

Why We Are Certain That The Bible is The Word Of God

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I. The Situation Confronting Us in the World of Biblical Scholarship Today

We who as individuals and as a church take our theological stand firmly and squarely on the Word of God feel that it is both a privilege and a responsibility constantly to keep the blessed truth before ourselves that the Bible, the Holy Scriptures of both the Old and the New Testaments, is the Word of God, the Word of Revelation of His eternal thoughts of grace and love, His speaking to us of that which we call Law and Gospel. As children of God we feel it a privilege to hear our heavenly Father's words and similarly we deem it a privilege to remind ourselves time and again who it is who is speaking these words to us. At the same time, we must feel that as confessional Evangelical Lutheran Christians we have the grave responsibility to study this truth, to work with it, to apply it in our teaching, preaching, and Christian living, and ever to implore the strength and guidance of God's Holy Spirit in this our God-given responsibility in a world where we of the confessional Lutheran Church are left standing almost alone in the stand that the Bible *is* indeed the Word of God in the sense in which the great teachers of the Lutheran Church, the reformers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and the founders of synods now comprising the Synodical Conference understood the term. Our brethren of the preceding generation read with delight and general approval a German book that by 1922 had reached its sixth edition: F. Bettex *Die Bibel Gottes Wort* (The Bible the Word of God).¹

A theologian who is perhaps best known among us as the writer of our Wisconsin Synod Catechism,² the late Rev. C. Gausewitz, pastor of St. John's Church, St. Paul, and of Grace Church, Milwaukee, and president of his Synod for ten years and of the Synodical Conference 1912 till 1927, presented the same topic in our midst. His work became known throughout the Synod in its English version: *Why I Believe that the Bible is God's Word*.³

It will be noticed that from the title given by the German Bettex to his work, through that of Pastor Gausewitz' paper, to the heading under which we are conducting our present study, there is a change in the expression used. I do not mean to imply that Bettex was any the less *certain* than President Gausewitz was or than we are that the Bible is the Word of God; nor should it even be suggested that the belief of Bettex or of ourselves in the matter of the Word-of-God-ness of the Bible is any different from that of the learned Gausewitz. But the title of this study has been chosen advisedly. There has not been a time in the history of Christendom when so many and such impressive forces have been at work all aimed at undermining and ultimately destroying our certain belief and trust that the Bible *is* the Word of God and that in the Old and New Testaments God is speaking to us with a clarity that outshines the clarity of the sun in the heavens itself. It was Martin Luther who said: "This fact must be recognized and utterly certain among all Christians that the Holy Scripture is a spiritual light much brighter than the sun itself,

¹ Sixth edition (Stuttgart: J. F. Steinkopf, 1922)

² Doctor Martin Luther's Small Catechism, edited by C. Gausewitz, pastor (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, n.d.)

³ A 16-page pamphlet printed as manuscript, no date or publisher given.

especially in matters which pertain to our eternal salvation or which every Christian must necessarily know” (*De Servo Arbitrio* XVIII 1742).⁴

The forces that are today attacking our certainty that the Bible is the Word of God are not basing their main arguments on the fact that there are many matters in which we should like to have more information in items of detail or that there are many questions about which Scripture is simply silent. In times past, unbelief has indeed often raised the argument that we who take our stand on Scripture have no solid ground under our feet because, for instance, we cannot with certainty and precision name the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, because there are so and so many “variant readings” in the ancient Greek manuscripts of the New Testament, or because we do not have given to us in either the Synoptic Gospels or in that of John a detailed chronology and a biographical statistical report on the life of our Lord. In past generations there have been scholars and other workers with the Bible who have demanded these things and many more of the Scriptures, and, not finding them, looked upon the Bible either as a glorified wastepaper basket of heterogeneous ancient documents that accidentally came to be gathered together or as the result of the misguided efforts of several score of deluded religious enthusiasts who had something to get out of their system and having gotten it out bequeathed to an unsuspecting world a book that they themselves took very much of an everyday attitude toward but which the world came to accept as a book in a class by itself and eventually labeled “the sacred scriptures of the Jewish and Christian churches.” These unbelieving interpreters and workers with the Bible have repeatedly told us who accept the Scriptures as what they present themselves to be (I wish there were an English equivalent for the German *Bibelglaeubig*) that we have been mistaken and that we are deluding ourselves still further, because, say they, according to all the accepted standards of scholarship, the Bible, while an interesting collection of materials, cannot lay claim to being anything more than the often naive and generally primitive product of certain people who perhaps had a genius for religion but certainly not for anything else. It almost looks as if these critics (that is the word they like to apply to themselves and it will serve us as well as any other) were making the same demands of the Scriptures as a faculty advisor of a candidate for the doctor of philosophy degree in some university would make of his protege. When we read the works of these critics of the past, we find them saying in almost so many words to the Holy Spirit, the ultimate author of the Bible: “We have read and carefully studied your work but cannot accept it as it is. You will have to indicate your sources more carefully, check your references, document your statements, bring the whole under a single unified point of view that we can accept, and finally comply with all the stipulations contained in the manual of style insofar as they apply to dissertations like this.”

What we can today speak of as the Age of Liberalism in modern theology was ushered in by Wellhausen’s work, *Prolegomena to the History of Israel*, in 1878. That event ushered in the first phase of the modern self-styled “rediscovery of the Bible.” This first phase lasted till the time between the two world wars, at which time the liberal theologians suddenly discovered that the “assured results of criticism” (as they referred to all the things they imagined they had discovered proving the Bible not to be true) were turning to ashes in their mouths, as the apples of Sodom were said to have done to the people living in it. For they had tried in vain to find comfort and strength in all the negative results of their criticism during the periods of conflict in the trenches of World War I and in the even more distressing experiences of the postwar years.

⁴ Quotations from Luther are made according to the St. Louis edition. Translations from other languages are the essayist’s unless it is otherwise noted.

Though in the 1920's in Europe and in the 1930's here in America there began to be noticeable a change in detail in the attitude that the liberal critics of the Bible espoused whose results were regularly of a negative nature, the fundamental approach to the Bible by its scholars and critics (outside of course our own confessional Synodical Conference Lutheran circles) was governed by the principle of evolution, especially from the time of Wellhausen on. The German philosopher Hegel thought that he had discovered a progress and a development in the history of the nations. Liberal theologians argued that religion, Christianity included, must be studied in the same way as Hegel had studied the progress and character of nations. They argued that man's ideas about God and about man must also be subject to the laws of evolution, that is, must progress ever from the lower to the higher. The same was true, they said, of man's standards of what is right and wrong. What was once frowned upon as bad, these critics argued, in the course of time may be tolerated and may finally become something that is upheld as a positive good, like the ordination of women into the public ministry of the Church.

The Bible, too, they claimed, reflects man's religious development from the crude and simple to the complex, the refined, the cultured. Wellhausen and his school held that a primitive animism was the prevailing religious character of the age of the patriarchs. But then the people of Israel came into being, not in the way, of course, that the Five Books of Moses present them as coming into being. This nation of Israel had a strong national trait. There was something they naturally took to, the way our fellow countrymen from Sheboygan take to bratwurst. The Israelites similarly had a flair for religion, appreciated it in all its phases and were busy and active in the creation of it, as the Germans have a flair for music, the French for cooking, and we Americans and our Australian brethren for staying out late. Having this flair for religion, the Israelites went in quest of knowledge about God. Finally, under the guidance of the prophets, these Israelite seekers after God attained the heights of a monotheistic faith. This Jewish faith in the oneness of God was further refined when Christianity came along, and it was Jesus Christ who then laid down the ultimate principles along which human kind must continue to advance until finally it brings about the kingdom of God on earth. The world was getting better and better said these theological liberals, and would keep on getting better as the world came to learn more and more of what the Jewish prophets and the early Christian leaders had discovered about God.

Perhaps some of you have gotten the impression that I was proceeding in a somewhat lighthearted, even facetious way. But what I have just given you is a summation of what a man has recently written who in all seriousness proposes the thought that not until the present generation began its work has the Bible really and truly been known. Naturally, he rejects some of the conclusions of the Age of Liberalism, but he just as stoutly maintains that under the guidance of the present generation of Biblical scholars the Christian Church has actually come to a rediscovery of the Bible.⁵

It is precisely this claim that the Bible has been rediscovered by the present generation of Bible critics that forces us to give heed to that fundamental article of our faith, that the Bible is the Word of God. Today there breathes a different air in the world of religious and theological scholarship and writing. Today the kind of theological liberalism that was riding the crest of the wave here in America in the 1930's and up till the post-World War II era, is pretty much a thing of the past. A generation ago the word "theology" was hardly a respectable one in learned circles. The word was "scientific," and you could get by with "theology" if you called it "scientific." But this situation has changed. The old-fashioned "liberal" is today much out of

⁵ William Neil *The Rediscovery of the Bible* (New York: Harper & Brothers, c.r. 1954), pp. 29-40

style. This is the man who believed and loudly said: that much of the Bible is irrelevant to life in the present-day world; that much of the Bible had best be silently ignored; and that the rest was at best a collection of fairytales. A liberal like this is today, in most theological circles in the world, left very much out in the cold, because he believed that science was infallible, and in these days (July 20) when America's second flight into space is being postponed from one hour and day to the next because of atmospheric conditions over the State of Florida, everyone is quite willing, be he believer or unbeliever, to admit that science, rather than having the predicate of infallibility attached to it, in the hands of man has become a tyrant who has developed the possibility of and the potentiality for the destruction of at least large portions of human kind and the unimaginable misery that a conflict like this, once unloosed, would bring to all the inhabitants of the earth.

Everyone today can see that the thinking of the old-time liberal was unrealistic and naively optimistic. He imagined that "day by day in every way the world was getting better and better." Still, however much present day Biblical scholarship may disagree with some of the things it describes as the "weakness of the Liberal position in Biblical study," and here it thinks of liberalism's subjective approach, its evolutionary principle, and its resultant scepticism, the men who stand in the forefront of theological and Biblical writing and teaching today would all agree with Neil:

...we remain profoundly in the debt of those scholars who, by their devoted and competent work over the past century, enable us to say today that no other ancient documents have been so carefully examined, compared, analyzed, sifted and checked. Thanks to them, we may feel that in continuing the process of Rediscovery by advancing to a more positive position, we are building on a more solid foundation than has ever been the case since the Bible was first written.⁶

We should be very wrong if we, misled by their use of words and phrases long familiar to and loved by ourselves, should think that the name-theologians of the great centers of learning of our land and of Europe had suddenly become *Bibelgläubig*. The name which is sometimes given to their brand of theology is just as misleading. Men speak of the present as the day of Neo-Orthodoxy. In truth, it is neither new nor orthodox. Van Tilt⁷ called it *The New Modernism*. I prefer to think of it as merely the current phase of the old, unbelieving, Bible-denying Liberalism, spawned by Hegel, naturalized in the Church by Schleiermacher, and in the process of being canonized in the Church today by men of such differing opinions and approaches as Karl Barth, Emil Brunner, C. S. Dodd, Rudolf Bultmann, the late Martin Dibelius, and a spate of their followers, imitators, and adapters in endless array. But if we want to think about why we are certain that the Bible is the Word of God, we must know what stand is taken by those people living today, whose books are used and read by the public at large and will most assuredly be found on the "required reading" lists for courses in contemporary religious thinking at any institution of learning that makes pretensions of any kind to being abreast of the times. These people tell us that now finally, in this advanced phase of the movement once called Liberalism, they are rediscovering the Bible. We, on the other hand, insist that Jesus and Paul had and used the real Old Testament, this despite the fact that they did not have a Julius Wellhausen to show

⁶ Neil, *op. cit.*, p. 41

⁷ Cornelius Van Til *The New Modernism: An Appraisal of the Theology of Barth and Brunner* (London: James Clarke & Co., Ltd., 1946)

them how to read the history of Israel and Israel's sacred books, its Law, Prophets, and Psalms. We insist that the fathers of our own Church, the reformers and dogmaticians Luther, Gerhard, Chemnitz, Melancthon, Quenstedt, Hollaz, and the founders of our Synod, Church, and theology, C. F. W. Walther, Adolf Hoenecke, the Piepers (August, Franz, Reinhold), J. P. Koehler, John Schaller, together with a host of their colleagues, coworkers, students, and disciples, all these had the Bible, both Old and New Testaments, and they were certain that this Bible was (not merely *contained*) but *was* the Word of God, that Word which is His Truth that endureth "to all generations" (Ps. 100:5), and that it did not need to be rediscovered anew.

