, (not stated, yet true) you are not Abraham’s true children.
This omission makes it very effective.

1 Corinthians 2:16 No one knows the Lord’s mind and instructs Him.
 We have Christ’s mind, He revealed it to us,
 Therefore, (not stated, but implied) no man can instruct or judge us.

The *beatitudes* are condensed syllogisms. “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth,” when in its full form would read:

All those that inherit the earth are blessed.
The meek shall inherit the earth,
Therefore, the meek are blessed.

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God,” would read in its unabridged form:

All those that shall see God are blessed,
All those who are pure in heart shall see God,
Therefore, all those that are pure in heart are blessed.

Other examples: Luke 5:21, “Who can forgive sins save God alone?” and “*Cogito, ergo sum*” (I think, therefore I am), Descartes.

Sorites (or a Chain or Series of Syllogisms)

Sorites is a chain of abridged syllogisms, in which the conclusion of one becomes the premise of the next, but where all conclusions but the last are unexpressed. Examples are:

A soul is a thinking agent.
A thinking agent cannot be severed into parts.
That which cannot be severed into parts cannot be destroyed,
Therefore, the soul cannot be destroyed.

A poem by Sir Thomas Wyatt presents a sorites:

“The longer the life the more offense,
The more offense the greater paine,
The greater paine the less defense,
The less defense, the lesser gaine,
The loss of gaine, long yll doth trye,
Wherefore, come death, and let mee dye,”

Romans 5:3-5 “We glory in tribulation also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, patience (worketh) experience, experience (worketh) hope, hope maketh not ashamed,” because it brings us to glory. Therefore, tribulation brings us to glory.

Romans 10:13-15 “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach, except they be sent, as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace. So, then, faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”

Also 1 Corinthians 15:12-19; Romans 8:28-31.

Prosylogism and Episylogism

When a complete syllogism is followed by the word the word “but” and by two other deductions, this first complete syllogism is called a prosylogism, and the last two lines, following the “but” are the episylogism.

“All good students soon understand the syllogism,
All good students of logic are good students,
Therefore, all students of logic can understand the syllogism.
But, many people in the University are students of logic,
Therefore, many people in the University understand the syllogism.”

Here also could be listed the fallacious syllogism about Epimenides, called “The Liar,” which will be referred to later, under “Fallacies.”

IV. Fallacies

Our Lord, asks us all to speak the same thing (1 Corinthians 2:10), which means we are to think the same things and reach the same conclusions. For many reasons that goal will not be reached here on earth. Much of this is due to the fact that all men are strongly biased in their thinking. The unbeliever is influenced by his unbelief, so naturally his conclusions will differ from ours. Remember too that the fundamental lie of natural man is the *opinio legis*, the idea of reward and merit. At times there are deliberate attempts to deceive, and many other factors contribute to fallacious thinking.

A fallacy is an argument which seems to be sound without being so in fact. A wise man once said, "Truth is one, errors are many." Fallacies may appear in a formal or a material way, formal if the fallacy consists in the structure, material, if it occurs in the thought contained. Paul warns us in Colossians 2:4, "Lest any man should beguile you with enticing words." Paul's meaning is that we should not let anyone cheat us by false reasoning. Fallacies are inevitable when anyone rejects the authority of Scripture either entirely or in part.

False Premises and Conclusions

In Matthew 22:29, Jesus tells the Sadducees, "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God." They could not avoid making false deductions under those circumstances.

Paul refers to similar false conclusions, Galatians 2:17, "If, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sins God forbid."

In Luke 7:39, the Pharisees reasoned as follows:

If Jesus were a prophet, He would know what kind of woman this was.
Therefore, either He does not know her,
Or, if He does know her and still lets her touch Him,
Then He lacks true holiness,
Therefore He is not a true prophet.

In regard to the temptation of Jesus by Satan the following syllogism is sometimes used:

If Jesus could not have fallen, his temptation was not real.
It is presented in the bible as a real temptation,
Therefore, Jesus might have fallen.

This is a fallacy. Jesus the Son of God cannot sin. On the other hand, it was a real temptation. This is beyond us. We cannot solve the mystery, like many others.

Here we could list the one which children in the confirmation class like to address to the pastor, "If God is almighty, can He create a stone so big that He cannot lift it?" This is fallacious for it questions and ridicules God and His almighty power.

We may expect false deductions from modernists. Bultmann argues that all historical knowledge remains an open question, and since history can accept only those things that are normally experienced, there can be no room for any supernatural events, such as miracles, or the working of the Spirit.

A central lie that is fundamental to modern interpretation is the materialistic ideas of the closed universe, where only those things that can be experienced can be believed. This major premise is taken for granted. Their minor premise is that written history cannot be experienced. Their conclusion is, written history therefore cannot be believed. The Bible is written history, therefore the Bible cannot be believed.

