

DOGMATICS NOTES VOL. II

D. SOTERIOLOGY

This part of dogmatics, dealing with the personal appropriation of the merits of Christ by a sinner, deals with:

- 1. Faith, the proper attitude of the heart**
- 2. The means of grace, that produce and preserve faith**
- 3. The order of salvation, the various phases of God's activity relating to faith**
- 4. The church, that is, the communion of believers**
- 5. The office (function) of the public ministry**
- 6. The Antichrist**

1. Faith

I. Faith occupies a central position in the New Testament (that is, in the gospel covenant).

1. The New Testament proclaims reconciliation and union between God and mankind.

a) Christ re-established union between God and the sinners.

1) Sin separates people from God.

Isaiah 59:2 Your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.

Isaiah 64:7 No one calls on your name or strives to lay hold of you; for you have hidden your face from us and made us waste away because of our sins.

Romans 3:23 All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

Romans 8:7 The sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.

2) Christ brought about a reconciliation.

2 Corinthians 5:19 God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.

Daniel 9:24 Seventy "sevens" are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy.

Ephesians 2:15b-16 His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, ¹⁶ and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.

Colossians 1:19-20 For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

b) This union is proclaimed and offered for sinners to receive and to enjoy. Receiving the offered reconciliation is called believing.

2 Corinthians 5:18-20 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: ¹⁹ that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰ We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.

Acts 2:44 All the believers (*οἱ πιστεύοντες*) were together and had everything in common.

Acts 4:4 But many who heard the message believed, and the number of men grew to about five thousand.

Acts 8:13 Simon himself believed and was baptized. And he followed Philip everywhere, astonished by the great signs and miracles he saw.

Acts 11:21 The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.

Acts 17:12 Many of the Jews believed, as did also a number of prominent Greek women and many Greek men.

c) Faith is the uniting bond in a sinner's renewed union with God.

1) Through faith there is peace with God.

John 1:12 To all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.

John 17:20,21 My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, ²¹ that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

Romans 5:1,2 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ² through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.

Galatians 3:26 You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

2) Those who receive this peace are simply called believers.

Acts 5:14 More and more men and women believed (πιστεύοντες) in the Lord and were added to their number.

1 Timothy 4:12 Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers (τύπος γίνου τῶν πιστῶν) in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity.

1 Corinthians 6:6 One brother goes to law against another—and this in front of unbelievers (ἀπίστων).

2 Corinthians 6:14 Do not be yoked together with unbelievers (ἀπίστοις). For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?

2. The dominance of faith is emphasized in various ways in the New Testament.

a) Sometimes the centrality of faith is stated directly.

1) The “law of faith” (the faith principle) is set in contrast to the law of works and ordinances.

Romans 3:27 Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. On what principle? On that of observing the law? No, but on that of faith (διὰ νόμου πίστεως).

Ephesians 2:14-15 He himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, ¹⁵ by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace.

Colossians 2:13-14 When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, ¹⁴ having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross.

Galatians 3:2,5 I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard (ἐξ ἀκοῆς πίστεως)? ⁵ Does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you because you observe the law, or because you believe what you heard (ἐξ ἀκοῆς πίστεως)?

2) The ratifying of the New Testament is the “coming” of faith.

Galatians 3:23,25 Before this faith came, we were held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed. ²⁵ Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law.

b) Sometimes the centrality of faith is stated less directly, but clearly.

1) For salvation sinners are asked only to believe.

John 3:16 God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Mark 16:16 Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.

Acts 16:30-31 He then brought them out and asked, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” ³¹ They replied, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household.”

Ephesians 2:8 It is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.

2 Timothy 3:15 From infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

2) A person’s relation to the New Testament revelation may be seen as a reflection of his attitude toward faith (or the faith).

Acts 6:7 The word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith (*ὑπήκουον τῇ πίστει*).

Romans 1:5 Through him and for his name’s sake, we received grace and apostleship to call people from among all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith (*εἰς ὑπακοὴν πίστεως*).

Romans 16:26 [The message of Jesus Christ is] now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all nations might believe and obey him (*εἰς ὑπακοὴν πίστεως*).

Galatians 1:23 They only heard the report: “The man who formerly persecuted us is now preaching the faith (*εὐαγγελίζεται τὴν πίστιν*) he once tried to destroy.”

Jude 3,20 Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints. ²⁰ But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit.

c) The coexisting emotions of love and hope are not to be excluded, although faith remains the primary and fundamental factor.

Love

John 14:23 Jesus replied, “If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.”

1 John 4:7,16,19 Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. ¹⁶ And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. ¹⁹ We love because he first loved us.

Hope

Romans 8:24 In this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has?

1 Peter 1:3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

1 Peter 3:15 In your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.

Faith and love

John 16:27 The Father himself loves you because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God.

Galatians 5:6 In Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love (*πίστις δι' ἀγάπης ἐνεργουμένη*).

Ephesians 3:16-18 I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, ¹⁸ may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ.

1 Timothy 1:14 The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

1 Timothy 2:15 But women will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety.

Faith and hope

Romans 15:13 May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Colossians 1:23 Continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.

Hebrews 11:1 Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.

Faith, hope, and love

1 Corinthians 13:13 Now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

3. The terms πίστις and πιστεύειν are used also to denote things other than saving faith in Christ.

a) The word πίστις may denote faithfulness, trustworthiness.

Romans 3:3 What if some did not have faith? Will their lack of faith nullify God's faithfulness?

Galatians 5:22,23 The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Titus 2:10 [Teach slaves] not to steal from [their masters], but to show that they can be fully trusted (πάσαν πίστιν ἐνδεικνυμένους), so that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive.

b) The term πίστις may refer to assurance, confidence in conscience.

Romans 14:22,23 Whatever you believe about these things keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the man who does not condemn himself by what he approves.²³ But the man who has doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and everything that does not come from faith is sin.

c) The word πίστις may have reference to a faith in God's power to do miracles.

1 Corinthians 13:2 If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.

Luke 17:5,6 The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!"⁶ He replied, "If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it will obey you."

Acts 14:9-10 He listened to Paul as he was speaking. Paul looked directly at him, saw that he had faith to be healed¹⁰ and called out, "Stand up on your feet!" At that, the man jumped up and began to walk.

Matthew 17:19-20 The disciples came to Jesus in private and asked, “Why couldn’t we drive it out?”²⁰ He replied, “Because you have so little faith. I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there’ and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you.”

d) Faith may refer to belief in a human statement.

1 Corinthians 11:18 I hear that when you come together as a church, there are divisions among you, and to some extent I believe it.

1 Corinthians 13:7 [Love] always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

4. In the language of the church, faith is often distinguished as “subjective faith” and “objective faith.”

a) This difference is stated also in the following words:

- 1) *Fides qua creditur* or *fides subjectiva*. The faith with which it is believed is subjective faith (trust, reliance).
- 2) *Fides quae creditur* or *fides objectiva*. The faith which is believed is objective (doctrine).

See, e.g., Lenski on Ga 1:23, ἡ πίστις: All these churches heard not only that Paul was gospelizing but that he was gospelizing the faith he once sought to wipe out. What faith was that? The one the Twelve preached — no other. In Jerusalem, the mother church, whither the Twelve often returned, and in all the Judean churches Paul’s gospel was acknowledged as the one original faith. What do the Judaizers mean with their falsifications? Here there is another plain example of ἡ πίστις used in the objective sense: “the faith” = the gospel = the doctrine, which contradicts the statement of Cremer-Koegel that this word is never used objectively.

b) Different types of subjective faith are recognized by the church.

- 1) **Justifying faith** (*fides justificans*) is reliance on Jesus and his atoning work.
- 2) **Historical faith** (*fides historica*) is intellectual acceptance of the Bible record.

5. In Scripture πίστις occurs mainly in the subjective sense, meaning justifying faith.

a) There are many examples of the use of πίστις in the subjective sense.

Hebrews 11:1 Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.

Galatians 5:6 In Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.

Ephesians 2:8 It is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.

2 Timothy 3:15 From infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

Romans 4:5 To the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness.

b) A figurative use of πίστις, for example in personification or metonymy (content), is not excluded.

Galatians 3:23,25 Before this faith came, we were held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed.²⁵ Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law.

c) The word πίστις also appears to be used in the objective sense (for the object of trust, the doctrine).

Jude 3,20 Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints.²⁰ But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit.

1 Timothy 3:9 They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience.

1 Timothy 4:1 The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.

Romans 10:8 But what does it say? “The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart,” that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming.

Galatians 1:23 They only heard the report: “The man who formerly persecuted us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy.”

d) Subjective faith must never be divorced from its content.

Mark 1:15 “The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!”

Acts 16:31 They replied, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household.”

6. A number of attributes of faith have been described with various terms.

a) We may speak of a true or genuine faith, or of a dead, hypocritical faith.

1 Timothy 1:5 The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere (*ἀνυποκρίτος*) faith.

James 2:17 Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

b) We may speak of a great, little, or weak faith.

Matthew 15:28 Jesus answered, “Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted.” And her daughter was healed from that very hour.

Matthew 8:10 When Jesus heard this, he was astonished and said to those following him, “I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith.”

1 Peter 5:9 Resist [the devil], standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.

Matthew 6:30 If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?

Matthew 8:26 He replied, “You of little faith, why are you so afraid?” Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm.

Matthew 14:31 Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. “You of little faith,” he said, “why did you doubt?”

Matthew 16:8 Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked, “You of little faith, why are you talking among yourselves about having no bread?”

Romans 14:1 Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters.

c) We may speak of faith hypothetically or as a demonstrated reality.

James 2:14-26 What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? ¹⁵ Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. ¹⁶ If one of you says to him, “Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? ¹⁷ In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. ¹⁸ But someone will say, “You have faith; I have deeds.” Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do. ¹⁹ You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder. ²⁰ You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? ²¹ Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? ²² You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. ²³ And the scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,” and he was called God’s friend. ²⁴ You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone. ²⁵ In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what

she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction? ²⁶ As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.

Galatians 5:6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.

II. Faith is essentially trust and confidence.

1. That faith is essentially confidence is stated directly in various passages.

Hebrews 11:1 Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.

Ephesians 3:12 In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.

Romans 4:19-21 Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead—since he was about a hundred years old—and that Sarah’s womb was also dead. ²⁰ Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, ²¹ being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised.

2. Contrast these departures from the truth with the Bible’s declarations:

Council of Trent, Sess. VI, Canon XII: If anyone says that justifying faith is nothing but trust in the divine mercy which forgives sins for Christ's sake, or that we are justified by this faith alone, let him be damned.

Council of Trent, Sess. VI, Canon XIV: If anyone says that a man is absolved from sins and justified by believing with certainty that he is absolved and justified, or that no one is justified except the man who believes that he is justified or that by this faith alone absolution and justification are brought about, let him be damned.

Council of Trent, Cap. VIII: But when the apostle says that a man is justified by faith and freely, these words must be understood in the following sense, namely, that we are said to be justified by faith because faith is the beginning of a man's salvation, the basis and source (root) of the whole justification.

3. That faith is trust or confidence is also indicated by the prepositions used.

a) With the Accusative: εἰς, ἐπί, πρὸς

εἰς

Matthew 18:6 If anyone causes one of these little ones who believe *in* me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.

John 3:16,18,36 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes *in* him shall not perish but have eternal

life. ¹⁸Whoever believes *in* him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed *in* the name of God's one and only Son. ³⁶Whoever believes *in* the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him.

John 11:25,26 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes *in* me will live, even though he dies; ²⁶ and whoever lives and believes *in* me will never die. Do you believe this?"

Romans 10:14 How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed *in* (εἰς + acc.)? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? See also v. 11: As the Scripture says, "Anyone who trusts *in* him (ἐπι + dative) will never be put to shame."

Galatians 2:16 [We] know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith *in* Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified.

ἐπί

Matthew 27:42,43 "He saved others," they said, "but he can't save himself! He's the King of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe *in* him. ⁴³ He trusts *in* God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, 'I am the Son of God.'"

Romans 4:5 To the man who does not work but trusts [upon] God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness.

Hebrews 6:1 Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith *in* God.

πρός

1 Thessalonians 1:8 The Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia—your faith *in* God has become known everywhere. Therefore we do not need to say anything about it.

Philemon 5 I hear about your faith *in* the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints.

b) With the Dative: ἐπί, ἐν

ἐπί

1 Peter 2:6 In Scripture it says: "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts *in* him will never be put to shame."

ἐν

John 3:15 Everyone who believes *in* him may have eternal life.

Ephesians 1:15 I heard about your faith *in* the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints.

4. Faith is described in Scripture as a matter of the heart. (In this connection it is important to observe the biblical meaning of “heart,” which involves intellect, emotion, and will – that is, the whole inner life of a human being.)

Intellect

Job 17:4 You have closed their minds (מִבִּינָם) to understanding; therefore you will not let them triumph.

Psalms 45:1 My heart is stirred by a noble theme as I recite my verses for the king; my tongue is the pen of a skillful writer.

Emotion

Psalms 4:7 You have filled my heart with greater joy than when their grain and new wine abound.

Psalms 13:2,5 How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and every day have sorrow in my heart? How long will my enemy triumph over me? ⁵ But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation.

Will

Job 17:11 My days have passed, my plans are shattered, and so are the desires of my heart.

Psalms 7:10 My shield is God Most High, who saves the upright in heart.

Psalms 21:2 You have granted him the desire of his heart and have not withheld the request of his lips.

a) With this biblical meaning of heart in mind we observe how faith is said to be a matter of the heart.

Romans 10:9,10 If you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.

Luke 24:25 He said to them, “How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!”

Acts 15:9 He made no distinction between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith.

Ephesians 3:16-17 I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.

b) The following clarification regarding faith as trust is in place:

1) Faith may be said to presuppose a certain knowledge and assent.

Romans 10:14 How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?

John 3:11,12 I tell you the truth, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony. ¹² I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things?

2) Though people may know about Christ, they are called unbelievers if they do not put their trust in him.

2 Corinthians 4:3,4 Even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. ⁴ The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

Romans 11:23 If they do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again.

John 3:18 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.

Quenstedt: The *materia ex qua* (the stuff of which something is made), as it were, are the material parts of faith, of which there are three: knowledge, assent, and confidence (*TDP*, pars IV, cap. VIII, sect. 1, thes. V, p 282).

Edward W. A. Koehler (d. 1951): A faith without knowledge is an impossibility. But a bare intellectual knowledge of the gospel is not faith; it is a prerequisite, but it is not a part of faith. [?] The fact that a person is well versed in the doctrines of the Bible does not prove that he also believes them. Nevertheless, such knowledge is necessary, inasmuch as it is the means through which the Holy Spirit works on the heart to produce faith. For no truth can touch and affect the heart unless it first be in the mind. "All who wish to be saved ought to hear this preaching of God's Word. For the preaching and hearing of God's Word are the instruments of the Holy Spirit, by, with, and through which He desires to work efficaciously, and to convert men to God, and to work in

them both to will and to do” (*A Summary of Christian Doctrine*, p 137-138, and citing FC, TD, Art. II, 52, p 901).

5. Faith governs and controls understanding.

a) This truth is expressed in a number of ways.

2 Corinthians 10:5 We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

Philippians 4:7 The peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Romans 12:6 We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man’s gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith.

1 Corinthians 1:5 In him you have been enriched in every way—in all your speaking and in all your knowledge.

2 Corinthians 3:14-16 Their minds were made dull, for to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read. It has not been removed, because only in Christ is it taken away.¹⁵ Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts.¹⁶ But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.

Matthew 13:10-17 The disciples came to him and asked, “Why do you speak to the people in parables?”¹¹ He replied, “The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them.¹² Whoever has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him.¹³ This is why I speak to them in parables: Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand.¹⁴ In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah: ‘You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving.¹⁵ For this people’s heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.’¹⁶ But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear.¹⁷ For I tell you the truth, many prophets and righteous men longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it.”

b) Because faith governs understanding, knowledge is sometimes used as a synonym for faith.

1) Blessings acquired through faith are also ascribed to knowledge.

John 17:3 This is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

Luke 1:76-77 You, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him,⁷⁷ to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins.

2) Knowledge is sometimes described as an experiencing of the truth.

John 7:17 If anyone chooses to do God's will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own.

Philippians 3:8 I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ.

1 Timothy 2:4 [God our Savior] wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

2 Peter 3:18 Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.

Ephesians 4:13 . . . until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

c) To demonstrate how faith influences and governs understanding, the Bible often refers to the knowledge of faith as enlightenment and as spiritual wisdom.

Enlightenment

2 Corinthians 4:6 God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

Ephesians 1:18 I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints.

Ephesians 5:8 You were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light.

Matthew 4:16 The people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.

Luke 1:76, 79 You, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him,⁷⁹ to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace.

1 Peter 2:9 You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

Spiritual wisdom

Ephesians 1:7-8 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace ⁸ that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.

Ephesians 1:17 I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.

Colossians 1:9 Since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding.

6. Faith also influences and governs the will.

a) This may explain why faith itself is sometimes called obedience, that is, submission to the gracious will of God.

Romans 1:5 Through him and for his name's sake, we received grace and apostleship to call people from among all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith (εις υπακοην πιστεως).

Romans 10:16 Not all the Israelites accepted the good news (υπηκουσαν τω ευαγγελιω). For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our message?"

Romans 15:18 I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me in leading the Gentiles to obey God by what I have said and done.

Romans 16:19,26 Everyone has heard about your obedience, so I am full of joy over you; but I want you to be wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil. ²⁶ but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all nations might believe and obey him (εις υπακοην πιστεως).

2 Corinthians 10:5 We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

2 Thessalonians 1:8 He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.

b) The impact of faith on the will is prominent in the producing of sanctification or holy living as a fruit of faith.

Romans 6:12-14 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. ¹³ Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as

instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. ¹⁴ For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.

Galatians 5:16,22-25 So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. ²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. ²⁴ Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. ²⁵ Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

Apology, Art. III, Triglotta, p 204, par. 183: Furthermore, if any sophist cavils that righteousness is in the will, and therefore it cannot be ascribed to faith, which is in the intellect, the reply is easy, because in the schools even such persons acknowledge that the will commands the intellect to assent to the Word of God. We say also quite clearly: Just as the terrors of sin and death are not only thoughts of the intellect, but also horrible movements of the will fleeing God's judgment, so faith is not only knowledge in the intellect, but also confidence in the will, i.e., it is to wish and to receive that which is offered in the promise, namely, reconciliation and remission of sins.

7. The Roman Catholic Church denies the description of faith given above.

a) The Church of Rome often speaks of saving faith as a mere intellectual (submissive) assent to the dogmas of the church combined with good works.

Council of Trent, Sess. VI, Canon XII: If anyone says that justifying faith is nothing but trust in the divine mercy which forgives sins for Christ's sake, or that we are justified by this faith alone, let him be damned.

Thomas Aquinas (d. 1274): To believe is an act of the intellect according to which it is moved by the will to accept something as true. Therefore love, coupled with reverence, is the foundation (principal thing) of faith... Now it is evident from what has been said (Article 1), that the act of faith is directed to the object of the will, i.e. the good, as to its end: and this good which is the end of faith, viz. the Divine Good, is the proper object of love (charity). Therefore love is called the form [essence] of faith in so far as the act of faith is perfected and formed by love... Charity is called the form of faith because it quickens the act of faith (*Summa*, II, II, q4).

Catechism of the Catholic Church, Par. 143, 144: By faith, man completely submits his intellect and his will to God. With his whole being man gives his assent to God the revealer. Sacred Scripture calls this human response to God, the author of revelation, "the obedience of faith." To obey (from the Latin *obaudire*, to "hear or listen to") in faith is to submit freely to the word that has been heard, because its truth is guaranteed by God, who is Truth itself. Abraham is the model of such obedience offered us by Sacred Scripture. The Virgin Mary is its most perfect embodiment.

Catechism of the Catholic Church, Par. 181: “Believing” is an ecclesial act. The Church’s faith precedes, engenders, supports and nourishes our faith. The Church is the mother of all believers. “No one can have God as Father who does not have the Church as Mother” (St. Cyprian, De unit. 6: PL 4, 519).

b) Various Roman Catholic distinctions regarding faith illustrate what they believe and teach.

1) They contrast assent without knowledge with assent with knowledge

-a) Implicit faith (*fides implicita* or *carbonaria*; *Koehlerglaube*), that is, simple assent to the doctrines of the church even without any knowledge of them.

Gabriel Biel (d. 1495): *Fides implicita* (implicit faith) by which a believer believes what the church believes is most useful for a believer (See Quenstedt, *TDP*, pars IV, cap. VIII, sect. 1, thes. V, antithes. I, p 289).

Bellarmino (d. 1621): The mysteries of faith that go beyond our reason we believe. We do not understand them, and by this [criterion] faith is distinguished from knowledge and is better defined as ignorance than as knowledge (See Quenstedt, *TDP*, cap. VII, 11, p 409).

Hieronymus Kromayer (d. 1670), referring the doctrine of Rome: Faith is not knowledge but rather ignorance (*Theol. pos. pol.*, art. XI, thes. IX, antithes., p 654).

Quenstedt, referring to the doctrine of Rome: Implicit faith [is the faith] by which we believe those things about which we know nothing but which we think are known to those about whose faith we consider it a crime to have doubts (*TDP*, pars IV, cap. VIII, sect. 1, thes. V, antithes. I, p 288).

-b) Explicit faith (*fides explicita*), that is, assent coupled with knowledge.

Vatican I, Chap. 3: The assent of faith is by no means a blind movement of the soul.

Catechism of the Catholic Church, Par. 155: “In faith, the human intellect and will co-operate with divine grace: ‘Believing is an act of the intellect assenting to the divine truth by command of the will moved by God through grace’” [St. Thomas Aquinas, *STh* II-II, 2, 9; cf *Dei Filius* 3; DS 3010].

2) Assent without works vs. assent with works

-a) “Unformed” faith (*fides informis*), that is, faith not animated by love, mere intellectual assent that does not save.

Galatians 5:6 In Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love (πίστις δι' ἀγάπης ἐνεργουμένη= faith working itself out in love; the Roman Catholic interpretation is: faith worked by love).

Council of Trent, VI, cap. 6: Believing that the things which are divinely revealed and promised are true, and this first of all: that the ungodly are justified by God through his grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.

The Catholic Encyclopedia: Since our Divine adoption and friendship with God is based on perfect love of God or charity, dead faith devoid of charity (*fides informis*) cannot possess any justifying power. Only such faith as is active in charity and good works (*fides caritate formata*) can justify man, and this even before the actual reception of baptism or penance, although not without a desire of the sacrament (cf. Trent, Sess. VI, cap. iv, xiv). But, not to close the gates of heaven against pagans and those non-Catholics, who without their fault do not know or do not recognize the Sacraments of Baptism and Penance, Catholic theologians unanimously hold that the desire to receive these sacraments is implicitly contained in the serious resolve to do all that God has commanded, even if His holy will should not become known in every detail (Online Edition, “Faith”).

-b) Faith “formed” by love (*fides caritate formata*) and therefore active in producing love and thus able to save.

Vatican I: Therefore faith in itself, even if it does not work through love, is a gift of God, and what it does is a work that has something to do with salvation. By it a man offers free obedience (the obedience of his free will) to God himself by assenting and cooperating with His grace which he could resist.

Vatican II: The same Holy Spirit constantly brings faith to completion by His gifts (*Documents*, p 114).

Catechism of the Catholic Church, Par. 1991: Justification is . . . the acceptance of God's righteousness through faith in Jesus Christ. Righteousness (or 'justice') here means the rectitude of divine love. With justification, faith, hope, and charity are poured into our hearts, and obedience to the divine will is granted us.

Compare with Socinus (d. 1604): Justifying faith is to obey the commandments of God and to believe that those things which Christ has said are true. Works cannot in any way be separated from the faith by which we are justified, but they are the soul or

essence of faith, we might say, and even its very life (*De Christo servatore, pars IV, cap XI, XII*).

Compare with Racovian Catechism: But what is the faith which necessarily obtains salvation? It is trust in God through Christ. From that it is clear that this faith in Christ includes two things, one, that we trust not only in God but also in Christ; the second, that we obey God. “Therefore you include obedience under faith?” Yes, that’s the way it is (Cited in *Hoenecke III*, p 327).

Compare with Wayne Grudem: It is contrary to the New Testament to speak about the possibility of someone accepting Christ “as Savior” but not “as Lord,” if that means simply depending on him for salvation but not committing oneself to forsaking sin and to be obedient to Christ from that point on (*ST*, p 714).

Compare with the Islamic definition of faith by Al-Risala (Maliki Manual): Surely, faith (*iman*) consists of a pronouncement with the tongue, sincerity of heart, and deeds with the limbs. It increases through an increase in good works. It decreases through their decrease. A decrease or increase in faith is dependent upon the volume of good works. Mere pronouncement of faith is incomplete except when coupled with the good works.

Contrast with Luther’s axiom: Love is not the essence of faith, but faith is the essence of love (On Ga 5:6; *LW* 27, p 28ff).

Contrast with Luther: My love, or the works that follow after faith, neither give the proper form to my faith nor do they adorn it, but my faith gives love its proper form and adorns it (*Commentary on Galatians*, at 2:19).

c) **Outside the Roman Church, the faith of infants can cause difficulties especially to those who over-emphasize the activity of the intellect (logical thinking) or the human will in connection with faith.**

1) **Roman Catholics baptize children “only in the faith of the church because they themselves do not do any believing” (Council of Trent, Session VII, Canon XIII).**

Catechism of Rome (1563), II, 2, 32: They (i.e., infants) are protected by the faith of their parents, if the parents are believers; but if they are not, by the faith of the whole congregation of saints.

Catechism of the Catholic Church, Par. 1282: Since the earliest times, Baptism has been administered to children, for it is a grace and a gift of God that does not presuppose any human merit; children are baptized in the faith of the Church.

2) **Reformed theologians include in the church the children of believing parents.**

Westminster Confession (1646), XXV, 2: The visible church ... consists of all those ... who profess the true religion together with their children, and it is the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, the household and family of God.

Calvin: From this it follows that the children of believing parents are baptized not for this reason that they who before this were outside the church might then first become children of God, but rather for this reason that they might by this solemn sign be received into the church, because, by virtue of the promise, they already before [baptism] belonged to the body of Christ (*Institutes*, Bk. IV, ch. 15, art. 22).

Gallic Confession (1559), 35: Although baptism is the sacrament of faith and repentance, nevertheless, since God considers, together with the parents, also their children to be in the church, we affirm that infants born to holy parents should be baptized by the authority of Christ.

The Presbyterian: We hold that just as by birth a child becomes a member of a particular family, and just as by birth a child becomes a citizen of a particular state, so by birth the child of believers becomes a member of the church of Jesus Christ. When therefore, we baptize a child, we do it not to make it a member of a church, but as a formal recognition of its birthright membership, so that the question that confronts such a child when it comes to years of discretion is not whether it will join, but whether it will leave the church of Christ (August 16, 1928 issue).

Contrast and compare with Wayne Grudem: Those who argue for infant baptism at this point resort to what seems to the present author to be vague language about infants being adopted “into the covenant” or “into the covenant community,” but the New Testament does not speak that way about baptism. Rather, it says all of those who have been baptized have been buried with Christ, have been raised with him, and have put on Christ . . . In the new covenant it is appropriate that infants *not* be baptized, and that baptism only be given to those who give evidence of genuine saving faith, because membership in the church is based on an internal spiritual reality, not on physical descent (*ST*, p 971, 977).

3) The Bible, however, clearly asserts that children can believe.

Matthew 18:3,6 And he said: “I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.⁶ But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.”

Mark 10:15 I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.

8. Paul Tillich's (d. 1965) views on the subject of faith are speculative and muddled, the fruit of religious philosophy rather than study of the Scriptures.

Faith is the state of being ultimately concerned. . . If faith is understood as belief that something is true, doubt is incompatible with the act of faith. If faith is understood as being ultimately concerned, doubt is a necessary element in it. . . . If doubt appears, it should not be considered as the negation of faith, but as an element which was always and will always be present in the act of faith. Existential doubt and faith are poles of the same reality, the state of ultimate concern. . . . Many Christians, as well as members of other religious groups, feel anxiety, guilt and despair about what they call "loss of faith." But serious doubt is confirmation of faith (*Dynamics of Faith*, p 1, 18, 22).

Doubt is not the opposite of faith; it is an element of faith (*S.T.*, II, p 116).

III. Faith appropriates the merits of Christ.

1. Faith is the proper attitude towards Christ's work of redemption.

a) Justification through Christ's merits is an absolutely finished product (objective justification). A person's faith does not add to its saving value.

John 19:30 When he had received the drink, Jesus said, "It is finished." With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

Galatians 5:2-4 Mark my words! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all.³ Again I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law.⁴ You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.

Romans 4:6,7 David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works:⁷ "Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered."

b) The gospel is a proclamation (cf. κηρύσσειν). Therefore faith is the proper way of receiving it.

2 Corinthians 5:19 God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.

Mark 16:15f He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation."

Isaiah 40:2 Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed, that her sin has been paid for, that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins.

- c) **God's message of salvation is often designated as a promise, *ἐπαγγελία*. Again, the proper response to a promise is faith.**

Romans 4:15,16,21 Law brings wrath. And where there is no law there is no transgression.¹⁶ Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring—not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all. . . .²¹ being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised.

Galatians 3:22 The Scripture declares that the whole world is a prisoner of sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe.

2. Faith appropriates or receives Christ and his merits.

- a) **This truth is directly stated in Scripture.**

John 1:12 To all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.

Colossians 2:5-7 Though I am absent from you in body, I am present with you in spirit and delight to see how orderly you are and how firm your faith in Christ is.⁶ So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him,⁷ rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.

Galatians 3:26,27 You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus,²⁷ for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

- b) **The believer applies the general truth of the gospel (universal grace) to himself individually (special or personal faith). Unbelief spurns this truth.**

Job 19:25 I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth.

John 3:16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Galatians 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

1 John 5:9-11 We accept man's testimony, but God's testimony is greater because it is the testimony of God, which he has given about his Son.¹⁰ Anyone who believes in the Son of God has this testimony in his heart. Anyone who does not believe God has made him out to be a liar, because he has not believed the testimony God has given about his Son.¹¹ And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.

Luke 7:30 The Pharisees and experts in the law rejected God's purpose for themselves, because they had not been baptized by John.

- c) **For this reason faith is called a receiving instrument (ὄργανον ληπτικόν), while the gospel is designated as a giving instrument (ὄργανον δοτικόν).**

Faith receives blessing

Romans 5:11 Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

Romans 9:30 What then shall we say? That the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith.

John 1:12 To all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.

Colossians 2:6 Just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him.

Galatians 3:14 He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.

The gospel gives results

Isaiah 55:5 Surely you will summon nations you know not, and nations that do not know you will hasten to you, because of the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, for he has endowed you with splendor.

Isaiah 2:2,3 In the last days the mountain of the LORD's temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and all nations will stream to it. ³ Many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths." The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

John 6:44 No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day.

Chemnitz: Faith is assent to the whole Word of God set before us, and in this Word to the free promise of reconciliation given for the sake of Christ, the Mediator. Therefore it remains firm and settled that the proper and principal object of justifying faith, in respect to which and by the apprehension of which it justifies, is the free promise of the mercy of God who forgives sins, adopts and accepts believers into eternal life for the sake of Christ the Mediator (*Examen, de fide justificante*, p 159).