Just what is it that the new theology claims to have found which makes of its effort an alleged rediscovering of the Bible but which we firmly believe and confess would, if followed, take the sweet Gospel of our salvation away from us since it would take away from us the certainty that the Bible is the Word of God? Just where does present-day theology stand?

Let it be clear at the outset that we are not here dealing with theological problems that may be pictured as having their being on the periphery of religious and theological thinking. Such questions might be the problem concerning the many different readings in the ancient manuscripts of the Greek New Testament, just how to translate and understand this or that word in the Bible, precisely what were and meant to Paul the books and the parchments that he left at Troas (II Tim. 4:13), whether to read a certain section of the Bible closely with the verses preceding or to draw them into connection with the following section, the position of Abishag the Shunammite (I Kings 1:15) in the household of King David, and matters of a like nature.

Questions that concern the understanding of the words of the Bible or of the matter of which they speak have always been with the members of the Church. It is a great comfort to us to know that Peter, prince of the Apostles, has similar difficulties. Speaking of the letters of Paul, he says of them, "in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction" (II Pet. 3:16). And I am quite certain that this side of heaven, where we shall see our God face to face and shall behold Him as He is, there shall always be with us such questions of detail. But the interest of modern Biblical study and criticism is aimed at a much more fundamental consideration. What is being denied by present-day theological thought is the very nature of the Bible which the Scriptures predicate of themselves and which, specifically, Wisconsin Synod theology from the start has always clung to.

Neil sums up what he calls "the traditional view" of the nature of the Bible thus: ⁸

"The traditional view was that man had reason and powers of observation: with these tools he could arrive at some idea of his nature and destiny and the majesty of his Creator. There were, however, limits beyond which his reason could not take him. To supply this gap, God had disclosed in addition all else that man needed to know for his eternal salvation, through infallible Holy Scripture. God's revelation of Himself was canalised into the pages of the Old and New Testaments."

While we would not be willing to underwrite this statement as completely agreeing with our attitude toward the nature of the Bible, it does ring out the salient points of our position, first, that it is God who has revealed Himself to man and not man seeking and finding God; and

⁸ *op. cit.* p. 38

secondly that this revelation given by God of Himself is to be found in the pages of the Old and New Testaments. It is this position which modern Biblical scholarship flatly contradicts, and in doing so generally states its own position, one which, it is claimed, is worthy of God, since the “traditional view” is supposed to be not worthy of our God. We could quote from any of a number of present-day writers on the subject. Each one will naturally insist on putting things his own way, but in general all are absolutely agreed that our position regarding an infallible Holy Scripture is long since outworn and must go the way of the gas street-lamp and the surrey with the fringe on top. But if God did not reveal Himself in the Old and New Testaments, then modern theology must find some way in which man can come to know things about God. (Let it be noticed here that the stress is always on “knowing things about God” in the way in which philosophers would speak about it.) Neil too, has this answer, for he says in the paragraph immediately following the above quotation:

“Now it was obvious to thoughtful and critical minds that this was a grossly inadequate appraisal, and one unworthy of God Himself. Not only were there features of this Revelation which were self-contradictory, but also the whole conception of God’s activity was much too restricted. If God, as all would have admitted, be the source of Beauty, Goodness and Truth, then poets, artists, writers, philosophers, composers, and scientists, who mediate these things, must be communicating some facet of the Divine Being to men. Likewise, in all religions, and not exclusively the Christian religion, God must be revealing something of Himself.

The position that Neil here espouses is of course nothing new. It is the one held by the unbelieving poets and thinkers of all ages and is briefly this, that through all men who give themselves to the contemplation of the good, the true, the beautiful, there is revealed something of eternal truth, that the Psalmist of the Old Testament and Theocritus, a Greek bucolic poet; that Isaiah and Sir Winston Churchill, both statesmen and persons of considerable literary gifts and activities; that Ezekiel the Prophet and the preacher in any pulpit wheresoever, all stand on the same level. Far be it from us from asserting that the preacher in the pulpit who is faithful to his call does not or cannot proclaim the Truth. Just the opposite is true. We insist that that which is heard from our pulpits is the Word of God. But here we and the modern theologians following Karl Barth are not speaking about the same thing. We say the sermons preached from our pulpits are the Word of God because they but restate and apply to the needs of the moment the Word of God which is contained in the Scriptures of Old and New Testaments. In our preaching we do not create divine Truth—we but repeat, we echo, we apply it. The false theology of the present generation would have us believe that the word of the preacher is Word of God in the sense that this truth has been brought into being *by him*. It would be only incidental if he should express sentiments similar to those found in the words of Prophet or Apostle. To the present-day theorizer about things theological, what makes the word of the preacher Word of God is the fact that in him we have a good man who is giving himself to thoughts about God and man, ethical conduct and eternal retribution. Perhaps contemplation of the words found in the Bible have stimulated him; but any other type of aid to this almost-poetic type of inspiration would have served as well: a news-broadcast of the fate of the latest “freedom riders” in one of our larger cities, a contemplation of life as it is lived in the slums, a newspaper picture of a drunk along skid-row, or the sight of a magnificent sunset or the sound of a piece of great music. Now the

argument runs like this: God is the source of Beauty, Goodness, and Truth; these men give themselves to thoughts of Beauty, Goodness, and Truth; therefore, what these men have to say in some way or other is a communication about God to mankind.

The other attitude worthy of note in this connection, as it is also brought out by Neil, is the insistence that “in all religions, and not exclusively the Christian religion, God must be revealing something of Himself.” The devout Mohammedan, Buddhist, or Brahman are not simply to be dismissed as heathens. They may be imperfect in their understanding of God but so says this modern rambling that calls itself “scientific theology,” obviously something of the nature of God had been revealed to them, and the Spirit of God was at work in them. This general revelation of God, shared by all mankind, enabled men to approach Him and discern something of His will for them.⁹

While the Liberalism of a former generation dismissed much of the Bible as being irrelevant to the present situation, the current trend that goes by the name of “neo-orthodoxy” is rather prepared to admit that it may have been possible that God chose to grant a special revelation of Himself in this way that the Old and New Testaments record a series of events which must be taken into account if we are to form any true picture of man’s role in the universe.¹⁰

Here, fathers and brethren, is the position that spells the greatest conceivable threat to our faith and to our certainty of salvation. For our Christian faith and the attitude we take toward the nature of the Bible go hand in hand. If I am to believe that the Bible is a noble collection of thoughts on the part of men and a record of events in which God was active, as men have seen and evaluated this activity in the past, then all I have before me in the books and words of Scripture are the thoughts and words of men, well-meaning without question, sincere and earnest beyond all doubt, but still men like myself who are doing their level best to accomplish the goal they have set themselves, and then I, when I read these words, must still try to see behind the words they have used in order to try to locate that bit of Divine Truth that might come to me, not in the words and letters and forms and syntax of these statements, but in some spiritualizing way that transcends the ordinary use of the senses so that in fine it takes another inspiration on my part in order to enable me to grasp of divine truth that comes to me in some way or other when I am exposed to it through my reading of the Bible. This, I submit, is *Schwaermerei* of the rankest sort, an attempt to arrive at truth in a direct “spiritual” way apart from the ordinary use of the senses.

But such is the nature of the “theology” that is in the saddle in our day, the teaching that lays such extravagant claims to being honest, scientific, and the only one that is true to the best traditions of the Christian Church and that will build this same Church in our day and in the future. Frankly, I find myself unable to see that this so-called “neo-orthodox” position has departed at all from the basic tenets of the old unbelieving liberal position. Both put the Bible entirely into the realm and competency of man. Both carefully examined, compared, analyzed, sifted, and checked the ancient documents that are contained in our beloved Bible, the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments. Both the old and the new modernism have felt free to accept or reject, rearrange and reassign to a different period of time from the one implicit in any book or any portion of any book of the Bible whatsoever. Both have always rejected the authority of the Scriptures in anything like a reasonable understanding of the term “authority,”

⁹ Neil, *op. cit.* p. 39

¹⁰ Neil, *op. cit.* p. 41

Both militantly deny the infallibility of Scripture. Both deny the intimate connection between the Old and the New Testaments that Jesus and the Apostles found to exist there, and of course both deny the fulfillment of prophecy in the sense in which the New Testament speaks of it. In fact, present-day liberals fall all over themselves in paying homage to the excellency of the work that was done by the negative destructive critics of the Bible of the past century. The following statement is a typical one on the part of a present-day writer on the topic:¹¹

“The Liberals were *wholly admirable* in their single-minded quest for truth whatever it might cost. They were essentially *right to question* what they felt to be a *bogus authority*, and to *explode* the *untenable doctrine* of the *infallibility of Scripture*. But above all they were right in their recognition that we live in a scientific age, whose conception of God’s world is vastly richer and more enlightened than that of the Hebrews, the Greeks, or the Christian Fathers, and that there can be no going back on that knowledge.” (Emphases ours.)

This is the temper of the age in which we live with regard to the nature of the Bible and the certainty that we can ultimately know the Truth of which our Lord assures us that it will make us free (John 8:32).

In only a few small matters does the present generation of Biblical scholars and theologians deviate from the position maintained by the liberals of the nineteenth century. The age of radical criticism “found” that much of the Bible was not written by the Prophets and Apostles whose names the several writings bore. The old radicalism was content to rest the matter there as though it had accomplished something great. The modern neo-orthodox interpretation simply no longer argues the point of the genuineness and integrity of, let us say, the Book of Isaiah or the Epistles of Paul to the congregation at Corinth. The modern exegete simply assumes that the findings of the liberal scholars are among the “assured results of criticism,” but now *he* goes on and pretends to build reliable truth upon what he thinks can be shown to be an utterly unreliable Bible.

Again the modern age has “discovered” a substitute for the personality of the divinely inspired Prophet or Apostle. If the individuals who are presupposed even if not directly named, in the various books of the Bible as their authors did not produce them, then who finally did? Here modern existentialistic Bible interpretation has suddenly discovered the worshipping community as the creative force. An Englishman writing recently on subject puts it directly thus:

“The earlier view regarded the Holy Spirit as simply enlightening the minds of those who were the authors, but by this new viewpoint the action of the Spirit is seen to be both wider and deeper. Not only individuals, but the whole nation of Israel is seen to be the object of Divine inspiration. In the history of the world, the Spirit of God may be discovered as ‘atmosphere,’ but in the story of Israel it is found to be ‘as a rushing mighty wind’... ‘Underlying the whole thought of the Bible is the idea of a God who reveals himself in history and experience.’ What is peculiar to Israel is the idea of a revelation that is given in history and experience in a single complex.”¹²

¹¹ Neil, *op. cit.* p. 41

¹² John T. Wilkinson *Principles of Biblical interpretation* (London: The Epworth Press, 1960) p. 40, quoting H. H. Rowley, *The Unity of the Bible*, pp. 65,66.

If a national characteristic that produces drastic results be tantamount to inspiration, then we shall have to claim that we Americans, too, are responding to a new and quite peculiar type of inspiration and one that leads us into an all-prevailing American habit, that of installment buying!