In a recent article written by Dr. Richard J. Gotsch, delivered at River Forest, the writer deduces that since Matthew is the only one who mentions that John the Baptist objected to Jesus' request to be baptized by him, that this is not factual, since Mark and Luke do not list this objection. The author calls this *haggadah* (legend). He maintains it did not really happen, but it is merely mentioned to bring out a theological point. So also, the rock (Exodus 17; Numbers 20; 1 Corinthians 10:4).

Incomplete Induction

Cicero tried to prove the existence of God scientifically by induction (*e consensu Gentium*): "All nations believe in a supreme being. Hence it must exist." But he did not consult all nations.

Non-sequitur

This is a loose argument whose conclusions do not follow the promises. It is also called an argumentative leap. “The country is tired of the present administration, therefore we shall change after the next election.” This does not follow at all.

A ludicrous example might be, “Every side of a square is a straight line, therefore a square is a straight line.”

Many who elevate reason above Scripture will make statements which do not follow, “Since God is the God of love, He would never send anyone to eternal damnation.” “Since God has not elected all men, He does not desire to save all men.” “Since Peter was saved, and Judas was lost, there must have been in Peter some cause why he was saved.” “Since every body is in space locally, Christ’s body cannot be truly present in the Lords Supper.” “Since the finite is incapable of the infinite, there can be no communication of attributes in the person of the God-Man.”

Descartes, “*Cogito, ergo sum*” (“I think, therefore I am”). He argued from one sphere to another, from thinking to being.

Also the Latin syllogism:

<i>Qui bene bibit, bene dormit,</i>	Who drinks well, sleeps well,
<i>Qui bene dormit, non peccat,</i>	Who sleeps well, does not sin,
<i>Ergo, Qui bene bibit, non peccat.</i>	Therefore, who drinks well, does not sin.

In many passages Jesus points out to the people that their reasoning was false: Matthew 4:6; Matthew 5:32-34; Mark 2:7; Romans 6:1; Luke 11:17. It has been shown repeatedly that with such non-sequiturs one can prove almost anything from the Bible, for instance:

The Bible tells us that Cain killed his brother Abel.

We should do what the Bible tells us,
Therefore, Go and do thou likewise.

Supposed Dilemma

The Pharisees approached Jesus with what they considered a dilemma in Matthew 22:17, “Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar or not?” Jesus with His divine wisdom easily escaped the trap with the words which caused them to marvel, “Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s and unto God the things that are God’s.”

In John 9:2, “Master, who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” Jesus shows this was not a dilemma when He answered, “Neither, but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.”

Convenience Proof

In proclaiming the doctrine of Mary’s bodily assumption to heaven (that her body did not see corruption but has long since been taken to heaven) the Catholic Church uses logical deductions which we call “convenience proof.” They deduce, “It is possible for God to act in a certain way. It is also exceedingly appropriate and fitting for Him to do so, therefore He has done it.” In this manner they formulate many of the defenses of their false doctrines.

Other examples are: The Jews maintain that in Genesis 3:15 the “seed” is the Jewish community; the Catholics assert that it was Mary who crushed the serpent’s head; and Calvin speaking about Genesis 3:15 said that mankind united with and in Christ will gain the ultimate victory.

Argumentum in Circulo

The geologists date strata on the theory of evolution. The evolutionists build up their theories on the results of the study of geology.

Dr. W. A. Maier, in his *Study of Genesis*, calls this a tendential or circle argument, advanced by those who try to prove that the six days of creation were long periods of time: “Since the sun was not created until the fourth day, since no evening and morning are listed for the seventh day, we may reasonably conclude that since the first three and the seventh days were long periods of time, so also the other three days.”

Here also the famous prosyllogism and episylogism about Epimenides, could be listed. In Titus 1:12, the statement by Epimenides that “all Cretans are liars” is quoted. Then:

“Epimenides said that all Cretans are liars,
Epimenides was a Cretan,
Therefore Epimenides was a liar.
But since he was a liar He lied when he called all Cretans liars,
Therefore they are not all liars.
But nevertheless was a Cretan, and he told the truth,”
And so into absurdity ...

Argumentum ad Hominem (?)

Since there is some difference as to the true definition of this argument, we list a few cases where authorities are not agreed whether this argument is employed or not.

This is also called the “you too” (*tu quoque*) argument. A vegetarian accuses his friend of being a “murderer” because he eats steaks. The friend replies, “You’re a murderer too, for your shoes are made of leather.”

In Matthew 15:2-3, Jesus was asked, “Why do Thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders?” He replied, “Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?” Some see this argument here. But Jesus did not simply say that you also are breaking the tradition, in other words as though He said, “We’re in the same boat,” but He here emphasizes that there is a great difference between their tradition which came from men, and the commandments of God.

When the Jews called Jesus “A Samaritan,” this was not an *argumentum ad hominem*, but rather name calling, or vilification.

So some find this argument in 1 Corinthians 15:19; Galatians 4:21; 1 Corinthians 15:29, but this is disputed by the best theologians.

Begging the Question (Petitio Principii)

In this fallacy the conclusion is assumed with no attempt to prove it. It is also on the order of a circular argument. An example would be, “This bill before the House is calculated to elevate the character of education in this country, for the general standard of instruction in all our schools will be raised by it.”