Quenstedt: The general object of faith is Scripture, or the things revealed in Scripture; the special object of faith is the doctrine of the gospel. But as far as justifying faith as such is concerned, the proper and special object of faith is

the grace and mercy of God promised in the Word to individual believers and merited by the active and passive obedience of Christ. This we prove by Romans 3:24,25, where the apostle says that the object of faith is Christ, not viewed in any which way, but as the *ἱλαστήριον*, the appeasement or appeaser of the wrath of God, set before us in his blood (*TDP*, thes. XIII, not. I, p 285).

Calov: Justifying faith has as its object not everything which God has revealed, but the grace and mercy of God, or the gospel promise concerning the grace of God, specifically, the suffering and death of Christ (by which redemption and salvation were won for us), his righteousness and obedience (*Apodixis, de fide justif.*, art. XXI, p 298).

d) In this way salvation becomes the possession of the believer.

Romans 1:17 In the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last (*ἐκ πίστεως εἰς πίστιν*), just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.”

Romans 5:1 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Romans 10:4 Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.

Galatians 2:16 [We] know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified.

Galatians 3:22 The Scripture declares that the whole world is a prisoner of sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe.

3. A characteristic of faith is assurance, the sure conviction of possessing salvation.

a) This truth is directly stated in Scripture.

Hebrews 11:1 Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.

Augsburg Confession, Art. XX, Triglotta p 55, par. 23-26: Men are also admonished that here the term “faith” does not signify merely the knowledge of the history, such as is in the ungodly and in the devil, but signifies a faith which believes, not merely the history, but also the effect of the history—namely, this article: the forgiveness of sins, that is, that we have grace, righteousness, and forgiveness of sins through Christ. Now he that knows that he has a Father gracious to him through Christ, he truly knows God; he knows also that God cares for him, and he calls upon God; in a word, he is not without God, as the heathen. For devils and the ungodly are not able to believe this article: the forgiveness of sins. Hence, they hate God as an enemy, call not upon him, and expect no good from him. Augustine also admonishes his

readers concerning the word “faith,” and teaches that the term “faith” is accepted in the Scriptures not for knowledge such as is in the ungodly but for confidence which consoles and encourages the terrified mind.

b) Assurance is a characteristic even of weak faith, that is, in so far as it is faith. The imperfection is due to the sinful weakness of the believer who permits doubt to lodge in his heart (Old Adam).

Ephesians 3:12 In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.

Romans 4:18-21 Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, “So shall your offspring be.”¹⁹ Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead—since he was about a hundred years old—and that Sarah’s womb was also dead.²⁰ Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God,²¹ being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised.

Romans 8:38 I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers . . . will be able to separate us from the love of God, that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

2 Timothy 1:12 That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day.

Mark 9:24 Immediately the boy’s father exclaimed, “I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!”

The Council of Trent, VI, Cap 9, disagrees with this: No one can know with a certainty of faith which cannot be subject to error that he has obtained the grace of God.

Chemnitz: The point at issue between us and the papists is that they teach that the sinner cannot and must not stand in sure confidence that he is in grace and that his sins have been remitted to him. . . . They come up with the notion that faith in a general way establishes that the divine promises are true and that in a general way we are not to have doubt concerning the mercy of God, the merit of Christ, of the efficacy of the sacraments, but concerning the special application to individual sinners . . . here faith must not establish anything certain even when it relies on the Word of God, but remains suspended in doubt. These arguments of the papists arise primarily from confusion of law and gospel. For they teach that the grace of the remission of sins must be merited or at least applied to us by our own works. . . . Thus they really teach only and totally law, that is, that merit or at least the application of the remission of sins and eternal life to ourselves depends on our own works. But because the conscience can never determine that it has sufficient works for the promise of grace to be merited or applied, not only does it remain in constant doubt, but finally in real agony it must take the route of despair (*Loci*, II, p 506).

c) This assurance is the product of the testimony of the Holy Spirit. It is not our own achievement.

1) Bible statements make the truth clear.

Romans 8:16 The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.

John 15:26 When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me.

1 John 5:6,9-11 This is the one who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ. He did not come by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. ⁹ We accept man's testimony, but God's testimony is greater because it is the testimony of God, which he has given about his Son. ¹⁰ Anyone who believes in the Son of God has this testimony in his heart. Anyone who does not believe God has made him out to be a liar, because he has not believed the testimony God has given about his Son. ¹¹ And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.

2) Some statements can be misunderstood in this regard.

2 Peter 1:10 Be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure (σπουδάσατε βεβαίαν ὑμῶν τὴν κλήσιν καὶ ἐκλογὴν ποιεῖσθαι). For if you do these things, you will never fall.

Philippians 2:12,13 Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³ for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose (μετὰ φόβου καὶ τρόμου τὴν ἑαυτῶν σωτηρίαν κατεργάζεσθε. ¹³θεὸς γὰρ ἐστὶν ὁ ἐνεργῶν ἐν ὑμῖν καὶ τὸ θέλει καὶ τὸ ἐνεργεῖν ὑπὲρ τῆς εὐδοκίας).

d) This assurance of having salvation is not to be confused with carnal security.

Mark 14:29-31 Peter declared, "Even if all fall away, I will not." ³⁰ "I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "today—yes, tonight—before the rooster crows twice you yourself will disown me three times." ³¹ But Peter insisted emphatically, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you." And all the others said the same.

Romans 11:20 They were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but be afraid.

1 Corinthians 10:12 So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!

2 Corinthians 13:5 Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you—unless, of course, you fail the test?

4. Faith is not in itself (that is, as the act of believing) a meritorious cause of salvation.

a) Faith is indeed an ethical act of man (though not produced by man); that is, people do believe, but this is the result of God's work.

Philippians 2:13 It is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.

John 6:29,44 Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent. . . No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day."

Romans 10:16 But not all the Israelites accepted the good news. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our message?"

Romans 15:18 I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me in leading the Gentiles to obey God by what I have said and done.

Galatians 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

2 Thessalonians 1:3 We ought always to thank God for you, brothers, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more, and the love every one of you has for each other is increasing.

Quenstedt: Faith can be called an active . . . work, if the word "work" is understood generically to denote any action, whether relative or absolute, but not when it is understood in the specific sense to denote such a good moral (meritorious) work which is commanded in the law; for understood in this way "work" is always in the process of justification opposed to "faith." Faith is in no way our work except subjectively, because it receives something and does something. For that reason not the Holy Spirit, but man is said to believe (*TDP*, s.1, th. 17, f. 1343).

b) Faith is not a condition to be fulfilled by us nor a work by which justification is merited.

1) Faith does not merit justification, which is a gift of grace. Note how the Bible clearly distinguishes faith from works.

Ephesians 2:8,9 It is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast.

Romans 4:4-5 Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation. ⁵ However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness.

Romans 11:6 If by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace.

Romans 3:28 We maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law.

2) Faith is merely instrumental in receiving justification.

-a) “By faith” is expressed by the instrumental dative.

Acts 15:9 He made no distinction between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith.

Romans 3:28 We maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law.

-b) “By faith” is expressed by the preposition ἐκ.

Romans 1:17 In the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.”

Romans 3:30 There is only one God, who will justify the circumcised by (ἐκ) faith and the uncircumcised through (διὰ) that same faith.

Romans 4:16 The promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham’s offspring—not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all.

Romans 5:1 Since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Romans 9:30 What then shall we say? That the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith.

Romans 10:6 The righteousness that is by faith says: “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’” (that is, to bring Christ down).

Galatians 2:16 [We] know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith (διὰ πίστεως) in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith (ἐκ πίστεως) in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified.

Galatians 3:8,24 The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: “All nations will be blessed through you.”²⁴ So the law

was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith.

-c) “By or through faith” is expressed by the preposition *διὰ* with the genitive.

Romans 3:22,25,30 This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, ²⁵God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished— ³⁰ since there is only one God, who will justify the circumcised by (*ἐκ*) faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith.

Galatians 2:16 [We] know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified.

Galatians 3:14,26 He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit. ²⁶ You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

Ephesians 2:8 It is *by* grace you have been saved, *through* faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.

Ephesians 3:12,17 In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence. . . ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.

Philippians 3:8-9 I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.

Colossians 2:12 [You have been] buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.

2 Timothy 3:15 From infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

Hebrews 6:12 We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.

Note that the NIV is not always consistent in rendering these terms.

-d) Never in Scripture do we find διὰ πίστεως (on account of or because of faith).

Heerbrand (d. 1600): Faith is not a condition, nor is it required as a condition, properly speaking. Because justification is not promised nor offered because of the worth or merit of faith or insofar as faith is a work. For faith is also imperfect, but it is, we might say, the way in which we receive the benefit which is offered and given through and because of Christ (*Compendium, loc. de evangelio*, p 165).

c) And so it is not the act of believing, but the object or content of faith, that saves.

1) For confessional statements, consider these:

Formula of Concord, TD, Art. III, p 918, 13: For faith justifies, not for this cause and reason that it is so good a work and so fair a virtue, but because it lays hold of and accepts the merit of Christ in the promise of the holy gospel; for this must be applied and appropriated to us by faith, if we are to be justified thereby.

Apology, Art. IV (II), p 146, 86: But since we receive remission of sins and the Holy Spirit by faith alone, faith alone justifies, because those reconciled are accounted righteous and children of God, not on account of their own purity, but through mercy for Christ's sake, provided only they by faith apprehend this mercy. Accordingly, Scripture testifies that by faith we are accounted righteous, Rom. 3:26. We, therefore, will add testimonies which clearly declare that faith is that very righteousness by which we are accounted righteous before God, namely, not because it is a work that is in itself worthy, but because it receives the promise by which God has promised that for Christ's sake he wishes to be propitious to those believing in him, or because he knows that Christ of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption, 1 Co. 1:30.

Calov: The mediate or instrumental cause of justification is faith, and indeed it is the only instrumental cause. However, it is never alone, nor does it exist separately (*Theol. pos.*, pars. III, sect. IV, cap V, p 494).

Calov: Faith does not justify essentially (i.e., by making us righteous in essence) nor by producing a righteous attitude in us (not because faith gives us a certain attitude or makes us worthy) or even as a cause or an indispensable condition. But it justifies as an instrument or as that by which we make the grace of God and the righteousness of Christ our own. But faith does not effect justification, nor does it merit it. It does not even begin it, but it accepts the free remission of sins and the righteousness of Christ and makes its own what is offered in the Word (*Apodixis fidei, de salutis consequendae modo*, art. XVII, p 289).

Quenstedt: Faith does not justify because of its worthiness as a work, action, or quality, but insofar as it applies and appropriates to itself the merit of Christ, to which alone that worthiness belongs (*TDP*, thes. X, p 518).

2) It is faith in Christ and his work that justifies (not, for example, reliance on God's providence).

John 3:16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Acts 16:31 They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household."

Romans 4:3 What does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."

3) Being saved does not become reality only when there is a consciousness or visible evidence of faith. The reality of faith does not depend on a person's consciousness of it.

-a) We say this not to deny that there are discernible evidences of faith. The church has long noted how a faith that lays hold of its object (*fides directa*) often becomes a faith that is subjectively aware of its presence (*fides reflexa*).

1 John 2:3 We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands.

1 John 3:14 We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death.

Romans 7:19,24 For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing.²⁴ What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?

-b) We say this to clarify that the reality of faith doesn't depend on discernible evidences, and that perceived "evidences" aren't always reliable.

Matthew 18:3 I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

Romans 8:26,27 In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.²⁷ And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will.

1 John 3:16, 18-20 This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. ¹⁸Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth. ¹⁹This then is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence ²⁰whenever our hearts condemn us. For God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything (NIV). ¹⁹And by this we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him. ²⁰For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things (NKJV).

Formula of Concord, TD, Art. II, p 902, 56: For concerning the presence, operation, and gifts of the Holy Spirit we should not and cannot always judge *ex sensu* [from feeling], as to how and when they are experienced in the heart; but because they are often covered and occur in great weakness, we should be certain from, and according to, the promise, that the Word of God preached and heard is truly an office and work of the Holy Spirit, by which he is certainly efficacious and works in our hearts, 2 Cor. 2:14ff; 3:5ff.

4) Because our believing is not a cause or condition for salvation, we seek to avoid using language that easily gives that impression.

1 Corinthians 4:7 Who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?

Philippians 2:13 It is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.

Compare Wayne Grudem: We may now appreciate that when a person comes to trust in Christ, all three elements must be present. There must be some basic knowledge or *understanding* of the facts of the gospel. There must also be *approval* of, or agreement with, these facts. . . . But all this still does not add up to true saving faith. That comes only when I make a decision of my will to depend on, or put my *trust* in, Christ as *my* Savior. This personal decision to place my trust in Christ is something done in my heart, the central faculty of my entire being that makes commitments for me as a whole person (*ST*, p 712).

Compare John Calvin: We must also notice here [Romans 1:5] what faith is; the name of obedience is given to it, and for this reason – because the Lord calls us by his gospel; we respond to his call by faith. ... Faith is properly that by which we obey the gospel (*Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans*, p 48).

2. The Means of Grace

A. General Remarks

I. The means of grace are the instruments appointed by God to proclaim the righteousness of Christ to a sinner and to create and maintain saving faith.

1. Since salvation has been accomplished, God devised ways and means for conveying and applying it to sinners.

a) After the Fall, all people are by nature not only ignorant of the reconciliation, but distort its meaning and oppose it as ruinous folly.

1 Corinthians 1:18,23 The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.²³ but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles.

1 Corinthians 2:14 The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.

Romans 9:32,33 They pursued [righteousness] not by faith but as if it were by works. They stumbled over the “stumbling stone.”³³ As it is written: “See, I lay in Zion a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.”

Romans 3:8 Why not say—as we are being slanderously reported as saying and as some claim that we say—“Let us do evil that good may result”? Their condemnation is deserved.

Acts 17:6,18 When they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some other brothers before the city officials, shouting: “These men who have caused trouble all over the world have now come here.”¹⁸ A group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers began to dispute with him. Some of them asked, “What is this babbler trying to say?” Others remarked, “He seems to be advocating foreign gods.” They said this because Paul was preaching the good news about Jesus and the resurrection.

b) So in applying salvation to people, God must make the first move.

Romans 9:16 It does not, therefore, depend on man’s desire or effort, but on God’s mercy.

Romans 11:32 God has bound all men over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all.

c) God did so by instituting and providing the means of grace.

2 Corinthians 5:18-21 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation:¹⁹ that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.²⁰ We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God.²¹ God

made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

1 Corinthians 1:21 Since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe.

2. The means of grace serve a double purpose.

a) The first function of the means of grace is to offer and proclaim to sinners pardon for Christ's sake.

Word

Mark 16:15,16 He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. ¹⁶ Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned."

Luke 24:47 Repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

2 Corinthians 3:9 If the ministry that condemns men is glorious, how much more glorious is the ministry that brings righteousness!

Baptism

Acts 2:38 Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

Acts 22:16 And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name.

Ephesians 5:25-26 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her ²⁶ to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word.

Lord's Supper

Luke 22:19,20 He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me." ²⁰ In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you."

Matthew 26:26-28 While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body." ²⁷ Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. ²⁸ This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."

1 Corinthians 10:16-17 Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we

break a participation in the body of Christ? ¹⁷ Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf.

Formula of Concord, TD, Art.II, p 902, 57: But if a man will not hear preaching nor read God's Word, but despises the Word and congregation of God, and thus dies and perishes in his sins, he neither can comfort himself with God's eternal election nor obtain his mercy; for Christ, in whom we are chosen, offers to all men his grace in the Word and holy Sacraments and wishes earnestly that it be heard, and he has promised that where two or three are gathered together in his name and are occupied with his holy Word, he will be in their midst.

b) The second function of the means of grace is to effect (create, maintain, strengthen) saving faith in Christ.

Romans 10:17 Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.

John 20:31 These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

1 Peter 1:23 You have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.

Titus 3:5 He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.

Luke 22:19 He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me."

Formula of Concord, TD, Art. II, p 902, 55,56: Now, although both the planting and watering of the preacher and the running and willing of the hearer would be in vain, and no conversion would follow them, if the power and efficacy of the Holy Spirit were not added to them—the Spirit who enlightens and converts the hearts through the Word preached and heard, so that men believe this Word and assent thereto, nevertheless, neither preacher nor hearer is to doubt this grace and efficacy of the Holy Spirit, but should be certain that when the Word of God is preached purely and truly according to the command and will of God, and men listen attentively and earnestly and meditate upon it, God is certainly present with his grace, and grants, as has been said, what otherwise man can neither accept nor give from his own powers. For concerning the presence, operation, and gifts of the Holy Spirit we should not and cannot always judge *ex sensu* [from feeling], as to how and when they are experienced in the heart; but because they are often covered and occur in great weakness, we should be certain from, and according to, the promise, that the Word of God preached and heard is truly an office and work of the Holy Spirit, by which He is certainly efficacious and works in our hearts, 2 Cor. 2:14ff; 3, 5ff.

Augsburg Confession, Art. V, p 44, 1-4: That we may obtain this faith, the ministry of preaching the gospel and administering the sacraments was

instituted. For through the Word and sacraments, as through instruments, the Holy Spirit is given, who works faith; where and when it pleases God, in them that hear the gospel, which is that God, not for our own merits, but for Christ's sake, justifies those who believe that they are received into grace for Christ's sake. They condemn the Anabaptists and others who think that the Holy Spirit comes to men without the external Word, through their own preparations and works.

Augsburg Confession, Art. XIII, p 48, 1-3, Of the use of the sacraments they teach that the sacraments were ordained, not only to be marks of profession among men, but rather to be signs and testimonies of the will of God toward us, instituted to awaken and confirm faith in those who use them. Wherefore we must so use the sacraments that faith be added to believe the promises which are offered and set forth through the sacraments. They therefore condemn those who teach that the sacraments justify by the outward act, and who do not teach that, in the use of the sacraments, faith which believes that sins are forgiven, is required.

Hollaz: The means of salvation are the divinely ordained means through which God by grace offers the salvation won by Christ the Mediator to all men who have fallen into sin, and gives them true faith and preserves it. The power of the divine Word is not only one that sets that salvation before us (*objectiva*) or that points it out (*significativa*) to us, as the power of a statue of Mercury which points out the way but does not cause the traveler to walk on it; but it is a power that is effective, since the Word of God not only points out the way to salvation but it causes souls to be saved (*Examen*, 992).

c) It is to be noted that the means of grace have their power inhering in themselves; it is not added to them in their application.

Jeremiah 23:29 “Is not my word like fire,” declares the LORD, “and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces?”

Hebrews 4:12 The word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

John 6:63 The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life.

James 1:21 Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.

Karl Barth (d. 1968), opposing the Lutheran doctrine of the efficacy of God's Word even prior to and aside from its use (*efficacia Verbi divini etiam ante et extra usum*): The Bible is God's Word so far as God lets it be his Word, so far as God speaks through it... The Bible therefore becomes God's Word in this event, and it is to its being in this becoming that the tiny word “is” relates, in the statement that the Bible is God's Word. It does not become God's Word because we accord it faith, but, of course, because it becomes revelation to us (*CD*, I, 1:123–124).

Compare Robert Reymond: The problem with this Lutheran insistence that the written and preached Word intrinsically carries within itself all the power necessary to convert all men is that this view cannot explain in a way that harmonizes with the Scripture's teaching on salvation why all men who read or hear the Word are not immediately and without exception converted thereby. ... The Lutherans deny the irresistibility of the very intrinsic power to convert which they claim for the written and preached Word (*NST*, p 915).

II. Faith is produced by God only through the means of grace.

Note: In saying this we do not wish to be understood that God could not create faith immediately in human hearts, or could not have devised other ways and means for doing it if he had seen fit to do so; but that he did not. "Since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe" (1 Corinthians 1:21).

1. Faith not based on the objective means of grace is imaginary, deceptive, and illusory.

a) God grants faith through the means of grace. Recall the double purpose of the means, expressed in the following passages.

John 17:20 My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message.

1 Peter 1:23 You have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.

Titus 3:5 He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.

Romans 10:14,17 How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? ¹⁷ Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.

John 6:63 The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life.

1 Corinthians 4:15 Even though you have ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel.

Formula of Concord, TD, Art. II, p 900, 48,50,52: For this reason we shall now relate, furthermore, from God's Word how man is converted to God, how and through what means (namely, through the oral Word and the holy Sacraments) the Holy Spirit wants to be efficacious in us, and to work and bestow in our hearts true repentance, faith, and new spiritual power and ability for good, and how we should conduct ourselves towards these means, and how we should use them. . . Therefore God, out of his immense goodness and

mercy, has his divine eternal law and his wonderful plan concerning our redemption, namely, the holy, alone-saving gospel of his eternal Son, our only Savior and Redeemer, Jesus Christ, publicly preached; and by this preaching collects an eternal Church for himself from the human race, and works in the hearts of men true repentance and knowledge of sins, and true faith in the Son of God, Jesus Christ. And by this means, and in no other way, namely, through his holy Word, when men hear it preached or read it, and the holy Sacraments when they are used according to his Word, God desires to call men to eternal salvation, draw them to himself, and convert, regenerate, and sanctify them. ... Now, all who wish to be saved ought to hear this preaching of God's Word. For the preaching and hearing of God's Word are instruments of the Holy Spirit, by, with, and through which he desires to work efficaciously, and to convert men to God, and to work in them both to will and to do.

b) Note the instructions to Christians to testify and to preach the gospel to bring about conversion.

John 15:27 You also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning.

Acts 1:8 You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

Acts 5:32 We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.

Matthew 28:19 Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Mark 16:15,16 He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. ¹⁶ Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned."

Luke 24:47 Repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

c) Those without the Word are described as being without light and in ignorance.

Luke 1:76-79 You, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him, ⁷⁷ to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins, ⁷⁸ because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven ⁷⁹ to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace.

Isaiah 9:2 The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.

Isaiah 60:2 See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the LORD rises upon you and his glory appears over you.

2. The Holy Spirit's converting and saving work is inseparably tied up with the means of grace.

a) This truth is clearly expressed in Scripture.

John 6:63 The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life.

John 3:5 Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit."

Galatians 3:2,5 I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law (ἐξ ἔργων νόμου), or by believing what you heard (ἐξ ἀκοῆς πίστεως)?⁵ Does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you because you observe the law (ἐξ ἔργων νόμου), or because you believe what you heard (ἐξ ἀκοῆς πίστεως)?

1 Corinthians 2:4,5 My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power,⁵ so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power.

Titus 3:5 He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.

b) One possible exception in Scripture has been identified and discussed.

Luke 1:15,44 He will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from birth.⁴⁴ As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy.

Smalcald Articles, Part III, Art. VIII, p 496, 12: Neither was John the Baptist conceived without the preceding word of Gabriel, nor did he leap in his mother's womb without the voice of Mary.

c) Despite this inseparable connection between the Spirit's work and the means of grace, there are "enthusiasts" (*Schwärmer*) who believe and teach otherwise.

1) Enthusiasts despise the means of grace and expect an immediate action of the Holy Spirit.

Smalcald Articles, Part III, Art. VIII, p 494, 4-5, 9-10: For indeed the Papacy also is nothing but sheer enthusiasm, by which the Pope boasts that all rights exist in the shrine of his heart, and whatever he decides and commands with [in] his church is spirit and right, even though it is above and contrary to Scripture and the spoken Word. All this is the old devil and old serpent, who also converted Adam and Eve into enthusiasts, and led them from the outward Word of God to

spiritualizing and self-conceit, and nevertheless he accomplished this through other outward words. In a word, enthusiasm inheres in Adam and his children from the first fall to the end of the world, its poison having been implanted and infused into them by the old dragon, and is the origin, power, life, and strength of all heresy, especially of that of the Papacy and Mohammad. Therefore we ought and must constantly maintain this point, that God does not wish to deal with us otherwise than through the spoken Word and the sacraments.

Formula of Concord, Ep., Art. II, p 788, 13: Also, we reject and condemn the error of the Enthusiasts, who imagine that God without means, without the hearing of God's Word, also without the use of the holy Sacraments, draws men to himself, and enlightens, justifies, and saves them. (Enthusiasts we call those who expect the heavenly illumination of the Spirit without the preaching of God's Word.)

2) The attempt to sever subjective faith from the objective means of grace invariably leads to a founding of faith on a person's own achievements.

Smalcald Articles, Part III, Art. VIII, p 494, 6: Just as also our enthusiasts at the present day condemn the outward Word, and nevertheless they themselves are not silent, but they fill the world with their pratings and writings, as though, indeed, the Spirit could not come through the writings and spoken word of the apostles, but first through their writings and words he must come. Why then do not they also omit their own sermons and writings, until the Spirit himself come to men, without their writings and before them, as they boast that he has come into them without the preaching of the Scriptures? But of these matters there is not time now to dispute at greater length; we have elsewhere sufficiently urged this subject.

3. It is God's revealed desire to deal with sinners through the means.

1 Corinthians 1:21 Since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. .

Smalcald Articles, Part III, Art. VIII, p 494, 3: And in those things which concern the spoken, outward Word, we must firmly hold that God grants his Spirit or grace to no one, except through or with the preceding outward Word, in order that we may thus be protected against the enthusiasts, i.e., spirits who boast that they have the Spirit without and before the Word, and accordingly judge Scripture or the spoken Word, and explain and stretch it at their pleasure, as Muenzer did, and many still do at the present day, who wish to be acute judges between the Spirit and the letter, and yet know not what they say or declare.

Formula of Concord, TD, Art. XI, p 1086, 76: Moreover, the declaration, John 6:44, that "no one can come to Christ except the Father draw him" is right and true. However, the Father will not do this without means, but has ordained for this purpose his Word and sacraments as ordinary means and instruments; and it is the will neither of the Father nor of the Son that a man should not hear or should

despise the preaching of his Word, and wait for the drawing of the Father without the Word and sacraments. For the Father draws indeed by the power of his Holy Spirit, however, according the order decreed and instituted by himself, by the hearing of his holy, divine Word, as with a net, by which the elect are plucked from the jaws of the devil.

Luther: Outwardly God deals with us through the oral word of the gospel and through material signs, that is, baptism and the sacrament of the altar. Inwardly he deals with us through the Holy Spirit, faith, and other gifts. But whatever their measure or order, the outward factors should and must precede. The inward experience follows and is effected by the outward. God has determined to give the inward to no one except through the outward. For he wants to give no one the Spirit or faith outside of the outward Word and sign instituted by him, as he says in Luke 16:29, "Let them hear Moses and the prophets" (*LW* 40, p 146).

III. Any error in the doctrine of salvation corrupts the doctrine about the means of grace.

1. The Roman Catholic error regarding the way of salvation illustrates this.

a) Catholics ultimately teach that Christ merited for sinners the ability to work out their own salvation.

Council of Trent, VI, Cap. 7: Justification is not only the forgiveness of sins, but also the sanctification and renewal of the inward man by a voluntary [one that takes place through man's free will] reception of grace [i.e., infused grace] and gifts [i.e., the ability to do various good works]. As a result of this a righteous man is made out of an unrighteous one.... The single essential cause is the righteousness of God ... by which he makes us righteous, by which, namely, when we are endowed by him with this grace and these gifts, we are renewed in the spirit of our mind, and are not only looked upon as righteous, but are truly righteous in name and in fact, as people who have received righteousness within ourselves, each one in accord ... with his own attitude and cooperation. For although no one can be righteous except the man to whom the merits of earned by the suffering of our Lord Jesus Christ are given, nevertheless in the justification of the ungodly this happens when, by the merit of his most holy passion the love of God is poured out by the Holy Spirit into the hearts of those who are justified, and this love becomes an inhering quality.

Council of Trent, Canon 32 : If any one says that he who is justified ... does not by good works himself ... merit an increase of grace ... let him be damned.

Catechism of the Catholic Church, Par. 654: The Paschal mystery has two aspects: by his death, Christ liberates us from sin; by his Resurrection, he opens for us the way to a new life. This new life is above all Justification that reinstates us in God's grace, "so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life." Justification consists in both victory over the death caused by sin and a new participation in grace.

b) In this Catholic system of thought the purpose of the means of grace is quite different from what the Bible teaches.

- 1) They do not offer forgiveness of sins to faith, and thereby produce faith; they confer (infuse) grace by the work performed (*ex opere operato*) on those who are not placing a hindrance (*obicem non ponentibus*) by a mortal sin [Sacramentalism].**
- 2) Furthermore, the efficacy of the means of grace depends on the intention of the person who administers them.**

Council of Trent, VII, Can. 11: If anyone says that when ministers celebrate and give the sacraments it is not required that they should have the intention at least of doing what the church is doing, let him be damned.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church, Par. 1256: The ordinary ministers of Baptism are the bishop and priest and, in the Latin Church, also the deacon. In case of necessity, any person, even someone not baptized, can baptize, if he has the required intention. The intention required is to will to do what the Church does when she baptizes, and to apply the Trinitarian baptismal formula.

c) The result of this kind of teaching is doubt, the opposite of faith.

Council of Trent, VI, Can. 15: If anyone says that a regenerated and justified person is bound by faith to believe that he is certainly one of the elect, let him be damned.

Chemnitz: The point at issue between us and the papists is that they teach that the sinner cannot and must not stand in sure confidence that he is in grace and that his sins have been remitted to him (*Loci*, II, p 506).

2. The Calvinist error regarding the way of salvation also corrupts the doctrine about the means of grace.

a) Calvinists teach a particular or special saving grace (*gratia particularis*) that God gives only to the elect.

Canons of Dordt (1619), Cap. 1,6: The fact that some are in time endowed with faith and others are not is a result of God's own eternal decision (decree).

Helvetic Consensus Formula (1675) Can. 19: God devised no eternal plan of salvation without a decision about the persons who would be saved, and therefore Christ did not die for each and every one but only for the elect who were given to him.

Charles Hodge (d. 1878): In addition to the grace of salvation to the elect, the Bible speaks of a divine grace to every man. ... This is what in theology is called common grace. . . . This common grace is distinguished from the

efficacious operation of the Spirit to which the Scriptures ascribe the regeneration of the soul (*ST*, 1988, ch. XIV, Art. 3, p 426-427).

b) If there is no real grace for the non-elect, it is self-contradictory to accuse them of rejecting the common grace offered to them in the means of grace.

Westminster Confession of Faith: Others, not elected, although they may be called by the ministry of the Word and may have some common [nonsaving] operations of the Spirit, yet they never truly come unto Christ, and therefore cannot be saved (Art. X, i-ii; cited by Reymond, *NST*, p 712).

Charles Hodge: The Scriptures refer to this general influence of the Spirit varied religious experiences which are not attended by genuine conversion or regeneration. . . . These common influences of the Spirit are all capable of being effectually resisted (*ST*, 1988, ch. XIV, Art. 3, p 427).

Wayne Grudem: We must realize that common grace is different from saving grace. Common grace does not change the human heart or bring people to genuine repentance and faith – it cannot and does not save people. ... Common grace restrains sin but does not change anyone’s foundational disposition to sin, nor does it in any significant measure purify fallen human nature. We must also recognize that the actions of unbelievers performed by virtue of common grace do not in themselves merit God’s approval or favor (*ST*, p 663).

c) In Reformed thought, even for the elect there are no real means of grace since the Spirit is said to work conversion without instruments.

Charles Hodge: “All second causes being excluded,” and the “infusion of a new life into the soul being the immediate work of the Spirit,” the means merely “attend the work of regeneration” (*ST*, Vol. II, p 684f).

Charles Hodge: Regeneration itself, the infusion of a new life into the soul, is the immediate work of the Spirit. There is here no place for the use of means (*ST*, Vol II, p 685).

d) Alleged Scripture proofs for the immediate working of the Spirit include the following points (drawn from A. Hodge’s *Outlines of Theology*, p 338f. See Pieper, III, p 149-150).