As part of the whole view that it is finally the worshiping community of the Old and New Testaments that has brought into being the Bible rather than the Prophet or Apostle called by the Lord for this particular purpose, present-day criticism has made much of the *Sitz im Leben* of a particular writing. Let it be said here that we of the Wisconsin Synod have always been keenly aware that the life-situation to which and out of which a Biblical writing speaks must always be taken fully into account if we are to understand the word of Apostle or Prophet in the sense in which they meant it. Anyone who has read the writings or has sat at the feet of our Professors August Pieper and John Philip Koehler will realize at once that these two interpreters of Scripture to us were most keenly aware of the *Sitz im Leben* of the particular Scripture they were expounding. The present generation of students at our Seminary will realize at once that the lectures of our venerable Professor John P. Meyer, who in his eighty-ninth year continues to carry a regular load of lectures at the Seminary at Mequon, are from beginning to end a demonstration of how we must let the text speak for itself, that is, how we must take full account of the *Sitz im Leben* of every Word of God that we attempt to expound. We have always recognized the need of this procedure and have always made the *Sitz im Leben* a principle of interpretation. The difference between us and the neo-orthodox existential interpreters lies simply here: with us paying due heed to the life-situation out of which a word of Scripture came and to which it was speaking is a necessary ingredient in our attempt to understand the Word of God that was already there, given to us by God by means of the inspiration of His Holy Spirit through His chosen servants, the Prophets and Apostles. This procedure but helps us become ever more certain that the Bible is the Word of God. Those who are following the current modern trend in Bible interpretation think they have discovered the *Sitz im Leben* as the explanation of how that Word came into being in the first place. The difference appears to be a small one, but that small difference is like the difference of a few degrees between two lines that radiate at a slightly different angle from a single common point: before they have gone very far, the one will have absolutely nothing to do with the other. So it is with the *Sitz im Leben* that is spouted so eloquently by the prophets of unbelief in our day and the due heed which in love and reverence we pay to everything contained within and everything surrounding the Bible when we make our attempt to read it aright. We cannot do otherwise, since we are certain that it is in truth the very Word of God.

II. How We Believe the Bible Came to Us.

While the false theology of the present day talks glibly about the “social origins” of the books of the Old and New Testaments and thinks of the worshiping communities *as such* as being the recipients of divine inspiration and while this pseudotheology very consciously conforms its formulations of its tenets according to the human philosophy that seems to have captured the minds of the Western World in these middle years of the twentieth century, we know no other Bible and we know no other origin for our Bible than the one which the Bible declares for itself and the one that believing students of the Bible from the earliest days of the

Christian Church on down to the present have always held to. Names and terms we must have, to be used as handles whereby we can take hold of the matter with which we are to deal. No term for the “new theology” that claims to have “rediscovered” the Bible is entirely adequate, for the simple reason that every writer, every Biblical scholar, as the world knows them, of this as of every other generation finds that he cannot entirely agree, even in what we would regard as essentials, with any other name-worthy scholar. Suffice it to say here, that the particular Bible interpretation of these scholars is also very strongly under the influence and direction of their particular theology, their concept of the whole. Of course they vigorously deny this and accuse us of letting our Bible interpretation be guided by our preconceived theological opinions. To the latter charge we gladly and quite proudly plead: “Guilty.” We cannot read the Bible, the Word of God, in any other way than as the Word, the revelation of heart and mind and will, of that God who created the world and everything in it to be the abode of man, and of that gracious Father who in spite of our sin will one day take us to the abode in heaven so that we to all eternity may see Him face to face and rejoice in our blessed communion with Him forevermore.

However, it can also quite handily be shown that those people who pretend to approach the Bible entirely in a detached, unprepossessed, presuppositionless, hence “scientific,” frame of mind so that their approach will be one in which they will let the words of the Bible speak entirely for themselves, these scholars also come to the Bible with their minds far from the “blank page” they pretend it to be. Ernst Lerle has shown that Rudolf Bultmann, perhaps the best-known of present-day New Testament scholars in Europe, comes to his study of the New Testament with a very definite set of presuppositions: These are simply the denial of each and every one of the statements of belief in the Apostolic Creed!¹³ When we on the other hand read the Bible, we do so with the positive confession in our hearts and on our lips that we accept, believe, and teach each and every one of the Articles of the Apostles’ Creed. In addition, we read the Bible in the firm conviction of our hearts that the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments are that which they declare themselves to be and what the *Bibelgläubig* of all generations have accepted them to be.

We believe (and this is the picture thereof that the Scriptures themselves give us of the matter) that the Eternal God in days gone by at sundry times and in divers manners called human beings into His service, each to be His chosen spokesman to his generation. These men were His Prophets of the Old Testament and His Apostles in the New.

These men differed as to the personalities they brought with them into the work of the Lord as well as the attitude they took toward that work once the Lord had made it clear to them that He was asking them to do this work in His name.

Some of these men were figures in the public eye of their time, others were apparently before their call to duty quite obscure men, as this world reckons earthly fame. There was a Moses, adoptive son of the daughter of the Pharaoh of Egypt, but at the time of his call, a fugitive from the wrath of Pharaoh and a keeper of the flocks of his father-in-law Jethro in the land of Midian, (Exod., chapters 2 and 3). There was Isaiah, statesman and diplomat, adviser to and confidant of kings, a man of position and presence and certainly of considerable renown (e.g., Isa., chapter 7). In the course of time Daniel became the president of the entire guild of “wise men” in the land of Babylon (Dan. 2:48); the king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, gave him many great gifts and made him a great man. Ezekiel, himself a priest and obviously a man of

¹³ Ernst Lerle *Voraussetzungen der neutestamentlichen Exegese* (Frankfurt am Main: Lutheraner-Verlag GmbH, 1951) p. 40

learning and culture as well as a person of a great literary gift, was taken among the Hebrew captives into the Babylonian Captivity and did his work among the people of God in the land of the conquering enemy. The Apostle John was obviously a man of position, wealth, and influence; he is described as a *gnostos*, a personal acquaintance of the high priest (John 18:15); he and James are described as partners with Simon in the fishing business (Luke 5:10), a business not at all of the mean proportions sometimes attributed to it but one that we know furnished the smoked and pickled fish that were sought after and prized as luxury items in the international trade of the day; and quite plainly, too, John had early in life made contact with learning, writing, books and their production, for in no other writer of the New Testament do we find so many allusions to all the things that belong to the stock in trade of the literary man. Other spokesmen for God appear on the scene of their calling as a new actor makes his entrance on the stage: unheralded, unannounced, dramatically. So it was with the great Prophet Elijah the Tishbite, a man as unique and rugged as the mountains among which he often had his abode, but there could be no question about it: when Elijah said, "Thus saith the Lord," there the Lord Himself indeed had spoken.

As different as were the several personalities and natural endowments of these spokesmen for God, so various was the initial response to God's call. In spite of the many direct evidences the Lord had given him that he should be the Lord's representative to Pharaoh and to Egypt, Moses still pleaded with the Lord to send someone else, since he was by nature slow of speech and of a slow tongue (Exod. 4:10-13). Isaiah's response on the other hand was: "Here am I; send me" (Isa 6:8). Paul's attitude on the Damascus Road was described as that of "kicking against the pricks" (Acts 9:5), but Peter and Andrew, James and John, who had been disciples of John the Baptist, sought the company of Jesus and spent some time with Him after their master, the Baptist, had directed their attention to Jesus (John 1:35-42), and when Jesus later on called them to be His representatives and ambassadors, "twelve, whom also he named apostles" (Luke 6:13), they quite willingly followed Him. But whether called directly by a word spoken to them by God Himself or by an inner word that spoke to their heart and mind just as surely as if it had been uttered to the physical ear; whether commissioned directly by God, as was Elijah, or through one of God's representatives as was Elijah's successor, Elisha (II Kings 2:13); whether they willingly did the Lord's bidding when called or whether they tried to run away in the directly opposite direction, as with Jonah (Jonah 1:3), these called representatives and chosen spokesmen for their God entered upon their divinely given task in the full knowledge of the nature of their assignment and with an appreciation of the significance of their calling. "Thus saith the Lord." Could any member of human kind speak a more weighty, a more responsible word than that?

We who believe in a verbally inspired, infallible Scripture and acclaim the very Word of God have always been and continue to be grossly misrepresented as to what we think happened when God called His servants in the days of old and, in a special way endowing them with His Holy Spirit, had them speak His Word to the world in which they lived. The negative critics of this day as of every generation speak of that which lay behind the production of the books of the Bible and of the men whom God called to produce them as though in this matter we were dealing with something that was very work-a-day and yet that here something occurred that has never occurred in like manner in any other connection. They would have us believe that the forces at work were precisely those which we can command today, but that nevertheless there was something produced here that demands our deepest attention and our sincerest study. The old unbelieving liberal criticism of the Bible has been forced by the simple events of history to

retreat step by step from the position it held and from which it attacked so vehemently the authority and the infallibility of the Bible. For many years it was maintained that Moses could not possibly have written the five books ascribed to him for the simple reason that by the time of Moses the art of writing was not yet known, that in the days of Moses the human race living in that portion of the Near East known as the Fertile Crescent had not yet reached the degree of culture and civilization that enabled it to develop and use an alphabet of sorts and the materials for writing it. Archaeology has in our day shown such a contention to be ridiculous, since the finds of students of the ancient world in both Mesopotamia and Egypt demonstrate that the art of writing was not only known but very adequately developed by the time of Moses and the Exodus from Egypt. In the eyes of many critical scholars of the New Testament, the Gospel of John could not possibly have been written by the beloved disciple, the Apostle John, for the reason, they contended, that it was plain that the Gospel must have been written some time deep in the second century, at a time when the disciple whom Jesus loved must in the course of events have been dead for quite a number of years. About a quarter of a century ago there was published a bit of papyrus out of the land of Egypt that very plainly contained a small but unmistakable portion of the Gospel of John. And the experts in palaeography, men who give themselves to the study of ancient writing, have shown that this writing was made at latest early in the second century, so at a time when the critics claimed the Gospel of John had not yet been written this archaeological find proved that it had already been in use long enough in Egypt so that the particular book from which this fragment came was worn out and this section of it was discarded together with other paper for which there was no longer a clear use. But I will not weary you with other examples, which could be quoted in goodly number. Though these matters were at one time played up very strongly by the unbelievers to show why they could not accept the Bible as the Word of God, today we hear very little about them. And instead of doing the obvious thing and recognizing that the attack upon the Word of God in the Bible was misconceived and misdirected in the first place, these scholars are today just slightly shifting their point of attack. They no longer declare that the Bible cannot possibly be true, as they once did. Too many of their favorite arguments have been punctured for that. Instead they have tried to move the entire environment out of which the books of the Old and New Testaments came into a semimystical, romantic, spiritualized never-never land, in which a whole people, like Israel, or a whole community, like the early Christian Church, is inspired to produce books of history, poetry, and preaching, the Gospels and Epistles and the Revelation and to do this in a way that leaves entirely out of account the personality of the divinely inspired servant of God, who had been called to be God's spokesman to his time. The proponents of this kind of romanticizing speculation do not give a name to the school of thought which they follow. Naturally not! They want to stand before the world and the Church as those people who now at long last have finally and really given us the Bible, as though Peter and Paul, Luther and Chemnitz, Stoeckhardt and August Pieper had been withholding it from us. The name Neo-Barthianism has been suggested for this trend. Precisely what that name could suggest I would not know, except possibly a bit of devilry that even Karl Barth has not thought of as yet. Suffice it for the present that we think of these critics, scholars, and writers, whose positions and books we shall go into a little more in detail later on, as the proponents of the false speculative theology that has captured the minds and imaginations of the vast majority of the spokesmen for Christendom and that has also to a marked degree invaded much of the church that bears the name of Martin Luther.

But how then, should we describe our own position? I like a word that Krummacker suggested better than a century ago: *Biblical Realism*.¹⁴ The term was in place in 1851 when he was battling the onslaughts of unbelief. The nature of these attacks has changed so little that the term is still much in place to indicate just where the difference and the difficulties lie. We earnestly believe that when God gave us the Bible something very real took place, because He had made it come about. Indeed He had created this world and everything in it, all matter, all relations, time and space, life itself, all reality. But in addition to this He created another reality: the position of the men sent to be His chosen spokesmen to their world. That an analysis of precisely what went on in the heart and soul and mind of an Isaiah just when and right after he had declared his willingness to speak the Word of God to men, you and I shall never know in detail, for we can analyze only that which we can observe and control while we are making our analysis. But our inability to analyze the state of the inner being of the persons who were filled by God's Holy Spirit to do His work cannot serve as proof that there was no such filling by the Spirit of God. When the Eternal God, in His wisdom and grace, in His omnipotence and providence, took possession of a human personality and made it His own so that it might fulfill a special purpose according to His will, there the everlasting Lord was but doing the kind of thing He did throughout His acts in this world: He was bringing into being a bit of reality. And that, because the Lord of heaven and earth willed it so.