A lawyer trying to prove the innocence of his client may show evidence that his client attends church regularly. This may be a good character reference but it does not prove his guilt or innocence.

This is sometimes called *Hysteron-Proteron*, “the latter before the former,” or “the cart before the horse.”

The conservatives are often accused of begging the question, when they begin by accepting the Bible as God’s inerrant Word, and then proceed to prove that everything in the Bible, every Word is true. So also the statement, “We know that God exists, for the Bible tells us so.”

This is true from man's natural point of view. We are biased, and we admit it gladly. This bias is a precious gift of God. The unbeliever and all who reject God's herd are biased too, but this comes from Satan.

Quaternio Terminorum (Fallacy of Four Terms)

Here the same term is used in two different meanings. Actually it amounts to four terms in the syllogism rather than three.

All foxes have four legs.
Jesus called King Herod a fox,
Therefore, King Herod has four legs.

"Fox" is used in the literal, then in the figurative sense.

Another example:

All men are sinners,
Jesus was a man,
Therefore, Jesus was a sinner.

The term "man" in this instance is ambiguous. Although Jesus is true man, He is also true God, and therefore cannot be sinful. "God is not a man that He should lie," (Numbers 23:19).

This fallacy also occurs when terms are confused, such as cause and effect, when sin and guilt are identified. Also, when you argue from one sphere to another, *i.e.* "Our mind harbors the concept of a supreme being. This being must exist, else it were not perfect," (Anselm of Canterbury).

Non Causa pro Causa

This is the fallacy of regarding as a cause that which is not a cause. Often this is due to the lack of discrimination between a mere coincidence and a veritable cause. E.g., A belief that an unusual appearance among the heavenly bodies, as a comet, is to be interpreted as a portent of disaster. This is how many of the common superstitions arise, breaking mirror, walk under ladder, black cat, etc. No doubt someone had bad luck when he encountered one of these, and he assumed this would always be the case.

Fallacy of Accent

Here the accent or the emphasis is placed on the wrong word. 1 Kings 13:27, "And he spake to his sons, saying, Saddle me the ass. And they saddled *him*."

Fallacy of Accident

This happens when a general rule is applied to a special case, to which the rule is not intended.

The food you buy, you eat,		If you drink an alcoholic beverage, you will become
You buy raw meat,	or	inebriated.
Therefore, you eat raw meat.		

Fallacy of Many Questions (or the Double Question)

"How much do you pay the members of the University football team?" This assumes the first question, whether they are paying them at all.

"Have you given up beating your wife?" Whether you answer "Yes" or "No" you are in trouble. This assumes that you have been beating her or that you are still beating her.

Dwight Moody was once asked, as he passed out leaflets against the evils of drinking, “Are you a reformed drunkard?” He replied indignantly, “Of course not.” Then he was asked, “And why don’t you reform?”

Amphiboly

This is a sentence capable of two meanings:

“Here lies ... after living with her husband for 55 years she departed in the hope of a better life.”

“I hope that you the enemy will slay” could mean, that you will slay the enemy or that the enemy slay you.

So also, “The duke yet lives that Henry shall depose,” (Whately).

Argumentum e Silentia (Silence Argument)

Critics of the Bible state that since Josephus does not mention the crime of Herod of slaying the infants in Bethlehem, that therefore this is not factual. *E Silentio* is no proof. With this kind of argument one could prove almost anything.

In Acts 4:25 the critics argue that since there is no superscription in Psalm 2 claiming David as the author of the psalms therefore Luke must err in assigning this psalm to David.

Some Reformed draw silence conclusions. They maintain that we are allowed to do only those things which are clearly mentioned in the Bible. So they state that since the Bible does not speak of church organs, therefore it is wrong to use them in church.

Fallacies of Circumstance

This is a deception arising from special circumstances and they are aimed at the vulnerability of the persons addressed (appeals to pity, prejudice, vanity, ridicule, farce, etc.)

Ad Populum

This is an argument addressed to the people, instead of bringing solid proofs it tries to impress the people. The pastor does this when he thinks only of making a fine impression instead of preaching the whole truth of God.

Ad Misericordiam

This is an appeal to pity. The weakness of the evidence is compensated for in language used to arouse sentiments and emotions. Picture the lawyer pleading his case with tears in his eyes. Pilate used this when he pointed to Jesus and said, “Behold the Man!”

Ad Ignorantiam

This argument appeals to people’s ignorance. It is the contention that a proposition is true simply because it was not proved false, or false because it was not proved true.

Ad Crumenam

This is an appeal to the pocketbook rather than the mind as such. “Elect me and I’ll see to it that your taxes are lowered.” This is often popular in church meetings.

Ad Verecundiam (or Captandam)

Here is an attempt to please the crowd, appealing to sentiments. A politician may address a crowd that is on strike, “The fact that you men are on strike proves that this strike is justified.” This is

not true at all but it sounds good to the crowd.

Here an example would be when we appeal to the loyalty or super-loyalty to the Synod and repeat over and over again, “This is our beloved Synod.”