1) The influence of the Spirit is distinguished from that of the Word.

John 6:45,64,65 It is written in the Prophets: “They will all be taught by God.” Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from him comes to me. ⁶⁴Yet there are some of you who do not believe. For Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray him. ⁶⁵ He went on to say, “This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled him.”

1 Thessalonians 1:5,6 Our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake. ⁶ You became imitators of us and of the Lord; in spite of severe suffering, you welcomed the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit.

In response, we say they are distinguished—but not separate.

John 6:63,68 The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life. ⁶⁸ Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.”

2) A divine influence is declared to be necessary to the reception of the truth.

Psalms 119:18 Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law.

Ephesians 1:17 I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.

In response, we say that influence is found in the Word itself.

Psalms 119:104,105 I gain understanding from your precepts; therefore I hate every wrong path. ¹⁰⁵ Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.

Ephesians 1:13 You also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit.

3) Working spiritual life is an internal operation attributed to God.

Philippians 2:13 It is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.

Ephesians 2:8 It is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.

2 Timothy 2:25 Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth.

In response, we agree but also say that God's internal work is accomplished through the Word.

Philippians 1:14-18 Because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly. ¹⁵ It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and

rivalry, but others out of goodwill. ¹⁶ The latter do so in love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. ¹⁷ The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains. ¹⁸ But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice. Yes, and I will continue to rejoice.

4) The gift of the Spirit is distinguished from the gift of the Word.

John 14:16 I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever.

In response, we say according to the context the Spirit is here distinguished from Christ.

John 14:26 The Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

5) The nature of divine influence is evidently different from that effected by the truth.

Ephesians 1:19 . . . his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength,

Ephesians 3:7 I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power.

In response we say the context attributes the same result indiscriminately to both causes.

Ephesians 1:13 You also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 3:6 This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.

Romans 10:17 Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.

6) People are by nature dead in sin and need a direct intervention of supernatural power.

1 Corinthians 2:14 The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.

2 Corinthians 4:4 The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

Ephesians 2:1 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins.

In response, we say the intervention of supernatural power is certainly required; but to assume that this must be immediate is begging the question. It does not follow.

F. Pieper: There is not even the semblance of Scripture proof for the Reformed teaching of the means of grace. Examination of the Scripture proof these men attempt to adduce reveals that the proof is nothing but a *petitio principii*, that from the outset they always assume as proved and certain that the Holy Spirit needs no *vehiculum*, yes, that God's honor is assailed if his "efficacious grace" is bound to the means of grace (*CD*, III, p 148).

- 7) **Add to this list of arguments the much-quoted analogy: "Man sees by the light. Without light vision is impossible. Yet the eyes of the blind are not opened by means of the light" (Chas. Hodge, *ST*, Vol. II, p 685).**

In response, we say an analogy is never conclusive. In reality, according to divine revelation, there is a sight-giving light. The Word is both a sight-giving tool and a guiding light. Let us therefore use it as such.

Luke 4:18 The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed.

Acts 26:17-18 I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them¹⁸ to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.

- e) **Calvinists promote and praise the means as signs and testimonials of immediate grace, but they acknowledge only this feature of the means.**

- 1) **The means themselves, however, testify to the illegitimacy of immediate grace.**

Jeremiah 22:29 O land, land, land, hear the word of the LORD!

Jeremiah 8:9 The wise will be put to shame; they will be dismayed and trapped. Since they have rejected the word of the LORD, what kind of wisdom do they have?

Hosea 4:6 My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also reject you as my priests; because you have ignored the law of your God, I also will ignore your children.

Isaiah 8:20 To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, they have no light of dawn.

Luke 7:30 The Pharisees and experts in the law rejected God's purpose for themselves, because they had not been baptized by John.

Luke 16:31 He said to him, "If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead."

2) To speak of a life-giving grace that requires outside testimony for its presence is self-contradictory.

Luke 24:32 They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"

Augsburg Confession, Art. XIII, p 48, 1-3: Of the use of the sacraments they teach that the sacraments were ordained, not only to be marks of profession among men, but rather to be signs and testimonies of the will of God toward us, instituted to awaken and confirm faith in those who use them. Wherefore we must so use the sacraments that faith be added to believe the promises which are offered and set forth through the sacraments. They therefore condemn those who teach that the sacraments justify by the outward act, and who do not teach that, in the use of the sacraments, faith which believes that sins are forgiven is required.

Gottlieb Wernsdorf (d. 1729): Scripture, therefore, teaches us about the essence and will of God and it teaches us these things for our salvation. For, in order that it might be able to do this, it is endowed with a special power which is active in enticing, drawing, influencing and leading the minds of men to faith and love. For we are not only instructed and taught by the Word, but we are also regenerated, improved, and changed so that the Word not only has the power to admonish and persuade, but also to effect and do something in us, and it can do this because of the perpetual influence of the Holy Spirit, by which the Word, as it were, is made a living and very efficacious thing. Because of this power conferred on it, it is called "spirit" and "life" in Jn 6:63, 68 (*Disp. de verbo Dei*, Art. 47, p 278).

3. The Synergistic error regarding the way of salvation also corrupts the doctrine about the means of grace.

- a) **Synergists ascribe to people, as free moral agents, the ability to cooperate in producing their own faith.**

- b) **In that case the means of grace are reduced to mere stimulating agents or to ordinances demanding correct conduct on the part of man.**

Wayne Grudem: Since Jesus commanded his church to baptize (Matt. 28:19), we would expect that there would be a measure of blessing connected with baptism, because all obedience to God by Christians brings God's favor with it. (*ST*, p 953) In addition to baptism, the other ordinance or ceremony that Jesus commanded the church to carry out is participation in the Lord's Supper (*ST*, p 954).

Contrast with Wernsdorf: For the Word not only teaches and admonishes us that we ought to be enlightened, regenerated, converted, justified, renewed, reunited with God, etc., but it also produces these things and regenerates a man, (1 Pe 1:23; Jac 1:18), enlightens (Ps 19:9), unless it is hindered by the stubbornness and resistance of men.... The reason for this is that the Holy Spirit is continually present with it (the Word). As the sainted Hunnius says, He coexists with it and therefore communicates his infinite strength and power to it and by his continual influence gives power and life to the word (*Disp. de verbo Dei*, Art. 54, 55, p 279).

4. **As we note the errors of others regarding the means of grace, we also do well to mark some weaknesses in our personal Christianity. The following failings, among others, merit self-examination.**
- **Negligence in using the means of grace**
 - **Regarding their use as a meritorious work.**
 - **When assailed by doubt, looking into our own heart and judging God's grace by our own thoughts and emotions rather than by his objective declarations.**

IV. The God-appointed means of grace are: the word of the gospel and the sacraments (the gospel in word and sacrament). Note that the definition and number of the "means of grace" varies, especially among Evangelicals.

Larger Catechism, Westminster Assembly: What are the outward means whereby Christ communicates to us the benefits of his mediation? Answer: The outward and ordinary means whereby Christ communicates to his church the benefits of his redemption are all his ordinances; especially the word, sacraments, and prayer; all which are made effectual to the elect for their salvation (Question 154; cited in Reymond, *NST*, p 912).

Wayne Grudem: We may define the means of grace as follows: The means of grace are any activities within the fellowship of the church that God uses to give more grace to Christians. . . The following list may not be exhaustive, but it does include most of the means of grace that believers have access to within the fellowship of the church:
1. Teaching of the Word' 2. Baptism, 3. The Lord's Supper, 4. Prayer for one another, 5. Worship, 6. Church discipline, 7. Giving, 8. Spiritual gifts, 9. Fellowship, 10. Evangelism, 11. Personal ministry to individuals (*ST*, p 950-951).

1. **The term "word of the gospel" must not be restricted to the audible word. It includes any way of conveying a thought.**

a) The word of the gospel includes the spoken word.

Mark 16:15 He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.”

Luke 24:47 Repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

Romans 10:17 Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.

b) The word of the gospel includes the written word.

John 5:39,46 You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me. ⁴⁶If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me.

John 20:31 These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

2 Timothy 3:16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.

1 John 1:3,4 We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. ⁴We write this to make our joy complete.

Colossians 4:16 After this letter has been read to you, see that it is also read in the church of the Laodiceans and that you in turn read the letter from Laodicea.

1 Thessalonians 5:27 I charge you before the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers.

c) The word of the gospel includes the thought expressed by symbols such as the crucifix or stained glass windows.

John 3:14,15 Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, ¹⁵ that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.

d) The word of the gospel includes the truth pondered in the heart.

Romans 10:8 But what does it say? “The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart,” that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming.

Luke 2:19,51 Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. ⁵¹ Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart.

2. There are two rites instituted of God and accompanied by outward signs through which he would convey his grace. These are commonly called sacraments.

a) One is the sacrament of baptism.

Acts 2:38 Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

Acts 22:16 What are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name.

Titus 3:5 He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.

b) The other is the sacrament of communion.

Matthew 26:28 This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

Luke 22:19 And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me."

c) The extent of the term "sacrament" depends on its definition.

Apology, Art. XIII (VII), p 308, 3 & 4: If we call sacraments "rites which have the command of God, and to which the promise of grace has been added", it is easy to decide what are properly sacraments. For rites instituted by men will not in this way be sacraments properly so called. For it does not belong to human authority to promise grace. Therefore signs instituted without God's command are not sure signs of grace, even though they perhaps instruct the rude children or the uncultivated, or admonish as to something as a painted cross. Therefore Baptism, the Lord's Supper, and Absolution, which is the Sacrament of Repentance, are truly sacraments. For these rites have God's command and the promise of grace, which is peculiar to the New Testament. For when we are baptized, when we eat the Lord's body, when we are absolved, our hearts must be firmly assured that God truly forgives us for Christ's sake.

Apology, Art. XIII (VII), p 309, 11: But if ordination is understood as applying to the ministry of the Word, we are not unwilling to call ordination a sacrament. For the ministry of the Word has God's command and glorious promises, Rom. 1, 16: "The gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believes." Likewise, Is. 55, 11: "So shall My Word be that goes forth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please."

Apology, Art. XIII (VII), p 309, 14-17: Matrimony was not first instituted in the New Testament, but in the beginning, immediately on the creation of the human race. It has, moreover, God's command; it has also promises, not

indeed properly pertaining to the New Testament, but pertaining rather to the bodily life. Wherefore, if any one should wish to call it a sacrament, he ought still to distinguish it from those preceding ones, which are properly signs of the New Testament and testimonies of grace and the remission of sins. But if marriage will have the name of sacrament for the reason that it has God's command, other states or offices also, which have God's command, may be called sacraments, as, for example, the magistracy. Lastly, if among the sacraments all things ought to be numbered which have God's command and to which promises have been added, why do we not add prayer, which most truly can be called a sacrament? For it has both God's command and very many promises; and if placed among the sacraments, as though in a more eminent place, it would invite men to pray. Alms could also be reckoned here, and likewise afflictions, which are, even themselves signs, to which God has added promises. But let us omit these things. For no prudent man will strive greatly concerning the number or the term, if only those objects still be retained which have God's command and promises.

Large Catechism, Infant Baptism, p 750, 74: And here you see that Baptism, both in its power and signification, comprehends also the third Sacrament, which has been called repentance.

Large Catechism, Of Baptism, p 752, 1: We have now finished the three chief parts of the common Christian doctrine. Besides these we have yet to speak of our two sacraments instituted by Christ, of which also every Christian ought to have at least an ordinary, brief instruction, because without them there can be no Christian.

Large Catechism, Short Preface, p 578, 20: Now, when these three parts are apprehended, it behooves a person also to know what to say concerning our sacraments, which Christ himself instituted, Baptism and the holy body and blood of Christ, namely, the text which Matthew 28, 19ff and Mark 16, 15f record at the close of their gospels when Christ said farewell to his disciples and sent them forth.

d) The Roman Catholic Church demands acceptance of seven sacraments.

Council of Trent, Sess. VII, Can. 1: If anyone says that the sacraments of the New Law (i.e., the New Testament) have not all been instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ, or that there are more or fewer than seven, namely, Baptism, Confirmation, the Eucharist, Penance, Extreme Unction, Ordination, and Matrimony, or even that some of these seven are not really and properly sacraments, let him be damned.

Catechism of the Catholic Church, Par. 1210: Christ instituted the sacraments of the new law. There are seven: Baptism, Confirmation (or Chrismation), the Eucharist, Penance, the Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders and Matrimony. The seven sacraments touch all the stages and all the important moments of Christian life: they give birth and increase, healing and mission to the Christian's life of faith. There is thus a certain resemblance between the stages of natural life and the stages of the spiritual life.

3. All means of grace serve the same purpose: they offer the grace of God, and produce and strengthen faith.

a) There is no difference in their purpose.

1) Baptism produces regeneration; so does the Word.

Titus 3:5 He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.

1 Peter 1:23, For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.

2) The purpose of the Lord's Supper is to convey forgiveness. There is nothing in Scripture that indicates it is to nourish physically a so-called resurrection body.

Luke 22:19 He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me."

Compare Cyril of Jerusalem (d. 386): Wherefore with full assurance let us partake as of the Body and Blood of Christ: for in the figure of Bread is given to you his Body, and in the figure of Wine his Blood; that you by partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ, may be made of the same body and the same blood with him. For thus we come to bear Christ in us, because his Body and Blood are distributed through our members; thus it is that, according to the blessed Peter, we became partakers of the divine nature. . . . Give us this day our substantial bread. This common bread is not substantial bread, but this Holy Bread is substantial, that is, appointed for the substance of the soul. For this Bread goes not into the belly and is cast out into the draught, but is distributed into thy whole system for the benefit of body and soul (*The Nicene & Post-Nicene Fathers*, Series II, Vol. VII, Catechetical Lectures XXII and XXIII, p 151, 155).

Compare Gregory of Nyssa (d. ca. 395): The body comes into fellowship and blending with the Author of our salvation in another way. . . . For, in the manner that, as the Apostle says, a little leaven assimilates to itself the whole lump, so in like manner that body to which immortality has been given it by God, when it is in ours, translates and transmutes the whole into itself. . . . He disseminates himself in every believer through that flesh, whose substance comes from bread and wine, blending himself with the bodies of believers, to secure that, by this union with the immortal, man, too, may be a sharer in incorruption (*The Nicene & Post-Nicene Fathers*, Series II, Vol. V, Great Catechism, ch.. XXXVII, p 505-506).

Koenig: This assertion [that the reception of communion produces an essential union of Christ with the communicant, a union that has a physical effect] is of such a nature that we cannot assent to it with a good

conscience for the following reasons: 1. It has no foundation at all in Scripture. . . . 2. The Sacrament confers on us what is promised in the Word. . . . But nowhere is [an essential union with Christ] promised to us. . . . 3. If the communicants are united essentially with Christ by the mere use of the Supper of our Lord, also the unbelieving should be acknowledged participants in this union . . . but . . . the conclusion is absurd (*Cases of Conscience*, p 484, cited in Walther-Baier, *Compendium*, III, p 526f.).

Hermann Sasse: That the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper are anticipations of the future, of our resurrection, and the complete union with Christ, is the doctrine of the New Testament. *How* the sacrament can have such effects, the Bible does not tell us. That is the reason why Luther never attempted to answer this question which was discussed also by the schoolmen. He was satisfied to know that a connection does exist between our receiving Christ's body and blood and our future glory (*This Is My Body*, p 185-186).

b) The variety in the ways of proclaiming grace serves the purpose of giving stronger assurance.

Smalcald Articles, Part III, Art. IV, p 490: We will now return to the gospel, which not merely in one way gives us counsel and aid against sin; for God is superabundantly rich and liberal in his grace and goodness. First, through the spoken Word by which the forgiveness of sins is preached in the whole world; which is the peculiar office of the gospel. Secondly, through Baptism. Thirdly, through the holy Sacrament of the Altar. Fourthly, through the power of the keys, and also through the mutual conversation and consolation of brothers, Matt. 18, 20: "Where two or three are gathered together," etc.

4. Prayer is not to be classed with the means of grace.

a) There is an essential difference between the act of praying and the means of grace.

1) Prayer is an expression on our part of a desire for grace from God.

2) The means are instruments that God uses to convey and confer his grace on us.

b) Calvinists and Arminians, assuming an immediate working of the Spirit, are prone to refer a terror-stricken conscience to prayer for reassurance.

Romans 8:26,27 The Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. ²⁷ And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will.

Charles Hodge (d. 1878): The means of grace, according to the standards of our Church, are the word, sacraments, and prayer (*ST*, Vol II, Part III, p 466).

R. Reymond: When one considers (1) that prayer “brings us near to God, who is the source of all good,” (2) that “fellowship with him, converse with him, calls into exercise all gracious affections, reverence, love, gratitude, submission, faith, joy, and devotion” [Charles Hodge, *ST*, 3:708], it seems altogether appropriate to treat prayer, although it is surely a fruit of grace, as itself also a means of grace (*NST*, p 912, fn).

c) Coordinating prayer with the means of grace easily leads to the concept that prayer itself is meritorious.

Matthew 6:7 And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words.

Walther (quoting and then commenting on words of J.P. Fresenius, Lutheran Pietist): “All depends on three rules which the sinner must observe. They are derived from the inmost nature of the divine order of salvation and are such that, if faithfully applied, the worst slaves of the devil are helped by them. The first rule is: Pray for grace. The second: Be watchful lest you lose grace. The third: Meditate upon the Word of God in a proper manner.” He should have said, “He must hear the Word of God.” But that he has put into his third rule. His whole scheme makes conversion dependent on man’s own effort to obtain grace (*Law and Gospel*, p 143-144).

V. The Old Testament means of grace had the same purpose as the New Testament means do. There were differences, however, in the way God designed and used them.

1. The purpose of both Old and New Testament means of grace is the same: to proclaim Christ and produce faith in justification for Christ's sake.

a) Old Testament writings speak of Christ.

Romans 3:21 But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify.

Acts 10:43 All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.

John 5:45-47 Do not think I will accuse you before the Father. Your accuser is Moses, on whom your hopes are set.⁴⁶ If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me.⁴⁷ But since you do not believe what he wrote, how are you going to believe what I say?

Luke 24:25 He said to them, “How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!”

b) Old Testament ceremonies prefigure Christ.

Colossians 2:16,17 Do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. ¹⁷ These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.

Hebrews 8:5 They serve at a sanctuary that is a copy and shadow of what is in heaven. This is why Moses was warned when he was about to build the tabernacle: “See to it that you make everything according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.”

Hebrews 9:11 When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation.

Hebrews 4:9,10 There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; ¹⁰for anyone who enters God’s rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his. Compare with Leviticus 25:10: Consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you; each one of you is to return to his family property and each to his own clan.

c) The Old Testament proclaims salvation through faith in Christ.

Genesis 15:6 Abram believed the LORD , and he credited it to him as righteousness.

Romans 4:1-3 What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather, discovered in this matter? ² If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about—but not before God. ³ What does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.”

Galatians 3:6-9 Consider Abraham: “He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.” ⁷ Understand, then, that those who believe are children of Abraham. ⁸ The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: “All nations will be blessed through you.” ⁹ So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.

Hebrews 11:26 [Moses] regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward.

2. The Old Testament means of grace differed from the New Testament means in the ways they were structured and presented to people.

a) The Old Testament writings and sacred ceremonies presented Christ in the form of predictive prophecy, while the New Testament proclaims their fulfillment.

Matthew 11:2-3 When John heard in prison what Christ was doing, he sent his disciples ³ to ask him, “Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?”

Acts 18:5,28 When Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia, Paul devoted himself exclusively to preaching, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ. ²⁸ For he vigorously refuted the Jews in public debate, proving from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ.

b) The Old Testament used the form of covenant ordinances and stipulations to predict and prefigure Christ, while the New Testament presents the gospel primarily in the form of unconditional promise.

1) The Mosaic Law or “old covenant” did not abolish or annul the gospel promise that had been previously given.

Galatians 3:17,19 What I mean is this: The law, introduced 430 years later, does not set aside the covenant previously established by God and thus do away with the promise. ¹⁹ What, then, was the purpose of the law? It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come. The law was put into effect through angels by a mediator.

Galatians 4:1-5 What I am saying is that as long as the heir is a child, he is no different from a slave, although he owns the whole estate. ² He is subject to guardians and trustees until the time set by his father. ³ So also, when we were children, we were in slavery under the basic principles of the world. ⁴ But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, ⁵ to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.

2) Rather, the legal stipulations served God’s people in anticipation of Christ. They were designed to keep the people of the promise distinct from other peoples and to help maintain their focus on the messianic hope.

Galatians 3:23-25 Before this faith came, we were held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed. ²⁴ So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith. ²⁵ Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law.

Exodus 19:5,6 “Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, ⁶ you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites.

Joshua 24:2 Joshua said to all the people, “This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: ‘Long ago your forefathers, including Terah the father of Abraham and Nahor, lived beyond the River and worshiped other gods.’”

Romans 3:1-2 What advantage, then, is there in being a Jew, or what value is there in circumcision? Much in every way! First of all, they have been entrusted with the very words of God.

c) The Old Testament prophecies were also less distinct in presenting information on the chronology and accompanying circumstances of the Messiah's work than the New Testament statements are.

1 Peter 1:10-11 Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care,¹¹ trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.

Heerbrand: As far as essence and effect are concerned there is no difference between Old Testament and New Testament sacraments, but so far as manner is concerned there is some difference. For always the doctrine of the gospel concerning the coming Savior was made more and more clear and set before people more plainly as certain circumstances were added by which it was explained more fully (*Compendium, loc. de evangelio*, p 318).

Quenstedt: We grant that there is a difference in the degrees and manner of revelation. For in the Old Testament the promises of the gospel were gradually proclaimed and explained more clearly until finally the full light rose in the New Testament (*TDP*, pars IV, sect. II, qu. I, obj. dial. VII, p 63).

Augustine: The New Testament in the Old lies concealed;
the Old Testament in the New is revealed
(*Quaestiones in Heptateuchum*, 2, 73).

3. Two Old Testament rites demand particular mention.

a) One of these Old Testament rites is circumcision.

1) Circumcision was an expression of the gospel promise.

Genesis 17:7,10-14 I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you.¹⁰ This is my covenant with you and your descendants after you, the covenant you are to keep: Every male among you shall be circumcised.¹¹ You are to undergo circumcision, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and you.¹² For the generations to come every male among you who is eight days old must be circumcised, including those born in your household or bought with money from a foreigner—those who are not your offspring.¹³ Whether born in your household or bought with your money, they must be circumcised. My covenant in your flesh is to be an everlasting covenant.¹⁴ Any uncircumcised male, who has not been circumcised in the flesh, will be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant.

Compare with Jeremiah 31:31-34 “The time is coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.³² It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them,”

declares the LORD. ³³ “This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time,” declares the LORD. “I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. ³⁴ No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,” declares the LORD. “For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.”

Romans 4:11 [Abraham] received the sign (σημεῖον) of circumcision, a seal (σφραγίς) of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. So then, he is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them.

Acts 7:8 [God] gave Abraham the covenant of circumcision. And Abraham became the father of Isaac and circumcised him eight days after his birth. Later Isaac became the father of Jacob, and Jacob became the father of the twelve patriarchs.

Colossians 2:11-12 In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, ¹² having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.

2) Circumcision was also regulated by covenant law.

Leviticus 12:3 On the eighth day the boy is to be circumcised.

John 7:22,23 Because Moses gave you circumcision (though actually it did not come from Moses, but from the patriarchs), you circumcise a child on the Sabbath. ²³ Now if a child can be circumcised on the Sabbath so that the law of Moses may not be broken, why are you angry with me for healing the whole man on the Sabbath?

Galatians 5:3 I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law.

3) Circumcision as a legal requirement is no longer binding on us.

Galatians 5:6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.

See Acts 15:5-29. The debate here centered in whether “the Gentiles must be circumcised and required to obey the law of Moses” (v. 5). The decision of the Jerusalem council was not to impose the rite of circumcision on the Gentiles (vv. 19-21, 28-29).

1 Corinthians 7:18,19 Was a man already circumcised when he was called? He should not become uncircumcised. Was a man uncircumcised when he was called? He should not be circumcised. ¹⁹ Circumcision is

nothing and uncircumcision is nothing. Keeping God's commands is what counts.

b) The other Old Testament rite that demands mention is Passover.

Exodus 12:13,23,24 The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are; and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt.²³ When the LORD goes through the land to strike down the Egyptians, he will see the blood on the top and sides of the doorframe and will pass over that doorway, and he will not permit the destroyer to enter your houses and strike you down.²⁴ Obey these instructions as a lasting ordinance for you and your descendants.

John 1:29 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

1 Corinthians 5:7 Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast—as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.

1 Peter 1:18-19 You know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers,¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.

Note: For additional information on the unique nature of the Passover sacrifice and its fulfillment in Christ, see Alfred Edersheim, *The Temple and its Services* (Revell, 1874, 1908), p 177-195, and Ceil and Moishe Rosen, *Christ in the Passover* (Moody Press, 1978).

B. The Word

I. The Word of God is essentially the divine truths conveyed to us in the form of human speech.

1. God is the fountain of truth.

- a) "Truth" may refer to conformity of a statement or proposition to fact or reality, or "truth" may be used by metonymy to denote the facts themselves.**

Deuteronomy 17:4 [If] this has been brought to your attention, then you must investigate it thoroughly. If it is true and it has been proved that this detestable thing has been done in Israel . . .

Ruth 3:12 Although it is true that I am near of kin, there is a kinsman-redeemer nearer than I.

Genesis 42:16 Send one of your number to get your brother; the rest of you will be kept in prison, so that your words may be tested to see if you are telling the truth. If you are not, then as surely as Pharaoh lives, you are spies!

Mark 5:33 Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet and, trembling with fear, told him the whole truth.

John 17:17 Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.

b) The ultimate reality of God's truth is his grace for Christ's sake.

1) God in all his ways is truth and love.

Note that the NIV is not consistent in its rendering for “truth.”

Genesis 24:27 Praise be to the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who has not abandoned his kindness and faithfulness (תְּמִנָּה) to my master. As for me, the LORD has led me on the journey to the house of my master’s relatives. (Compare NASB: Blessed be the LORD , the God of my master Abraham, who has not forsaken his lovingkindness and his truth toward my master; as for me, the LORD has guided me in the way to the house of my master’s brothers.)

Psalm 25:10 All the ways of the LORD are loving and faithful (תְּמִנָּה) for those who keep the demands of his covenant. (Compare KJV: All the paths of the LORD are mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies.)

Psalm 57:10 For great is your love, reaching to the heavens; your faithfulness (תְּמִנָּה) reaches to the skies.

Psalm 43:3 Send forth your light and your truth (תְּמִנָּה), let them guide me; let them bring me to your holy mountain, to the place where you dwell.

Psalm 89:14 Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; love and faithfulness (תְּמִנָּה) go before you.

Psalm 115:1 Not to us, O LORD, not to us but to your name be the glory, because of your love and faithfulness (תְּמִנָּה).

Psalm 117:2 For great is his love toward us, and the faithfulness (תְּמִנָּה) of the LORD endures forever. Praise the LORD.

2) The great lie, that God is not loving and that self-righteousness is necessary, was introduced into the world by the devil.

2 Thessalonians 2:9-12 The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders,¹⁰ and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.¹¹ For this reason God sends them a powerful

delusion so that they will believe the lie ¹² and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness.

John 8:44 You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

Romans 1:18,25 The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness. ²⁵ They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen.

Romans 10:3 Since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness.

Apology, Art. III, p 196, 144: But works become conspicuous among men. Human reason naturally admires these, and because it sees only works, and does not understand or consider faith, it dreams accordingly that these works merit remission of sins and justify. This opinion of the law (*opinio legis*) inheres by nature in men's minds.

3) Christ came to restore the truth.

John 1:17 The law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

John 14:6,16,17 Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—¹⁷ the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you."

John 18:37 "You are a king, then!" said Pilate. Jesus answered, "You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me."

c) It is God's will that all people should know and enjoy this truth.

Psalm 86:11 Teach me your way, O LORD, and I will walk in your truth; give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name.

Isaiah 59:14,15 So justice is driven back, and righteousness stands at a distance; truth has stumbled in the streets, honesty cannot enter. ¹⁵ Truth is nowhere to be found, and whoever shuns evil becomes a prey. The LORD looked and was displeased that there was no justice.

John 8:32 Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.

Galatians 2:5,14 We did not give in to them for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might remain with you. ¹⁴ When I saw that they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter in front of them all, “You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs?”

1 Timothy 2:4 [God our Savior] wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

2 Timothy 2:18,25 [Hymenaeus and Philetus] have wandered away from the truth. They say that the resurrection has already taken place, and they destroy the faith of some. ²⁵ Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth.

2 Timothy 3:7,8 [In these last days some are] always learning but never able to acknowledge the truth. ⁸ Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so also these men oppose the truth—men of depraved minds, who, as far as the faith is concerned, are rejected.

1 John 1:6,8 If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. ⁸ If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

Luther: Take away assertions, and you take away Christianity (*Bondage of the Will*, LW 33, p 21).

Contrast the biblical assurance that we have the truth with the following:

Carl Braaten: Luther believed that the literal meaning of Scripture is identical with its historical content; things happened exactly as they were written down. Today it is impossible to assume the literal historicity of all things recorded. What the biblical authors report is not accepted as a literal transcript of the factual course of events. Therefore, critical scholars inquire behind the text and attempt to reconstruct the real history that took place (*CD*, I, p 76-77).

Paul Tillich (d. 1985): Biblical research in Protestantism has shown the many levels of Biblical literature and the impossibility of considering the Bible as containing the infallible truth of faith.... [The Protestant principle] does not accept any truth of faith as ultimate except the one that no man possesses it. (*Dynamics of Faith*, p 98).

Note: Conservative writers sometimes refer to the “Protestant principle” as the shared conviction that the Bible alone is the written Word of God, and as such is the infallible, definitive standard for doctrine in the church. Tillich, however, means something quite the opposite. In his own words: The Protestant principle, in name derived from the protest of the “Protestants” against decisions of the Catholic majority, contains the divine and human protest against any absolute claim made for a relative reality, even if this claim is made by a Protestant church (*The Protestant Era*, ch. 11, p 175).

Tillich: Truth transcends all human fixation, even the letters of a sacred book (*The Protestant Era*, p 177).

G. Ernest Wright (d. 1994): No system of propositions can deal adequately with the inner dynamics of Biblical faith (*God Who Acts*, p 36).

2. God's truth is conveyed to people through his Word.

a) God makes known his truth by proclaiming it.

Psalm 40:10 I do not hide your righteousness in my heart; I speak of your faithfulness and salvation. I do not conceal your love and your truth from the great assembly.

Exodus 34:5-6 Then the LORD came down in the cloud and stood there with him and proclaimed his name, the LORD. ⁶ And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, "The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness (אֱלֹהִים).

John 5:33 You have sent to John and he has testified to the truth.

John 8:40,45,46 As it is, you are determined to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. Abraham did not do such things. ⁴⁵ Yet because I tell the truth, you do not believe me! ⁴⁶ Can any of you prove me guilty of sin? If I am telling the truth, why don't you believe me?

John 16:7 But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.

b) His Word is the word of truth, revealing and conveying the truth.

Psalm 119:43 Do not snatch the word of truth from my mouth, for I have put my hope in your laws.

Ecclesiastes 12:10 The Teacher searched to find just the right words, and what he wrote was upright and true.

Ephesians 1:13 You also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit.

Colossians 1:5 [We have heard of your] faith and love that spring from the hope that is stored up for you in heaven and that you have already heard about in the word of truth, the gospel.