This very real being, God's spokesman, was then placed into his world with the direction to serve as God's ambassador to it. God did not create a new personality for His Prophet or Apostle. The personality with all its characteristic traits that had been his from his birth on remained his also when he now became the proclaimer of the Word of God. The unbelievers like to picture us as a people who believe that the writers of the Bible were but animated penholders in the hands of the Holy Spirit, men who went into something like the trance the Delphic goddess went into when she produced her mutterings that her priests then interpreted as oracles from the god Apollo himself. Such a notion would be the rankest caricature of our position. We believe that God called a very real person, in a very real and effective way endowed him with His gifts and Spirit, and placed him into a very real world, there to do the bidding of his God.

Naturally, such a spokesman for God did not use a language different from the one he had always used. And his particular temperament likewise remained what it had always been; he did not become a new personality as such. But all that he was and had as such a personality was now taken into the service of his Lord, the Lord of the Church.

And as part of the realism that we see surrounding the representatives of God from among whom the writers of the books of the Bible came, was the fact that they used in an entirely usual and natural manner the materials which were themselves the creation of God and which they found in the world in which they had to work.

David in his youth had served as shepherd "to feed his father's sheep at Bethlehem" (I Sam. 17:15). Surely, his anxieties and joys experienced in those days were not forgotten when in more mature years this same David sang the hymn that remains one of the universally better-known portions of the Old Testament. The feelings he had there, the pictures of that life he retained in his memory were the very real materials he used, when under the inspiration of God's Holy Spirit he wrote the Twenty-third Psalm. But it was not merely the action of the human spirit of David upon these remembered thoughts and emotions that brought the Psalm into being. For over and above all these considerations capable of description and evaluation in human

¹⁴ Friedrich Wilhelm Krummacker *Elias der Thisbiter* (Elberfeld: Wilhelm Hassel, 1851), p. 415

terms was the force of the Spirit of God that filled David, prompting him to write, giving him the thoughts which he expressed and the very words he used to express them. Surely there can be no objection to thinking of the operation of the Spirit of God in the inspired writers in this way on the ground that it is self-contradictory that we have to make up our minds whether David was writing or whether the Spirit of God was speaking through him. We maintain that it is part of the realism which we find in Scripture and in the production thereof likewise that both David sang and the Holy Spirit of God spoke through him. To deny that this is possible is to deny that the God we worship is the kind of God Scripture portrays Him to be.

According to the unanimous testimony of the leading teachers of the Church in the second, third, and fourth centuries, of just those men who were in the best position in all the world to know about these things¹⁵ the Apostle John wrote the Fourth Gospel in our New Testament canon in the later years of his life, after he had transferred his activities to the vicinity of Ephesus in Asia Minor. Matthew, Mark, and Luke had already written their Gospels, and these were well known in the Church that John served. John, however, did not write to correct erroneous impressions left by the first three, nor did he write because the world was in his day coming to think and to speak in a different way about Jesus than had been the popular one when Matthew, Mark, and Luke wrote their Gospels. John simply takes for granted that his readers and hearers know what the other Gospel writers have recorded. But he, as the beloved disciple, as the eyewitness to so much that was of special moment in the earthly career of our Lord, as one who heard those precious discourses of the Lord as a member of the inner circle of His most intimate followers, now sets down with stylus and ink on papyrus things he feels should be recorded of that Life that was like none other that ever was or ever shall be. But again, John was not merely the gifted, the sensitive, the perceiving and alert disciple of a Great Teacher. He was the chosen vehicle of the Lord's Holy Spirit. It was also precisely of this John that the Lord spoke the words on the night of His betrayal and arrest: "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14:26). And it is the gift of this Holy Ghost, promised by Jesus and sent by the Father, that makes not only the Gospel of John, but the Gospels of the other three, the Book of Acts, the Epistles, and the Book of Revelation in the New Testament as well as all the prophetic and poetic writings of the Old Testament canon, writings that stand altogether in a class by themselves, for in no other literary work on all the earth do we find that which we have here: the realism of a human being speaking out of and to the situation in the midst of which he dwells, using all the materials which experience, environment, research, and reflection can furnish; AND ADDED TO THIS REALISM ANOTHER REALITY OF A TOTALLY DIFFERENT KIND, THE VERY REAL, POWERFUL, AND ACTIVE LEADING, GUIDING, DIRECTING, AND PROMPTING PRESENCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT OF GOD.

We have noticed that when John wrote his Gospel he took for granted that his readers were acquainted with what the other Evangelists had previously written and published in their works. The Evangelist Luke tells us in so many words that he carefully compared and studied all the materials he could find, that he had conferred with eyewitnesses to the events he records, and that he had then "written in order" "those things which are most surely believed among us" (Luke 1:1-4). Should the fact that Luke used the materials and oral evidence to which he refers, should the fact that the historical books of the Old Testament refer to books which their authors had and used but which we no longer possess (e.g., The Book of the Kings of Israel and Judah, II

¹⁵ Heinrich E. F. Guericke *Neutestamentliche isagogik* (Leipzig: Ad. Winter, 1854) p. 170

Chron. 9:1; The Book of the Wars of the Lord, Num. 21:14; The Book of Jasher, II Sam. 1:18) in any way detract from the certainty we have that our Bible is the Word of God? Rather this Biblical realism of which we speak is a very important element in the combination of things that makes for that certainty.

Another sometimes quite disturbing consideration that is brought up by the modern school of critics is the notion that the particular literary type to which a piece of Biblical writing belonged had a formative influence upon the content of that writing. Now, let there be no mistake about it: there are literary *genres* in the Bible, as these types of literature are commonly spoken of. There is poetry, and much of it according to its poetic form is of a highly developed order. Compare for example Psalm 119, in which in the original Hebrew the first eight verses begin with 'Aleph, the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet, the second group of eight verses all begin each verse with the second letter of the alphabet, and so through the entire Hebrew alphabet, eight times 22 giving us the 176 verses the Psalm contains. The books of the Prophets are to a great extent poetry of a high order. Then there is narrative, there are collections of wise sayings, summing up the mature reflections on heaven and earth, on time and eternity, on the part of the respective men of God who wrote these Scriptures. We find letters ("epistles"), we find the account of the words and deeds of our Lord in the four Gospels. Acts tells us of the beginning and early spread of the Christian Church. There are literary types aplenty in our Scriptures, for the Bible is really not a book at all, but a whole library of 66 books.

However, are we to believe that the very content of a portion of the Bible was determined by the literary form in which that particular section of Holy Writ happened to be cast? is not this to put the cart before the horse? Self-evidently, David writing the six verses of the Shepherd Psalm naturally could not say as much about the care of the Lord for His own in the light of the care of any shepherd worthy of the name for his charges as he would have been able to say if he had written a book the size of one of the volumes in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Does the fact that Paul communicated his thoughts (which we admit very often sound more to us like sermons than like letters as we know them) in the form of "epistles" in which in that first century personal greetings to people among the recipients or in close touch with them formed a standard part, detract anything from the sincerity and reality of the greetings Paul sends? it is often contended that it does, that Paul's greetings have no real purpose at all, that they were merely added because such was the thing to do. Sometimes the people who discuss the literary forms in which the Biblical books are cast talk as if these forms had the effect of externalizing the whole so that the content of the work became as devoid of real substance as is the stamp we place upon the outside of the envelope in which we enclose and send our letters.

Edmond Jacob, whose French work on the theology of the Old Testament has been translated into English and published in this country,¹⁶ believes that the story of the ascension of the Prophet Elijah to heaven, as it is told in II Kings 2:1-11, of course did not happen as the Scriptures describe the important event. Jacob writes: "Elijah's removal is presented in a more circumstantial manner (i.e., than Enoch's), he went up to heaven in a chariot of fire and in the midst of a whirlwind, *the classical accompaniment of divine manifestations*. (Emphasis mine!) it would be easy to read right over the top of this blasphemous utterance of the unquestionably learned Frenchman, but let us be sure that we grasp what he is saying: in the literature of all the people of the world, their gods are often spoken of as appearing to men and as taking a direct

¹⁶ Edmond Jacob *Theology of the Old Testament*. Translated by Arthur W. Heathcote and Philip J. Allcock (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1958) p. 307

hand in their doings. When these things are said to have happened out in the heathen world, the story always had it that the god appeared among men surrounded by disturbances in the atmosphere, disturbances that were then interpreted as being due to a chariot of fire and horses of fire! Such then is the argument here: Elijah did not of course ascend into heaven as the Second Book of Kings tells it and as Elisha, who saw it, believed it. Here the literary *genre* has given form and substance to the matter, and II Kings 2 reads as it does, not at all because the event happened that way but simply because the uncritical people of this earth have always imagined that when the gods appear on earth, they appear with storm and fire, and Elijah's story had to be told to conform to the pattern!

Let us be sure that we see very clearly here. Of course, the writers of Scripture used the materials customary to their time and people. These materials included the literary forms into which they cast their work. But these spokesmen for God, both using the natural endowments which their Creator had given them and being led, guided, and directed by God's Holy Spirit, were not subordinate or obedient or subservient to the literary forms they used. In plain talk, the writers of the books of the Bible used the literary *genre* that suited their purpose, they were not used by it. Their picture of an event is drawn as it is because they wish to present the story in this particular way. They are telling of the event as they want us to see it and as it happened, not according to a formula predetermined by some such thing as a literary *genre*.

In these matters, too, the books of Scripture are in a class by themselves. Only in a general way do the forms which the Biblical writers use correspond to the literary forms which the critics of the world's literature think they can distinguish. There is nothing else exactly like the books of the Bible, for there were no other writers exactly like the men who wrote the books of our Bible: the Lord had made them what they were, to serve His purpose. The Holy Spirit, as in the case of the Gospels, created His own forms, or, as in the case of the Psalms, molded the forms that had been used by others to suit His own purposes.

Least of all will we be willing to concede any validity to the contentions of some continental scholars who, in their effort to "rehabilitate the Old Testament" quite literally have been diving into the Old Testament and coming up in the New. I am happy that I can at least agree with Neil in his rejection of their approach to Bible history.¹⁷ These people would deny that the event of the judgment of Solomon ever happened, but see in it merely an allegory, a comparison and a picture, of the judgment of the world by Christ, a picture in which the true mother in the Solomon story represents the Church and the false mother the synagogue. Just what sense all this would make I am sure I do not know, but then one cannot expect to make much sense out of a great deal that passes for the deepest learning of our day. These same rehabilitators of the Old Testament would treat the Biblical story of Melchizedek in the same way, as a picture of, and a comparison with, Christ, who offers us His body and blood, as Melchizedek came out to welcome Abraham with bread and wine in his hands (Gen. 14:18).

If immortal souls were not being endangered by such vagaries, one would be inclined to pass them off with a shrug and the remark that such critics certainly must be geniuses and most geniuses are at least slightly mad. But it will not do to remark: "What fools these mortals be" and pass by on the other side. We have to face the fact that in our time, and indeed very close to us, such nonsense is being palmed off as the very latest result of scholarly research. For how could we still say that we have a firm foundation for doctrine and practice under our feet and that the Bible in all certainty is the very Word of God if we are willing to abide the thought that the Bible

¹⁷ *op. cit.* p. 104

presents things in the way it does, not because that is the way they really happened but because the Bible is following a certain outward form established elsewhere for it.

This is not at all to deny that there exists a most intimate relation between the things seen by our mortal eyes and the realities of the spiritual world, between the way God dealt with His people in the days of the Old Testament and the way He deals with His children in these latter times. It remains eternally true that the “things...written aforetime were written for our learning” (Rom. 15:4). This truth lies at the bottom of all validity for seeing persons, events, institutions or relations of the Old Testament as “types” or pictures of things that are found in the New Testament or for recognizing in things that have their being at this time and upon this earth as a help to our understanding of things that eternally exist in heaven. The writers of the New Testament time and again draw attention to the fact that an event in the life of the Lord was prefigured by something that the prophets of the Old Covenant had spoken of. The bronze serpent in the wilderness is a “type” of Christ on the cross (John 3:14); Melchizedek is likewise a figure from whose appearance we are to learn something about the eternal verities that have to do with Christ (Heb. 7). The relation between husband and wife in a marriage here on earth can make clear to us the blessed relation that exists between Christ and His Church, for Christ is the Head of the Church even as the husband is the head of the wife; so the Apostle Paul teaches us and all Christendom in Ephesians 5:23. Both relations actually exist, the lower, the one on earth, serving to illustrate the higher, the one that has its being where Christ is. For both relations have been called into being by the same God, who is Himself the Creator of all reality.