A politician may speak about the “American Way” with little thought of the contents or the truth of his speech.

This is sometimes called *captatio benevolentiae*. This is used by orators to capture in advance the favor of the hearers. In Acts 24:2 we hear Tertullus addressing Governor Felix, “Seeing that by thee we enjoy great quietness, and that very worthy deeds are done unto this nation by thy providence, we accept it always and in all places, most noble Felix, with all thankfulness.” This is actually begging the question, seeking to win by favor and not by the merit of the cause.

Mark 12:14, “Master, we know that thou art true, and carest not for no man; for thou regardest not the person of men, but teachest the way of God in truth,” and then the Pharisees and the Herodians continued and asked, “Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar or not?”

Galatians 1:3 and Acts 19:35 are not examples of this argument.

Ad Baculum

This is called the law of the claw and the fang. The point is established, not by arguments, but by force. Reasoning ceases, thinking vanishes.

So the enemies of Christ cried, “Crucify Him, Crucify Him,” in order to drown out the words of Pilate. The opponents of Stephen covered their ears, converged upon Stephen, dragged him out and stoned him to death.

Pastors may be guilty of this when their sermons are rather weak, but in order to hide this fact they pound the pulpit, throw down the Bible, and yell loudly to impress the people.

This listing of fallacies reveals how important the thorough study of God’s Word is but it also indicates that it is necessary for every Christian and for every theologian to have some knowledge of logic and of the proper argumentation of Scripture. There is the constant danger of going to extremes and of making unwarranted deductions. Luther was a student of Aristotle and the other logicians, even though he often referred to them as “those heathen.” Walther, Hoenecke, the Piepers, Lenski, John Meyer, were all keen students of the rules of logic as well as of the Holy Bible.

V.

Our Lutheran Doctrines

In these last days when so many insist upon “academic freedom,” which is simply an excuse to do with the Bible as they please, and when the cry of the day is “ecumenism,” it is essential that we study our Lutheran doctrines carefully, to note how they came to us and by what processes of revelation and reason and logic they were formulated. We also must be ready to formulate new defenses of our Scriptural position as new battlefields arise.

Direct Contemplation (or Simple Intuition)

The Bible clearly states the doctrines of the atonement, justification, conversion, inspiration, immortality, eternal punishment, and others. The passages are clear, “Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world.” “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.” “All scripture is given by inspiration of God.” “The righteous shall go into life eternal.” “The unbelievers shall go to everlasting punishment.”

This is true also of many so-called non-fundamental articles, *viz.*, the existence of angels, their holiness, Adam’s imputed guilt, the duties of the pastoral office. They are stated in clear words and in

simple language, and we obtain them simply by listening to the Lord's words and we receive them into our heart and mind. Our human reason and its powers helps us to accept them into our mind, and with the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit we receive a saving knowledge of these heavenly truths.

Induction

The Bible is not a book of dogmatics. Words which refer to one doctrine may be scattered throughout many books of the Bible. It is essential that we combine these words for our own faith and life, for the instruction of others, and as a defense against Satan and his kingdom. Satan and his agents formulate their false doctrines too.

Thus the doctrine of the *Trinity* is not set forth in so many words but there are many texts which refer to the three Persons of God as separate persons. Isaiah 48:16; John 14:15-17; Matthew 28:19. When we compare these and other verses we find that the Persons are strictly coordinate, and other texts disclose that each of the Persons is divine. The conclusion is inescapable that the Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is the One Supreme Being. We have the right to coin words like "trinity" even though it is not found in the Bible.

Similarly the *communion of attributes or natures* of Christ, by which the human nature of Christ shares the attributes of the divine, for instance, the Man Christ's omniscience.

By induction we reach the conclusion that the six days of creation were *cosmic days of about twenty-four hours*. This is the natural interpretation, and after each of the first six days it is mentioned that it was evening and morning. In Exodus 20:11, God stated that as He worked six days and rested on the seventh, so they should do the same, so He gave us the week, and instituted the Sabbath for the Old Testament.

Nowhere does the Bible explicitly mention that *infants should be baptized*, and nowhere is it forbidden. But as we study various passages which refer to baptism we find, that Christ's command is general to baptize all nations which certainly includes children. Christ wants and loves little children, children cannot yet read the Bible nor understand a sermon, circumcision was performed one week after birth, children are born sinful, children too can believe, entire families were baptized which could have included children, then the conclusion must follow, baptize infants also.

We also insist that our definition of *justification* is scriptural even though the language is not taken word or word from the Bible, "Justification is that forensic act of God by which He, on the basis of the perfect vicarious atonement wrought by Christ, declares the whole world to be justified in His sight (objective justification) and transmits and imputes the effect of this declaration to all whom He brings to faith by the work of the Holy Ghost through the means of grace (subjective justification)." Our definition comprehends in one sentence what is clearly taught in Romans 3:22-28; Ephesians 2:1-8; 2 Corinthians 5:18-21; Romans 8:33ff.; (cf. also Romans 4; 5).