2 Timothy 2:15 Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.

James 1:18 He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created.

c) **His Word is in every instance identical with the truth.**

2 Samuel 7:28 O Sovereign LORD, you are God! Your words are trustworthy, and you have promised these good things to your servant.

1 Kings 17:24 Then the woman said to Elijah, “Now I know that you are a man of God and that the word of the LORD from your mouth is the truth.”

Psalms 119:86,142,160 All your commands are trustworthy; help me, for men persecute me without cause. ¹⁴²Your righteousness is everlasting and your law is true. ¹⁶⁰All your words are true; all your righteous laws are eternal.

John 17:17 Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.

3. **In and of themselves, the sounds or syllables are not the Word in the strict sense.**

a) **These external vehicles of thought may be destroyed, while the Word is enduring.**

Jeremiah 36:27-28 After the king burned the scroll containing the words that Baruch had written at Jeremiah’s dictation, the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah: ²⁸“Take another scroll and write on it all the words that were on the first scroll, which Jehoiakim king of Judah burned up.”

Psalms 119:89 Your word, O LORD, is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens.

Isaiah 40:8 The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands forever.

Matthew 24:35 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

1 Peter 1:23-25 For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God. ²⁴For, “All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, ²⁵but the word of the Lord stands forever.” And this is the word that was preached to you.

Gerhard: By the term *Scripture* we have in mind not so much the outer form or the signs, that is, the particular letters, the act of writing, and the words with which the divine revelation has been written down, but the subject matter itself and the thing signified, namely, that which is meant and designated by the writing, the Word of God, which teaches us of his nature and will. Some have expressed it this way: The Word of God may be viewed essentially as the very thoughts God expresses, or non-essentially and accidentally as preaching and writing. In other words, as in any other writing done by an intelligent and rationale agent, so also in the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures two things should be borne in mind: first, the letters, syllables, and words that are written and are outer symbols indicating and expressing the ideas of the mind; and second, the thoughts themselves, which are the things signified, expressed with the symbols of letters, syllables, and words. Accordingly, in the term

Scripture we include both of these, but especially the latter (*Loci Theologici*, I, 14).

Quenstedt: The name “Holy Scripture” is used either *essentially* [in its real essential meaning] as a name for the divine sense expressed in the spoken words or the writing or in so far as it is a divine Word (in this sense, eternity is ascribed to Scripture Is 40:8; 1 Pe 1:23,25), or it is used *materially* [with reference to the stuff of which Scripture is made], as a name for the spoken words themselves, the letters and characters, or the writing itself, insofar as it the meaning God intends to convey, the divine sense is recorded in letters. Note VIII: The *formale* (essence) of Scripture is the divine message revealed in it; the *materiale* (the stuff of which it is made) is the letters, the words, the writing. — Thesis V: The essence of Scripture is, on the one hand, internal, on the other, external. The *internal essence*, or that which makes Scripture be what it is, namely, to be the word of God, i.e., that which makes it be the Word of God and distinguishes it from any other writing is the inspired meaning of Scripture, which in general is the concept existing in God's mind concerning the mysteries of God and our salvation, a concept that was formed in eternity and revealed in time and communicated to us in writing, or the *θεοπνευστία* itself, i.e., the divine inspiration, 2 Tm 3:16, as that by which the Word is made divine and distinguished from a human word. The *external essence* is the character of the speech, or style and idiom, in the Old Testament the idiom of the Hebrew language and in part, the Aramaic, in the New Testament of the Greek language (*TDP*, pars I, cap. IV sec.I, thes. I, nota VII, p 54).

b) If the sounds, letters, or syllables were the essence of God’s Word, translations of the Word would be impossible.

Matthew 28:19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Mark 16:15 He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.”

Acts 2:8,11 Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language? ¹¹ We hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!

c) However, thoughts cannot be conveyed except by certain linguistic forms and expressions.

1) Therefore the original forms are of utmost importance.

Luther: Let us be clear on this: we are not likely to retain the gospel without the languages. The languages are the scabbards in which the sword of the Spirit is held. They are the keg in which the drink is kept. They are the pantry in which this food is stored. ... Therefore it is certain that where the languages do not remain, the gospel itself will ultimately perish (*To the Councilmen of Germany*, LW 45, p 360).

Luther: In the measure that we love the gospel, so let us place strong emphasis on the languages. For it is not without reason that God wrote the Scriptures in the two languages Hebrew and Greek. That language

which God did not despise but rather chose above all others for the final revelation of his Word is the language which we also should honor above all others (*To the Councilmen of Germany*, LW 45, p 359).

- 2) **To the degree that translations of Scripture reproduce God's truth in a different language, they are truly the Word of God. This should be remembered even though they dare not be placed on a par with the original.**

Compare the status of the Vulgate in the Roman Catholic Church. In 1546 the Council of Trent made the Vulgate the official version of the Catholic Church, and in 1592 the official text with no variants was promulgated by Clement VIII. Subsequent editions of the Vulgate published with the church's imprimatur represent this Clementine edition.

Compare Henry E. Jacobs' (d. 1932) misleading argument: It is only the Scriptures as written in the original languages that are inspired. Even the best translation is only a human explanation or interpretation of the inspired words, however well the inspired thought may be conveyed in other language (*Elements of Religion*, p 31f).

Compare any translation of John 3:16 with the original. E.g., *Sic enim Deus dilexit mundum, ut Filium suum unigenitum daret: ut omnis qui credit in eum non pereat, sed habeat vitam aeternam.*

Consider the weaknesses of inaccurate paraphrases like these from the *Living Bible*: 2 Samuel 12:27, "Joab sent messengers to tell David, 'Rabbah and its beautiful harbor are ours!'"

Luke 8:13, "The stony ground represents those who enjoy listening to sermons, but somehow the message never really gets through to them and doesn't take root and grow. They know the message is true, and sort of believe for awhile; but when the hot winds of persecution blow, they lose interest."

1 Corinthians 11:29, "For if he eats the bread and drinks from the cup unworthily, not thinking about the body of Christ and what it means, he is eating and drinking God's judgment upon himself; he trifling with the death of Christ."

Consider the deficiencies of translations that reflect theological bias, e.g., the *New World Translation* at John 1:1, "In [the] beginning the Word was, and the Word was with God, and the Word was a god."

- d) **Even the purely grammatical construction (*materia Scripturae*) is in the last analysis no more than a vehicle for the divine truth (*forma Scripturae*).**

2 Corinthians 3:14-16 But their minds were made dull, for to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read. It has not been removed, because only in Christ is it taken away.¹⁵ Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts.¹⁶ But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.

Consider the use of “The Fatherhood of God” in Lodges, the use of the Trinitarian formula among Mormons, or the use of “This is my body” among Evangelicals.

II. God gave us his Word in Scripture by inspiration.

1. Scripture is rightly and accurately called the Word of God.

a) Regarding the Old Testament Scriptures, we have clear testimony.

Luke 16:27-31 He answered, “Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my father’s house,²⁸ for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.”²⁹ Abraham replied, “They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.”³⁰ “No, father Abraham,” he said, “but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.”³¹ He said to him, “If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.”

2 Peter 1:19-21 We have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.²⁰ Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation.²¹ For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Hebrews 1:1 In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways.

Romans 1:1-2 Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God—²the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures.

2 Timothy 3:15-16 From infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.¹⁶ All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness. *πᾶσα γραφὴ θεόπνευστος καὶ ὠφέλιμος πρὸς διδασκαλίαν, πρὸς ἐλεγμὸν, πρὸς ἐπανόρθωσιν, πρὸς παιδείαν τὴν ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ.*

1 Peter 1:10-11 Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care,¹¹ trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.

b) Regarding the New Testament we also have clear testimony.

1) What the apostles preached was the Word of God.

1 Corinthians 2:13 This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words (*πνευματικοῖς πνευματικὰ συγκρίνοντες*).

2 Corinthians 5:20 We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.

2 Corinthians 13:3 You are demanding proof that Christ is speaking through me. He is not weak in dealing with you, but is powerful among you.

Revelation 22:18-20 I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book.¹⁹ And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.²⁰ He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

Matthew 10:19-20 When they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say,²⁰ for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.

1 Thessalonians 2:13 We also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe.

2) The apostolic writings agree with their oral testimony.

1 John 1:2-4 The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us.³ We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.⁴ We write this to make our joy complete.

Philippians 4:9 Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

1 Corinthians 15:1 Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand.

1 Corinthians 14:37 If anybody thinks he is a prophet or spiritually gifted, let him acknowledge that what I am writing to you is the Lord's command.

2 Thessalonians 2:15 So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the teachings we passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or by letter.

3) The apostolic writings are called Scripture.

2 Peter 3:16 [Paul] writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.

1 Timothy 5:18 For the Scripture says, "Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain" and "The worker deserves his wages" (Dt 25:4 and Lk 10:7).

c) Scripture is the revealed truth of God, the Word of God.

1) Consider these theological statements of the fact.

Hollaz: In the definition of Holy Scripture "Word of God" essentially means the thought of God or the concept of the divine mind concerning the salvation of men, made known, directly to the prophets and apostles and indirectly by their ministry to the whole human race (that is, through their preaching and writing) (*Examen*, 77).

Gerhard: By the name "Scripture" we must understand not so much the external form or the signs, i.e., the points of the letters, the act of writing, and the words with which the divine revelation is written down, but rather the material itself or that which is meant by the words, and therefore that very thing which is denoted and meant by the writing, namely, the Word of God itself which teaches us about the essence and will of God.... In this prophetic and apostolic Scripture two things are to be kept in mind, namely, first the letters, syllables and words themselves, which are written and are the external symbols which signify and express the thoughts of the mind; secondly, the thoughts themselves, which are, as it were, indicated, being expressed in those external symbols consisting of letters, syllables and words. Therefore both of these are included in this name "Scripture," and the latter indeed principally (*Loci Theologici*, II, p14).

2) The written form is non-essential or incidental (*accidens*).

Gerhard: That there is no real difference between "the Word of God" and "the Holy Scripture" understood in the material sense is proved 1) from the *materia* of Scripture, 2) from the equal connotation of the two terms 3) from the logical rule that a non-essential (an accident, a characteristic) does not change the essence of a thing. It is a non-essential for the Word of God whether it is expressed vocally or committed to writing. It is one and the same Word of God whether it is made known to us in a spoken or written way, since neither the principal efficient cause, nor the material, nor the internal essence, nor the purpose is changed, but there is a difference only in the way it is made known, depending on which organ (i.e., the mouth or the hand) is used (*Loci Theologici, de Scriptura sacra*, Art. 7).

- 2. We use the term "inspiration" to describe the process by which God called and empowered men to write Scripture. We use the term "inspired" to describe the writings that were produced in this manner.**

a) The chosen writers were called and carried along by the Holy Spirit in the task of proclaiming and writing God’s Word.

2 Peter 1:21 Prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. οὐ γὰρ θελήματι ἀνθρώπου ἠνέχθη προφητεία ποτέ, ἀλλὰ ὑπὸ πνεύματος ἁγίου φερόμενοι ἐλάλησαν ἀπὸ θεοῦ ἄνθρωποι

Ezekiel 1:3 The word of the LORD came to Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, by the Kebar River in the land of the Babylonians. There the hand of the LORD was upon him.

Exodus 17:14 Then the LORD said to Moses, “Write this on a scroll as something to be remembered and make sure that Joshua hears it, because I will completely blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven.”

Exodus 34:27 Then the LORD said to Moses, “Write down these words, for in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel.”

Jeremiah 30:2 This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: “Write in a book all the words I have spoken to you.”

2 Corinthians 5:20 We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God.

Romans 1:1 Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God

Romans 15:15,18 I have written you quite boldly on some points, as if to remind you of them again, because of the grace God gave me. ¹⁸ I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me in leading the Gentiles to obey God by what I have said and done.

Galatians 1:1 Paul, an apostle—sent not from men nor by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead . . .

Revelation 1:11 Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea.

b) The resultant writings are identified as God’s Word, as divinely inspired words.

1) This truth is clearly stated many times.

2 Timothy 3:15-16 From infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶ All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful (πᾶσα γραφὴ θεόπνευστος καὶ ὠφέλιμος) for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.

2 Peter 1:19-21 We have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. ²⁰Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. ²¹For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Zechariah 7:12 They made their hearts as hard as flint and would not listen to the law or to the words that the LORD Almighty had sent by his Spirit through (תְּנִיחָ) the earlier prophets. So the LORD Almighty was very angry.

Acts 1:16 Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled which the Holy Spirit spoke long ago through the mouth of David concerning Judas, who served as guide for those who arrested Jesus.

2 Samuel 23:2 The Spirit of the LORD spoke through me; his word was on my tongue.

1 Peter 1:10-11 Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, ¹¹ trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.

2) Use of sources, study, investigation, and meditation were not excluded, but were guided and controlled by the Holy Spirit.

Titus 1:12 Even one of their own prophets has said, "Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons" (Epimenides, ca 600 BC).

Luke 1:3 Since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus.

Daniel 9:2 In the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, understood from the Scriptures, according to the word of the LORD given to Jeremiah the prophet, that the desolation of Jerusalem would last seventy years.

Ecclesiastes 1:13 I devoted myself to study and to explore by wisdom all that is done under heaven.

Ecclesiastes 9:1 I reflected on all this and concluded that the righteous and the wise and what they do are in God's hands, but no man knows whether love or hate awaits him.

Ecclesiastes 12:9,10 Not only was the Teacher wise, but also he imparted knowledge to the people. He pondered and searched out and

set in order many proverbs.¹⁰ The Teacher searched to find just the right words, and what he wrote was upright and true.

1 Corinthians 2:11-12 Who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.¹² We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us.

c) This divine inspiration of the Scriptures extends to the choice of the very words.

1) This truth is revealed many times.

1 Corinthians 2:13 This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words (*πνευματικοῖς πνευματικὰ συγκρίνοντες*).

Matthew 5:18 I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen (*ἰῶτα ἢ ἓν ἢ μία κεραία*), will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.

Matthew 10:19-20 When they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it (*πῶς ἢ τί*). At that time you will be given what to say,²⁰ for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.

John 10:35-36 If he called them “gods,” to whom the word of God came—and the Scripture cannot be broken—³⁶ what about the one whom the Father set apart as his very own and sent into the world? Why then do you accuse me of blasphemy because I said, “I am God's Son”?

Galatians 3:16 The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say “and to seeds,” meaning many people, but “and to your seed,” meaning one person, who is Christ.

2) For this reason the holy writers may be called “writing instruments” (*amanuenses, calami*). But this does not require that we understand the process as some sort of mechanical dictation.

Psalms 45:1 My heart is stirred by a noble theme as I recite my verses for the king; my tongue is the pen (*قلم*) of a skillful writer.

Compare the Council of Trent IV: The written books and the unwritten traditions which, received by the apostles from the mouth of Christ himself, or from the apostles themselves, the Holy Spirit dictating (*Spiritu Sanctu dictante*).

Compare Leo XIII in his encyclical, *Providentissimus Deus*, 1893: All the books and the whole of each book which the church receives as sacred and canonical were written at the dictation of the Holy Spirit.

Note: *dictare* can be used in a wider sense than “dictate” and may mean “say again, repeatedly” or even “get something written down” in some way.

Contrast Barth (d. 1968): We have to resist and reject the 17th century doctrine of inspiration as false doctrine.... [The Bible] became a “paper Pope” (*CD*, I, 2:525).

Contrast Emil Brunner (d. 1966): The equation of the “Word” of the Bible with the “Word of God” ... produced the doctrine of Verbal Inspiration, with all its disastrous results (*Dog.*, I:28). The leaders of the Reformation ... returned to the Catholic idea of revelation, according to which the revelation guaranteed the infallible doctrine contained in Scripture, and the Scripture guaranteed the divine revelation, which is therefore the infallible source of this doctrine.... Now the way led ... to the “paper-Pope” (*Revelation and Reason*, p 10f).

Contrast Carl Braaten: Churches that claim the heritage of Luther and the Reformation still affirm the Bible as the Word of God. This is not meant in the fundamentalistic sense that everything in the Bible stands directly as the Word of God. ... The Bible is the Word of God as a whole, in its total import and impact, because it conveys the message of eschatological salvation. ... Luther believed that the literal meaning of Scripture is identical with its historical content; things happened exactly as they were written down. Today it is impossible to assume the literal historicity of all things recorded (*CD*, I, p 76).

3. The citations and arguments for verbal inspiration are reassuring only for a Christian.

a) For an unbeliever they are merely begging the question.

b) For a Christian, however, they are conclusive.

1) A believer has experienced the divine power of the Word.

Psalm 119:92 If your law had not been my delight, I would have perished in my affliction.

Romans 1:16 I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.

1 Thessalonians 1:5 Our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake.

2) Hence the believer rightly puts implicit faith in all statements of Scripture.

Psalm 119:43,81,95-100,105 Do not snatch the word of truth from my mouth, for I have put my hope in your laws. ⁸¹ My soul faints with longing for your salvation, but I have put my hope in your word. ⁹⁵ The wicked are waiting to destroy me, but I will ponder your statutes. ⁹⁶ To all perfection I see a limit; but your commands are boundless. ⁹⁷ Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long. ⁹⁸ Your commands make me wiser than my enemies, for they are ever with me. ⁹⁹ I have more insight than all my teachers, for I meditate on your statutes. ¹⁰⁰ I have more understanding than the elders, for I obey your precepts. ¹⁰⁵ Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.

John 7:17 If anyone chooses to do God's will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own.

John 8:47 He who belongs to God hears what God says. The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to God.

4. There are many objections to verbal inspiration, but they are all invalid.

a) Some objections to verbal inspiration are based on the differing styles of the various writers.

- 1) The same writer may indeed use different styles, such as narrative, poetry, and oratory.**
- 2) This may be caused by varying subject matter, such as history, doctrine, threats, and exhortation.**
- 3) This may reflect, in part, the training and life experience the men received from God himself.**

Consider: Amos 1:1, 7:14: The words of Amos, one of the shepherds of Tekoa . . . Amos answered Amaziah, "I was neither a prophet nor a prophet's son, but I was a shepherd, and I also took care of sycamore-fig trees.

Consider the varied backgrounds and experiences of Moses, Isaiah, Daniel, Paul, or Peter.

- 4) This may also reflect, in part, the manner in which the writer obtained the desired information.**

Luke 1:3 Therefore, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus,

1 Corinthians 1:11 My brothers, some from Chloe's household have informed me that there are quarrels among you.

b) **Some objections to verbal inspiration are based on variations in the reports of the same events by different writers, for example, in the Easter story.**

1) **The variations may be caused by a particular aim of the writer.**

Consider the account of Saul's conversion and the hearing of Christ's voice:

Acts 9:3-7 As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. ⁴ He fell to the ground and heard a voice (ἤκουσεν φωνήν) say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" ⁵ "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. ⁶ "Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do." ⁷ The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound (ἀκούοντες τῆς φωνῆς) but did not see anyone.

Acts 22:6-9 About noon as I came near Damascus, suddenly a bright light from heaven flashed around me. ⁷ I fell to the ground and heard a voice (ἤκουσα φωνῆς) say to me, "Saul! Saul! Why do you persecute me?" ⁸ "Who are you, Lord?" I asked. "I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting," he replied. ⁹ My companions saw the light, but they did not understand the voice (τὴν φωνὴν οὐκ ἤκουσαν) of him who was speaking to me.

Acts 26:12-14 On one of these journeys I was going to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests. ¹³ About noon, O king, as I was on the road, I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, blazing around me and my companions. ¹⁴ We all fell to the ground, and I heard a voice (ἤκουσα φωνήν) saying to me in Aramaic, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads."

Consider variations of the superscription on the cross:

Matthew 27:37 Above his head they placed the written charge against him: THIS IS JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS.

Mark 15:26 The written notice of the charge against him read: THE KING OF THE JEWS.

Luke 23:38 There was a written notice above him, which read: THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

John 19:19-20 Pilate had a notice prepared and fastened to the cross. It read: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS. ²⁰ Many of the Jews read this sign, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and the sign was written in Aramaic, Latin and Greek.

2) **The variations serve to supplement each other, not to contradict each other.**

c) **Some objections to verbal inspiration are based on supposed contradictions.**

1) **Alleged contradictions often disappear upon closer investigation.**

2 Samuel 24:24 But the king replied to Araunah, “No, I insist on paying you for it. I will not sacrifice to the LORD my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing.” So David bought the threshing floor and the oxen and paid fifty shekels of silver for them.

1 Chronicles 21:25 David paid Araunah six hundred shekels of gold for the site.

2) **The variations might be intended to make a point.**

1 Samuel 13:1 presents a special problem.

The MT says: “Saul was the son of a year in his reign and two years he ruled over Israel.”

The NIV supplies numbers: Saul was [thirty] years old when he became king, and he reigned over Israel [forty-]two years.

The verse is not in the LXX, except in editions by Origen & Lucian.

Some think the short version of the text is correct and teaches a spiritual lesson about Saul’s changing attitudes. Compare with 1 Samuel 10:9, “As Saul turned to leave Samuel, God changed Saul’s heart, and all these signs were fulfilled that day.” Compare with 1 Samuel 13:13,14, “You acted foolishly,” Samuel said. “You have not kept the command the LORD your God gave you; if you had, he would have established your kingdom over Israel for all time. ¹⁴ But now your kingdom will not endure; the LORD has sought out a man after his own heart and appointed him leader of his people, because you have not kept the LORD’s command.”

The possibility of textual lacunae in the Samuel manuscripts seems to be the more likely explanation, but what impact, if any, would this have on divine inspiration? Also recall the point made by A.T. Robertson (d. 1934): Even a possible explanation is sufficient to meet the objector.

d) **Some objections to verbal inspiration are based on alleged historical inaccuracies, but there are responses to all of them.**

Objection: There are many historical errors in the Bible.

Response: In no case where modern research (excavations, etc.) has shed any light has the Bible account been genuinely discredited. We acknowledge that we have limited information in some cases, but the absence of evidence regarding historical accuracy is not to be understood as the evidence of absence regarding historical accuracy.

Objection: The list of kings in Genesis 14 is not historical.

Response: Negative critics question the historicity of the chapter and of Mesopotamian kings mentioned. More recent archeological evidence has

supported the plausibility of the names and therefore the credibility of such events. See G. Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, p 177ff.

Objection: According to 2 Kings 19:9 Sennacherib received a report that Tirhakah, the Cushite (Ethiopian, Nubian) king of Egypt, was marching out to fight against him. There have been objections to the accuracy of this passage partly based on the chronology involved (that Tirhakah or Tirhaqah was not yet king), and partly because he is called a “Cushite” ruler of Egypt.

Response: There is ample evidence, however, to question the correctness of the earlier assumed chronology of this Egyptian dynasty. Furthermore, the reference to Tirhakah as king may be proleptic. Tirhaqah belonged to the 25th Egyptian dynasty, which is acknowledged to be Ethiopian. See Edward Young, *Isaiah*, II, p 553-555, and Eugene Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests*, p 414-419, 438.

Objection: Isaiah 20:1-2 In the year that the supreme commander, sent by Sargon king of Assyria, came to Ashdod and attacked and captured it—² at that time the LORD spoke through Isaiah son of Amoz. Since extra-biblical references to Sargon II, king of Assyria from 722-705 BC and father of Sennacherib, were for a long time virtually nil, many saw the biblical reference as unhistorical.

Response: Excavations of his palace at Dur Sharrukin [Khorsabad] in the 1920s and 1930s changed all that and confirmed his identity.

Objection: Daniel 5 says Belshazzar was the last king of Babylon. The mention of King Belshazzar was long seen by critics as unhistorical. See G. Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, p 426ff. for a brief discussion of the issues and potential resolutions to the supposed problem.

Response: Extant inscriptions say that while Nabonidus was king, his son Belshazzar was a coregent and in charge of the city. This would also explain why Daniel was “third highest” in the realm (Daniel 5:29).

Objection: Luke 2:1,2 says “In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor (ἡγεμονεύοντος) of Syria.”

The career of Publius Sulpicius Quirinius is fairly well documented but there is no record of his being “governor” of Syria until about 6 AD, about ten years later than the event described by Luke.

Response: The word used by Luke, however, may signify the exercise of military command other than holding a formal gubernatorial office. Shortly after Quirinius became a consul in 12 BC he was given the task of bringing to order the rebelling Homanadensians of Asia. In 3 BC he became proconsul of Asia. In the intervening years, going about his work, he could have assumed military governorship of the surrounding provinces including Syria.

e) **Some objections to verbal inspiration based on supposed errors by the author.**

1) **A number of examples may be briefly considered.**

-a) **An apostolic memory lapse?**

1 Corinthians 1:16 I also baptized the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I don't remember if I baptized anyone else.

F. Pieper: The objection against the inspiration of Scripture taken from 1 Cor. 1:16 is due to a confusion of two things which have nothing in common. It has been said that since the Apostle in this passage concedes the possibility of a *lapsus memoriae* with regard to the number of those whom he baptized personally, his epistles could not have been written by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, since the Holy Spirit is not subject to *lapsus memoriae*. This objection has been answered briefly and pointedly: As inspiration did not make the holy writers personally sinless in their lives, so it did not make them infallible or omniscient as to their past lives (*CD*, I, p 261).

-b) Jeremiah or Zechariah?

Matthew 27:9 Then what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled: "They took the thirty silver coins, the price set on him by the people of Israel."

Zechariah 11:12,13 I told them, "If you think it best, give me my pay; but if not, keep it." So they paid me thirty pieces of silver.¹³ And the LORD said to me, "Throw it to the potter"—the handsome price at which they priced me! So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them into the house of the LORD to the potter.

Jeremiah 32:6-15 Jeremiah said, "The word of the LORD came to me:⁷ 'Hanamel son of Shallum your uncle is going to come to you and say, 'Buy my field at Anathoth, because as nearest relative it is your right and duty to buy it.'⁸ Then, just as the LORD had said, my cousin Hanamel came to me in the courtyard of the guard and said, 'Buy my field at Anathoth in the territory of Benjamin. Since it is your right to redeem it and possess it, buy it for yourself.' I knew that this was the word of the LORD;⁹ so I bought the field at Anathoth from my cousin Hanamel and weighed out for him seventeen shekels of silver.¹⁰ I signed and sealed the deed, had it witnessed, and weighed out the silver on the scales.¹¹ I took the deed of purchase—the sealed copy containing the terms and conditions, as well as the unsealed copy—¹²and I gave this deed to Baruch son of Neriah, the son of Mahseiah, in the presence of my cousin Hanamel and of the witnesses who had signed the deed and of all the Jews sitting in the courtyard of the guard.¹³ In their presence I gave Baruch these instructions:¹⁴ 'This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: "Take these documents, both the sealed and unsealed copies of the deed of purchase, and put them in a clay jar so they will last a long time."¹⁵ For this is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: "Houses, fields and vineyards will again be bought in this land.'"

Consider: Matthew blends two prophecies into one and may have legitimately used the name of Jeremiah or Zechariah or both of

them. Perhaps he simply chose to use the more prominent name. Another explanation that has been advanced is that the Jewish arrangement of the books latter prophets placed that of Jeremiah first, and Matthew was merely designating the collection of books by the name of the first.

-c) Abraham or Jacob?

Acts 7:2, 15,16 He replied: “Brothers and fathers, listen to me! The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham while he was still in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran.”¹⁵ Then Jacob went down to Egypt, where he and our fathers died.¹⁶ Their bodies were brought back to Shechem and placed in the tomb that Abraham had bought from the sons of Hamor at Shechem for a certain sum of money.

Genesis 50:13 They carried him to the land of Canaan and buried him in the cave in the field of Machpelah, near Mamre, which Abraham had bought as a burial place from Ephron the Hittite, along with the field.

Joshua 24:32 And Joseph’s bones, which the Israelites had brought up from Egypt, were buried at Shechem in the tract of land that Jacob bought for a hundred pieces of silver from the sons of Hamor, the father of Shechem. This became the inheritance of Joseph’s descendants.

Consider: One perceived difficulty here is that Genesis tells us Jacob was buried with his father and grandfather at Machpelah, but Stephen’s words are supposed to indicate he was buried at Shechem. But Acts 7:16 doesn’t necessarily say Jacob was buried at Shechem. “They” might refer only to “our fathers” and likely has reference to the sons of Jacob, the fathers of the tribes of Israel. This is also in agreement with rabbinic tradition. Another perceived difficulty is that Joshua says Jacob purchased Joseph’s burial place at Shechem while Stephen says that Abraham bought the parcel of land. A fully satisfactory explanation is that both men purchased the land, something that was necessitated by the interval of many years between them and the period of absence of the patriarchs from that immediate area.

-d) This number or that?

1 Corinthians 10:8 We should not commit sexual immorality, as some of them did—and in one day twenty-three thousand of them died.

Numbers 25:9 Those who died in the plague numbered 24,000.

Consider: It is possible that both Moses and Paul were using round numbers and the actual number was between the two numbers used. It is also possible that the lower number, 23,000, referred to

those who died by the plague on the stated day, and the higher number of 24,000 included those who were executed by Moses and Israel's leaders as stated in Numbers 25:5: So Moses said to Israel's judges, "Each of you must put to death those of your men who have joined in worshipping the Baal of Peor."

-e) Long or short sojourn in Egypt?

Exodus 12:40 Now the length of time the Israelite people lived in Egypt was 430 years (Hebrew: אֲשֶׁר יָשְׁבוּ בְּמִצְרָיִם; LXX adds also *καὶ ἐν γῆ Χανααν*, and in Canaan)

Genesis 15:13 Then the LORD said to him, "Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years."

Acts 7:6 God spoke to him in this way: "Your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years."

Galatians 3:17 What I mean is this: The law, introduced 430 years later, does not set aside the covenant previously established by God and thus do away with the promise.

Consider: The starting point of the Israelite stay in Egypt has been debated for a long time, as the LXX text of Ex 12:40 might indicate. In Acts 7 Stephen seems to take the round number used already in Gen 15 while the 430 years given in Exodus is obviously more precise. The main perceived difficulty is that Paul seems to reckon the time from Abraham to the Exodus as 430 years. Some prefer simply to say he used the figure because it was provided in the OT and familiar to his readers even though it was "an understatement" (Lenski). Others point out that the reference to the establishment of the patriarchal covenant need not refer to the original giving of the covenant to Abraham, but could also refer to the repetition and affirmation of it to Jacob as he brought his household to Egypt (See Gen 46:3-4). Since the extant Septuagint is post-New Testament, it might have been adjusted to agree with Galatians.

-f) Staff or bed?

Hebrews 11:21 By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of Joseph's sons, and worshiped as he leaned on the top of his staff [as in the LXX, *ῥάβδος* is used].

Genesis 47:31-48:2 "Swear to me," he said. Then Joseph swore to him, and Israel worshiped as he leaned on the top of his staff (מִטָּה). ¹Some time later Joseph was told, "Your father is ill." So he took his two sons Manasseh and Ephraim along with him. ²When

Jacob was told, “Your son Joseph has come to you,” Israel rallied his strength and sat up on the bed (מִטָּה).

Consider: One explanation that quickly comes to mind is that of a copyist error that has more to do with the transmission of MSS rather than the inspiration of the original text. Perhaps that is satisfactory. It may also be said that Jacob’s use of his bed (מִטָּה) while blessing Joseph’s sons does not rule out his leaning on his staff (מִטָּה) at the same time. Perhaps both are true.

-g) Ears or body?

Psalm 40:6 Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but my *ears* you have pierced (לִי אֲזָנִים כָּרַיְתָ לִי); burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not require.