So it is quite one thing to recognize the truth that John the Baptist, in his outward appearance and the message he delivered, was obviously taking the great figure of the Prophet Elijah as his model. To do so would but be Biblical realism. It is quite a different matter to hold that the Gospels tell the story of John the Baptist as they do, not because these things happened as they are told, but because in some way or other the New Testament here follows the model set for it in the story of Elijah in the First Book of Kings.

As another feature of that attitude to which we have given the name “Biblical realism,” we notice this that some of the persons whom the Spirit of God called to be the spokesmen for God to their generation committed their message to writing, and of others we find that so far as it has come down to us they have left us not a single written word. The only time that the Lord Jesus Christ is said to have written was the time He stooped down and with His finger wrote on the ground of the Temple courtyard, before Him the woman taken in the very act of adultery (John 8:5). The Prophets Elijah and Elisha in the Old Testament and John the Baptist in the New have left us no statement written by themselves of the content of their oral preaching. What they had to proclaim to the hearers of their own time with the appended “Thus saith the Lord” has been recorded for us by others. On the other hand there are books in the Bible which the Church has from the earliest times accepted as the inspired word of God for which we do not have recorded for us the identity of the particular person who was their human author. So the historical books, the so-called “Former Prophets” of the Old Testament, stand in our Bibles without their authors being named. Our English Bibles commonly list Paul as the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Now while it is true that the theology of Hebrews is emphatically the theology of the great Apostle to the Gentiles, the style and manner of writing is quite evidently not his, and according to the best sources we have the author of this instructive “Epistle” is not named.

Our chief interest here is with those Prophets and Apostles who not only preached by word of mouth but who also wrote down (and we praise the providence of our God that this is

so) what it was that they said to the people of their time and to the Church of the living God. For some of the books of the Bible there is a specific command of the Lord that they should be written:

Of Moses we repeatedly read words like that in Exodus 34:27: “And the Lord said unto Moses, Write thou these words: for after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel”; and again Deuteronomy 31:24-27: “And it came to pass, when Moses had made an end of writing the words of this law in a book, until they were finished, that Moses commanded the Levites, which bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord, saying, Take this book of the law, and put it in the side of the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, that it may be there for a witness against thee. For I know thy rebellion, and thy stiff neck: behold, while I am yet alive with you this day, ye have been rebellious against the Lord; and how much more after my death?” To Isaiah the Lord said: “Now go, write it before them in a table, and note it in a book, that it may be for the time to come for ever and ever” (30:8); to Jeremiah the direction came: “Write thee all the words that I have spoken unto thee in a book” (30:2). On the other hand, the fact that a Prophet like Jonah wrote, grew out of the needs of the situation in which he lived, out of the realities which his soul knew. The experiences of Jonah he himself briefly records: Called by God to go to preach to Nineveh, the great capital city of Assyria, Jonah fled in the opposite direction. The Lord Himself, however, intervened and the incident of the great fish swallowing Jonah and at the Lord’s direction spitting him out on dry land followed. Then came the second call to preach to Nineveh, a call which Jonah heeded. But when Nineveh believed God, put on sackcloth, and followed the example the king set, who put on sackcloth and sat in ashes then, we read: “God repented of the evil that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not” (3:10). The Jonah who was now displeased and very angry at this turn of events needed to be taught a lesson about the God he served, and the incident of the gourd that withered leaving Jonah to sit in the hot sun brought the lesson home to Jonah that he so badly needed to learn. Now the Lord did not in so many words, so far as we know of them, tell Jonah to write his experiences down in this his book. We should rather look at the matter in this way: Having learned his lesson, Jonah now in repentance and sorrow over his rebellion and his sin against the Lord and the call the Lord had directed to him, set down his experiences as his great confession of sin and at the same time the greatest preaching he was capable of concerning the greatness of the goodness and mercy of Jehovah, the Lord of Israel. Jonah then, too, wrote out of a heavenly wrought reality, the changed heart that now beat in his breast after the experiences recorded in his book. The Book of Jonah then, we can say, came into being by divine providence out of the needs of the moment.

For only one book of the New Testament do we read that a specific direction was given that it should be written, the Book of the Revelation of John; “What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia” (1:11). For the rest of the books of the New Testament we can apparently say of them what we noted as true for the Book of Jonah: that they grew under divine providence out of the needs of the moment, in their case, the needs of the Church as it expanded from Jerusalem to Spain; from Egypt to Macedonia. We have already alluded to the situation out of which the Apostle John wrote his Gospel. For most of the letters of Paul, there was a concrete situation, a definite need to be supplied, an error to be set straight, an appeal to be made, that led him to write, in form indeed of a letter but according to its contents that very same Gospel of a crucified and risen Christ which he also by word of mouth proclaimed to the congregations among whom he worked.

What was true of Paul and John in his Gospel was true also of the other New Testament writers. They turned to papyrus, stylus, and ink because some real situation had arisen that made it advisable for them to do so. Naturally, the all-pervading activity of the God of all grace is to be seen in and through all that His representatives to the world and to the Church did and said.

And now it is this Word of Apostle and Prophet, gathered for us in the book known as the Bible, the sacred Scriptures of Old and New Testaments, that we cling to as our only norm of faith and life, for doctrine and for practice, since we are certain that the very words of these books, thus produced, are the revelation by means of which the eternal God speaks to us just as surely as He was speaking to the Israelites whom Isaiah addressed or the Galatians to whom Paul wrote his forthright letter.

The unbelieving world has in the past always tried to cast the shadow of doubt over our certainty in these matters by pointing to the fact that, while perhaps some of the men we call Prophets and Apostles actually lived and wrote something, there is no place in the Scriptures themselves where we read that the Lord directed that an official collection of the writings of His official spokesmen was to be made nor even the account that something like that was done. Furthermore, these skeptics of the truth of God's Word have for a long time and with great vehemence argued, how could we be certain that the words we read in our Bibles are the exact words of Prophet and Apostle in the first place? The Bibles we regularly use are translations into modern languages of very ancient copies made of these original writings in their ancient languages. And it is also a fact of history that in the days before the invention of the printing press, the only way books could be produced would be to copy them by hand from a copy that was already on hand.

Quite literally, then, copies were made of copies, each generation making its own, and quite naturally, too, each generation contributing its quota to the variations in the new copy that it made. For with the best of intentions it is impossible for a human being to copy with absolute letter-perfection from a page before him for any great length of time. Let it be said here that of course the scribes who worked on the manuscripts of the Old Testament were traditionally extremely careful, and the problem of the "textual criticism" of the Old Testament as the collection, comparison, study, and evaluation of these "variant readings" is called, is not nearly so great in the Old Testament as it is in the New.

In our own day the attack on the reliability and infallibility of the Bible is no longer carried on in the first place in the terms of the truthfulness of its canon-making process (the selection of just those books that actually belong in the Bible) or of the reliability of its text (the reasonable certainty that the words we read there actually are the words the Prophet or Apostle used and wrote in this place). In the days of skeptical Liberalism much was made about all the uncertainties these critics had about the Bible because of the questions they could raise concerning its canon and its text. Criticism like that just described has in our time been toned down considerably. Not that the critics have finally come to see and accept the truth. Not that the great name-theologians of our time have suddenly become *Bibelgläubig*. Far from it. The case is rather this, that in the question of the text and canon of Scripture the critics of our day just tacitly assume that the so-called findings of radical, unbelieving scholarship of the past generations are among the "assured results of critical scholarship." Today they simply take for granted that you and I do not know what we are talking about when we say that we believe the Bible is the Word of God according to its text and canon. Indeed, to them the "Word of God" is not the words of Prophet and Apostle spoken to their own time and recorded for our learning. To these philosophizing theologians (and they are all that, finding their standpoints on the nets of

philosophy rather than the Biblical realities) the “Word of God,” as they call it, is that which comes to them when they are exposed to some kind of religious activity. This activity may be the reading of a portion of the Hebrew or Christian Scriptures, but it need not necessarily be. However, the attack upon the reliability of the text of the Bible as we know it and upon the trustworthiness of the fact that the several books found in the Bible have a right to be there, has not been withdrawn in the very least. That it is no longer in the forefront of the discussion is also true. Yet, time and again in the literature being produced in such great profusion on the study of the Bible in our own time, a point is made on the basis of the “unreliability” of the text as transmitted to us or on the alleged fact that a particular book of the Bible really ought not be reckoned on a par with the admittedly “great books” of the Bible. In the New Testament, strangely enough, it is the Gospel of John and the Epistle to the Hebrews that are singled out for special attack. Now we know that we have neither the time nor the inclination to go into all the detail matters involved in the discussion of these questions. But we who confess gladly to our certainty that the Bible is the Word of God also have the responsibility to be clear to ourselves at least just why we still profess the certainty just named in spite of the now age-old attacks upon the Bible’s text and canon.

To put the matter as briefly as we can, the plain truth of the matter is this: Admittedly the many manuscripts of the Greek New Testament show numerous so-called “variant readings.” Some of these are merely errors of the copyist’s eye or ear. In other cases the copyist substituted in the copy he was making a word different from the one he found in the copy before him. His reasons for doing so could apparently have been any one of a number of considerations: this would hardly be the time even to enumerate them. Now for many years we who have the responsibility for devoting most of our energies to the study of the Bible, and especially the New Testament, have also been giving due heed to these places in the New Testament where the one copyist wrote one thing and another put in something else. And we find that to begin with this is not a religious or a theological problem at all. Actually it belongs in the realm of church history. For the study of the textual criticism of the New Testament merely tells me what word was read in the particular text at a particular time and in a specific place. When I compare all of these different readings that have crept in over the centuries (and you will have to believe me, brethren, when I assure you that the problem is not nearly as stupendous as it has been made to sound!), I come to the following very realistic conclusions:

The number of passages in which there are actually significant variant readings in the text is very small. Most of the variants have to do with changes in word order, additions of words that very often give the appearance of being no more than stylistic variations (the use or nonuse of the definite article “the,” the addition or omission of the possessive case of the personal pronoun “his,” “their”), and things of a similar nature that most of us in our reading of Scripture would pass over unless our attention were called to them.

In the smaller number of passages in which there are variant readings of a significant nature, the *Bibelgläubig* student of Scripture will not be frightened or embarrassed by the presence in his Bible of these different words used by the ancient and medieval copyists. If the giving of Scripture had been a mechanical thing or one that operates only and emphatically with the letter of the text to the exclusion of the ultimate sense that is to be conveyed, then indeed the change of a single letter could cause consternation among those who are looking at the final result. A slight variation in the figure used after consulting the logarithmic tables could give a result that would cause that particular mathematician a tremendous headache. And of late our newspapers have carried several stories of what happened when a clerk in a bank pushed the

wrong button in operating one of those electronic bookkeeping machines: for a short time at least the possessor of a savings account passbook in that bank was credited with being wealthier by a million dollars or so more than he actually owned or perhaps ever will own. To those who believe that the Bible and especially the New Testament is a “new law” comparable to the ceremonial law given to the Children of Israel and who today still handle the Bible in the stern legalistic way in which the most austere theologians of the Calvinistic branch of Christendom handled it in the days when Calvinistic doctrine was being developed and elaborated (I need but mention the complications that were thought up during the infralapsarian and supralapsarian controversies), to them even the admission that there would be variations in the textual handing-down of the words of the Bible from one generation to the other could be well-nigh fatal. Their failing is similar to the one that our Lord criticized in the scribes and Pharisees of His time: they thought that the mere devotion to the jots and tittles of the outward words of Scripture was the thing that should spell eternal life for them: the Lord reminded them that in Him, and in Him alone, there was true and eternal life (John 5:39).

For us, however, whose approach to Scripture is based upon a Biblical realism, the recognition that some of the old Bible manuscripts do vary slightly among themselves is no cause for alarm. We know that what the Prophet and Apostle wrote was the very Word of God, and that the God who sent and inspired His servant to speak and to write has also preserved for the Church even to the present day the Truth that in Biblical times was proclaimed to the children of God. As it has turned out, God has likewise meant this matter unto us for good, and just because here and there there is the problem about which word the Apostle or Prophet wrote, we find ourselves prompted to pay closer and stricter attention to the very letters of the sacred text than would be the case if all things had been made so completely easy and uncomplicated for us in the sense in which we use these words. God indeed is not the cause of confusion in the matter of the words of His Scripture. But we can quite well see that He in our case is using this matter to serve His purpose of driving us ever deeper into Scripture, and that into its very words.