We also must make a clear distinction between *universal redemption* wrought by Christ on Good Friday, a sacrificial act, and *objective justification*, announced by the Father on Easter on the basis of Christ's suffering, death, and resurrection, which was a judicial act.

We also distinguish between *objective* and *subjective justification*, between the forensic announcement that Christ has paid completely for the sins of all men, and the blessed moment when the Holy Spirit brings those merits to the human soul, which receives them by faith.

Enumeration

One form of induction consists of enumeration. We take texts from various parts of the Bible and we find that there are only two sacraments, two kinds of angels, that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and from the Son, and that there are two grounds for divorce.

Identification

When Jesus and the disciples tried to convince the people that Jesus was indeed the Christ, they followed the process which might be called "Identification." They led them into the Scriptures, they referred to the Old Testament prophecies and showed how they were fulfilled in Christ. Luke 7:19ff.; Matthew 11:3ff.

The same procedure was followed by Peter in his Pentecost sermons, Acts 2; by Paul in his teaching in Pisidian Antioch, Acts 13; and by Apollos in Corinth, Acts 18:28. No one else could possibly come later who would fit these prophecies. Conclusion, Jesus is the *Savior*.

So also by inductive reasoning, based clearly on Scripture, our Lutheran confessions make the well-known declaration, "*Papem esse verum Antichristum*," which clearly denotes the Pope in home as the *Antichrist*. In studying 2 Thessalonians 2, and 1 John 2 and 4, as compared with prophetic descriptions in Daniel and in the Book of Revelation, our forefathers drew logical conclusions. Luther and his co-workers were fully aware that the Bible does not specifically state that the Pope of Rome is the Antichrist, but they also knew that the description of the Antichrist could not possibly apply to any other phenomenon in history than that of the Papacy. It is a matter of simple identification. For this purpose God has given us both the Bible and our reasoning powers.

Deduction

Many of the doctrines are derived by deduction from words of Scripture. The simplest examples would be those depending upon direct inference. If Jesus is the Son of Mary, it follows that since He is true God, Mary is the mother of God. If the Latter Days are described as days of suffering and persecution for the church, then they cannot be days of glory and earthly power. This excludes the millennium as preceding the Second Coming and the end of the world.

We deduce from Scripture also our right to serve in "just wars," (Augsburg Confession). (This does not mean that each one must now decide for himself whether a war is just or not. This is very difficult to determine in many instances. But the Augsburg Confession wanted to emphasize that the Christian has the right and the duty to serve in the armed forces of his nation.)

Many, of our principles we follow regularly have been derived by deduction, the divine nature of the ministerial call, the requirement that the vote for a pastor be unanimous, the idolatrous nature of the lodge the anti-Christian character of Communism, and many others.

From the words of Paul regarding woman's place in the church we make the deduction that women should not preach in church and that they should not have the right to vote (unless there would be a congregation consisting only of women). From the words of our Lord regarding the importance of teaching the children we make the deduction that the Christian Day School is the finest facility for the early training of the child.

Their Validity

The question arises very naturally, "How valid are such inductions, deductions, and the like?" The example of Jesus Himself gives us the answer. The Lord drew conclusions from Old Testament passages. He encouraged His hearers to do the same, always warning against anti-scriptural conclusions. Jesus showed that the law of the Sabbath was not transgressed when the disciples hungered and ate on the Sabbath Day, by a reference to the act of David and custom of the priesthood, in Matthew 12:3-5. So also the obligation of the marriage bond, Matthew 19:3-8; John 22:31ff. and others. Therefore, conclusions based on the normal processes of human reasoning have the status of doctrine.

Here it could be mentioned too that our Lord has promised to be with us and to give our words power, as we preach and teach His Name. Although the inspiration of the words of Scripture was confined to the 66 books in the original languages, nevertheless our words of testimony also are the Word of God, so long as they are based upon that Word. The Word of God is not bound to any particular

sound, symbol, or language, otherwise there could be no translating, and all preaching and teaching would be restricted to a mechanical reproduction of the original sounds and forms of the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. Note also that Jesus and the sacred writers so often quote Old Testament verses but so often did not quote verbatim. We recognize that to be the word of God which properly communicates the thoughts of God to man. Our doctrinal formulations, our sermons, our hymns, the creed, our word of instruction, all are God's pure word so long as they build upon the foundation of God's Word, and the saving power of the Holy Spirit works through these words.

Toward Clearer Thinking

It has been well said, "*Qui bene distinguit, ben docet*," ("Who distinguishes well, teaches well"). Full knowledge is possible only when the terms used are clear and when proper distinctions are made.

Essence and Accident

We must distinguish between the *essence (substance)* and the *accident* of a thing. Essence is that which is true in every relation, while others refer to that which is merely accidental. Regarding man the fact that he is a creature, that he is two-legged, are essential. But doctor, white, good, musical are accidental marks of man. In the Formula of Concord, "Of Original Sin," reference is made to Matthias Flacius, the father of modern scientific church history, who stated that original sin belongs to the essence of man. The Formula of Concord emphasizes the damnable nature of original sin but stated that it is accidental, not of its essence.