Hebrews 10:5 Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said: “Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a *body* you prepared for me (σῶμα δὲ κατηρτίσω; the LXX has σῶμα or ὦτρα δὲ κατηρτίσω μοι)

Consider: While some manuscripts of the LXX and the New Testament translation in Hebrews differ from the imagery of the MT of Psalm 40, the basic meaning and emphasis has not changed. The Messiah’s total, unswerving attention and devotion to the LORD is the clear point. The apostles often paraphrase OT phrases and frequently opt for LXX translations that adequately repeat the intended thought of the text and that were perhaps more familiar to Greek-speaking Jews of the first century AD. Some Bible students include a reference to Exodus 21:5-6 at this point: “But if the servant declares, ‘I love my master and my wife and children and do not want to go free,’⁶ then his master must take him before the judges. He shall take him to the door or the doorpost and pierce his ear (וְרָצַץ אֶת־אָזְנוֹ) with an awl. Then he will be his servant for life.” Again, the main point is voluntary and complete devotion with obedience, although the verb used is different from that used in Psalm 40.

2) In considering these supposed errors in the biblical text, we appropriately ask: Is our ignorance of a solution proof that the author is guilty of an error?

1 Corinthians 13:12 Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

3) The Bible statements about its own inspiration and inerrancy remain conclusive for the believer.

John 10:35-36 If he called them “gods,” to whom the word of God came—and the Scripture cannot be broken—³⁶ what about the one whom the Father set apart as his very own and sent into the world? Why then do you accuse me of blasphemy because I said, “I am God’s Son”?

John 17:17 Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.

Large Catechism, Infant Baptism, p 746, 57: Thus we do also in infant baptism. We bring the child in the conviction and hope that it believes, and we pray that God may grant it faith; but we do not baptize it upon that, but solely upon the command of God. Why so? Because we know that God does not lie. I and my neighbor and, in short, all men, may err and deceive, but the Word of God cannot err.

Large Catechism, Sacrament of the Altar, p 770, 76: Therefore, if you cannot feel it, at least believe the Scriptures; they will not lie to you, and they know your flesh better than you yourself. Yes, St. Paul further concludes in Rom. 7:18: I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwells no good thing. If St. Paul may speak thus of his flesh, we do not propose to be better nor more holy.

Contrast Carl Braaten: Fundamentalist biblicism is rejected by most theologians and is out of favor in most of the seminaries that train clergy for the parish ministry. They reject biblicism not merely because historical science has disclosed errors and contradictions in the biblical writings, but rather because the authority of the Bible is elevated at the expense of Christ and his gospel. Non-fundamentalist Protestants also accept the Bible as the Word of God in some sense, but they point out that the concept of the Word of God . . . cannot be confined to the Bible. We cannot say that the Bible is the Word of God in a simplistic way, for the concept of the Word of God bears many diverse meanings in the classical Christian tradition (*CD, I*, p 74-75).

f) Some objections to verbal inspiration are based on statements alleged to be inappropriate or incongruous with the idea of inspiration.

1) Passages that have been cited in this connection include these:

2 Timothy 4:13 When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, and my scrolls, especially the parchments.

1 Timothy 5:23 Stop drinking only water, and use a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent illnesses.

Proverbs 11:22 Like a gold ring in a pig’s snout is a beautiful woman who shows no discretion.

2) In response we offer the following questions.

-a) Who are we to judge propriety in the matter of inspiration?

-b) Might not something that under some circumstances is considered trivial be of utmost importance under other circumstances?

g) Some objections to verbal inspiration are based on evident corruptions of the text in transmission. In reality these do not affect the doctrine of inspiration.

1) Copyists and printers were not inspired.

Consider the so-called *Narrenbibel*, a German edition in which *Narren* (Fool) was accidentally printed in place of *Herren* (Lord); or *The Wicked Bible*, a English edition in which the “not” was accidentally left out of the Sixth Commandment. There were also attempts to produce deliberate falsifications, for example, the efforts of the Samaritans or Marcion (ca. 100-160).

2) Evidence of corruptions must be established in each case by proper methods of textual criticism.

-a) God, who gave us his Word, in loving-kindness carefully watched over its preservation.

-b) The vast majority of variant readings affect only minor matters, such as orthography.

-c) No variant exists that in any way would alter the truth of the gospel.

John 1:13 [They believe on his name], who (οἱ) were born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.

[They believe on his name], who (variant δς) was born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.

1 John 5:7,8 For there are three that testify: ⁸ the Spirit, the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement (“The “Johannine Comma”—reference to the Trinity is not in any reliable Greek manuscript).

Siegbert Becker: Those who see the variant readings as an excuse for the denial of verbal inspiration and inerrancy are not motivated by true scholarly concern for the facts. They have a theological ax to grind. Any honest examination of the evidence will show that the facts do not support them. . . . True orthodox Lutheranism has nothing to fear from the variant readings. The message brought to us in the holy Scriptures is not distorted or vitiated by any of them that could conceivably be correct (“Verbal Inspiration and the Variant Readings,” *WLQ*, July, 1974, p 184, and *OGH*, I, p 182).

5. Neo-orthodoxy confuses inspiration with conversion and enlightenment.

Karl Barth: We cannot speak of the inspiration of the Bible without that royal act of the original inspiration in which the risen Christ gave his own a part in his own divine Spirit. But no more can we speak of it without that other royal act—which is only a continuation of the first—in which the inspiration is imparted to us, in which here and now we are forced out of our position as spectators of the word and work of the biblical writers, in which the calling of the prophets and apostles becomes an event to us by the ministry of their word and work (*CD*, I, 2:522).

Barth: The *theopneustia* is the act of revelation in which the prophets and apostles in their humanity became what they were, and in which alone in their humanity they can become to us what they are (*CD*, I, 2:507).

Barth: Verbal inspiration does not mean the infallibility of the biblical word in its linguistic, historical and theological character as a human word. It means that the fallible and faulty human word is as such used by God and has to be received and heard in spite of its human fallibility (*CD*, I, 2:533).

Barth: What matters is to do the will of God if we are to know his grace and truth—for that is the inspiration of the Bible (*CD*, I, 2:533–534).

Barth: We have to understand the inspiration of the Bible as a divine decision continually made in the life of the Church and in the life of its members (*CD*, I, 2:534–535).

George S. Hendry: When the Word of God creates faith in us, this is God's own work, His miracle, His in-spirit-ing. It is not in our power to make it happen. At the best we can pray for it. This, in all its simplicity, is the doctrine of the inspiration of the Bible (*Reformation Old and New*, p 152).

Paul Tillich: The inspiration of the Bible writers is their receptive and creative response to the potentially revelatory facts. This inspiration of the writers of the New Testament is their acceptance of Jesus as the Christ and with him of the New Being, of which they became witnesses (*S.T.*, I, p 159).

6. Lutheran writers have sometimes used the term “inspiration” in a looser way, referring to the Holy Spirit’s guiding the users of Scripture.

Franz Pieper: Mylius (d. 1607) and Hutter (d. 1616) and some later Lutheran theologians spoke of an inspiration of the Lutheran Symbols. They did not mean, of course, to place the Symbols on a plane with Scripture, but they merely wanted to state that the Symbols were produced under the special guidance and assistance of the Holy Ghost. Hollaz has shown from their own words that Mylius and Hutter used the term *inspiration* in a wider sense (*sensu latiori*). But even with these precautions the Symbols should not be called “inspired.” It is certainly better to reserve the term for the writings of the Apostles and Prophets (*CD*, I, p 358).

III. Scripture has divine authority. It is sufficient, and it is clear.

1. The authority of the Scriptures, both causative and normative, is divine. (“Causative authority” refers to the power to bring sinners to faith and save them; “normative authority” refers to the power to be the source and judge of theology.)

a) Scripture claims divine authority to teach.

Psalm 94:12 Blessed is the man you discipline, O LORD, the man you teach from your law.

Luke 16:29,31 Abraham replied, “They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.”³¹ He said to him, “If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.”

Romans 15:4 Everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

2 Timothy 3:16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.

b) Scripture claims the authority to judge doctrine.

Deuteronomy 4:2 Do not add to what I command you and do not subtract from it, but keep the commands of the LORD your God that I give you.

Deuteronomy 13:1-5 If a prophet, or one who foretells by dreams, appears among you and announces to you a miraculous sign or wonder,² and if the sign or wonder of which he has spoken takes place, and he says, “Let us follow other gods” (gods you have not known) “and let us worship them,”³ you must not listen to the words of that prophet or dreamer. The LORD your God is testing you to find out whether you love him with all your heart and with all your soul.⁴ It is the LORD your God you must follow, and him you must revere. Keep his commands and obey him; serve him and hold fast to him.⁵ That prophet or dreamer must be put to death, because he preached rebellion against the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt and redeemed you from the land of slavery; he has tried to turn you from the way the LORD your God commanded you to follow. You must purge the evil from among you.

Acts 17:11 The Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.

Acts 26:22 I have had God’s help to this very day, and so I stand here and testify to small and great alike. I am saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen.

1 Timothy 6:3-4 If anyone teaches false doctrines and does not agree to the sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ and to godly teaching,⁴ he is conceited and understands nothing.

c) The authority of Scripture, being absolute, cannot rest on any authority outside of Scripture.

1) The following passages bring out this truth.

Isaiah 8:20 To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, they have no light of dawn.

Luke 16:29-31 Abraham replied, “They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.”³⁰ “No, father Abraham,” he said, “but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.”³¹ He said to him, “If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.”

Galatians 1:8 Even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned!

2) **The authority of Scripture rests on the testimony of the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures.**

1 Thessalonians 1:5,6 Our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake.⁶ You became imitators of us and of the Lord; in spite of severe suffering, you welcomed the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit.

1 Thessalonians 2:13 We also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe.

1 John 5:6 This is the one who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ. He did not come by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth.

Gerhard: The first is the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit who, just as he gives testimony to the spirit of believers that they are the children of God (Ro 8:16), so he also powerfully convinces them that in the Scriptures the voice of the heavenly Father is heard and that only God is a fit and authentic witness (*Loci*, tom. II, art. XXXVI, p 37).

Quenstedt: But the final reason for which and on account of which we believe with God-given and unerring faith that the Word of God is the Word of God is the power and efficacy itself which is intrinsic in the divine Word and the testimony and seal of the Holy Spirit who speaks in and through Scripture. Because the bestowal of faith, by which we not only believe the doctrines, but by which we also believe the Scripture, which shows and proclaims the doctrines, is a work that comes from the Holy Spirit as the highest cause (*TDP*, par. I, cap. IV, sect. II, qu. IX, thes., p 97).

Hollaz: By “the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit” this is meant: it is the supernatural act of the Holy Spirit who through the Word of God, when it is read with attention or perceived with the ear, by virtue of his divine power communicated to the Holy Scripture moves, opens, enlightens, and bends the heart of man to the obedience of faith, so that

the man who has been enlightened truly believes for internal, spiritual reasons that the Word which has been proclaimed to him truly came from God, and for that reason gives unshakable assent to it (*Examen*, prol., cap. III, qu 31, p 136).

3) Various external criteria may be mentioned, for example, antiquity, preservation, the consistency of the witness, and the accuracy of predictive prophecy.

Hollaz: We have adduced external criteria because the minds of unbelieving men who are to be converted are prepared by them for reading and meditating on the Holy Scripture with diligence and a desire to learn. . . . It is necessary, first of all, that unbelievers should be moved by the adduced external criteria to think that it is not unlikely that Scripture traces its origin back to God, and that they may for that reason begin to think highly of it, read it, and meditate on it (*Examen*, prol., cap., qu. 28-30, p 124).

Franz Pieper (d. 1931): A word on the rational proofs for the Christian religion, as employed in apologetics. The Christian apologist is in a position to show any rational man, particularly if he have a well-trained mind, that after all it would be more reasonable to accept the claims of Christianity as true than to reject them as false. But he must ever keep in mind that his real business is not to demonstrate the truth of the Christian religion to the unbeliever, but to uncover the insincerity of unbelief, for all who reject Christianity do so, consciously or unconsciously, because of their evil will and not because of their pretended "intellectual honesty" (*CD*, I, p 110).

Compare/Contrast with Henry Morris: Skill at persuasion and argumentation is no substitute for prayer and sincere concern for souls, and certainly no substitute for the use of the Word of God itself. At the same time, it is a serious mistake to teach, as many do, that the use of Christian evidences . . . is unnecessary. In a world of almost universal hostility to Bible Christianity, where unbelief in the Bible is only exceeded by ignorance of the Bible, it is obvious that to most people at least, the testimony of Scripture and personal experience alone . . . will be pointless. Some basis must also be given for believing the Bible to be true and the experience to be more meaningful than experiences offered by other religions (*Many Infallible Proofs*, p 4).

d) Since the authority of Scripture is absolute, Scripture is its own interpreter.

Luther: Scripture itself by itself is its own surest, best, and clearest interpreter (*Erl. Ed.*, 36:160-161).

Quenstedt: To the Holy Spirit, as the original Author of Scripture, belongs the interpretation of it. And since he speaks to us today only in and through Scripture, it follows that the legitimate interpretation of Scripture is to be sought from Scripture itself (*TDP*, I:138).

Quenstedt: The more obscure passages which need explanation can and ought to be explained by other more clear passages of Scripture. And thus Scripture itself gives the interpretation of the more obscure passages, by comparing them with the clearer ones, so that thus Scripture is explained by Scripture. For generally speaking, there are certain biblical sayings that are like suns with respect to others, which, like planets, are illuminated by them (*TDP*, I:137).

1) Each passage has one intended meaning, unlike the intentional ambiguity in the pronouncements of ancient oracles.

Luther: The Holy Spirit is the most simple writer and speaker in heaven and earth; therefore his words have only one sense, the most simple one, which we call the literal sense (*LW* 39, p 178-179).

-a) It is necessary that each passage to be taken in the natural sense indicated by the context.

2 Peter 1:20 Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation.

2 Peter 1:19 We have the word of the prophets made more certain (*καὶ ἔχομεν βεβαιότερον τὸν προφητικὸν λόγον*), and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.

2 Timothy 3:15 From infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

Luther: You shall not give your own interpretation. The Holy Spirit himself must expound Scripture. Otherwise it must remain unexpounded. Now if anyone of the saintly fathers can show that his interpretation is based on Scripture, and if Scripture proves that this is the way that Scripture should be interpreted, then the interpretation is right. If this is not the case, I must not believe him. (*LW* 30, p 166).

Consider the importance of this truth in interpreting Revelation 20.

-b) The allegorical approach to the interpretation of Scripture is not acceptable. It violates the simple sense of the words of the sacred text as indicated by the context.

-1) The ancient fourfold approach to biblical interpretation ignored the context of the passage.

The literal interpretation teaches what was done;
the allegorical, what you should believe;
the moral, what you should do;
the anagogical, what you should hope.

Honorius of Autun (12th century); Scripture is interpreted and understood in four ways: historically, typologically, tropically, and anagogically. This is expressed by the table for the presentation of the bread in the ark [sic], which is supported by four feet. The ark presents the church,...the table represents Scripture,...the four feet are the four kinds of meaning. ...

It is history that Solomon is called peaceable and that he built the temple in seven years. It is allegory that Solomon is called peaceable and that he is Christ...who made the church as a temple for himself.... It is tropology that just as Solomon made the temple out of planks and stones, so each believer makes in his soul a temple of God.... It is anagogy ...that Christ establishes a temple in the heavenly Jerusalem out of living stones, that is, the elect (*Commentary on Songs*, Intro.)

-2) Samples of allegorical interpretation illustrate its weakness:

Epistle of Barnabas, 10:3 [With reference to Deuteronomy 14:8, The pig is also unclean; although it has a split hoof, it does not chew the cud. You are not to eat their meat or touch their carcasses]: He mentioned the swine for this reason: you shall not consort, he means, with men who are like swine, that is to say, when they have plenty they forget the Lord, but when they are in want they recognize the Lord, just as the swine when it eats does not know its master, but when it is hungry it cries out, and after receiving food is again silent. (Kirsopp Lake translation, 1912).

Donald Fortner: *Ruth* represents all who are saved by the grace of God. *Boaz* represents the Lord Jesus Christ, our Kinsman-Redeemer. He is the owner of all things. All the fields of the world belong to him. . . . *The field* in which Ruth gleaned represents the Word of God. The *young men*, the reapers, represent those who preach the gospel of Christ. As Boaz commanded his young men to let fall some of the grain on purpose for Ruth, so the Lord Jesus Christ commands his servants , those who preach the gospel, to let fall precious truths on purpose for chosen sinners (*Discovering Christ in Ruth*, p 95).

-3) Consider these evaluations of allegorizing.

Calov first cites a passage from the *Philologia Sacra* of Glassius: “The mystical sense is the sense which is not directly signified by the words themselves but by the thing which is signified by the words,” and then he says: “If anyone wishes to speak very carefully, the meaning of the words or statements of Scripture is one thing, and the typical significance which God has in mind in something described in Scripture or in some historical account is something else. For

God can have something in mind that he wants to tell us through a certain historical account, but while that thing is described in that historical account, it does not follow that the words in which it is described have a double meaning, one literal, the other mystical. But those words have a single meaning, but through the thing itself which is described in these words God wished at the same time to set something else before the eyes of men, but he did not want to do that through the words which describe it” (*Systema*, tom. I, cap. IV, sec. II, qu. XVIII, p 664, which quoted Salomon Glassius (d. 1656).

Quenstedt: We must distinguish between 1) an accommodation or mystical application of things said and done in Scripture which is “in-Scripturated” (*εγγραφον*) and divine or which is handed down in Scripture itself, as when St. Paul in Ga 4:24 by means of the two sons of Abraham points out the two covenants of God [that is, an interpretation that is found in the text of Scripture and that God himself makes], and 2) a non-Scriptural (*αγραφον*) accommodation or mystical application which is brought in or invented by human effort. We must distinguish between allegories and types which Christ himself or the apostles built on the literal sense in the Scripture itself, and allegories and types which Scripture itself does not point out (*TDP*, pars. I, cap. IV, sect., II, qu. XIII, ecthes. X, p 130).

-c) Biblical texts are not to be torn out of their context.

Genesis 19:20 (KJV) Behold now, this city is near to flee unto, and it is a little one: Oh, let me escape thither, (is it not a little one?) and my soul shall live. [CS Spurgeon (d. 1892) reportedly based a sermon on the second half of the verse to mimic and dissuade those who would trifle with little sins.]

Colossians 2:21 Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch! [The words have been used to support temperance ideology and to prescribe abstinence from all alcoholic beverages. In reality, this text condemns such views.]

Luke 22:38 The disciples said, “See, Lord, here are two swords.” “That is enough,” he replied. [Used by Roman Catholicism for the use of spiritual and temporal power by the church.]

Ezekiel 44:2 The LORD said to me, “This gate is to remain shut. It must not be opened; no one may enter through it. It is to remain shut because the LORD, the God of Israel, has entered through it. [Alleged evidence for the perpetual virginity of Mary]

2) The Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church do not allow the Scripture to be its own interpreter.

Bellarmino: We and our adversaries agree that the Scriptures ought to be understood by that spirit by whom they were produced, i.e., the Holy Spirit. The whole question therefore hinges on this point, Where is this Spirit? For it is our settled opinion that this Spirit, although he is often given to many private persons, nevertheless is surely to be found in the Church, that is, in the council of the bishops confirmed by the highest pastor of the whole Church, or in the highest pastor together with the council of the other pastors.—But in this matter we say in general that the judge of the Scripture's true meaning and of all controversies is the Church, i.e., the pope together with the council (*Disputationes*, tom. I, lib. III, cap. III, Art. 11 & 12, p 82).

Gregory of Valentia (d. 1603) The main point is this, if at any time a controversy about doctrine should arise, the church cannot stray from the truth in defining the doctrine. However, this infallible authority of the Church for defining doctrines does not belong to individual believers, for they obviously are able to err as individuals. Nor does it even belong to all believers together. For it would be given to them in vain since it would hardly be possible for an authoritative opinion to be spoken by them all. But the highest authority of the church is vested in the vicar of Christ, the Supreme Pontiff, whether he wants to settle the matter together with the council of bishops, or without the council (Cited by Aquinas in his *Summa*, then in *Calov, Systema*, tom. I, p 378).

Quenstedt [with reference to 2 Peter 1:20: Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation]: If Peter wanted to teach that there is a double authority in the church, the first, the authority of the Holy Scripture which proclaims the heavenly truth to us, and the second, the authority to interpret the Scripture, the admonition of Peter would lack coherence. For how are these things combined: the believers ought to take heed to the most sure prophetic Word and at the same time to know that the light of interpretation by which the prophetic Word is to be understood does not rise out of the Word. Do not these things mutually annul one another? (*TDP*, qu XIV, thes. beb. II, obs. 9, p 140).

Council of Trent, Sess. IV, Decret. II: No one, relying on his own skill, shall—in matters of faith, and of morals pertaining to the edification of Christian doctrine—wresting the sacred Scripture to his own senses, presume to interpret the said sacred Scripture contrary to that sense which holy mother Church—whose it is to judge of the true sense and interpretation of the holy Scriptures—has held and does hold.

Vatican II: All of what has been said about the way of interpreting Scripture is subject finally to the judgment of the Church, which carries out the divine commission and ministry of guarding and interpreting the word of God (*Documents*, p 121).

Catechism of the Catholic Church, Par. 85 [citing Vatican II]: The task of giving an authentic interpretation of the Word of God, whether in its written form or in the form of Tradition, has been entrusted to the living teaching office of the Church alone. Its authority in this matter is

exercised in the name of Jesus Christ. This means that the task of interpretation has been entrusted to the bishops in communion with the successor of Peter, the Bishop of Rome.

Bishop Kallistos (Timothy) Ware: It is from the Church that the Bible ultimately derives its authority, for it was the Church which originally decided which books form a part of the Holy Scripture; and it is the Church alone which can interpret the Scripture with authority. There are many sayings in the Bible which by themselves are far from clear, and individual readers, however sincere, are in danger of error if they trust their own personal interpretation . . . Orthodox, when they read the Scripture accept the guidance of the Church. When received into the Orthodox Church, a convert promises, "I will accept and understand Holy Scripture in accordance with the interpretation which was and is held by the Holy Orthodox Catholic Church of the East, our Mother" (*The Orthodox Way*, p 199-200).

Luther: If what they claim were true, why have the Holy Scripture at all? Of what use is Scripture? Let us burn the Scripture and be satisfied with the unlearned gentlemen at Rome who possess the Holy Spirit.... Their claim that only the pope may interpret Scripture is an outrageous fancied fable (*LW* 44, p 134).

3) Those with evolutionary presuppositions who interpret Genesis 1 according to the geological "record of the rocks" fail to let the natural sense of a passage stand.

Henry M. Morris: The standard system of orthodox historical geology has been entrenched in scientific literature for over a hundred years and is the real strength of the evolution model. The idea that the earth is billions of years old and the forms of life on earth have been gradually changing and increasing in complexity during those vast ages seems to be *prima facie* evidence of evolution and against the Bible. The almost universal indoctrination in this geologic-age concept is beyond question the major barrier against acceptance of the divine inspiration of the Bible and the truth of Christianity. People have numerous moral and spiritual reasons for rejecting Christ, but their main intellectual justification will usually be found, if one probes deeply, in the assumption that the early chapters of the Bible have been proved scientifically false. The geologic-age system, as presently structured . . . obviously seems to be a powerful evidence for evolution. . . . The fossil record does, of course *suggest* evolution, though it certainly does not *prove* evolution (*Many Infallible Proofs*, p 273-274).

4) Neo-orthodox and modernist "demythologizing" applies the principles of rationalism to biblical interpretation.

Bultmann: The cosmology of the New Testament is essentially mythical in character. The world is viewed as a three-storied structure, with the earth in the centre, the heaven above, and the underworld beneath.... All this is the language of mythology.... To this extent the kerygma is incredible to modern man, for he is convinced that the mythical view of the world is obsolete.... Man's knowledge and mastery of the world have

advanced to such an extent through science and technology that it is no longer possible for anyone seriously to hold the New Testament view of the world—in fact, no one does.... There is no longer any heaven in the traditional sense of the word. The same applies to hell.... Now that the forces and laws of nature have been discovered, we can no longer believe in spirits, whether good or evil.... What a primitive mythology it is, that a divine Being should become incarnate, and atone for the sins of men through his own blood! (*Kerygma and Myth*, p 1–7).

5) The historical-critical method of interpretation treats Scripture, not as the inspired Word of God, but as a legitimate subject for human criticism (as do gospel reductionism and the documentary hypothesis).

Immanuel Kant (d. 1804): Enlightenment is man’s release from his self-incurred tutelage. Tutelage is man’s inability to make use of his understanding without direction from another. Self-incurred is the tutelage when its cause lies not in lack of reason but in lack of resolution and courage to use it without direction from another. *Sapere aude!* “Have the courage to use your own reason!” – That is the motto of enlightenment (*An Answer to the Question: “What is Enlightenment?”* 1784 newspaper essay).

Roy Harrisville & Walter Sundberg: Historical criticism of the Bible originated in the opposition between church dogma and the new liberal political philosophy of emergent modern Europe in the seventeenth century. This in turn led to a concerted effort in the eighteenth century to uncover the original message of Jesus apart from church tradition. Historical criticism sought to measure the meaning of Jesus’ message according to the standards of Enlightenment morality and rationality. . . . What the Bible reports and what it means are conceived to be two different matters, the latter especially to be determined by scholarship operating under presuppositions of modern culture. The result has been to assess the Bible according to measures that scholars deem fit and to treat church tradition and its reading of biblical texts with a hermeneutic of suspicion (*The Bible in Modern Culture*, p 2).

Edgar Krentz, summarizing principles originally articulated by Ernst Troeltsch and still held to be valid by contemporary historical-critical scholars: The historical method of thought and explanation has three principles: (1) the principle of criticism or methodological doubt, which implies that history only achieves probability. Religious tradition must also be subjected to criticism. (2) The principle of analogy makes criticism possible. Present experience and occurrence become the criteria of probability in the past. This “almighty power” of analogy implies that all events are in principle similar. (3) The principle of correlation (or mutual interdependence) implies that all historical phenomena are so interrelated that a change in one phenomenon necessitates a change in the causes leading to it and in the effects it has. Historical explanation rests on this chain of cause and effect. The third principle rules out miracle and salvation history. Historical method is the child of the Enlightenment (*The Historical-Critical Method*, p 55).

2. Scripture is sufficient for bringing sinners to salvation.

a) By means of Scripture salvation is actually attained.

1) This comforting truth is affirmed many times:

John 20:31 These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

Romans 1:16 I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.

2 Timothy 3:15-17 From infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶ All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷ so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Gerhard: We never say that Scripture is perfect in this sense that everything that we need to know for faith and life is *αὐτολεξεί* or *κατὰ ῥητόν*, that is, literally or in so many words stated in Scripture, but some things are stated in substance and some literally, or, to state the same thing in a different way, we say that some things are contained in them explicitly but others implicitly so that they can be drawn from what is said in Scripture by a legitimate and sure process of deduction (*Loci*, II, 286).

Adolf Hoenecke: Whether in theology one can actually draw logical conclusions—The answer must be: In the full sense not; only in a very limited way, insofar as only analytical conclusions are permissible which in fact and truth only draw out of Scripture what God himself actually put into it and clearly testifies has been put into it (*ELD*, III, p 71).

Adolf Hoenecke: But what is a legitimate conclusion? One 1) which does not violate the laws of logic; 2) which does not in the least contradict what Scripture says; 3) which takes its premises from Scripture itself; 4) which does not draw a conclusion which is not implicit in Scripture (*ELD*, I, p 334).

Quenstedt: We do not agree with the papists that Scripture is perfect implicitly: that it contains all things necessary for faith as in a bulb, as in a seed, as a universal principle, as in an outline, in such a way that it indeed itself does not contain all things, but nevertheless shows whence and where we ought to look for them, reference being made to the church and its traditions, from which the lack of those doctrines which are desired can be supplied (*TDPI*, 102).

2) On the force of Paul's word *ᾠφέλιμος* (2 Tm 3:16) consider these words:

Adolf Hoenecke: In regard to 2 Tm 3:15–17 Bellarmine says that this passage does not prove the sufficiency of Scripture, for this word “it is useful” however much it may be twisted by Chemnitz, nevertheless never means, “it is sufficient.” Let us hear Chemnitz himself as he responds, “‘But what,’ you ask, ‘will you prove from that passage (2 Tm 3:15ff)? For there is no one, who denies that the Scripture, also that of the New Testament, is useful. But one cannot draw a firm conclusion by arguing from usefulness to sufficiency.’ ... I answer: I confess that if Paul’s statement would say only, ‘Scripture is useful for doctrine, etc.,’ that would not be enough to infer from it the sufficiency of Scripture. But Paul says that all Scripture is in such a way useful for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” (Bellarmine, *Disputationes*, Art. 23, p 122; Chemnitz, *Examen, de epist. Apostol.*, p 35; both cited in *Hoenecke*, I, p 399-400)

b) Scripture, with a solemn curse, forbids additions, subtractions and alterations.

1) There are various statements that make this point.

Deuteronomy 4:2 Do not add to what I command you and do not subtract from it, but keep the commands of the LORD your God that I give you.

Proverbs 30:6 Do not add to his words, or he will rebuke you and prove you a liar.

Luke 16:29-31 Abraham replied, “They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.”³⁰ “No, father Abraham,” he said, “but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.”³¹ He said to him, “If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.”

Galatians 1:8 Even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned!

Revelation 22:18 I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book.

2) No additional inspired Scriptures are to be expected. There is no hint of promise that there will be other sacred Scriptures. God’s use of the prophets and apostles, whose writings serve as the foundation of the church, has concluded.

Hebrews 1:1,2 In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways,² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.

Matthew 28:19,20 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.

John 17:20 My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message.

Ephesians 2:19-20 Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household,²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.

Acts 1:21,22 It is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us,²² beginning from John's baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us. For one of these must become a witness with us of his resurrection.

3) The Roman Catholic Church and Eastern Orthodox Church declare the parity or even the superiority of "tradition" over Scripture.

Council of Trent, Sess. IV, Decr. 1: The sacred and holy ecumenical general Synod of Trent ... seeing that this truth and discipline are contained in written books and unwritten traditions, which were received by the apostles from the mouth of Christ himself, or which have come down to us from the apostles themselves, handed down, as it were, from hand to hand, under the dictation of the Holy Spirit, the Synod following the example of the orthodox fathers, receives and venerates with an equal feeling of piety and reverence all the books of the Old Testament as well as of the New, since one God is the author of both, and no less the traditions themselves, both those pertaining to faith and those pertaining to morals, which have been spoken orally by Christ himself or dictated by the Holy Spirit and preserved in the Church Catholic by the continuous succession of the bishops.

Bellarmino: Therefore the controversy between us and the heretics consists in two things. The first is that we assert that not all the doctrine which is necessary either for faith or morals is expressly contained in the Scriptures, and therefore besides the written Word of God, also the unwritten Word of God, that is, the divine and apostolic traditions, is required.—“The Necessity of the Traditions is Shown”: Now, that we may come to the proof, we will try to demonstrate three things. First, that the Scriptures without the traditions have in themselves been neither necessary nor sufficient. Secondly, that apostolic traditions not only concerning morality but also concerning faith are extant. Finally, we will show how we can be sure about true traditions (*Disputationes, de verbo Dei non Scripto*, lib. IV, cap. III, I, p 101).

Vatican II: Sacred tradition and sacred Scripture form one sacred deposit of the word of God, which is committed to the Church (*Documents*, 117).