As we compare the several words (and most often there are no more than two that come into serious consideration) among which we have to choose one as the word we believe originally stood in the text and as the one we shall have to interpret here, we find that the several copyists are actually furnishing us with the very oldest commentary on the text. A copyist who is substituting a word familiar to himself for the unfamiliar one in a particular text is thereby telling us very plainly just how he read and understood that text. In fact, he is thereby giving us his interpretation of the passage. He might be right and he could be wrong. Just which is not the final issue right now. Writers of commentaries of the Scripture have regularly been either the one or the other right down through the centuries. But bearing this truth in mind we are again being loyal to our basic platform of always remaining true to a Biblical realism.

Instead of posing insoluble theological conundrums for us, these different readings in the old Bible manuscripts actually have the same results for us that a comparison on the same passage would have if we were to read it in a number of different translations. Most of us have no doubt from time to time compared the language Luther used in his German Bible with our familiar King James English version on a particular passage. If we had other German or English translations, perhaps we compared them, too, such as, the German of Schlachter or Menge, or the English of one of the Revised Versions of England or America or of *The New English Bible* which recently came out of England. When we compare the various readings of the ancient manuscripts, we are doing a thing that at least is strongly similar to this.

Of course, every translation is different from every other one, and the Biblical writers could have used but one word in a certain place. But when we study these passages, we have a great deal more to work with than just the knowledge that the several old copies vary one from the other. We have studied all the writings of the particular writer whom we are studying. We know how, for instance, Paul and John customarily express themselves. We look at what comes before the passage we are looking at and we study what is going to follow. If after doing all these things we still cannot with any certainty decide just which word we will say the Biblical writer used in this place, then we as good realists in Biblical matters will confess that we simply do not know, for of this we can be certain, that the wonderful providence of our God has been at work in the preservation of His Word in this way, too, that not even if we were to accept any one or all of the different readings in any one or all of the passages of the Bible that are affected, would we, once we have properly evaluated these readings, find that a single Biblical teaching has been affected. Of course there were heretics in the ancient world, too, and among them scholars who tried to make the Bible say what they themselves would have liked to believe. But here again, we will know how to evaluate their work.

One simple example of textual criticism at work will have to suffice: In John 1:13 our Bibles and most of the Greek manuscripts read: "Which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." But we do know that as far back as the second century there were Bibles that read this verse: "Who (singular) was born, not of bloods nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God," making this testimony on the part of the Apostle John that he, too, knew and taught the doctrine of the virgin birth of our Lord. The negative critics of the Bible have tried to make capital of the fact that only Matthew and Luke set forth this doctrine. But here we see that as far back as we can trace readings in the New Testament there were notable Christians, and men who stoutly opposed the heretics of their day, in whose Bibles the virgin birth of Jesus was taught also in the Gospel of John. Now textual criticism has to decide, not: is the doctrine of the virgin birth true or not? but: did the Apostle John write chapter 1, verse 13 of his Gospel in such a way that shows that he positively believed and taught this doctrine, or did he not? The doctrine of the virgin birth does not stand or fall by our decision, but it is with things like this that textual criticism must operate. Now many of the most noteworthy and scholarly manuscripts of the New Testament come from the land of Egypt, where the Church flourished at an early date and where Christian scholarship, too, came to the fore in the earliest times of Christendom. Now, while giving all due respect to this scholarship of that, as well as all subsequent, ages, we must say with Luther that a good scholar (Luther, I think, spoke of "grammarians") is not always also a good theologian. Now there were some excellent grammarians in Egypt who were despicably poor theologians, men who among other things denied the Biblical truth of the virgin birth of our Lord. At least that learned German theologian, who without question knew more about the writings and beliefs of the early Christian scholars and leaders than any other man of his own day or since that time, Theodor Zahn of the University of Erlangen, Germany, felt sure that John had written this text in a way that taught the virgin birth and that it was the man with heretical ideas in Egypt who substituted the reading we now have in most of our Greek New Testaments and in the translations made from them.¹⁸ I must confess as my own private conviction that the virgin birth is taught at John 1:13, for it is much easier to see how, if the text had originally read in such a way as to teach that doctrine, it, especially in the text current in Egypt, would have been changed to read as it does for most of us

¹⁸ Theodor Zahn *Das Evangelium des Johannes* (Leipzig: A. Deichert, 1912) pp. 709-712

now, rather than to see the situation the other way around. So much for our certainty that the Bible is the Word of God when we are thinking of the letters and words that comprise the text.

Something needs also to be said about our certainty that the books contained in our Old and New Testaments actually have a right to be there, are the true prophetic and apostolic revelation of the Lord and that they are still saying to us today as they said when they were first heard: "Thus saith the Lord."

For our Lord Himself and His Apostles the Word of God as it is contained in the books of the Old Testament lay ready at hand before them. They used a variety of words to designate this Old Testament, but there can be no question as to what they meant. To the people of the Jews their sacred writings naturally fell into three groupings: first, The Books of Moses, "The Law"; secondly, The Prophets, sometimes divided into former and latter prophets, the first being the so-called historical books of the Old Testament, the second what we call the Prophets, Major and Minor; thirdly, the "Writings," the books not included in either of the first two categories but commonly named after an outstanding constitutive element, The Psalms. To the Jews, however, the Old Testament was *Thorah*, the Pentateuch; *Nebi'im*; the Prophets, the historical books Joshua through Second Kings and the three great and the twelve minor prophets, Daniel being placed into the third category; *Kethubim*, Hagiographa, the sacred writings. The false theology of the day likes to stress the point that in the days of Jesus and His Apostles the Old Testament canon of the Jews was still very much in a state of flux and that it was not "definitely settled" until the Jewish scholars began their great literary activity after the destruction of Jerusalem. Now it is true that beginning about 90 A.D. the rabbis got to work to reduce to writing the "traditions of the elders" that through the centuries had been passed on from generation to generation by word of mouth, and learned by being repeated over and over again in the synagogue schools (*Judenschulen*) of the time. Till then their rabbinical theology had been a thing heard and memorized, not in the first place a thing written down and read. But after the fall of Jerusalem and the final destruction of its Temple the rabbis set down in writing that which had been "said by them of old time" (Matt. 5:21) and is found incorporated for us in the so-called *Mishna*.¹⁹ But the fact that this scholarly work was done by the rabbis just before the end of the first century A.D. does not contradict the fact that long before that time the learned men among the Jews knew their sacred books according to the aforementioned three divisions with the content defined as it has been since that time. Writing almost two centuries before the birth of Christ, Jesus, son of Sirach, in the prologue to his book (included in our German Bibles among the Apocrypha of the Old Testament and known as "The Wisdom of Jesus Sirach" or "Ecclesiasticus") spoke of "The Law and the Prophets and the Other Books of the Fathers" and of "The Law and the Prophecies and the rest of The Books" (Ecclesiasticus, Prologue 1-10). The New Testament presupposed this canon of the Jewish Church. Both Paul and Peter know that they will be understood as referring to the Revelation of God in the Old Testament when they merely speak of it as "Scripture": Paul in II Timothy 3:16: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness"; Peter in II Peter 1:20: "No prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation." To these two Apostles of Jesus Christ the entire Old Testament is that body of writings which was given by inspiration of the Holy Ghost, which pointed to the coming of Christ, and which was then fulfilled in Christ. In Luke 24:44 the risen Christ says to His

¹⁹ The most useful edition is the translation with introduction and notes by Herbert Danby *The Mishna* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1933)

disciples: “These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.” Then Luke adds (v. 45): “Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand *the scriptures*.”

An interesting corroboration of our argument that the Old Testament canon of Jesus and the Apostles is the one still in use in our Hebrew Bibles today is contained in the statement of Jesus recorded Matthew 23:35 and Luke 11:51, and in a place where the extent and content of the canon is not at all in question, but which follows hard upon the repeated “Woe’s” pronounced upon the scribes and Pharisees. In the account of Matthew, Jesus says (23:34.35): “Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar.” The story of the slaying of righteous Abel we read in the first book of the Bible; the account of this Zacharias is found in II Chronicles 24:20, but in the Hebrew Bible The Books of the Chronicles are the last books, placed at the end of the third division, The Writings. When Jesus therefore says “from Abel to Zacharias,” He has reference to all the murders of righteous men referred to in all the Old Testament, as we would say, from Genesis to Malachi.

There has been considerable sniping on the part of the radical critics and some on the part of a few people who should know better against the claim of the 27 books of our New Testament canon to be included in a list of apostolic writings. Suffice it to say here that the Apostle Paul, whose writings and the writings of whose doctor-friend Luke loom so large on the pages of the New Testament, himself took the first steps that must surely have led to a gathering of a number if not all of the New Testament writings already at a very early date. For Paul directed the Colossians (4:16): “And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea.” It makes no difference that there may be some variation of opinion as to just what this “epistle from Laodicea” was. But here we definitely have the beginnings of a collection of Paul’s letters, as sort of Pauline *Urkanon*, as the Germans like to speak of it. Peter obviously had some kind of collection of the letters of Paul, since in his complaint about the misuse of things “hard to be understood” in these letters, he made reference to Paul as writing “in all his epistles” (II Pet. 3:15). The same gracious God who had caused the books of the Bible to be written also caused the prophetic and apostolic writings with their revelation of the divine heart and mind and will to be collected, preserved, and disseminated. I have the very strong personal feeling, when the Lord, in chapter 2 verse 2 of the Revelation of John, has the statement contained in the letter to the Church of Ephesus that Ephesus had “tried them which say they are apostles,” that the activity referred to is not a theological colloquy on the orthodoxy of certain teachers in the church but that these words have reference to an activity at Ephesus in which the pseudoapostolic writings were being separated from the genuine and that the latter were then given to the believing world. For the writings collected by M. R. James in *The Apocryphal New Testament*²⁰ plus all the finds that have more recently come to light, like the Papyrus Acts of Paul and the entire Gnostic library recently unearthed at the ancient Chenoboscion, the modern Nag Hammadi in Egypt, certainly leave us with the definite impression that in the decades after

²⁰ Montague Rhodes James *The Apocryphal New Testament* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1924)

the death of Peter and Paul the woods were full of writings that claimed to be by an Apostle and were not. Some of these may have been innocent enough, mere “Biblical” fiction, like the novel *Ben Hur*, but most of them were vicious attempts to undermine the faith of the unwary, for here under the guise of a fascinating story propaganda was often made for the most devilish soul-destroying falsehood. At any rate, I think that in Revelation, chapter 2, we have an indication that the Church at Ephesus early had a hand in segregating the genuine from the spurious and passing on that which was genuinely apostolic to the brethren in other places and times.

Even a cursory view of all the problems connected with the story of the formation of the New Testament canon would lead us too far afield at this Convention. I have treated the matter with some thoroughness elsewhere.²¹ Let it suffice to notice here that it is precisely those books of the New Testament that are most frequently under attack in this modern age: Second Peter, James, Jude, Hebrews, and the Revelation, for which we have early concrete historical evidence that they were read and used in the Church as *Scripture* side by side with the acknowledged and accepted divinely inspired prophetic books of the Old Testament.

III. How We Will Use This Bible Which is the Word of God

The certainty that the Bible is the very Word of God is not for us an academic proposition, a truth that we might with more or less satisfaction mull over in the quiet of our study or in the calm that settles over the household after the day’s work is done and we settle back for rest and reflection in our favorite easy chair with our favorite pipe and all the things that go with it ready to hand. In moments like this there are truths that we might relish tossing to and fro in our minds, speculations on which, to no let or harm to anyone, we might let our imaginations dwell: Suppose there had been a Northwest Passage to the Far East—would the existence of such materially have affected the development of our country and the rest of the world, and if so, how? Suppose it had not rained on the morning of the Battle of Waterloo and Napoleon could have gotten his crack artillery into action at a much earlier hour—how could that have affected the course of this world’s and our nation’s history? What would the strongly confessional Lutheran Church in North America have looked like today if the plan put forth in the last century would have included the dissolution of the then-existing church bodies and our Synod would have found it possible and feasible to give up its own identity and let its congregations become a constituent part of the suggested state synods? Or, if Dr. Adolf Hoenecke’s doctor had not so strongly urged him to decline the call as professor to the Seminary at St. Louis and he had been able to accompany the Wisconsin Synod’s students to that training-school for workers in the public ministry of the Word, what would probably have been the complexion of Lutheran theology in the Synodical Conference today? Pipedreams like this are fascinating to occupy the idle moment, but they remain just that: pipedreams. And the proposition that we are certain that the Bible is the Word of God is not among them. That truth has substance, it has meaning, and as a consequence it must bear practical results. And what are some of the practical results of our convictions concerning the nature of the Scriptures, the nature of revelation as we have it in the Bible?