In the New Testament ministry the call is essential but ordination is accidental. In prayer the communication of the believer's soul with God is essential, but it is accidental whether it is spoken aloud or only in the heart, whether it is said in English, German, or Latin. In baptism it is essential to apply water in the name of the Triune God. It is accidental whether this is done by sprinkling, applying, pouring, or by immersion.

We insist too, that the means of grace are not of the essence of the church but they are the means which the Holy Ghost employs in building His Church, and they are the marks, or the indication, whereby we know where it is found.

The souls which by the grace of God have been brought to faith in Christ are the essence of the Holy Christian Church. It is accidental whether these souls are found in black, white, red, or yellow people, or whether these souls are in the body or out of the body, in heaven.

Matter and Form

Another distinction which aids clear thinking is the distinction between matter and form. This is the universal principle, inherent in the nature of things. After we have divested the thing of everything accidental, we examine the thing itself, its essence. Now we differentiate between *causa materialis* and *causa formalis*. Here is a group of men. That is the matter. Now we must determine, what is the form, the purpose of that group. It may be a police force, a baseball team, a pastoral conference. Or, a man shoots a gun. This is the matter. The form may be to murder, to execute, to shoot a deer or a pheasant. The distinction is very important.

In baptism the *causa materialis* is the act of applying water. The same act could be performed in washing ourselves or taking a bath. But the *causa formalis*, namely the words and command and promise of our Lord, make it a sacrament. In the Lord's Supper the matter is the eating and drinking of the bread and the wine. This could be done in the Passover or during the lunch hour also, but the form, the words of institution, make it a sacrament. The principle that the end justifies the means is a perversion of this principle. This is true also of the Roman Catholic doctrine that the intention of the priest makes the sacrament.

This is of the utmost importance in the matter of church fellowship. Two people of different faiths are talking, working, playing, or praying together. It will not do to at once shout “unionism.” God has given us the Bible but also our human reason, now enlightened by Scripture, to determine what circumstances govern each instance. Many factors must be considered carefully.

It could be an *external matter*. They are merely conversing, or they may be playing in the same church softball league.

Perhaps the *lines of confession have not yet been clearly drawn*. In the early ministry of Paul he worshiped with those who did not accept Jesus as the Savior, but he felt that he must testify more until it could be clearly determined whether they were weak in faith or were persistent errorists. So it also happened in the early days in America. Luther preached at the Wartburg colloquy and went to communion with Zwingli. Later he withdrew.

One or the other may be *in a state of confession*, where there is need for added testimony before a break is made.

It could also be a situation *where a break in fellowship has occurred* but because of souls involved *not all ties have been cut*. We for instance still support Bethesda in Watertown, Wisconsin.

Sometimes situations are *more or less forced upon us*. Servicemen may be forced to attend joint services. This is similar to Naaman’s plight where he, in the line of duty, had to attend heathen services with his king. Elisha understood the circumstances and said, “Go in peace.” Prof. E. Kowalke put it this way, “We can’t help it if people pray over us.” It may happen in a mixed gathering that someone will suddenly start praying.

It could be a case where *fellowship is far in the background*. A dying man may ask me to pray with him. (Or is it for him?) I may not have time to determine his church affiliation.

Or it might be a matter of *flagrant unionism*.

God has given us general principles of church fellowship, also some individual cases. Like the early apostles we should now, with God’s help, decide what is right and what is wrong.

Similar decisions must be made in regard to matters of divorce, or suicide cases, and in many other practical matters. In the New Testament we do not have the Urim and Thummim, nor do we have direct revelations from heaven. God is now dealing with us as adults and has promised to be with us always, so long as we build solidly on His inspired Word.

Things and Words

A third distinction must be made between things and words. We do not accept the baptism of Anti-Trinitarians even though they may use the identical words that we use. They have the words, the sound of the words, but not the thing, the essence, the true faith and confession of the meaning of the words as God intended them. The Unitarians and the Jews call their god “Father,” and the Jehovah’s Witnesses address their god as “Jehovah,” but by rejecting Jesus Christ as the eternal Son of God, their words are an offense to the true God.

In Luke 22:67, Jesus was asked by the elders, “Art Thou the Christ, Tell us?” Jesus did not answer, “Yes, I am,” because their conception of the Christ had a highly rationalistic and political meaning. Therefore He answered as He did, “If I tell you, ye will not believe, and if I also ask you, ye will not answer.”

So also the Reformed, in their Lord’s Supper, use the same words we do, but they mean something else. Luther said in this connection, “*Die Schwärmer machen eitel Brot and Wein daraus and schälen den Kern aus and geben ihnen die Hülsen.*” All they receive are the husks, not the kernel. Prof. John Meyer put it this way, “By their confession they empty the words of their real meaning.” We admit

that this does not solve the matter entirely. We cannot delve into the wonderful mysteries of God's grace and we would not want to deny that God can even in such circumstances bring His grace to men.