Vatican II: This tradition which comes from the apostles develops in the Church with the help of the Holy Spirit (*Documents*, 116).

Catechism of the Catholic Church, Par. 80-82: Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture, then, are bound closely together, and communicate one with the other. For both of them, flowing out from the same divine well-spring, come together in some fashion to form one thing, and move towards the same goal. Each of them makes present and fruitful in the Church the mystery of Christ, who promised to remain with his own “always, to the close of the age”. Sacred Scripture is the speech of God as it is put down in writing under the breath of the Holy Spirit. And Holy Tradition transmits in its entirety the Word of God which has been entrusted to the apostles by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit. It transmits it to the successors of the apostles so that, enlightened by the Spirit of truth, they may faithfully preserve, expound and spread it abroad by their preaching. As a result the Church, to whom the transmission and interpretation of Revelation is entrusted, “does not derive her certainty about all revealed truths from the holy Scriptures alone. Both Scripture and Tradition must be accepted and honored with equal sentiments of devotion and reverence.”

Vladimir Lossky: An advance is made toward a purer notion of tradition if this term is used to designate solely the oral transmission of faith. The separation between tradition and Scripture still subsists, but instead of isolating two sources of revelation, one opposes two modes of transmitting it: oral preaching and writing. It is then necessary to put in one category the preaching of the apostles and of their successors, as well as all preaching of faith performed by a living teaching authority, and in another category the Holy Scripture and all other written expressions of the revealed truth (these latter differing in the degree of their authority recognized by the church). This approach affirms the primacy of tradition over Scripture, since the oral transmission of the apostles’ preaching preceded its recording in written form in the canon of the New Testament. It even might be said that the church could dispense with the Scriptures, but she could not exist without tradition (“Tradition and Traditions” in *Eastern Orthodoxy Theology*, p 128).

Michael Pomazansky: Sacred Tradition is also necessary because some truths of the faith are expressed in a completely definite form in Scripture, while others are not entirely clear and concise and therefore demand confirmation by the Sacred Apostolic Tradition (*Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*, p 34).

Consider Middler Dogmatics Notes, p 15ff., regarding Scripture as the only true source of theology.

c) Alleged Scripture proof for the necessity of “tradition” is imaginary and fabricated.

1) One argument is that some authoritative books have been lost.

-a) Cited as instances are books mentioned in the biblical record.

Numbers 21:14 That is why the Book of the Wars of the LORD says. . . .

Joshua 10:13 So the sun stood still, and the moon stopped, till the nation avenged itself on its enemies, as it is written in the Book of Jashar.

2 Samuel 1:18 [David] ordered that the men of Judah be taught this lament of the bow (it is written in the Book of Jashar).

1 Kings 11:41 As for the other events of Solomon's reign—all he did and the wisdom he displayed—are they not written in the book of the annals of Solomon?

1 Kings 14:19,29 The other events of Jeroboam's reign, his wars and how he ruled, are written in the book of the annals of the kings of Israel. ²⁹ As for the other events of Rehoboam's reign, and all he did, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Judah?

1 Chronicles 27:24 Joab son of Zeruah began to count the men but did not finish. Wrath came on Israel on account of this numbering, and the number was not entered in the book of the annals of King David.

1 Chronicles 29:29 As for the events of King David's reign, from beginning to end, they are written in the records of Samuel the seer, the records of Nathan the prophet and the records of Gad the seer,

2 Chronicles 9:29 As for the other events of Solomon's reign, from beginning to end, are they not written in the records of Nathan the prophet, in the prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite and in the visions of Iddo the seer concerning Jeroboam son of Nebat?

2 Chronicles 12:15 As for the events of Rehoboam's reign, from beginning to end, are they not written in the records of Shemaiah the prophet and of Iddo the seer that deal with genealogies?

1 Corinthians 5:9 I have written you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people.

Colossians 4:16 After this letter has been read to you, see that it is also read in the church of the Laodiceans and that you in turn read the letter from Laodicea.

-b) In response to this argument, we offer these questions.

-1) Were these books inspired? Scripture quotes books which were not inspired.

Acts 17:28 “For in him we live and move and have our being.” As some of your own poets have said, “We are his offspring.” [Paul quotes the Cretan poet Epimenides, ca. 600 BC, and the Cilician poet Aratus, ca. 315-240 BC, who were not inspired.]

Titus 1:12 Even one of their own prophets has said, “Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons.” [The Cretan poet Epimenides, ca. 600 BC, is here quoted by Paul.]

-2) Does the sufficiency of Scripture depend on the number of biblical books?

Gerhard: The perfection of Scripture is to be judged not by the number of books, but by whether there are enough of the doctrines that men must know to be saved. That which was written in any period of the church's history served as a perfect canon (rule of faith) since in those books (the ones extant at that period of history) the divine revelation was set forth perfectly in respect to that time. Thus when only the books of Moses were extant, Scripture was perfect, namely if that period of the church is kept in view, when many revelations which God wanted to have recorded in writing were not yet extant (*Loci*, II, 286).

2) Another argument used is that Scripture itself points to traditions.

-a) The following passages are cited.

2 Thessalonians 2:15 So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the teachings we passed on to you (τὰς παραδόσεις ἃς ἐδιδάχθητε), whether by word of mouth or by letter.

1 Corinthians 11:23 For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you (παρέδωκα ὑμῖν): The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread . . .

1 Corinthians 11:34 If anyone is hungry, he should eat at home, so that when you meet together it may not result in judgment. And when I come I will give further directions (τὰ λοιπὰ).

-b) In response, we note that in such passages Paul refers to truths taught elsewhere in Scripture or to details for implementing local plans.

1 Timothy 6:20 Timothy, guard what has been entrusted (τὴν παραθήκην) to your care. Turn away from godless chatter and the opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge.

2 Timothy 1:13,14 What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus. ¹⁴ Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you—guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us.

2 Timothy 2:1,2 You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. ² And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.

3. Scripture is clear.

a) God's Word calls for repeated, diligent attention and study.

1 Timothy 4:13 Until I come, devote yourself to (πρόσεχε) the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching.

John 5:39 You diligently study (ἐραυνᾶτε) the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me.

Luke 8:18 Therefore consider carefully (βλέπετε) how you listen. Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what he thinks he has will be taken from him.

Acts 17:11 The Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined (ἀνακρίνοντες) the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.

b) The testimony regarding the overall clarity of the Bible is abundant.

Psalms 19:8 The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes.

Psalms 119:104,105,130 I gain understanding from your precepts; therefore I hate every wrong path. ¹⁰⁵ Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path. ¹³⁰ The unfolding of your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple.

2 Peter 1:19 We have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.

2 Timothy 3:15 From infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

c) This does not say that all things in Scripture are always clear to every one (subjective clarity).

Psalms 119:18 Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law.

Acts 8:30-31 Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. “Do you understand what you are reading?” Philip asked. ³¹ “How can I,” he said, “unless someone explains it to me?”

2 Peter 3:16 He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.

Gerhard: It should be kept in mind that when we say that Scripture is clear we do not want this to be understood as though we mean that in their entirety all the things which are set before us in the Holy Scriptures are composed [the word “*comparata*” is very likely a reference to 1 Cor 2:13: “comparing spiritual things with spiritual words”] in such a way that they are at first glance fully and clearly understood by everyone. No, rather we confess that there are some things in Scripture which are spoken in a less clear way and are more difficult to understand. But this is what we say and in every way try to prove, that the clarity of Scripture is such that from it can be gained a certain sure and firm opinion concerning the doctrines which anyone must know if he is to be saved. ... Some things in Scripture are more clearly expressed than others; and things which are said in a more obscure way in one place are explained more clearly somewhere else (*Loci*, tom. I, loc. I, art. LXVIII—LXX, p 26).

Quenstedt: We teach the clarity of Scripture in such a way that at the same time we do not at all exclude (consider unnecessary) devout prayers for the enlightening of our intellect and for a saving understanding, pious and daily diligence applied in the reading and meditating on Scripture, earnestness in comparing unclear passages with those that are clear, and the enlightenment which comes from the Holy Spirit (*TDP, ecthes. XV*).

d) Nor does the truth of the clarity of Scripture mean that people, by nature, can properly understand or appreciate Scripture.

1 Corinthians 2:14 The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.

Luke 24:25 He said to them, “How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!”

Matthew 22:29 Jesus replied, “You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God.”

2 Corinthians 3:14-16 But their minds were made dull, for to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read. It has not been removed, because only in Christ is it taken away. ¹⁵ Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts. ¹⁶ But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.

2 Corinthians 4:3-4 Even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. ⁴ The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that

they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

Apology, Art. IV (II), p 152, 107: Truly, it is amazing that the adversaries are in no way moved by so many passages of Scripture, which clearly ascribe justification to faith.

Quenstedt: If nothing can be said to be clear except that which cannot be understood in a perverted way or interpreted in a bad sense by anyone, nothing in the universe can be said clearly and plainly (*TDP*, pars. I, cap. IV, sect. II, qu. XII, f.s. VI, p 124).

Huelsemann (d. 1661): It is very absurd to deny the clarity of some statement or doctrine just because some shoemaker, tailor, tanner, or anyone else who is already tainted by an opposite heresy only says that he does not recognize it as evident (*Praelect. in Form. Conc.*, art. I, cap. IV, par. 4; cited in Quenstedt, *TDP*, p 119).

Gottfried Hoffmann (d. 1712): For although the words of Scripture are so clear that by their very nature they really force the true meaning on anyone, nevertheless no one can look deeply into the clarity of such sublime things except the man for whom the Holy Spirit takes the veil away (2 Cor 3:14ff) (*Synopsis Theol., de sac. Script.*, par IX, p 97).

Baier: Certainly the man who does not take a close look at the words themselves, but gives himself up to his own previously formed opinions and twists the words of Scripture to fit these prejudices will also be able to err when he seeks to study the clear passages and their true meaning (*Compendium, De principio theol.*, Art. XLV, (m), p 103).

e) The truth of the clarity of Scripture does not deny that there is a certain progressive clearness in Scripture itself.

Augustine: The New Testament in the Old is concealed;
the Old Testament is in the New revealed.
(*Quaestiones in Heptateuchum*, 2, 73).

f) The truth of the clarity of Scripture also does not deny that there should be progress in a person's understanding of Scripture.

Gerhard: The clarity of Scripture is a double one, as Luther says, "one is external, found in the ministry of the Word, the other is located in the knowledge of the heart. If you [sc. Erasmus] are speaking about internal clarity, no man understands one iota in the Scripture by the natural powers of his innate ability, except the man who has the Holy Spirit. All men have a darkened heart. The Holy Spirit is needed if we are to understand the whole Scripture and any one of its parts. If you are speaking of external clarity nothing is left obscure and ambiguous, but everything is most clearly brought into the light by the Word" (*Loci*, I, 26).

g) The truth of the clarity of Scripture is not to be understood as implying that in heaven no increased illumination is possible.

2 Corinthians 5:7 We live by faith, not by sight.

1 John 3:2 Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

1 Corinthians 13:12 Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

4. God, not the church, has established the canon of the Scriptures.

a) Only those books are canonical which have been given by inspiration of God.

1) The Old Testament canon includes only those books that were recognized by the Jews in the days of Jesus and the apostles as God's Word.

Luke 16:29 Abraham replied, "They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them."

Luke 24:44 He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms."

John 5:39 You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me.

Romans 3:1-2 What advantage, then, is there in being a Jew? . . .² Much in every way! First of all, they have been entrusted with the very words of God.

2 Timothy 3:15 From infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

2) The New Testament canon includes only those books that were given by inspiration of God and recognized by external and internal evidence as inspired.

-a) External evidence is commonly linked to apostolic authorship, i.e., that books were written by an apostle or a disciple of an apostle.

Ephesians 2:20 [You have been] built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.

John 16:13 But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.

1 Corinthians 2:13 This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words (πνευματικοῖς πνευματικὰ συγκρίνοντες).

2 Peter 3:16 He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.

-b) External evidence and the testimony of the ancient church remind us how the church received the canon.

Consider the listing of categories of New Testament writings from Eusebius (d. ca. 340):

- *Homologoumena*: generally accepted books
- *Antilegomena*: contested books (Hebrews, James, 2 Peter, 2 John, 3 John, Jude, Revelation)
- *Apocrypha* and *pseudepigrapha*: non-inspired writings

The Old Testament Scriptures also had what might be called “antilegomena,” e.g., Esther, Song of Songs. The primary question asked was not “Are the books canonical?” but “Why are they in the canon?” There were also Old Testament apocryphal and pseudepigraphic writings that were not considered canonical.

-c) The internal evidence is the self-authenticating power of the inspired writings (αὐτοπιστία).

Luke 24:32 They asked each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?”

John 7:17 If anyone chooses to do God’s will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own.

-d) Closely related to this self-validating power of the inspired writings are other features.

-1) The chosen writers’ claim to inspiration testifies to Scripture.

2 Samuel 23:1-2 These are the last words of David: “The oracle of David son of Jesse, the oracle of the man exalted by the Most High, the man anointed by the God of Jacob, Israel’s singer of songs: ²The Spirit of the LORD spoke through me; his word was on my tongue.”

Psalm 45:1 My heart is stirred by a noble theme as I recite my verses for the king; my tongue is the pen of a skillful writer.

1 Corinthians 2:13 This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words (πνευματικοῖς πνευματικὰ συγκρίνοντες).

-2) The chosen writers' performance of miracles testifies to Scripture in some cases.

Exodus 4:1-5,30,31 Moses answered, “What if they do not believe me or listen to me and say, ‘The LORD did not appear to you’?”² Then the LORD said to him, “What is that in your hand?” “A staff,” he replied.³ The LORD said, “Throw it on the ground.” Moses threw it on the ground and it became a snake, and he ran from it.⁴ Then the LORD said to him, “Reach out your hand and take it by the tail.” So Moses reached out and took hold of the snake and it turned back into a staff in his hand.⁵ “This,” said the LORD, “is so that they may believe that the LORD, the God of their fathers—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob—has appeared to you.”³⁰ Aaron told them everything the LORD had said to Moses. He also performed the signs before the people,³¹ and they believed. And when they heard that the LORD was concerned about them and had seen their misery, they bowed down and worshiped.

Exodus 7:11, 8:19, 9:11 Pharaoh then summoned wise men and sorcerers, and the Egyptian magicians also did the same things by their secret arts . . . The magicians said to Pharaoh, “This is the finger of God.” But Pharaoh’s heart was hard and he would not listen, just as the LORD had said. . . The magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils that were on them and on all the Egyptians.

Mark 16:17,18,20 And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues;¹⁸ they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well.²⁰ Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it.

2 Corinthians 12:12 The things that mark an apostle—signs, wonders and miracles—were done among you with great perseverance.

-3) The fulfillment of predictive prophecy testifies to Scripture.

Exodus 3:12 And God said, “I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain.”

Deuteronomy 18:20-22 But a prophet who presumes to speak in my name anything I have not commanded him to say, or a prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, must be put to death.²¹ You may say to yourselves, “How can we know when a message has not been spoken by the LORD?”²² If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the LORD does not take place or come true, that is a message the LORD has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously. Do not be afraid of him.

Jeremiah 28:9 The prophet who prophesies peace will be recognized as one truly sent by the LORD only if his prediction comes true.

Daniel 9:1-2 In the first year of Darius son of Xerxes (a Mede by descent), who was made ruler over the Babylonian kingdom —² in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, understood from the Scriptures, according to the word of the LORD given to Jeremiah the prophet, that the desolation of Jerusalem would last seventy years (See Jeremiah 25:11-12, 29:10).

-4) Agreement with the previously given Word is a testimony to Scripture.

Deuteronomy 13:1-5 If a prophet, or one who foretells by dreams, appears among you and announces to you a miraculous sign or wonder,² and if the sign or wonder of which he has spoken takes place, and he says, “Let us follow other gods” (gods you have not known) “and let us worship them,”³ you must not listen to the words of that prophet or dreamer. The LORD your God is testing you to find out whether you love him with all your heart and with all your soul.⁴ It is the LORD your God you must follow, and him you must revere. Keep his commands and obey him; serve him and hold fast to him.⁵ That prophet or dreamer must be put to death, because he preached rebellion against the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt and redeemed you from the land of slavery; he has tried to turn you from the way the LORD your God commanded you to follow. You must purge the evil from among you.

Isaiah 8:19-20 When men tell you to consult mediums and spiritists, who whisper and mutter, should not a people inquire

of their God? Why consult the dead on behalf of the living? ²⁰To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, they have no light of dawn.

- e) **The testimony of the Holy Spirit is the basis for divine certainty concerning the canon. This is our conviction, as the following statements declare.**

Baier: [For divine certainty] the testimony of the church alone is not enough, but also here the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit, or his working, his efficacy through the Scriptures must be active also (*Compendium*, proleg., cap. II, par. 34, p 75).

Chemnitz: Scripture therefore has canonical authority (the ability to speak with convincing certainty about matters of faith and life) above all else from the Holy Spirit, by whose impulse and inspiration it was produced. Then it also has canonical authority from the writers to whom God himself gave sure and extraordinary evidences of the truth. After that it has canonical authority from the early church, as from the witness in whose time those writings were produced and approved (*Examen*, pars. I, p 47).

Wisconsin Synod Proceedings, 1959: Scripture being the Word of God, it carries its own authority in itself and does not receive it by the approbation of the Church. The Canon, that is, that collection of books which is the authority for the Church, is not the creation of the Church. Rather, the Canon has, by a quiet historical process which took place in the worship life of the Church, imposed itself upon the Church by virtue of its own divine authority (p 199).

Formula of Concord, Summary, p 776, p 1,2 : We believe, teach, and confess that the sole rule and standard according to which all dogmas together with all teachers should be estimated and judged are the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures of the Old and of the New Testament alone, as it is written Ps. 119:105: “Your Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.” And St. Paul: “Though an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you, let him be accursed,” Gal. 1: 8. Other writings, however, of ancient or modern teachers, whatever name they bear, must not be regarded as equal to the Holy Scriptures, but all of them together be subjected to them, and should not be received otherwise or further than as witnesses, which are to show in what manner after the time of the apostles, and at what places, this pure doctrine of the prophets and apostles was preserved.

- b) **The Roman Catholic Church and Eastern Orthodox Church claim the church ultimately determines the canon. They also demand that other books be acknowledged as canonical or see them as authoritative.**

Bishop Kallistos (Timothy) Ware: It is from the Church that the Bible ultimately derives its authority, for it was the Church which originally decided

which books form a part of the Holy Scripture; and it is the Church alone which can interpret the Scripture with authority (*The Orthodox Way*, p 199).

Council of Trent, IV, after naming the books Tobit, Judith, Additions to Esther, Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus (Wisdom of Sirach), Baruch, Story of Susanna, Song of the Three Children, Story of Bel and the Dragon, 1 & 2 Maccabees as canonical: If anyone, however, does not accept as holy and canonical the whole books themselves together with all their parts just as they have been customarily read in the Catholic Church and as they are contained in the old Vulgate Latin edition, and if he knowingly and deliberately despises the aforementioned traditions, let him be damned.

Clarifying note: The Council of Trent failed to give a complete list of all apocryphal books that the Roman Catholic Church considers canonical. Two books of Esdras and the Prayer of Manasseh, for example, were not listed for formal adoption. This has not troubled Catholic theologians. The Catholic Encyclopedia offers an interesting comment on their prevailing mindset: During the deliberations of the Council there never was any real question as to the reception of all the traditional Scripture. . . . In the mind of the Tridentine Fathers they had been virtually canonized, by the same decree of Florence (1442), and the same Fathers felt especially bound by the action of the preceding ecumenical synod. The Council of Trent did not enter into an examination of the fluctuations in the history of the Canon. Neither did it trouble itself about questions of authorship or character of contents. True to the practical genius of the Latin Church, it based its decision on immemorial tradition as manifested in the decrees of previous councils and popes, and liturgical reading, relying on traditional teaching and usage to determine a question of tradition (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03267a.htm>, *Catholic Encyclopedia* Online). [In reality, they probably just left the three books out by mistake.]

Catechism of the Catholic Church, Par. 120: It was by the apostolic Tradition that the Church discerned which writings are to be included in the list of the sacred books. This complete list is called the canon of Scripture. It includes 46 books for the Old Testament (45 if we count Jeremiah and Lamentations as one) and 27 for the New.

The Old Testament: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah, Tobit, Judith, Esther, 1 and 2 Maccabees, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, the Song of Songs, the Wisdom of Solomon, Sirach (Ecclesiasticus), Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Baruch, Ezekiel, *Daniel*, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zachariah and Malachi. [Underling and italics added. Underlining marks additional books. Italics books with additions.]

Michael Pomazanski: The Church recognizes 38 books of the Old Testament. . . . These books, which were entered at some time into the Hebrew canon, are called “canonical.” To them are joined a group of “non-canonical” books. . . . The Church accepts these latter books also as useful and instructive and in antiquity assigned them for instructive reading not only in homes but also in churches, which is why they have been called “ecclesiastical.” The Church

includes these books in a single volume of the Bible together with the canonical books. As a source of the teachings of the faith, the Church puts them in a secondary place and looks on them as an appendix to the canonical books (*Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*, p 26-27).

Daniel Clendenin: A measure of uncertainty remained as to the exact status of the “longer canon” of the Old Testament; books like Wisdom and Ecclesiasticus – which were not a part of the Hebrew canon, but only of the Septuagint, and which are called Apocrypha in the West. ... Even today, Orthodox theologians refer to them as deuterocanonical books. They are considered part of Scripture and are read in church liturgically, but occupy somewhat of a marginal place in the canon. This rather detached Orthodox attitude toward the problem of the scriptural canon shows clearly that for them the Christian faith and experience can in no way be compatible with the notion of *Scriptura sola* (*Eastern Orthodox Theology*, p 82).

IV. The Word of God works in both a psychological and supernatural manner.

1. As ordinary speech does, the Word of God appeals to the psychological nature of human beings.

a) The Word of God appeals to the human intellect.

2 Peter 1:19 We have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.

2 Corinthians 4:6 God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

Luke 24:45 Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures.

Colossians 1:9 For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding.

Psalms 119:104,130 I gain understanding from your precepts; therefore I hate every wrong path. ¹³⁰ The unfolding of your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple.

Ephesians 3:18,19 [I pray that you] may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, ¹⁹ and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Matthew 13:19 When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is the seed sown along the path.

b) The Word of God appeals to human emotion.

Psalm 119:32 I run in the path of your commands, for you have set my heart free.

Romans 10:9,10 If you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.¹⁰ For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.

Psalm 119:72,103,120 The law from your mouth is more precious to me than thousands of pieces of silver and gold.¹⁰³ How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!¹²⁰ My flesh trembles in fear of you; I stand in awe of your laws.

c) The Word of God appeals to the human will.

2 Corinthians 5:20 We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God.

Romans 12:1 Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.

Ephesians 4:1 As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.

1 Thessalonians 4:10 And in fact, you do love all the brothers throughout Macedonia. Yet we urge you, brothers, to do so more and more.

Titus 1:9 He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.

1 Thessalonians 2:11,12 You know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children,¹² encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory.

2 Timothy 4:2 Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction.

Titus 2:15 These, then, are the things you should teach. Encourage and rebuke with all authority. Do not let anyone despise you.

Colossians 1:28 We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ.

d) For statements from our dogmaticians, consider the following.

Huelsemann: When the Word of God is understood in its original sense, when it is applied to a suitable subject [a person capable of being taught] as an instrumental cause, it exercises its divine power to enlighten the darkened

minds of men with the knowledge of divine things, to turn the will from evil to good, from hatred against God to trust in him, etc., indeed, *not in a physical way*, by contact with the agent, as opium, rhubarb root, poison, fire, and so on work in a physical way in a suitable subject [e.g. you cannot poison a stone], but it works *in a psychological way (moraliter)* by enlightening the mind, by moving the will, by cleansing the emotions, etc. For the phrase “in a psychological way” here is not to be understood as opposed to a supernatural contact and influence but only as a repudiation of any concept of physical contact and influence (*Praelect. in Form. Conc.*, sect. I, part 2, par. 2).

Huelsemann: The Word of God has this in common with ordinary human words that just as a man's word is a representation or an indication of what is in his mind, by means of which he indicates to another man the ideas of his mind, either to seek those things which he desires or to share those things which he has, so the Word of God is an indication of God's will, by which God makes known to us what he wants us to believe and to do (*De auxiliis gratiae*, disp. III, IV, p 178).

2. In each of these psychological activities the Holy Spirit fills the Word with divine power.

a) No purely human word could bring about the radical change of a man's views, feelings, and desires into their very opposite.

1 Corinthians 2:14 The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.

1 Corinthians 12:3 I tell you that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, “Jesus be cursed,” and no one can say, “Jesus is Lord,” except by the Holy Spirit.

1 John 5:4 Everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith.

Huelsemann: The Word of God has a power of its own which goes beyond the most persuasive words of men because it persuades the hearers to believe those things which do not agree with the senses of man, nor with the intellect, which gets its knowledge through the senses, nor with the will, which measures what is desirable or undesirable by agreement with the senses (*De auxiliis gratiae*, disp. III, qu. VI, par. 9, p 255).

Valentin Loescher (d.1749): When, however, the best writers say that the act of conversion is a “natural” one, they do not intend to ascribe to conversion a mechanical or some other physical way of operating. This meaning of the word “natural” we also reject. But they argue against the Pelagians, who hold that conversion is nothing more than psychological persuasion (who therefore place the converting power of the Scriptures only in its specific doctrine of conversion), and they only point out this that there are no powers left in fallen man by which he could yield to psychological persuasion (*Praenotiones theologicae*, p 223).

b) The Word of God is an instrument through which the power of God works faith.

Romans 1:16 I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.

Hebrews 4:12 The word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

James 1:21 Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.

c) According to God's decree the Word is the instrument of the Spirit.

1 Corinthians 1:21 For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe.

Ephesians 6:13,17 Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.¹⁷ Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

James 1:18 He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created.

John 6:63 The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life.

Gerhard: We have never held that the Word of God is an instrumental cause of conversion in this way, as if there were subjectively inhering in it some natural force to produce this effect, but it is such an instrumental cause because it pleased God to set up the external Word as a cause which acts as an instrument to produce that divine result, namely the conversion and salvation of men. It pleased him not to deal with men immediately (without means) but mediately in the matter of salvation. Whatever therefore is attributed to the external word in this matter, that is entirely and totally a result of God's decision (*Loci*, tom. XIII, de fine ministerii, loc. XXIV, cap. VI, sect. I, par. CCLIII, 5, p 74).

Chemnitz: It is true beyond all argument that this virtue and power is not in the syllables as they are printed on the page (literally, as characters, e.g., as the words written on an amulet or charm). Nor do we want to say this that the fading voice of the preacher is so powerful that it can by itself bring this about. For to kindle and convert hearts, to begin and to produce repentance, faith, and the new obedience are powerful works of God alone, which he produces in man by his almighty power. And without this power of the Spirit the Scriptures are nothing but dead letters. But the Holy Spirit does not want to exercise this power without means, but he decided that the Word and the sacraments should be the appointed means, which he uses as his external tools and instruments in order that through them he might produce, increase and preserve the things

mentioned above in the hearts of men (*Enchiridion praecipuorum capitum coelestis doctrinae, etc.*, 1569; *An Enchiridion*, p 43).

d) The power of the gospel does not work magically or automatically by mere contact or ritual. It is the power of the divine truth and the Holy Spirit, accomplishing what God wants.

Psalm 50:16,17 But to the wicked, God says: “What right have you to recite my laws or take my covenant on your lips? ¹⁷ You hate my instruction and cast my words behind you.”

Isaiah 1:13 Stop bringing meaningless offerings! Your incense is detestable to me. New Moons, Sabbaths and convocations—I cannot bear your evil assemblies.

Isaiah 29:13 The Lord says: “These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me is made up only of rules taught by men.”

2 Timothy 3:5 [Many in the last days will be have] a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them.

Quenstedt: The Holy Scripture does not act or work physically or naturally, in the strict sense of these words, or in a natural and physical way, namely, through physical contact, as poison works physically (*TDP*, pars I, cap. IV, sect. II, qu. XVI, ecthes., 12, p 172).

Quenstedt: Indeed, in the early church certain unlearned and superstitious women became so insane that they ascribed a certain averting or magical power to the very letters, syllables and words of Scripture, and they thought in regard to the speaking, wearing, hanging, or some other use of these that effects greater than those produced by human power could be produced, for example, that sicknesses, demons, ghosts, and other evils could be put to flight or cast out (*TDP*, par I, cap. IV, sec. II, qu XVI, ecthes., I, p 169).

Chemnitz: When we dispute about the power and efficacy, we must with care and concern be on our guard lest we take away from God those things which properly belong to the grace of the Father, the efficacy of the Spirit, and the merits of the Son of God and transfer them to the sacraments; for this would be the sin of idolatry... Therefore, just as the gospel is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes not because a certain magical power inheres in the letters, syllables, or sound of the words, but because it is the means, the tool and instrument through which the Holy Spirit is efficacious, in setting forth, offering, showing, distributing and applying the merits of Christ and the grace of God for salvation to everyone who believes, so also power and efficacy is ascribed to the sacraments, not because we are to seek grace leading to salvation in the sacraments outside of or beside the merit of Christ, the mercy of the Father, or the efficacy of the Holy Spirit... In this way God's glory remains his, so that grace is not sought anywhere else than from God the Father, the price and cause of the forgiveness of sins and everlasting life are not sought anywhere else than in the death and resurrection of Christ, the

working of rebirth leading to salvation is not sought anywhere else than in the working of the Holy Spirit (*Examen, de sacramentorum efficacia et usu*, p 19).

Loescher: Against the Naturalists (Rationalists) we must carefully defend the proposition that conversion and the rest of the acts which belong to God's way of salvation do not take place mechanically but in a way which is proper for spiritual beings and which is beyond nature (*Praenotiones theologicae*, p 223).

Compare Donald Bloesch: Revelation must be proclaimed, but in an intelligent way. One must understand the words of the preacher before believing the message. The gospel should be related to the cultural situation in which people find themselves, for in this way it takes on specificity and concreteness. It must be put in the language of the people. Our presentation must be as logically coherent as possible if our hearers are to understand. Yet communication means more than making it knowable. But only the Holy Spirit can do that; therefore the success of our preaching rests on the One whom we proclaim and not basically on the way in which we proclaim (*A Theology of Word and Spirit*, p 222-223).

- e) **Since Word and Spirit are inseparable, it would be useless to speculate about the character of the instrument as such. We would maintain, however, that the Word is not a dead instrument.**

Isaiah 55:10,11 As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, ¹¹ so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.

Jeremiah 23:29 “Is not my word like fire,” declares the LORD, “and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces?”

Hebrews 4:12 The word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

1 Peter 1:23 You have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.

2 Peter 1:19 We have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.

Michael Behm (d. 1650): The Word of God, from the viewpoint of its external proclamation and its use in the order of salvation, is and can be called an instrument. Nevertheless up to the present time we have tried to avoid calling the divine power internally communicated to the Word an instrument.... For the power of God predicated of the gospel is not something else than the power of God himself, but it is the very power of God. Who, however, would call this power of God an instrument? (Quoted in Quenstedt, *TDP*, part I, cap. IV, sect. II, qu. XVI, font. sol., 15, p 185).

Chemnitz: Although the Word does not attain its effect by itself and by its own power, yet by the principal cause (i.e., the Holy Spirit) it is raised beyond its own natural power to produce this effect (*Disp. de Gratuita Justif, par 18*, quoted in Baier-Walther, *Compendium, Proleg, II, 39, p 160*).