Let us be clear at the outset that the way we approach the Bible is determined by what we believe the Bible to be. This is not true only in theology: it is true in life in general. If I know that I am sensitive to poison ivy and have noticed a luxuriously growing three-leaved plant in my

²¹ “The Formation of the New Testament Canon” *Theologische Quartalschrift*, Vol. 38 (1941) 272-292

proximity, my attitudes and my actions over against that bit of vegetation will be pretty well determined. The grab I make for a night crawler that I hope to use in tomorrow morning's fishing will be quite different from what my actions would be if I recognized that that coiled-up thing on the ground was a diamondback rattlesnake. And the way I approach the Bible will reveal at once what I hold this Bible to be. Here is the explanation for why the theological book market is being flooded in the present decade by books on the "principles of Biblical interpretation." The case is not that the people who produce these books have suddenly discovered that there is such a thing as "hermeneutics" and therefore feel the urge to write about it. The plain fact of the matter is that there are men today who think (or at least pretend that they think) that they have found that the Bible is really something different from what anyone in the past believed it to be, and now they are busy producing books that will lead us, if we follow them, to the same conclusions about the Bible and the same way of interpreting it that they have. We need, all of us, to be actively aware of the fact that the particular doctrine of inspiration I have determines for me my hermeneutics, the principles I follow in reading and interpreting the Bible.

Now how do we with the stand we take toward the nature of the Bible approach the problem of reading, understanding, and then practically using this Scripture?

Since "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God," then we will use all of it, both Old and New Testaments, as bringing to us one revelation of the heart and will of our God and one fundamental doctrine that tells me, sinner that I am, how I can hope to stand in the sight of the all-holy God and once dwell in His presence, a life that He willed for me and for all His children from eternity. The same Holy Spirit dwelt in Amos and Zechariah that Paul confessed in I Thessalonians 4:8 God had also given to him. The sacrifices in the Temple at Jerusalem were not, in their essential nature, the practice of a folkreligion like that developed by the other Semitic peoples in the land of Syria-Palestine, but these sacrifices are a picture and a teaching of the one thing needful, the truth of how the sinner is to have his guilt removed in the sight of God. The Lord Himself had in the Garden of Eden in the first proclamation of the Gospel told how this should come about in the word of the Seed of the Woman (Gen. 3:15). And God's dealings with the patriarchs, with the Children of Israel in Egypt and during the time of their journey from the land of slavery to their own Promised Land, His revelation of His will and plan to and through the prophets whom He from time to time called, all these but gave substance and emphasis to the plan of salvation announced in Eden, the plan that spoke of the vicarious suffering and death of the one there called the Seed of the Woman but whom we know as true God and true Man, Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. Isaiah preached about Him, David sang beautiful psalms of Him, and John the Baptist pointed to Him and said: "Behold the Lamb of God" (John 1:29). So there is one Word, one Message in the Scriptures of Old and New Testaments. Let us not think of the New Testament as being in a higher sense Word of God than the Old, as though the Old Testament were still to a great extent nature-religion or folkreligion and therefore the product of the mind and heart of man, who is vainly groping to find his way to God. Rather, let us cling to this, that Scripture knows one Gospel, one way of salvation throughout; the faithful of the Old Covenant were carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom by reason of the very same faith in the Redeemer whom God would send as was that of a Paul, who declared himself "ready to be offered," because of his firm trust in the atoning merit of the Jesus who had lived and died, risen again and appeared to Paul, calling him to faith and delegating him to go out and become his glorified Lord's chosen vessel to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15).

Just as both Old and New Testaments teach one way of salvation and one Redeemer, so both of them teach Law and Gospel. The way of salvation in the Old Testament, too, is by way of the Gospel, never by way of the Law. Yet all Scripture also teaches Law, that Word of God which speaks to me as I am in my sin, corrupt by nature, given to all that would turn away from God, yes, inclining to all that, as did Eve's eager grasping at the promise made by the Serpent at the time of the fall into sin, would no longer let God be God but would place my will and decisions into the position occupied for me in this universe by the holy will of my God. As long as this corrupt flesh is with me, I need to hear the Law preached in all its severity and fury: "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezek. 18:20). For unless I know that I am a sinner who needs to be saved, the Gospel of forgiveness and salvation in Christ has become meaningless to me. Both these doctrines, Law and Gospel, are taught very clearly and directly in both Testaments, and it behooves us to whom the Bible is the Word of God in this matter, too, "rightly to divide the Word of Truth" (II Tim. 2:15).

Furthermore, since the Word of God is not some notion that comes to me while I meditate on things religious, but the word spoken and written by Apostle and Prophet in the sense in which he intended that word to be taken, a study of Scripture will always have to include paying the strictest of attention to the very forms and meanings of the words and sentences that stand in the Scriptures. There is a marked, and an alarming, tendency in the world of Biblical studies in our day which moves very positively away from the kind of strict and loving attention to words and letters that Luther gave and that even the scholars of the past generations who strongly advocated the liberal and even the unbelieving point of view devoted to the pages of Holy Writ. There once was a time when you could pretty well depend upon the men who wrote about the Bible even if you did not share their theological point of view, to give sane and fair consideration to the words and phrases, to the grammar and syntax, to the meanings of words and to the use of literary devices as found in Scripture. That kind of patient and laborious, indispensable if unglamorous, study of the very words of Scripture has in the modern theological world become positively "old hat." The students of the Bible in our generation fancy themselves above such a plodding and pedestrian approach. A literal, grammatical, historical interpretation—one gets the impression— would too much leave the impression of being earth-bound, and our modern false theologians in this respect are just the opposite of the liberal unbelievers of a generation ago. The latter could not see anything but that the books of the Bible were strictly and only the product of, and answering the needs of, the life on this earth. The modern breed of theologizing *Schwaermer* manages pretty well to keep its meanderings entirely in the atmosphere of the world of ideas, and loves to stress the fact that very few of the things spoken of in the Bible ever did, or ever really could, happen, but *of course they are fulfilled in Christ*. I like to tell my students at the Seminary that in order to follow this kind of drivel we have to throw the transmission that controls our thinking into neutral if not into reverse before we can realize that this modern cancer on the body of theological thinking, instead of leading us as it pretends to do to a brighter realization of the glory of God, winds up in the abyss of nothingness exactly where it began, only instead of nothingness it speaks of "despair," "the possibility of impossibility," "contradiction." The word in the society of modern interpreters of the Bible is "Theological Interpretation." This is very literally a sort of mixed-pickles concoction of the wildest kind of pseudospiritualizing and a very mediocre brand of linguistic study. The idea is that Bible interpretation dare not ask the Bible in the first and last place and all along the way in between what it has to tell us, in the sense of little Samuel, "Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth" (I Sam. 3:9), but that there must in all Bible interpretation be mixed in a strong injection

of the theological convictions of the exegete. As a result, modern books on the interpretation of the Bible, like the now-famous commentary of Karl Barth on Paul's Epistle to the Romans, tell us a great deal about the theological convictions of the writer but are extremely poor guides in helping us get at the trend of the thought of the original writer whose words we are trying to understand. Just as the age of the enlightenment made of Jesus a freethinker, so the present generation of Bible students is trying to make of John Paul, Peter, and Luther, modernistic, Barthian or neo-Barthian, existentialistic philosophizing theologians whose advancing legions wave the banner of Neo-Orthodoxy and loudly proclaim: "The Bible is not a rock upon which you can stand, but it is a stone upon which you can walk."²² Indeed, when we have looked at all the places in the Bible that speak of a certain matter, we try to formulate these into definite statements if we can, and having formulated them we can then say that we take our doctrinal position on them. But when we want to know what God has to say to us, we begin with the Word of that God and not with our own opinions about it.

In addition, then, to paying the strictest attention to the very words of Scripture, we will look carefully at these words in their connections, in their context. Any particular passage will always have to be viewed in the light of the aim and intention of the writer in the portion of his work under consideration (here we speak of the *scope* of the passage). For the words of the inspired writers of Holy Writ are like those of the rest of us in this respect that neither we nor they are aiming at all things all the time, but they rather have one point in view and what they have to say will have to be understood in the light of their point of aim. Very often, when we have taken into account all that can be said about different ways of understanding a certain passage, it is the point of aim of the writer, the *scope* of this passage, that will help us decide in favor of one interpretation over all others.

Closely related to the scope of a passage is the context to the right and to the left. Since it is Biblical realism that prevails in our view of the nature of Scripture, the individual force of a certain passage, the degree of earnestness with which it was spoken or written, the emotional tone, if you please, of the passage will be directly connected with what went before and with what is about to come directly after. Likewise will the general purpose of the whole book of Scripture which we are studying have a bearing upon the way we will take the separate sections and passages in it. In his letter to the Church at Ephesus, for instance, Paul takes as his theme the Glory of the Church of which Christ is the Head, and in his writing to the Colossian Christians, a letter often very similar to that to the Ephesians, he concentrates his attention upon the Christ who is the Head of His Church. Naturally, in reading the writings that make up our Bibles, writings which when they were given to the Church by the Holy Spirit of God were works that filled a very real need, we will be careful to understand the words in them in the way in which the man who wrote them and the people for whom they were written understood them at that time. We would be doing a great injustice to the Word of God if we were to read the words in it and take them in a sense which the particular word may have had in ages long gone by (the *etymology* of the word) but which that word no longer retained in the popular usage of *that day*; just as wrong would we be if we were to take Biblical words and understand them in the first place in the sense in which we usually use those words in our civilization today. An example of the first kind of misuse of words, taking an old and out-of-date meaning for a word is the insistence that the word "baptize" must mean "to immerse." It is true, when we first meet the word in Greek literature it does mean: dip under. But by New Testament times the usage had

²² Karl Barth *Das Wort Gottes und die Theologie*, pp. 171f. quoted in Lerle, *op. cit.* page 34 and note 81

changed, and the word came to signify merely “wash.” An example of the second matter quoted would be the understanding of the word bottles in the familiar observation of our Lord: “Neither do men put new wine into old bottles” (Matt. 9:17). What difficulties do we not get ourselves into if we think of these “bottles” as the thing Pepsi-Cola comes in instead of bearing in mind that these “bottles” are water bags made of the skins of animals and which would quite naturally deteriorate with age.

Since the books of Scripture were given to meet real life-situations and were not abstract theologizings or merely logical statements of cold fact, but were spoken with the intention of being understood directly without recourse to learned “helps” of any kind, it will be a part of our realistic understanding of the words of Scripture if we see that they, being in the language of the people, and an Oriental people at that, will abound in figures of speech. When our Lord calls Himself “The Door of the Sheep” (John 10:7), our correct understanding of His statement will be a part of our realistic, literal understanding of Scripture. For the everyday talk of all peoples, and especially of the Hebrews, abounded in such pictures that made the basic meaning the clearer for them. Don’t we for our more vigorous statements gain emphasis for them in the same way, by embroidering them with the pictures which we call *figures of speech*?