Churches may be orthodox in theory but not in practice. The ALC may have some fine confessions against the lodge religion, but in so many cases their actions speak louder than their words. For many years we have heard the professions of the leaders in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod that no false doctrine is tolerated in its midst. But the facts dispute this loudly. Just because someone insists "We are conservative" does not make it conservative.

Real and Potential

There is also a difference between real and potential. There is always a potential danger involved in eating, drinking, card playing, smoking, dancing, etc., but we must be careful of the blanket statement that these are always sinful. We cannot condemn in every instance the betting of a candy bar on the outcome of a baseball game. Other distinctions that are necessary are between cause and effect, genus and species, essential and non-essential, universal and particular, real and ideal, and others. The Formula of Concord states, "But as regards terms and expressions it is best and safest to use and retain the form of sound words employed. Words and expressions should be carefully and distinctly explained."

VI.

Our Lutheran Practice

What we know with our intellect, what we feel with our emotions, what we determine to do with our will, what our enlightened conscience urges us to do or not to do, what we believe with all our heart, will show itself in our practice, our conduct, our life. Paul reminds us that we are letters of God, written to the world. This is a great privilege but also involves a great responsibility. Here too human reason so often rears its ugly head and causes us to make unwarranted deductions. If it is true, as has been stated, that the Wisconsin Synod is "coming into bloom" and that we have opportunities which few conservative churches have had, then it is doubly imperative that we do not go to extremes, do not become legalistic on the one hand or liberal on the other.

Careful in Our Deductions and Applications

Although our logical reasoning is a precious gift of God, we must be careful lest we presume for our reasoning powers more than God intended and also lest we make applications which do not follow from the Word of God. Our conviction of truth is in proportion to the directness of apprehension. From Matthew 18 some deduce that the three degrees of discipline are like "3 strikes and out." From the fact that Christ refused the vinegar and gall, therefore, some assume, it is wrong to be vaccinated, to receive an anesthetic, or to use novocaine. In the Missouri Synod they had the so-called "Cincinnati case," where it was demanded that every family had to send their children to the Christian Day School. And when Jesus tells us to render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's there have been many variant deductions. Some refuse to accept social security and quote this passage. We must be careful not to confuse the American heritage of separation of church and state guaranteed to us by our Constitution with the words of our Lord. Otherwise we might be embarrassed by many things Luther permitted under his form of government in Germany. In regard to church fellowship our Synod has suffered much by the actions of those who have made a long string of deductions from the words of Romans 16, "Avoid them." Some have interpreted this to mean that their children may not play with children of other faiths, that this bars all attendance at any other church at weddings or funerals, and some have refused to preach over the radio and quote Scripture to prove their point.

The Full Truth of God

Our Lord asks us to preach the “whole counsel of God.” Thus we will avoid the “social gospel,” which insists that our primary task is to make this world a better place to live in by improving the social, economic, and political conditions. The “Live and Work,” movement emphasizes this thought. Dr. H. R. Niebuhr sums up the social gospel this way, “A God without wrath brought men without sin into a kingdom without judgment through the ministrations of a Christ without a cross.”

May God also preserve us from the ecumenical movement. This started when people drew false conclusions from Bible passages. They consider the Holy Christian Church a visible body. Their cries are “In Union there is strength,” “United we stand, divided we fall,” “Merge or be submerged.” A typical argument is “Christian truth is like a diamond with many facets (168) which makes room for many interpretations. Unity in doctrine is unattainable and undesirable. All opinions when they are combined makes the whole diamond.” This is an example of their garbled logic. This movement results from the departure from the pure Gospel of Jesus Christ.

No Substitutes

When the Gospel does not seem to work as quickly as we think it should, there is the ever present danger that we are impelled by our reason to bring in substitutes. When we note an absence of good works, we easily become impatient and try to force good works by laying down the law or applying other legalistic means. When people are not attracted to the church by the sermons which they hear and when people begin to drift away from the church because we are too conservative, our reason suggests that we add other inducements to the Gospel to draw or hold the people. And when the love of God in their hearts does not move Christians to give as cheerfully and liberally for the work of the Lord, our reason offers all sorts of money-making schemes to achieve something that may look like love for the Gospel. This of course does not rule out organizing our canvasses nor improving our methods of solicitation.

Teaching and Preaching

Those favored souls who have been entrusted with the task of dealing with the souls of people should remember the words of Walther, “*Suchen sie das Gewissen zu treffen*” (“Seek to reach the conscience”). We are not to use a whip on men as some may do with animals. Nor are we to shout commands at them or threaten them. We are not accomplishing anything when we lay down laws that no one is permitted to join the lodge or the scouts, or that people must come to church and give a tenth of their income, otherwise they will be dropped from membership. God has given us His Word and asks us to teach it. The Holy Ghost will supply the power. Let the people draw their own conclusions. If they will listen to the Lord, the Lord has granted us the victory. If they will not listen, they will have to answer to God.