3. We reject all views that regard Scripture as a mere human record of, witness to, or medium of God's Word (revelation). This error is commonly affirmed in neo-orthodoxy, dialectical theology, theology of crisis, and existentialism.

a) Representatives of this error are Barth, Brunner, Tillich, and their schools of thought.

Karl Barth: A witness is not absolutely identical with that to which it witnesses In the Bible we meet with human words written in human speech, and in these words, and therefore by means of them, we hear of the lordship of the Triune God. Therefore when we have to do with the Bible, we have to do primarily with this means, with these words, with the witness, which as such is not itself revelation, but only—and this is the limitation—the witness to it (*CD, I, 2, p 463*)

Emil Brunner: Those who take this view (that the word of the Bible is the Word of God) do not understand that there is only an indirect identity between the word of the Bible and the Word of God; that even the word of the Bible is only the means of the real Word of God, Jesus Christ, and that therefore, in spite of its priority as the original witness, fundamentally it stands upon the same level as the testimony of the Church (*Revelation and Reason, p 145*).

Brunner: The New Testament is not a book of doctrine, but it is a collection of apostolic confessions of faith and historical records which have been written down in order to awaken and strengthen faith. . . . All Christian doctrine, even in its primitive form in the New Testament, in this twofold sense, is merely a pointer to something outside itself; it is the pointer to “him, himself,” and it is a pointer to that which He discloses concerning himself, which human-speech or teaching, “reproduces,” or repeats, or expresses in human language. The Biblical expression for this twofold character of Christian doctrine as a “pointer” is called: “Witness.” The Apostles . . . know themselves to be witnesses to the divine revelation (*Christian Doctrine of God, p 12,15*).

Tillich: It is obvious that the word as a medium of revelation, the “Word of God,” is not a word of information about otherwise hidden truth. . . . The term Word is applied to the document of the final revelation and its special preparation, namely, the Bible. But if the Bible is called the Word of God, theological confusion is almost unavoidable. . . . Probably nothing has contributed more to the misinterpretation of the Biblical doctrine of the Word than the identification of the Word with the Bible (*ST, I, p 124, 159*).

b) This error is compatible with the theology of Rome.

Pontifical Biblical Commission: The Bible does not present itself as a direct revelation of timeless truths but as the written testimony to a series of

interventions in which God reveals himself in human history (*Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*,” quoted in *Origins*, January 6, 1994, p 524).

c) Scripture is, indeed, a “witness” of the prophets and apostles, but it is not a mere human witness.

1) The biblical writers were witnesses.

Luke 24:48 You are witnesses of these things.

John 15:27 You also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning.

Acts 1:8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

Acts 10:43 All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.

Acts 22:15 You will be his witness to all men of what you have seen and heard.

1 John 1:1-4 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. ² The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. ³ We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. ⁴ We write this to make our joy complete.

2) The biblical writers were more than mere human witnesses.

John 14:26 The Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

John 15:26,27 When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me. ²⁷ And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning.

John 16:13,14 When he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. ¹⁴ He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you.

Acts 5:32 We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.

1 Peter 1:10,11 Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care,¹¹ trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.

- d) **The view that Scripture is a mere human witness to divine revelation is to be condemned and avoided as damaging to Christian faith. This regards Holy Scripture not as the infallible Word of the infallible God, which it actually is, but rather as the fallible word of fallible men.**

Barth: To the bold postulate, that if [the prophets and apostles] word is to be the Word of God they must be inerrant in every word, we oppose the even bolder assertion, that according to scriptural witness about man, which applies to them too, they can be at fault in every word, and have been at fault in every word, and yet according to the same scriptural witness, being justified and sanctified by grace alone, they have still spoken the Word of God in their fallible and erring human word (*CD*, I, 2, p 529f).

Barth: The prophets and apostles as such, even in their office, even in their function as witnesses, even in the act of writing down their witness, were real, historical men as we are, and therefore sinful in their action, and capable and actually guilty of error in their spoken and written word... Here fallible men speak the Word of God in fallible human words (*CD*, I, 2, p 528f).

Barth: The vulnerability of the Bible, i.e., its capacity for error, also extends to its *religious* or *theological* content (*CD*, I, 2, p 509).

Brunner: The Scripture ... is a word inspired by the Spirit of God; yet at the same time it is a human message; its human character means that it is colored by the frailty and imperfection of all that is human (*Christian Doctrine of God*, p 34).

Brunner: The habit of regarding the written word, the Bible, as the “Word of God” exclusively—as is the case in the traditional equation of the “Word” of the Bible with the “Word of God”—an error which is constantly on the verge of being repeated—is actually a breach of the Second Commandment: it is the deification of a creature, bibliolatry (*Revelation and Reason*, p 120).

Barth: [This is] perhaps the worst of all idols. (*CD*, I, 2, p 237)

William Temple (d. 1944): There is no single deed of His of which we can be perfectly sure that He said or did precisely this or that (*Revelation*, ed. John Baillie and Hugh Martin, p 114).

William Temple: No single sentence can be quoted as having the authority of a distinct utterance of the All-holy God (*Nature, Man and God*, p 350).

Hans Küng: There is no a priori infallible teaching book in Christendom. . . . And even though there are no propositions in the Bible which are a priori free from error, nevertheless there are in fact true propositions attesting the gospel.

Truth of Scripture therefore means more than simply truth as conformity of intellect with reality, as it has been defined in the light of Greek philosophy from the middle ages onward. The more recent doctrine of inerrancy, just like Protestant orthodoxy's doctrine of inspiration, is a product of rationalism, which sought to make a divine origin of Scripture clear and distinct, illuminating and evident, in its propositions: which, however, sooner or later could not fail to be turned into a domination of reason over scripture. Truth of Scripture means in the last resort truth beyond all true propositions; "truth" (*emet, aletheia*) means, over and above the truth of words and sentences, fidelity, constancy, reliability: the fidelity, that is, of the God of the covenant to his word and promise.... In this sense Scripture, which is by no means free from error, attests unrestrictedly the truth as the perpetual fidelity of God (*Infallible? An Inquiry*, p 219, 220f).

- e) **Closely allied with this heresy is the denial that the Bible is the Word of God and the claim that it only *becomes* the Word of God through an *event (Ereignis)*, an existential experience which God must again and again bring about.**

Barth: God's revelation is the event of Jesus Christ (*CD*, I, 2:49).

Barth: It takes place as an event, when and where the word of the Bible becomes God's Word, i.e., when and where the word of the Bible functions as the word of a witness ... when and where by means of its word we also succeed in seeing and hearing what he saw and heard (*CD*, I, 1:127).

Barth: We said of church proclamation, that from time to time it must become God's Word. And we said the same of the Bible, that it must from time to time become God's Word. Now "from time to time" had to do, not with human experience (as if our being affected by this event and our attitude to it could be constitutive of its reality and content.), but, of course, with the freedom of God's grace. *Ubi et quando visum est Deo* (*CD*, I, 1:131f).

Barth: The statement, "The Bible is the word" ... is a statement which we allow to be true as a description of the act of God in the Bible, whatever the experience may be which we have or do not have in that connection. But this is just precisely the faith which in this way sees and reaches beyond itself and all experiences bound up or not bound up with it to the act of God, namely, to the fact that this act of God upon man has become an event, therefore not to the fact that man has reached out to the Bible, but to the fact that the Bible has reached out to man. The Bible, therefore, becomes God's Word in this event, and it is to its being in this becoming that the tiny word "is" relates, in the statement that the Bible is the Word of God. It does not become God's Word because we accord it faith, but, of course, because it becomes revelation for us (*CD*, I, 1:123f).

Note Klaas Runia: An infallible Bible would mean that man has the Word of God. But this is never so, according to Barth. God in His sovereign grace has to make it His Word time and again. Revelation is always the revealing God, God in His act of revealing. It is never a static *datum*, but always an event, a divine act. We could say it in this way: It is never a *datum* (that which has

been given), but always a *dandum* (that which must be given again and again, in an always-new divine act) (*Karl Barth's Doctrine of Holy Scripture*, p 108).

Note J. P. Meyer pointing out that the Bible has its power *ante et extra usum*, and quoting Runia, p 197, with approval: “[Christ] again and again appeals to the Old Testament Scriptures as the final authority. They do not become authoritative because He appeals to them, but He appeals to them because they are authoritative.” Well spoken!... In the Bible and by means of the Bible God confronts us with His Word. Thus it ever is, to use that expression, both a *datum* and a *dandum* (*WLQ*, July, 1964, p 219).

Gustaf Wingren (d. 2000): When Barth speaks of “the Word of God in three forms”—proclaimed in preaching, written in the Bible, and “revealed” in Christ—it is important to note that only this last, “the revelation,” is really “divine Word.” The spoken and written words are “signs” (*Theology in Conflict*, p 124).

Brunner: Revelation is certainly not a “Something,” or a “thing”; but it is a process, an event, and indeed an event which happens to us and in us. Neither the prophetic Word of the Old Testament, nor Jesus Christ, nor the witness of the Apostles, nor of the preachers of the Church who proclaim him, “is” the revelation; the reality of the revelation culminates in the “subject” who receives it.... All objective forms of revelation need the “subject” in whom they become revelation (*The Christian Doctrine of God*, p 19).

Brunner: [The Bible] becomes to me the word of God through the fact that God, through His Spirit, permits it to dawn on me as the word of His truth (*Reason and Revelation*, p 169).

Suggested for Further Reading:

- J. P. Meyer, “Inspiration,” *WLQ*, Oct. 1951.
- Armin Schuetze, “Neo-Orthodoxy,” *WLQ*, April & Oct. 1963 (Also in *OGH*, I, p 203-231)

f) We reject the false idea that the Bible contains contradictory theologies.

Luke 24:27,44 Beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself. ⁴⁴ He said to them, “This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.”

John 5:39 You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me.

John 16:13 When he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.

2 Peter 3:15,16 Bear in mind that our Lord’s patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. ¹⁶

He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.

Ephesians 2:20 [You have been] built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.

Contrast Carl Braaten: Critical attention to what the texts actually say has exploded the notion that one orthodox dogmatics can be mined out of Scripture. There are different theological tendencies and teachings in the various texts. Ecumenically this has led to the practical conclusion that the traditional demand for a complete consensus of doctrine may be wrong-headed, if even the Scriptures fail to contain such a consensus. (*CD*, I, 77)

Carl Braaten and Robert Jenson: Although all of us stand within the Lutheran tradition, the differences among us and the consequent inconsistencies in the book are considerable. ... At some points the authors simply disagree, and this disagreement occasionally reaches the point of contradiction. We leave it to the readers to discover the places where it occurs. (I, xvii)

g) We reject the false idea that God's truth cannot be expressed in propositions that express reality. We believe it can be and is expressed in this way.

John 6:63 The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life.

John 17:17 Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.

John 18:37 "You are a king, then!" said Pilate. Jesus answered, "You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me."

2 Timothy 1:13 What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus.

Luther: Take away assertions, and you take away Christianity (*LW* 33, p 21).

Contrast Hans Küng: Articles of faith are propositions. Formulas of faith, professions of faith, and definitions of faith, are propositions—simple or complex—and are not *a priori* free from the laws that govern propositions. ... Propositions of faith participate in the problematic of human propositions in general. . . .

- 1) Propositions fall short of reality. This is fundamental. I can never totally capture reality either by a word or by a proposition, simple or complex.
- 2) Propositions are open to misunderstanding.
- 3) Propositions can be translated only up to a point.
- 4) Propositions are in motion.... Language is not a static shape, but a dynamic event.... Words and sentences can completely change their meaning.
- 5) Propositions are ideology prone (*Infallible?* p 157, 158f).

Contrast Warren Quance (ALC, d. 1979): Since human language is always relative, ... there can be no absolute expression of the truth even in the language of theology... The words of the Bible must not be absolutized (*Theology in the Life of the Church*, R. Bertram, ed., p 25,31).

C. Law and Gospel

I. Scripture clearly differentiates a twofold word of God.

1. Since God is essentially one and unchangeable, his truth is also undivided and unchanging.

a) God's essence is immutable.

Psalm 102:26,27 [The created earth and heavens] will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment. Like clothing you will change them and they will be discarded. ²⁷ But you remain the same, and your years will never end.

James 1:17 Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.

1 Timothy 6:16 [God] who alone is immortal (*ἔχων ἀθανασία*) and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. To him be honor and might forever. Amen.

b) God's word is also immutable.

Numbers 23:19 God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?

Proverbs 19:21 Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is the LORD's purpose that prevails.

Malachi 3:6 I the LORD do not change. So you, O descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed.

1 Samuel 15:29 He who is the Glory of Israel does not lie or change his mind; for he is not a man, that he should change his mind.

Romans 3:3 What if some did not have faith? Will their lack of faith nullify God's faithfulness?

2 Timothy 2:13 If we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself.

Romans 11:29 God's gifts and his call are irrevocable (*ἀμεταμέλητος*).

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

2. Scripture speaks of two kinds of word, law and gospel.

a) Scripture admonishes us to handle the Word properly.

2 Timothy 2:15 Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth (ὀρθοτομοῦντα τὸν λόγον τῆς ἀληθείας).

Consider the use of **רָפַי** in the Piel (“make smooth, make straight”), which the Septuagint renders with ὀρθοτομεῖν.

Proverbs 3:6 In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.

Proverbs 11:5 The righteousness of the blameless makes a straight way for them, but the wicked are brought down by their own wickedness.

b) Scripture points out the two kinds of word.

John 1:17 The law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

2 Corinthians 3:5-11 Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. ⁶ He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant—not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. ⁷ Now if the ministry that brought death, which was engraved in letters on stone, came with glory, so that the Israelites could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of its glory, fading though it was, ⁸ will not the ministry of the Spirit be even more glorious? ⁹ If the ministry that condemns men is glorious, how much more glorious is the ministry that brings righteousness! ¹⁰ For what was glorious has no glory now in comparison with the surpassing glory. ¹¹ And if what was fading away came with glory, how much greater is the glory of that which lasts!

Galatians 3:2,5,17,21 I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard? ⁵ Does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you because you observe the law, or because you believe what you heard? ¹⁷ What I mean is this: The law, introduced 430 years later, does not set aside the covenant previously established by God and thus do away with the promise. ²¹ Is the law, therefore, opposed to the promises of God? Absolutely not! For if a law had been given that could impart life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law.

Jeremiah 31:31-34 “The time is coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. ³² It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them,” declares the LORD. ³³ “This is the covenant

I will make with the house of Israel after that time,” declares the LORD. “I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. ³⁴ No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,” declares the LORD. “For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.”

3. Both law and gospel have many points in common.

a) Both are given by divine revelation. Both are fully the word of God.

1) The law is the word of God.

Exodus 20:1 And God spoke all these words:

Deuteronomy 5:4-6 The LORD spoke to you face to face out of the fire on the mountain. ⁵ (At that time I stood between the LORD and you to declare to you the word of the LORD, because you were afraid of the fire and did not go up the mountain.) And he said: ⁶ “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.”

2) The gospel is the word of God.

Genesis 3:14,15 So the LORD God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, Cursed are you above all the livestock and all the wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. ¹⁵ And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”

Genesis 12:1,2 The LORD had said to Abram, “Leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you. ² I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.”

Galatians 3:18 If the inheritance depends on the law, then it no longer depends on a promise; but God in his grace gave it to Abraham through a promise.

b) Both law and gospel are universal in application. They are God’s word to all mankind.

1) The law is addressed to all mankind.

Romans 3:9, 19 What shall we conclude then? Are we any better? Not at all! We have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin. ¹⁹ Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God.

Galatians 3:10 All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.”

2) The gospel is addressed to all mankind.

John 3:16 God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

1 Timothy 2:4 [God our Savior] wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

Romans 3:23,24 All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,²⁴ and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

c) Both law and gospel are spiritual in nature. They have to do with our spirit, our relation to God, and they are from the Holy Spirit.

1) The law is spiritual in nature.

Romans 7:14 We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin.

Consider the Sermon on the Mount, demonstrating how obedience to divine law is to be expressive of spiritual life.

2) The gospel is spiritual in nature.

John 6:63 The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life.

d) Both law and gospel were originally intended to promote life.

1) The law was intended to bring life to mankind.

Romans 7:10,12,13 I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death.¹² So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good.¹³ Did that which is good, then, become death to me? By no means! But in order that sin might be recognized as sin, it produced death in me through what was good, so that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful.

Luke 10:25,28 On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?”²⁸ “You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.”

Genesis 2:16,17 The LORD God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden;¹⁷ but you must not eat from the tree of

the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.”

Hollaz: The purpose of the moral law is a) the glory of the Lawgiver; b) eternal life promised on condition of perfect obedience; c) the incidental outcome is eternal death (Ro 7:10) (*Examen*, pars III, sect. II, cap I, qu. 25, p 471).

Quenstedt: The first purpose of the moral law is eternal life, which is promised conditionally (Lv 18:5; Ezk 20:11; Ro 10:5; Ga 3:12); the subsequent purpose is a knowledge of our own inability by which the law is weakened (Ro 8:3), and to drive us to seek a physician (Ga 3:24) (*TDP*, pars IV, cap I, sect. I, thes. XXXII, p 9).

Jacob Heerbrand (d. 1600): The purpose of the law is that the rational creature may from it get to know the will of God, conform to it, and worship and honor him according to this norm (*Comp., de lege*, p 288).

2) **The gospel is intended to bring life to mankind.**

John 3:16 God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

II. **The law in the strict sense may be defined as the word of God by which he demands that man, both in conduct and nature, conform to his requirement of moral conduct. The law may also be defined as the word of God that pronounces a curse on the transgressor.**

1. **These are Lutheran definitions of divine law based on Scripture.**

a) **Consider the following confessional statements.**

The Apology, Art. IV (II), p 121, 5-8: All Scripture ought to be distributed into these two principal topics, the law and the promises. . . . Moreover, in this discussion, by law we designate the Ten Commandments, wherever they are read in the Scriptures. Of the ceremonies and judicial laws of Moses we say nothing at present. . . . Now, the Decalog requires not only outward civil works, which reason can in some way produce, but it also requires other things placed far above reason, namely, truly to fear God, truly to love God, truly to call upon God, truly to be convinced that God hears us, and to expect the aid of God in death and in all afflictions; finally, it requires obedience to God, in death and all afflictions, so that we may not flee from these or refuse them when God imposes them.

Formula of Concord, Ep., Art. V, p 800, 3,4: We believe, teach, and confess that the law is properly a divine doctrine, which teaches what is right and pleasing to God, and reproves everything that is sin and contrary to God’s will. For this reason, then, everything that reproves sin is, and belongs to, the preaching of the law.

Formula of Concord, TD, Art. V, p 956, 17: Therefore we shall set forth our meaning: we unanimously believe, teach, and confess that the law is properly

a divine doctrine, in which the righteous, immutable will of God is revealed, what is to be the quality of man in his nature, thoughts, words, and works, in order that he may be pleasing and acceptable to God; and it threatens its transgressors with God's wrath and temporal and eternal punishments. For as Luther writes against the law-stormers [Antinomians]: "Everything that reproves sin is and belongs to the law, whose peculiar office it is to reprove sin and to lead to the knowledge of sins," Rom. 3:20; 7:7; and as unbelief is the root and well-spring of all reprehensible sins and all sins must be censured and reprov'd, the law reprov's unbelief also.

August Pieper: The law, in its essential nature, is the demand of the holy God on our person in regard to our personal relationship with him and even more. Truly, the law is no abstraction; here the personal God himself comes against us ordering, commanding and forbidding, requiring, demanding, and threatening. Where the law encounters sin, it turns into wrath, curse, and damnation because of sin. . . . The law is truly a most serious matter for sinners, not merely a story about wrath and curse. Just as its demand is no game, so its threat is no mere shadowboxing. No, it brings wrath, curse, and damnation with it *in concreto* [that is, the law does not merely announce God's judgment; it brings God's judgment with it]. The law of God is actually grabbing and getting hold on sinners spiritually. The law puts sinners into real spiritual handcuffs and brings them to trial. *In concreto* it convicts, sentences, and hands them over to punishment, that is, to death and to eternal agony (Heb 4:12; Gal 3:10; Ge 2:17; Rom 5:12; 2:8,9). In short, the law's office is to preach damnation, to judge the sinner and award him damnation as his rightful lot (2 Co 3:9) ("The Proper Distinction of Law and Gospel," *The Wauwatosa Theology*, II, p 20).

b) Consider these statements of Scripture.

Galatians 3:10,12 All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law."¹² The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, "The man who does these things will live by them."

Romans 3:19,20 Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God.²⁰

2. Besides this strict sense, the term law (תּוֹרָה, νόμος) is used with various meanings. The context of a particular use determines the meaning.

a) "Law" may refer to God's Word in general.

Psalm 1:2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.

Psalm 19:7,8 The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple.⁸ The precepts of the

Psalm 119:97-105 Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long. ⁹⁸Your commands make me wiser than my enemies, for they are ever with me. ⁹⁹I have more insight than all my teachers, for I meditate on your statutes. ¹⁰⁰I have more understanding than the elders, for I obey your precepts. ¹⁰¹I have kept my feet from every evil path so that I might obey your word. ¹⁰²I have not departed from your laws (מִשְׁפָּטֶיךָ), for you yourself have taught me. ¹⁰³How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth! ¹⁰⁴I gain understanding from your precepts; therefore I hate every wrong path. ¹⁰⁵Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.

b) “Law” may refer to the Old Testament portion of Scripture.

John 10:34 Jesus answered them, “Is it not written in your Law, ‘I have said you are gods’?” (Quotes Psalm 82:6)

John 12:34 The crowd spoke up, “We have heard from the Law that the Christ will remain forever, so how can you say, ‘The Son of Man must be lifted up’? Who is this ‘Son of Man’?” (Refers to Psalm 110:4 The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind: “You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.”)

John 15:25 This is to fulfill what is written in their Law: “They hated me without reason.” (Refers to Psalm 35:19 Let not those gloat over me who are my enemies without cause; let not those who hate me without reason maliciously wink the eye. Psalm 69:4 Those who hate me without reason outnumber the hairs of my head; many are my enemies without cause, those who seek to destroy me.)

1 Corinthians 14:21 In the Law it is written: “Through men of strange tongues and through the lips of foreigners I will speak to this people, but even then they will not listen to me,” says the Lord. (Refers to Isaiah 28:11,12 Very well then, with foreign lips and strange tongues God will speak to this people, ¹² to whom he said, “This is the resting place, let the weary rest”; and, “This is the place of repose”— but they would not listen.)

John 7:49 No! But this mob that knows nothing of the law—there is a curse on them.

c) “Law” may refer to the Pentateuch.

Luke 24:44 He said to them, “This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.”

Luke 16:16 The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John. Since that time, the good news of the kingdom of God is being preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it.

John 1:45 Philip found Nathanael and told him, “We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.”

Acts 13:15 After the reading from the Law and the Prophets, the synagogue rulers sent word to them, saying, “Brothers, if you have a message of encouragement for the people, please speak.”

Acts 24:14 I admit that I worship the God of our fathers as a follower of the Way, which they call a sect. I believe everything that agrees with the Law and that is written in the Prophets.

Acts 28:23 They arranged to meet Paul on a certain day, and came in even larger numbers to the place where he was staying. From morning till evening he explained and declared to them the kingdom of God and tried to convince them about Jesus from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets.

Romans 3:21 But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify.

d) “Law” may refer to the Mosaic covenant stipulations.

1) The reference may be to Mosaic commandments in general.

John 1:17 The law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

John 7:19 Has not Moses given you the law? Yet not one of you keeps the law. Why are you trying to kill me?

Acts 13:39 Through him everyone who believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the law of Moses.

Galatians 3:17 What I mean is this: The law, introduced 430 years later, does not set aside the covenant previously established by God and thus do away with the promise.

2) The word may refer moral law.

Matthew 22:35-40 One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: ³⁶ “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” ³⁷ Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ ³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ ⁴⁰ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments” (Also: Luke 10:25-28).

Romans 2:13-15 For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God’s sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous. ¹⁴ (Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, ¹⁵ since they show that the

requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.)

Romans 13:8-10 Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law.⁹ The commandments, “Do not commit adultery,” “Do not murder,” “Do not steal,” “Do not covet,” and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”¹⁰ Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

Galatians 5:14 The entire law is summed up in a single command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”

3) “Law” may refer to ceremonial law.

Acts 15:5,24 Then some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, “The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to obey the law of Moses.”²⁴ We have heard that some went out from us without our authorization and disturbed you, troubling your minds by what they said.

1 Corinthians 9:20,21 To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law.²¹ To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God’s law but am under Christ’s law), so as to win those not having the law.

4) “Law” may also refer to civil law.

John 7:51 Does our law condemn anyone without first hearing him to find out what he is doing? (Deuteronomy 1:17 Do not show partiality in judging; hear both small and great alike. Do not be afraid of any man, for judgment belongs to God. Bring me any case too hard for you, and I will hear it. Dt 19:15 One witness is not enough to convict a man accused of any crime or offense he may have committed. A matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.)

Acts 23:3 Then Paul said to him, “God will strike you, you whitewashed wall! You sit there to judge me according to the law, yet you yourself violate the law by commanding that I be struck!” (Refers to Deuteronomy 25:1-3)

e) “Law” may also be used generally, to denote any rule or order, principle or standard (as in “law of nature”).

Romans 3:27 Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. On what principle? On that of observing the law? No, but on that of faith.

Romans 7:21,23,25 So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me.²³ but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members.²⁵ Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God’s law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.

Romans 8:2 Through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.

f) “Law” may even be used to refer to the gospel.

Isaiah 2:3 Many peoples will come and say, “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths.” The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

Isaiah 42:3,4 A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice.⁴ he will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth. In his law the islands will put their hope.

Psalms 19:7,8 The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple. 8 The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes.

Psalms 119:18,29,92,97,142,174 Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law.²⁹ Keep me from deceitful ways; be gracious to me through your law.⁹² If your law had not been my delight, I would have perished in my affliction.⁹⁷ Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long.¹⁴² Your righteousness is everlasting and your law is true.¹⁷⁴ I long for your salvation, O LORD, and your law is my delight.

III. The gospel is the word of God by which he, out of free grace for Christ's sake, promises forgiveness and pronounces the transgressor of the law righteous.

1. On the basis of Scripture this is the Lutheran definition of gospel.

a) Consider these confessional definitions.

The Apology, Art. IV (II), 5, p 121: All Scripture ought to be distributed into these two principal topics, the law and the promises. For in some places it presents the law, and in others the promise concerning Christ, namely, either when in the Old Testament it promises that Christ will come, and offers, for his sake, the remission of sins justification, and life eternal, or when, in the gospel in the New Testament, Christ himself, since he has appeared, promises the remission of sins, justification, and life eternal.

Formula of Concord, Ep., Art. V, p 800, 5: But the gospel is properly such a doctrine as teaches what man, who has not observed the law and therefore is

condemned by it, is to believe, namely, that Christ has expiated and made satisfaction for all sins and has obtained and acquired for him, no merit of the sinner intervening, forgiveness of sins, righteousness that avails before God, and eternal life.

Formula of Concord, TD, Art. V, p 956, 20,21: However, now that man has not kept the law of God, but transgressed it, his corrupt nature, thoughts, words, and works fighting against it, for which reason he is under God's wrath, death, all temporal calamities, and the punishment of hell-fire, the gospel is properly a doctrine which teaches what man should believe, that he may obtain forgiveness of sins with God, namely, that the Son of God, our Lord Christ, has taken upon himself and borne the curse of the law, has expiated and paid for all our sins, through whom alone we again enter into favor with God, obtain forgiveness of sins by faith, are delivered from death and all the punishments of sins, and eternally saved. For everything that comforts, that offers the favor and grace of God to transgressors of the Law, is and is properly called the gospel, a good and joyful message that God will not punish sins, but forgive them for Christ's sake.

August Pieper: What is the gospel? It is the joyful message, revealed from heaven, of the gracious forgiveness of sins for eternal life through faith in Christ. . . . This is the substance of the gospel. We see that it is a completely different teaching from the law. Here there is nothing more about commandment, demand, threat, or curse, but the opposite of all these. The gospel is a story, a history, an account, a message. It tells us what God, out of eternal love, did for those who were lost, who had fallen away from him, who were under the curse of the law and sentenced to hell. The gospel announces what God, out of great, heartfelt compassion, has done for our deliverance, our salvation. It tells how, out of his great love, God gave up his Son for us; how he did away with the guilt of our sin through him; how he does not count sin against the world anymore, but has absolved and forgiven them all. It tells how he has sent the word of reconciliation out into the world, how he calls on all the world to be of good cheer and come to him, to believe in Christ and be saved through faith with no strings attached, at no charge ("The Proper Distinction of Law and Gospel," *The Wauwatosa Theology*, II, p 37,41).

b) Consider these statements of the scriptural view.

Acts 20:24 However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace.

Romans 1:16,17 I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.¹⁷ For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."

Romans 10:15 How can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

Ephesians 1:13 You also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit.

2. The term gospel is also used in Scripture with other meanings.

a) “Gospel” may designate a written record of the life and work of Jesus.

Mark 1:1 The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

b) “Gospel” may be used for a message that includes the preparatory preaching of the law (synecdoche).

Mark 1:14,15 After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. ¹⁵ “The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!”

Mark 16:15 He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.”

Formula of Concord, Ep., Art. V, p 802, 6: But since the term *gospel* is not used in one and the same sense in the Holy Scriptures (on account of which this dissension originally arose), we believe, teach, and confess that if by the term gospel is understood the entire doctrine of Christ which he proposed in his ministry, as also did his apostles (in which sense it is employed, Mark 1:15; Acts 20:21), it is correctly said and written that the gospel is a preaching of repentance and of the forgiveness of sins (Also see Formula of Concord, TD, Art. V, p 952, 3-6).

Hoenecke: The gospel in the narrowest sense is the message that in Christ, the Son of God who became man, we have the Redeemer from sin. In other words, it is the preaching of the forgiveness of sins in the Redeemer who has appeared. . . . In the wider sense, the gospel is the preaching of free forgiveness, without express reference to the *already* incarnate Redeemer. . . . Used in a still wider sense, the word appears in Mark 1:14 and 16:15, as embracing the preaching of both the law and the gospel in the narrower sense. . . . It is used in a transferred sense (*improprie*) when it refers to the historical writings of the evangelists (*ELD*, IV, p 39).

IV. Law and gospel are opposites (although, as seen above, they have many points in common).

1. Law and gospel are opposites in the mode of revelation.

a) The law is revealed to man in nature.

1) The law was originally written in the heart of mankind, so that they not only knew its content but also approved of and enjoyed it.

Genesis 1:26,27 Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

Romans 7:22 In my inner being I delight in God’s law.

Psalm 37:31 The law of his God is in his heart; his feet do not slip.

2) The law is still found in the hearts of people so that they feel their obligation and, within certain limits, know what is right.

Romans 2:14,15 Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law,¹⁵ since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.

Consider the phrase: τὸ ἔργον τοῦ νόμου = that which the law works.

3) The idea of merited retribution (reward and punishment) governs the whole moral and religious thinking, feeling, and striving of human beings by nature.

Acts 17:23 For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you. (Note: The complete inscription on the altar was: Θεοῖς Ἀσίας καὶ Εὐρώπης καὶ Λιβύης, θεῶν ἀγνώστων καὶ ξένων. Cf. Zahn, *Kommentar*, Apg. II, p 874).

Note: The prevalence of this *opinio legis* in all people leads us to be on guard against moralizing, that is, using of the law with its threats and promises to try to motivate others to live an outwardly upright life.

Romans 8:15 You did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.”