In connection with our use of the Bible we shall also have to give some attention to our application of the Scriptural truths contained in them. There is often confusion between the interpretation of a Word of God and its application. Interpretation is one, but applications may be many. The interpretation is the sense intended by the Holy Spirit and expressed by the Holy Writer in his time and place. Naturally the sense of his words will be a single simple sense, though there may be any number of applications of them, and a word of prophecy may have a number of instances of its fulfillment. These considerations do not militate against the stand Luther took in the Reformation for the single simple sense of Scripture. They are part of the realism of Scripture, the way in which we continue to use language to this very day. When we think of the application of the divine truth that the Bible contains, we again need to focus our attention very carefully on just what the Bible is. In the days of the Old Testament the worship life of the Children of Israel was quite expressly regulated by the ceremonial prescriptions which the Levites had to follow. However, even in the days of old, considerable latitude was allowed the individual for the expression of his faith in his life of sanctification, for instance in the matter of the making and keeping of vows. These were not demanded by the Law, are not even especially commended, but are left entirely a matter of the free will of the believing individual.²³ In these days of the New Testament all concrete prescriptions as to the manner and degree and time of our keeping to the detailed injunctions of the Word of God are among the things that have passed away (Col. 2:16,17). For by way of contrast with the state of immaturity in which Israel was before the coming of Christ and had to be led by a kind of tutor, the Law, until Christ should come (Gal. 3:24 according to the Greek text and Luther’s translation), we, the members of the New Testament Church, are in a state of responsible maturity. Paul’s expression for this concept is the word translated *perfect* in our Bibles but which really means *mature, having attained the state they are intended for*. In Ephesians 4:12 Paul tells his readers that the heavenly ascended Lord has given gifts to His Church in the form of the public ministers of the Word “for the perfecting of the saints.” Surely Paul does not mean that the work of our ministers and teachers will produce perfectionism in us. Paul’s much more realistic and quite obvious meaning is this: the public servants of the Word in the Church have the function of helping

²³ Ad Kinzler *Die Biblischen Altertüemer* (Calw & Stuttgart: *Vereinsbuchhandlung*, 6th ed., 1884, p. 211

God's children to be forevermore that which they should be. Absolute perfection in a mathematical sense we will not attain this side of the grave. This flesh is too much with us for that. But by the grace of God, and in the strength that He gives, we ever "follow after," we constantly strive to live up to the high calling which the God of our salvation has bestowed upon us. And in His household we will demean ourselves, not like petulant, spoiled children, but like the mature responsible adults that we by the gift of God have become. And now that our Lord has given us the means for being able to stand on our own feet in spiritual things, He no longer holds us by both hands so that our feet might walk aright; He no longer contains us in a "walker" where a set of mechanical contrivances, wheels and the like, supply that which is lacking in our own make-up and will. He rather tells us that which is His will and then lets it up to our good Christian mature judgment to carry out His will in the spirit of love and in absolute obedience to the will He has revealed to us in His Word. Precise directions on how we shall lead our lives of sanctification in the fear and love of God the New Testament does not contain. But in two passages it does give us fundamental principles according to which our major decisions should be reached. These are words of the Apostle Paul in Romans 12: 1,2 and Ephesians 4:23. They read: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable (we would say "spiritual") service. And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." "And be renewed in the spirit of your mind."

Our God's Revelation concerning our Christian conduct becomes quite clear from these statements of the great Apostle. We will be very sure that we are clear on the nature of the situation that confronts us. In all things it is as it is in our dealing with an individual: we should be very wrong to treat a person who is belligerently disobedient to the Word of God and one who is suffering from an emotional illness in one and the same way, even though certain features of the one case may seem strongly like certain features of the other.

But having ascertained what the nature of the situation confronting us is, we shall keep on testing what the will of our God in that situation is for us. The needs of one situation may in the love and fear of God call for action that looks like the direct opposite of the treatment accorded a similar case. Paul we may be sure was not shaky on the doctrine concerning circumcision. Yet in two instances he acted in two directly opposite ways: his one disciple and coworker, Timothy, Paul took and circumcised (Acts 16:3) "because of the Jews which were in those quarters: for they knew all that his father was a Greek." Titus, on the other hand, Paul refused to circumcise though there was apparently considerable pressure brought to bear that this be done (Gal. 2:3). In these cases Paul as a mature Christian and responsible representative of his Lord, after calm circumspect deliberation, decided what God's will for him was and then performed that will.

The decisions which we must arrive at, be it as individuals or as a Church, as a congregation or as a Synod, will, if the Bible is to us the real thing that our fathers have always confessed it to be, be made in the way that Paul followed. In His Word God has revealed to us what is His holy will. He has shown us in Scripture all we need to know about the Way of Salvation. He has shown us Christ the Lamb of God that takes away a world's sin. And in this Word He has likewise shown us what will be the basic principles of our conduct before the world and toward one another. He has taught us the basic truths of what our Christianity must mean in our lives as we live them, not as though these were elaborations of some idea having its existence only in the mind of God, but because, when the New Testament indicatives and

imperatives spell out what the life of the Christian and of his Church must be, it is merely in detail defining what that Christian maturity is about which the New Testament is so emphatic. It may well be that only the spirit of Christ wrought in us by His Gospel can teach us the tense of the indicatives and define the emotional connotations of the imperatives, but the maturity demanded of the believing Christian will realize that these indicatives and imperatives are giving a very realistic picture of him, as he lives his life in Christ in the complex world of today as well as that life was lived when Christianity was new and possibly at least in a relative manner somewhat less complex.

IV. Our Heaven-Wrought Certainty: The Bible is God-Speaking-To-Us

Our plea has been that it is only from the point of view that the picture which Scripture gives us of this world of man according to his outward and his spiritual side and of all things else, mundane and ultramundane, is a realistic one, and that it is therefore from the approach to the Scriptures which we have called a Biblical realism that there comes to us the certainty that the Bible we use and revere is the Word of God.

This approach to the study of the Word is not an innovation on our part: it is the approach to Scripture which our Lord Jesus Christ Himself uses. The Pharisees had come with the criticism of Jesus' disciples that His followers were plucking ears of grain from the fields through which they were walking on the Sabbath day and were rubbing the kernels out of the beads in their hands hence, quite obviously, doing on the Sabbath the type of labor that we describe as threshing grain. Matthew (12:14), Mark (2:23-27), and Luke (6:1-5) all tell the incident, and it is Luke who adds the detail about rubbing out the grain with their hands. The Pharisees seemingly expected Jesus to launch out onto a discussion of the theoretical aspects of what constitutes the kind of labor that is forbidden on the Sabbath, as the later rabbis summarized the traditional teaching of the Pharisees in the tractate of the *Mishna* called "Sabbath."²⁴ But Jesus disappointed them. He replied (Matt. 12:3-8): "Have ye not read what David did, when he was an hungered, and they that were with him; how he entered into the house of God, and did eat the shewbread, which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priests? Or have ye not read in the law, how that on the Sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless? But I say unto you, That in this place is one greater than the temple. But if ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless For the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day," A little realistic thinking of things as they are, and correctly applied memory of things that they all new had happened, utterly demolished the finespun logic of His critics. For to this presentation the Pharisees had no answer.

Asked by the disciples of John the Baptist about the fact that His own disciples did not engage in the practice of frequent fasting as they, John's disciples and the Pharisees, did (Matt. 9:14), Jesus answered (v. 15), not with an abstract speculative argument, but with a statement of hard fact, drawing a parallel to an earthly social situation that all could understand: "Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them?" Again, the answer comes from plain, palpable fact.

Jesus' use of parables in His teaching is but another facet to His realistic approach in all matters. For in His parables He taught eternal truth not by means of a presentation that could be

²⁴ Danby, *op. cit.* pp. 100-121 (tractate on "The Sabbath")

grasped only in thought, but He did so by means of pictures of facts that were pretty much everyday occurrences in that world.

The approach of our Lord's Apostles to theological questions is just as completely based on a Biblical realism. To show why he forbids women to conduct the ordinary worship services in church (I Tim. 2:12; 1 Cor. 14:34), Paul does not enter upon a discussion of the equality of the sexes nor does he argue from any abstract ideas. He points rather to the simple facts of God's order of creation: woman is not to take precedence over the man. In this connection Paul points out that it was Eve's rebellion against this order of creation and her attempt on her own part and independently of Adam to determine great things for herself and for the whole human race that led to the fall into sin. Paul does not argue his points as the sophists of Greece of a bygone age had done or as did the streetpreachers like Epictetus, so popular in the Hellenistic, Graeco-Roman days of the New Testament era: he proclaims facts, concerning the truth of which there is no argument, proclaiming them as did the herald of old whose responsibility it was to make known the facts that were of vital concern to the person in whose service the herald stood. Hence one of the New Testament words for preaching is *kerygma* proclaiming facts in the manner in which a herald does it.

As an example of devotion to a presentation that bases on Biblical realism, could anything surpass Peter's admonition at the close of his First Epistle (5:6-11)? "Humble yourselves ... that he may exalt you!" "Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you." To the logical human mind, this passage fairly buzzes with self-contradictions. But they are there only to the superficial view. What we have here are merely the self-contradictions that all life, especially the Christian life, is so full of. The solution to that which looks like a contradiction in the relations of God in heaven to His creatures lies not in finely drawn argument but in the realities of Scripture: The Father in heaven has created thinking, feeling, human beings to share His eternal bliss, not robots, automatons, or machines.

The question of the origin of evil in the world has called forth volumes of speculative reasoning. Peter meets the problem head on, and his is the only possible solution. He speaks of the stark reality of the devil's existence. He does not give himself to the argument that the idea of an absolute and good God is incompatible with that of a devil who is the origin of evil, or that the fact that the two are there proves that the Bible has merely taken over the old dualistic ideas of the Eastern religions, in which there were two eternal principles, the one good and the other evil, and the world had come into being when the sparks cooled off that had flown when this irresistible force had met its immovable object. Rather, Peter wants his Christians to face the fact: the devil, that angel who fell from his first estate, is there, in the world, going about like a roaring lion. "Whom resist steadfast in the faith!" says Peter, verse 9. Is Peter troubled by the thought that ultimately all power to resist the Evil One reposes in God Himself? And that it would be rather beside the point to call upon mere human beings to resist this Prince of Darkness? No more than we are troubled by the thought with which we operate every day of our active lives, that we go at our labor in the Lord's vineyard as though we were going to live a thousand years but that we pray as though we were going to die tomorrow. Peter's answer to all these seeming-contradictions lies in the nature and in the activity of his and our God: "But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, establish, strengthen, settle you" (verse 10). It is the God of all grace, our Creator, Preserver, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, who is also the Creator of all reality. Indeed, it often goes beyond our puny minds to see the great unity in diversity. Yet surely our failure in this regard is not sufficient warrant for us to seek ultimate truth elsewhere and to cease

to do what Scripture itself so constantly does, cling to the simple facts and realities of heaven and earth, of God and man, of time and eternity, of matter and spirit. To follow any other course than that set by Scripture itself, by our Lord and His Apostle, is no longer to let God be God and to deny that He and He alone is the ultimate Creator of all reality.

“But these are mere allegations,” we will bear; “Where is the certainty?” To this demand there is no other answer than the one given by Pastor Gausewitz in the essay already referred to. There he wrote (page 12):

“I cannot demonstrate the truth that the Bible is God’s Word by the use of human arguments. Repentance (*metanoia*) is the only way that leads to the conviction that the Bible is the Word of God. Only he who through the doctrine of the Bible has come to faith in Jesus Christ will accept also that particular doctrine of the Bible that it is the Word of God. Here the remark of our Lord Jesus comes into its own: ‘If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God.’ A believer will say with Peter: ‘We believe and are sure that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.’ And: ‘Thou hast the words of eternal life.’ Here the answer applies which Jesus gave Peter on a similar occasion: ‘Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.’ Likewise the words of Christ in His high-priestly prayer: ‘I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world. . . . Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee. For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me.’

“All I can do about this truth, as well as about all Bible truths unto salvation, is to testify as the Bible itself testifies, adding: ‘He that believeth not shall be damned.’”

If someone is going to insist that we must approach the fact of our certainty that the Bible is the Word of God from a point outside of this life, which the very God we are speaking of has created, then we are making the same impossible demand that that old Greek philosopher made as his condition for being able to move the whole world . “Give me,” he cried, “a place to stand, a place to use a fulcrum, and then by virtue of the physical laws of the mechanics of the lever I’ll be able to lift the world.” Alas, he never got outside this world, neither has it yet fortunately been lifted, as the old Greek dreamt it could be. For our existence is one entirely *inside* the creation of our God, and it is from this position, letting God be God, that we view all things. Among them, and very prominently there, is the reality that the Eternal God has from time to time given His Holy Spirit to servants of His own choosing, endowing, directing, leading, and guiding them, so that the written words which they have left us out of their ministry in the Church of God and which have been collected for us in the books of the Bible, are the revelation of the heart and mind of our God Himself, His holy Word.

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