Our Lord not only told us what to preach, but also by word and by example shows how to preach. We should preach Law and Gospel and know how to divide the Word of Truth. We are to speak clearly and simply so that the children and also the old people can hear and understand. Our Lord tells us “Be ye wise as serpents,” he who knows all things sought to reach the intellect and mind of His hearers, that they might know the truth. He who is Love sought to reach the emotions and create true love in their hearts. He who fulfilled the Father’s will perfectly aimed to guide the wills of His hearers and to make it conform to His own. The three prerequisites for a faithful pastor as told by Prof. August Pieper come to mind here: 1. Know your Bible, 2. Love your people, 3. Use good common “horse sense” in the ministry.

The Pastor

Few greater honors are accorded anyone here on earth than when the Lord calls someone to be a pastor, professor, or teacher in His kingdom. The pastor should always remember the words of Matthew

20:25-28, that his work is to “minister,” not to dominate the congregation. The Christian pastor may not command anything that is contrary to the Word of God. He has no right to act single-handedly in deciding matters of indifference. He may not presume to lay down rules with regard to adiaphora and stubbornly insist on his own viewpoint and opinion. Nor should he take it upon himself to institute changes in the services, to wear gowns which may offend the congregation, or to excommunicate someone. Great harm has been done in congregations where the pastor deduces from the fact that he has a divine call that he is holy, all the rest are sinners, or that he rules, all the rest must obey. The congregation should expect leadership from the pastor, but each congregation has a group of wonderful people who will gladly work with him. When they are offended at his actions and words, there is good reason to believe that the pastor has gone too far.

Polemics

With the many blessings God gives to the conservatives there also are some dangers that appear. There is the constant temptation that we become negative in our thinking and preaching, It is absolutely essential to refute error, to unmask and expose error of any and every kind. The people should know where we stand, and why. But we should not mistake vituperation and noise and denunciation for refutation. To storm against error does not convict or convince. Here is a real danger. Our good people sometimes cringe when they come to church, longing to hear the precious truths of God, and then they hear their pastor ranting and raving in the pulpit, constantly harping over and over again on one of his pet subjects. Such people are starving, and often this constant stress on polemics works just the opposite way. Often those who are overwhelmed with the barrage will question whether any of it is true. On the other hand polemics are necessary at times. Luther, when he returned from the Wartburg, preached a series of eight sermons in eight days against the actions of the Enthusiasts (the Zwickau prophets). But it should not be a steady, diet, “Preach the Gospel” is still the one great command, which should far outrank any other.

Politics

We could hardly conceive of a faithful pastor who has not pointed out the idolatrous and atheistic nature of Communism. We must continue to preach the Ten Commandments and apply them to all our hearers and to ourselves. But the pastor and the church should be careful not to be involved in politics. Our main purpose must always be to use the keys to heaven. We are here to save souls and to help the people who are in the pew and in the pulpit. When we speak at great length and on many occasions about communism, civil rights, and the like, we may ignore the real needs of our people who may have no direct connection with such matters. But it should be stressed very strongly that when we warn against overindulging in harangues against Communism and the like, we are not Communists, but we believe in using the most powerful weapon in the world against them and against all Anti-Christian powers ... the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Sex

We know that among the temptations that beset mankind, also the Christians, the sins against the sixth commandment are among the strongest. This is true especially in our day when even churches and pastors condone sins which were repulsive to most people years ago. But again there is the danger of speaking so bluntly that the people in the pew will be offended. It is a sad commentary on some of our pastors when children come home from confirmation class and comment about the many things they learned about sex from their pastor. The information they need to know is clear in Scripture. Our body is to be the temple of God. Sex is a wonderful blessing, which God has bestowed upon mankind for a very good purpose, but only when it is used to His glory. We can clearly point out dangers and temptations without going to extremes. Note how Paul approaches this in 1 Corinthians 7.

Different Personalities, Different Assignments

It should be mentioned in this connection that we cannot lay down firm rules about our Lutheran practice for every pastor and every congregation. God has ways of using people of many different personalities in order to serve in His kingdom. The twelve apostles were not all alike, yet the Lord made use of them all. We need men like Luther and like Melanchthon. We are grateful for men like Prof. August Pieper and also Prof. John Meyer. And when we look at ourselves, with all our many weaknesses, isn't it amazing that God continues to use people like you and me to build His kingdom? This reminds us again that the Lord God omnipotent rules.

Conclusion

Our human reason is a precious gift of God, but it must continue to be dethroned and to be made captives to Scripture. Every heresy, every false doctrine, every departure from God's Word stems from the false use of reason. Reason has won the greatest mastery in the church among those whose education and position have been on a high level. Emerson Fosdick is an example. The rationalist movement which plagued the Lutheran Church in Europe evidently had its origin in the universities. And it is needless to say that a great percentage of the difficulties which the Lutheran Church has had to contend with in the United States has arisen from reason's conquests among the leaders of the church, especially starting in those who have high degrees from State Universities. Faith alone, the power of God, must rule supreme.

Paul brings this out beautifully:

“For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness, but unto us which are saved, it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? or after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.” (1 Corinthians 1:18-25)

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