Romans 9:31-32 Israel, who pursued a law of righteousness, has not attained it.³² Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works. They stumbled over the “stumbling stone.”

b) The gospel is revealed only through Scripture.

1) The gospel is a total mystery to natural man. It is revealed by the Spirit.

1 Corinthians 2:6-10 We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing.⁷ No, we speak of God's secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began.⁸ None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.⁹ However, as it is written: "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him"—¹⁰ but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God.

2) So deep-rooted is the *opinio legis* in natural man that he opposes the gospel as folly.

1 Corinthians 1:18,23 For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.²³ but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles.

1 Corinthians 2:14 The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.

Romans 9:31-33 Israel, who pursued a law of righteousness, has not attained it.³² Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works. They stumbled over the "stumbling stone."³³ As it is written: "See, I lay in Zion a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame."

2. Law and gospel are opposites with regard to their mediators.

a) The law was delivered through a human mediator.

1) The law was given through Moses.

Exodus 20:19-22 [The people at Sinai] said to Moses, "Speak to us yourself and we will listen. But do not have God speak to us or we will die."²⁰ Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid. God has come to test you, so that the fear of God will be with you to keep you from sinning."²¹ The people remained at a distance, while Moses approached the thick darkness where God was.²² Then the LORD said to Moses, "Tell the Israelites this. . . .

Galatians 3:19 What, then, was the purpose of the law? It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come. The law was put into effect through angels by a mediator.

2) The moral content of the law given through Moses was, however, essentially the same as that originally written in the hearts of mankind.

Romans 2:14,15 Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law,¹⁵ since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.

Romans 5:13 Before the law was given, sin was in the world. But sin is not taken into account when there is no law.

Hollaz: The natural law does not differ materially (in the matters dealt with in each) from the moral law, specifically so-called, if, as is the case, the summary of the natural law is contained in the decalog, but it does differ in form. For 1) the natural law is written by nature in the inmost souls of men, while the moral law is proclaimed from outside, being made known by the voice of God and repeated in writing; 2) the natural law is less perfect and more unclear, [while] the moral law is more perfect and clearer. The former controls outward behavior, the latter governs and regulates both the inward and outward actions of men. (*Examen*, 1002)

b) The gospel is established by the Son of God.

1) The Mediator of the gospel is Jesus Christ.

1 Timothy 2:5 There is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.

Hebrews 8:6 The ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, and it is founded on better promises.

Hebrews 9:15 For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.

Hebrews 12:24 [You have come] to Jesus the mediator (*μεσίτης*) of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

Hebrews 7:22 Because of this oath, Jesus has become the guarantee (*ἔγγυος*) of a better covenant.

2) While Moses was only instrumental in revealing the law, Christ is himself the founder and chief cornerstone of the gospel.

John 1:17 The law was given through Moses (*διὰ Μωϋσέως ἐδόθη*); grace and truth came through Jesus Christ (*διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐγένετο*).

Ephesians 2:20 [You have been] built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.

1 Corinthians 1:30,31 It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.³¹ Therefore, as it is written: “Let him who boasts boast in the Lord.”

1 Corinthians 2:2 I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.

1 Corinthians 1:18,23f The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.²³ But we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles.

3. Law and gospel are opposites in their messages to mankind.

a) The law speaks about human works and achievements.

Romans 2:14,15 Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law,¹⁵ since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.

Romans 3:28 We maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law.

Romans 4:4,5 When a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation.⁵ However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness.

Galatians 3:2,5 I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard?⁵ Does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you because you observe the law, or because you believe what you heard?

b) The gospel speaks of God's grace and creates faith, which appropriates God's grace.

Acts 20:24 However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace.

Romans 11:6 If by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace.

Philippians 3:9 [Paul's desire is to] be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.

4. Law and gospel are opposites in the way they offer blessing.

a) The law tells us what God demands of us.

1) The law makes demands and requires compliance.

Ephesians 2:15 [Christ made peace] by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace.

Exodus 20:3,4,5,7 You shall have no other gods before me.⁴ You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below.⁵ You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me,⁷ You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.

2) The law gives promises (even of eternal life), but only under certain conditions.

Exodus 20:6 [The Lord] showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.

Leviticus 18:5 Keep my decrees and laws, for the man who obeys them will live by them. I am the LORD.

Deuteronomy 28:1,2 If you fully obey the LORD your God and carefully follow all his commands I give you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations on earth.² All these blessings will come upon you and accompany you if you obey the LORD your God.

Matthew 19:16,17 Now a man came up to Jesus and asked, “Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?”¹⁷ “Why do you ask me about what is good?” Jesus replied. “There is only One who is good. If you want to enter life, obey the commandments.”

3) The law threatens condemnation to the transgressor.

Exodus 20:5 You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me.

Deuteronomy 27:26 Cursed is the man who does not uphold the words of this law by carrying them out.

Deuteronomy 28:15 However, if you do not obey the LORD your God and do not carefully follow all his commands and decrees I am giving you today, all these curses will come upon you and overtake you.

Deuteronomy 32:22 A fire has been kindled by my wrath, one that burns to the realm of death below. It will devour the earth and its harvests and set afire the foundations of the mountains.

Romans 7:10 I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death.

Hollaz: The purpose of the moral law is: a) the glory of the Lawgiver, b) eternal life promised on condition of perfect obedience, c) the incidental outcome is eternal death (Ro 7:10) (*Examen*, pars III, sect. II, cap I, qu. 25, p 471).

b) The gospel tells us what God promises to us.

1) The gospel promises life as a free gift to faith.

Romans 3:24,25 [All sinners] are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.²⁵ God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished.

Romans 4:16 The promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring—not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all.

Galatians 3:22 The Scripture declares that the whole world is a prisoner of sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe.

2) This gracious gospel offer may be clothed in the form of a command. This so-called “gospel imperative” is an invitation.

1 John 3:23,24 And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us.²⁴ Those who obey his commands live in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us.

Acts 17:30 In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent.

Acts 16:31 They replied, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household.”

3) The gospel promise may be expressed in the form of a conditional promise. Still, the gospel remains an unconditional promise.

Romans 10:9 If you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

Gerhard: The particle “if” is either etiological or syllogistic, that is, it either designates a cause or a consequence. In the preaching of law, namely: “if you do this, you will live,” the particle “if” is etiological, since obedience is the cause on account of which eternal life is given to those who keep the law; but in the gospel promises, “if you believe, you will be saved,” the particle “if” is syllogistic, for it denotes the divinely appointed way in which salvation becomes ours (the divinely appointed way of application), belonging to faith alone (*Loci*, Vol VI, Loc. XV, Cap. II, par. 26).

Walther: When the Lord says, “Believe,” he does not utter a demand, but issues an urgent invitation to man to take, to apprehend, to appropriate what he is giving, without asking anything in return for it. The gift must, of course, be accepted. Non-acceptance forfeits the gift, but not because there was a condition attached to it. . . . A beggar would be insane if he were to say to the donor: “What? I am still to do the accepting?” and would be told to be gone with his silliness (*Law and Gospel*, p 272).

August Pieper: In defining the essence of the gospel, everything depends on whether it is a conditional or an unconditional message of grace. Does it offer those cursed unconditionally by the law the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation without any and every condition or on the condition of faith? Is the gospel an unconditional or conditional absolution? . . . Note this very well – the question is not whether man’s faith is necessary to appropriate the gospel, to make it effective in the case of each individual. About this there is no disagreement. If anything is clear, this is clear in Scripture: Whoever believes will be saved; whoever does not believe will be condemned. . . . In short, faith is the unconditional ordinance for appropriating the gospel, the good news of grace. But the question is, does the message itself, according to its content, make faith the condition for realizing its promises? Does the gospel plainly say, “Your sins are forgiven,” or does it say, “If you believe I will forgive you your sins, then I will forgive them; if you do not believe that, then I will not forgive you.” Thank God we know that nothing is more certain than this. The gospel, God’s message of grace to all sinners on earth, has no conditions, none at all, not even that of faith (“The Proper Distinction of Law and Gospel,” *The Wauwatosa Theology*, II, p 41,42).

5. Law and gospel are opposites in their effects.

a) The purpose and impact of the law is clearly revealed.

1) The law reveals the utter sinfulness of mankind.

Romans 3:20 Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.

2) **The law also draws out the sinfulness of mankind.**

Romans 5:20 The law was added so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more.

Romans 7:7,8,13 What shall we say, then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! Indeed I would not have known what sin was except through the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, “Do not covet.”⁸ But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of covetous desire. For apart from law, sin is dead.¹³ Did that which is good, then, become death to me? By no means! But in order that sin might be recognized as sin, it produced death in me through what was good, so that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful.

Galatians 3:19,22 What, then, was the purpose of the law? It was added because of transgressions (τῶν παραβάσεων χάριν προσετέθη) until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come. The law was put into effect through angels by a mediator.²² But the Scripture declares that the whole world is a prisoner of sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe.

3) **The law drives a sinner to despair. It kills and condemns.**

Romans 4:15 Law brings wrath. And where there is no law there is no transgression.

Acts 2:37 When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?”

Acts 16:29,30 The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas.³⁰ He then brought them out and asked, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”

Psalm 32:3 When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long.

Psalm 38:4-6 My guilt has overwhelmed me like a burden too heavy to bear.⁵ My wounds fester and are loathsome because of my sinful folly.⁶ I am bowed down and brought very low; all day long I go about mourning.

2 Corinthians 3:6,9 He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant—not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.⁹ If the ministry that condemns men is glorious, how much more glorious is the ministry that brings righteousness!

Quenstedt: This inability or helplessness assigned to the law (Ro 8:3) does not belong to it *per se* or by its own nature, but it is incidental to it, namely because of our flesh, which makes the law of God weak, although it is holy and good in itself ... (Ga 3:21). This is the reason

why inability to save is ascribed to the law (*TDP*, pars IV, cap. I, sect. I, thes. XXXII, nota, 2, p 9).

4) Our Lutheran forefathers speak about the purposes and impact of the law.

Consider the three terms most frequently used to denote the purposes of law: *Spiegel*, *Riegel*, *Regel*, mirror, curb, and rule.

Quenstedt: The use of the moral law is fourfold: political, elenctic (rebuking, exposing), pedagogical, didactic (*TDP*, pars IV, cap. I, sect. I, thes. XXXIII, p 9).

[With caution] Quenstedt: The first use pertains to unregenerate and obstinate sinners, the second and third to men who are to be justified, the fourth to those who have been justified and regenerated (*TDP*, IV, 10).

Hollaz: The political use of the law consists in the preservation of outward discipline, so that wild and untamed men might be kept from the more serious crimes, by the punishments and rewards which are proposed. According to this use, the law is a bit or bridle by which sinners are coerced. The elenctic use is the manifestation and reproof of sins, as well as the pointing out of the most severe judgment of God (Ro 3:20). According to this use the law is a mirror of sin. The pedagogical use is that by which men are driven indirectly to Christ. For although the law neither knows nor teaches anything formally or directly about Christ, nevertheless, by accusing, convicting, terrifying, it in an indirect way compels the sinner to seek comfort and help in Christ, the Redeemer. And thus the law is our schoolmaster (pedagog) to bring us to Christ (Ga 3:24). The didactic use consists in telling us about and giving us directions in regard to all moral acts, both internal and external. Thus the law is the perpetual rule of life (Mt 5:17) (*Examen*, 1021).

b) The purpose and impact of the gospel is also clearly revealed.

1) The gospel justifies the sinner.

Romans 3:21,28 But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. ²⁸ For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law.

Romans 4:5 To the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness.

Ephesians 2:8-9 It is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast.

Galatians 2:16 [We] know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ

Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified.

2) The gospel produces faith in this free justification.

Romans 10:17 Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.

3) The gospel in this way creates a new life.

1 Peter 1:23 You have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.

John 3:5 Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit."

John 20:31 These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

Galatians 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Romans 1:16 I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.

Romans 6:23 The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Quenstedt: The purpose of the gospel is either ultimate or intermediate. The ultimate purpose is either absolute or relative. The absolute or simply ultimate purpose is the glory of God (2 Cor 4:4,5). The relatively ultimate purpose is the salvation of human souls (1 Pe 1:9). The intermediate purpose is, on the one hand, regeneration (1 Pe 1:23), on the other, justification (Lk 1:77; Ro 3:21; Eph 6:15), along with the things connected with these (reconciliation, Eph 6:15; the gift of the Holy Spirit, 2 Cor 5:19) (*TDP*, pars IV, sect. I, thes. IX, p 60).

4) A rejection of this saving gospel will result in increased divine condemnation.

2 Corinthians 2:14-16 Thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him.¹⁵ For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing.¹⁶ To the one we are the smell of death; to the other, the fragrance of life. And who is equal to such a task?

2 Peter 2:20-22 If they have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and are again entangled in it and overcome, they are worse off at the end than they were at the

beginning.²¹ It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than to have known it and then to turn their backs on the sacred command that was passed on to them.²² Of them the proverbs are true: “A dog returns to its vomit,” and, “A sow that is washed goes back to her wallowing in the mud.”

Hebrews 10:26-31 If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left,²⁷ but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God.²⁸ Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses.²⁹ How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace?³⁰ For we know him who said, “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” and again, “The Lord will judge his people.”³¹ It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Luke 12:47,48 That servant who knows his master’s will and does not get ready or does not do what his master wants will be beaten with many blows.⁴⁸ But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows. From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.

Luke 11:26 Then [the evil spirit] goes and takes seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that man is worse than the first.

6. Law and gospel are opposites in the persons to whom they apply.

a) The law applies to all people as sinners. It also applies to the Old Adam of believers.

Matthew 19:16-22 Now a man came up to Jesus and asked, “Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?”¹⁷ “Why do you ask me about what is good?” Jesus replied. “There is only One who is good. If you want to enter life, obey the commandments.”¹⁸ “Which ones?” the man inquired. Jesus replied, “‘Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony,¹⁹ honor your father and mother,’ and ‘love your neighbor as yourself.’”²⁰ “All these I have kept,” the young man said. “What do I still lack?”²¹ Jesus answered, “If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”²² When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth.

Luke 10:25-28 On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?”²⁶ “What is written in the Law?” he replied. “How do you read it?”²⁷ He answered: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’; and, ‘Love your neighbor as

yourself.”²⁸“You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.”

Romans 7:13 Did that which is good, then, become death to me? By no means! But in order that sin might be recognized as sin, it produced death in me through what was good, so that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful.

b) The gospel comforts the terror-stricken conscience.

1) For an expression of this truth, consider the following passage.

Isaiah 61:1,2 The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners,² to proclaim the year of the LORD’s favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn. [Quoted in Luke 4:18-19 as fulfilled by Jesus.]

2) Applying the gospel to repentant sinners was the practice of Jesus and his servants.

Luke 7:48 Then Jesus said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.”

Acts 2:37-39 When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?”³⁸ Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.³⁹ The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.”

Acts 16:27-31 The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped.²⁸ But Paul shouted, “Don’t harm yourself! We are all here!”²⁹ The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas.³⁰ He then brought them out and asked, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”³¹ They replied, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household.”

1 Corinthians 5:1-3 It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that does not occur even among pagans: A man has his father’s wife.² And you are proud! Shouldn’t you rather have been filled with grief and have put out of your fellowship the man who did this?

2 Corinthians 2:6-8 The punishment inflicted on him by the majority is sufficient for him.⁷ Now instead, you ought to forgive and comfort him, so that he will not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow.⁸ I urge you, therefore, to reaffirm your love for him.

2 Samuel 12:13 Then David said to Nathan, “I have sinned against the LORD.” Nathan replied, “The LORD has taken away your sin. You are not going to die.”

3) In view of this, we speak of the higher authority of the gospel.

-a) The gospel supersedes the verdict of the law.

Romans 10:4 Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness (τέλος νόμου εις δικαιοσύνην) for everyone who believes.

Romans 5:20,21 The law was added so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more,²¹ so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

2 Corinthians 3:7-11 If the ministry that brought death, which was engraved in letters on stone, came with glory, so that the Israelites could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of its glory, fading though it was,⁸ will not the ministry of the Spirit be even more glorious?⁹ If the ministry that condemns men is glorious, how much more glorious is the ministry that brings righteousness!¹⁰ For what was glorious has no glory now in comparison with the surpassing glory.¹¹ And if what was fading away came with glory, how much greater is the glory of that which lasts!

Jeremiah 31:31-34 “The time is coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.³² It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them,” declares the LORD.³³ “This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time,” declares the LORD. “I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.³⁴ No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,” declares the LORD. “For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.”

Hebrews 8:6-8,13 But the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, and it is founded on better promises.⁷ For if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for another.⁸ But God found fault with the people and said: “The time is coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.¹³ By calling this covenant “new,” he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and aging will soon disappear.

1 Corinthians 9:20,21 To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law— *μη ὡν αὐτὸς ὑπὸ νόμον*), so as to win those under the law. ²¹ To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law – *μη ὡν ἀνομος θεοῦ ἀλλ' ἐννομος Χριστοῦ*), so as to win those not having the law.

-b) Yet, the gospel doesn't do away with the law. It just outweighs it.

Romans 3:31 Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law.

Matthew 5:17 Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.

Luther: Now when both law and gospel meet, and the law declares me a sinner, accuses and condemns me, the gospel however says, "Be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven," "You shall be saved," and both are God's Word. Which am I, then, to follow? St. Paul tells you. "But after that faith came," he says, "we are no longer under a schoolmaster," the law has come to an end. For as the lesser it should and must give way and place to the gospel. Both are God's Word, the law and the gospel, but the two are not equal. One is lower, the other higher; one is weaker, the other stronger; one is lesser, the other greater. When now they wrestle with each other, I follow the gospel and say, Good-by, Law! (*St. L., IX, p 80*).

Consider comparisons and contrasts between law and gospel:

Law	Gospel
1. The law is written in the heart of man, and is therefore known by nature (Ro 2:15).	1. The gospel is a mystery unknown to man by nature (1 Cor 2:7ff; Ro 16:25).
2. The law demands perfect obedience from people (Gn 17:1; Mt 5:48).	2. The gospel makes no demands but only offers the grace of God to people (Eph 2:8,9).
3. The law promises salvation and life to those who obey all its demands (Lk 10:28).	3. The gospel promises salvation to those who have broken the law (Ac 16:31).
4. The law says that the doers of the law shall be justified (Ro 2:13).	4. The gospel says that those who have not kept the law shall be justified (Ro 4:5), and that a man is justified without the deeds of the law (Ro 3:28).
5. The law says that God will not forgive sin nor acquit the sinner (Jos 24:19; Na 1:3).	5. The gospel says that God has acquitted all men, that he has forgiven the sins of the world (Ro 5:18; 2 Cor 5:19).
6. The law says that every sinner is to be cursed (Ga 3:10).	6. The gospel says that all the families of the earth are blessed in Christ (Gn 22:18; Ga

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| | 3:16). |
| 7. The law says that God hates sinners (Ps 5:5; 11:5; Ho 9:15). | 7. The gospel says that God loves all people (Jn 3:16). |
| 8. The law says that God is angry with sinners (Na 1:2; Ro 1:18). | 8. The gospel says that God is favorably disposed toward all people and reconciled to all people (Tt 2:11; 2 Cor 5:19). |
| 9. The law has the effect of arousing people against God (Ro 4:15). | 9. The gospel has the effect of reconciling people with God (2 Cor 5:20). |
| 10. The law terrifies people and is intended to terrify them (Ex 20:18f). | 10. The gospel is intended to cast out all fear. "Fear not" (Lk 2:10 et al.). |
| 11. The law must be preached to make the comfortable distressed (Ro 3:20). | 11. The gospel must be preached to make the distressed comfortable (Is 40:11). |

7. It is the most difficult part of a minister's work to apply law and gospel properly.

a) The following passages speak of faithfulness and competence in applying God's word.

Luke 12:42-44 The Lord answered, "Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom the master puts in charge of his servants to give them their food allowance at the proper time?"⁴³ It will be good for that servant whom the master finds doing so when he returns.⁴⁴ I tell you the truth, he will put him in charge of all his possessions."

2 Corinthians 2:16 To the one we are the smell of death; to the other, the fragrance of life. And who is equal (*ίκανός*) to such a task?

2 Corinthians 3:5 Not that we are competent (*ίκανοί*) in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence (*ίκανότης*) comes from God.

b) The law must be faithfully preached also to Christians.

1) The Christian insofar as he is "new man" needs no law.

Romans 10:4 Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.

1 Timothy 1:9 We also know that law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious; for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers.

2) Because of the Old Adam, however, the Christian needs the law in its threefold application.

Romans 3:20 Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.

Romans 7:7 What shall we say, then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! Indeed I would not have known what sin was except through the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, “Do not covet.”

Titus 2:1-6 You must teach what is in accord with sound doctrine. ²Teach the older men to be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, in love and in endurance. ³Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. ⁴Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children, ⁵to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God. ⁶Similarly, encourage the young men to be self-controlled.

Quenstedt: The use of the moral law is four-fold: political, elenctic, pedagogical, didactic (*TDP*, thes. XXXIII, p 9).

Quenstedt: In the church not only the doctrine of the gospel but also of the law must be preached as the Word of God, not only to the impious and unbelievers, but also to those who are pious and truly believe (*TDP*, part IV, chap. I, qu. VI, thesis, p 46).

Formula of Concord, Ep., Art. V, p 804, 2-8: 1. We believe, teach, and confess that, although men truly believing in Christ and truly converted to God have been freed and exempted from the curse and coercion of the law, they nevertheless are not on this account without law, but have been redeemed by the Son of God in order that they should exercise themselves in it day and night, that they should meditate upon God’s law day and night, and constantly exercise themselves in its observance, Ps. 1:2, Ps. 119. . . . 2. We believe, teach, and confess that the preaching of the law is to be urged with diligence, not only upon the unbelieving and impenitent, but also upon true believers, who are truly converted, regenerate, and justified by faith. 3. For although they are regenerate and renewed in the spirit of their mind, yet in the present life this regeneration and renewal is not complete, but only begun, and believers are, by the spirit of their mind, in a constant struggle against the flesh, that is, against the corrupt nature and disposition which cleaves to us unto death. On account of this old Adam, which still inheres in the understanding, the will, and all the powers of man, it is needful that the law of the Lord always shine before them . . . Thus the law is and remains both to the penitent and impenitent, both to regenerate and unregenerate men, one and the same law, namely, the immutable will of God. . . . Accordingly, we reject as a dogma and error injurious to, and conflicting with, Christian discipline and true godliness the teaching that the law in the above-mentioned way and degree is not to be urged upon Christians and true believers, but only upon unbelievers, non-Christians, and the impenitent.

Formula of Concord, TD, Art. V, p 962, 5: For although “the law is not made for a righteous man,” as the apostle testifies 1 Tim. 1:9, but for the unrighteous, yet this is not to be understood in the bare meaning, that the

justified are to live without law. For the law of God has been written in their heart, and also to the first man immediately after his creation a law was given according to which he was to conduct himself. But the meaning of St. Paul is that the law cannot burden with its curse those who have been reconciled to God through Christ; nor must it vex the regenerate with its coercion, because they have pleasure in God's law after the inner man.

c) Our Lutheran Confessions address the issue of the proper distinction between law and gospel.

Formula of Concord, Ep. Art. V, p 802, 7,10,11: We believe, teach, and confess that the gospel is not a preaching of repentance or reproof, but properly nothing else than a preaching of consolation, and a joyful message which does not reprove or terrify, but comforts consciences against the terrors of the law, points alone to the merit of Christ, and raises them up again by the lovely preaching of the grace and favor of God, obtained through Christ's merit. Yet as long as all this (namely, Christ's suffering and death) proclaims God's wrath and terrifies man, it is still not properly the preaching of the gospel, but the preaching of Moses and the law, and therefore a foreign work of Christ. . . . Accordingly we reject and regard as incorrect and injurious the dogma that the gospel is properly a preaching of repentance or reproof, and not alone a preaching of grace; for thereby the gospel is again converted into a doctrine of the law, the merit of Christ and Holy Scripture are obscured, Christians robbed of true consolation, and the door is opened again to the errors and superstitions of the Papacy.

Formula of Concord, TD, Art. V, p 954, 10,11: For since the mere preaching of the law, without Christ, either makes presumptuous men, who imagine that they can fulfill the law by outward works, or forces them utterly to despair, Christ takes the law into his hands, and explains it spiritually, Matt. 5:21ff ; Rom. 7:14 and 1:18, and thus reveals his wrath from heaven upon all sinners, and shows how great it is; whereby they are directed to the law, and from it first learn to know their sins aright—a knowledge which Moses never could extort from them. . . . Therefore the Spirit of Christ must not only comfort, but also through the office of the law “reprove the world of sin,” John 16:8, and thus must do in the New Testament, as the prophet says, Is. 28:21, *opus alienum, ut faciat opus proprium*, that is, he must do *the work of another* (reprove), in order that he may afterwards do his own work, which is to comfort and preach of grace.

Formula of Concord, TD, Art. V, p 960, 27: The true and proper distinction between the law and the gospel must with all diligence be inculcated and preserved, and whatever gives occasion for confusion *inter legem et evangelium* (between the law and the gospel), that is, whereby the two doctrines, law and gospel, may be confounded and mingled into one doctrine, should be diligently prevented. It is, therefore, dangerous and wrong to convert the gospel, properly so called, as distinguished from the law, into a preaching of repentance or reproof.

Franz Pieper: Properly to distinguish between law and gospel is a difficult art. Of course, not in theory, for it is easy to say what is law and what is gospel;

but in practice the difficulty is present, particularly in one's own heart and conscience. Luther wisely reminds us again and again that the proper differentiation between law and gospel exceeds the power of natural man and is achieved only through the action of the Holy Spirit. The reason lies in man's natural condition. Natural man seeks grace and salvation through the law, that is, he strives to secure through the law what can be obtained only through the gospel. This *opinio legis* is an obsession with him, and continues to be an obsession, until God's grace and power turns his heart from the law to the gospel (*CD*, III, p 241).

Luther: Without the Holy Spirit it is impossible rightly to divide law and gospel. I experience this in my own case, also daily observe it in others, how difficult it is to separate the doctrine of the law from that of the gospel. The Holy Spirit must here be pedagogue and teacher, or no man on earth will ever have the knack of it or be able to teach it. . . . The theory is easy; quickly we can explain how the law is another Word and doctrine than the gospel; but to divide them *practice* and to apply the art to life, that is trouble and toil. St. Jerome, too, has written much about it, but like a blind man about colors (*St. L.*, IX: 802, 806ff.; cited in F. Pieper, *CD*, III, p 243).

d) We do well to note and to remain aware of how frequently law and gospel are confused and misused. We are not immune from committing such errors. Prominent examples of this include the following:

- Seeking or insisting on “degrees of repentance”
- Using legalistic vocabulary when seeking to present the gospel
- Striving to bring about “repentance out of love to God”
- Softening the message of the law by speaking of God's kindness to an impenitent sinner
- Speaking of a Fatherhood of God without Christ
- Presenting faith as a condition of justification
- Moralizing, or seeking mere behavior modification, being satisfied with externally good works, not the fruit of faith and forgiveness
- Emphasizing external organization in place of testifying to the truth.

Recommended for additional reading:

Armin Schuetze, “A Christian and the Law”, *WLQ*, Oct. 1964; also *OGH*, III, p 120ff.

August Pieper, “The Law Is Not Made for a Righteous Man,” *WLQ*, Oct., 1960; also *TWT*, II, p 73ff.

8. The proper, biblical distinction between law and gospel is abolished or blurred by many churches.

a) The law-gospel distinction is effectively annulled by Roman Catholics.

Council of Trent, Sess. VI, Can. 20: If anyone says that the justified person, however perfect he may be, is not obligated to keep the commandments of God and of the church but only to believe, as if in fact the gospel were a bare

and absolute promise of eternal life, without the condition of obedience to the commandments, let him be damned.

Council of Trent, Session VI, Can. 21: If any one says that Jesus Christ was given to men by God as a Redeemer in whom they should believe, not also as a lawgiver whom they should obey, let him be anathema.

Catechism of the Catholic Church, Par. 1965: The New Law or the Law of the Gospel is the perfection here on earth of the divine Law, natural and revealed. It is the work of Christ and is expressed particularly in the Sermon on the Mount. It is also the work of the Holy Spirit and through him it becomes the interior Law of charity.

Contrast Luther: Beware of turning Christ into a Moses, as if he had nothing more for us than precept and example, like the other saints.... The chief thing in the gospel is this, that before you take Christ as your example, you recognize and accept him as God's gift to you (*St. L, XI, p XLf*).

Contrast Heerbrand: Faith is not a condition, nor is it required as a condition, properly-speaking. For justification is not promised or offered because of the worth or merit of faith, or insofar as it is a work. For faith is also imperfect, but it is certainly the way to accept the benefit offered and given through and on account of Christ (*Compendium, loc. de evangelio, p 165*).

Contrast Hoenecke: The orthodox axiom is, "The gospel in its *strict* sense is not a preaching of repentance but of free remission of sins." Whatever punishes sin and preaches repentance is law, not gospel (*ELD, IV, p 44*).

b) The law-gospel distinction is sometimes canceled by Calvinists.

Charles Hodge: Being a proclamation of the terms on which God is willing to save sinners and an exhibition of the duty of fallen men in relation to that plan, it of necessity binds all those who are in the condition which the plan contemplates. [The gospel] is in this respect analogous to the moral law (*ST, II, p 642f*).

Karl Barth objecting to Luther's distinction between law and gospel: We hear the Law of God when we hear the Gospel. The two dare not be separated. This is what concerns me most about the Lutherans (*Freie Reformierte Synode Barmen-Gemarke* (1934), quoted in Sasse, *Here We Stand*, p 163).

c) The law-gospel distinction is obliterated by synergists, who assume a different (better or worse) conduct of natural man toward grace.

Melanchthon: Three causes [of conversion] are conjoined: The Word, the Holy Spirit and the will not wholly inactive, but resisting its own weakness.... God draws, but draws him who is willing. . . and the will is not a statue, and that spiritual emotion is not impressed upon it as though it were a statue (*Loci*, second edition, 1535. See *Triglotta*, p 129-131).

J. Michael Reu refers to "noble souls" who "though not yet in the kingdom of God," are nevertheless "in a place appreciably nearer" (*Christian Ethics*, p 121).

Catechism of the Catholic Church, Par. 30: Although man can forget God or reject him, He never ceases to call every man to seek him, so as to find life and happiness. But this search for God demands of man every effort of intellect, a sound will, “an upright heart”, as well as the witness of others who teach him to seek God.

Passages frequently misunderstood and misused by synergists:

Matthew 21:31 “Which of the two did what his father wanted?” “The first,” they answered. Jesus said to them, “I tell you the truth, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you.”

Mark 12:34 When Jesus saw that he had answered wisely, he said to him, “You are not far from (οὐ πακρὰν ἀπὸ) the kingdom of God.” And from then on no one dared ask him any more questions.

Acts 26:28 Then Agrippa said to Paul, “Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?” (KJV: “Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian”— ἐν ὀλίγῳ με πείθεις Χριστιανὸν ποιῆσαι).

The often repeated and unmistakable truth of Scripture remains, however.

Romans 3:22-24 This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference,²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,²⁴ and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

V. God uses his law in various ways.

1. In his providential governing of the world, God uses his law to uphold order and decency (*justitia civilis*, civil or civic righteousness).

a) God does this through the agency of civil government.

Romans 13:1-5 Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.² Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves.³ For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you.⁴ For he is God’s servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God’s servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer.⁵ Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience.

1 Peter 2:13,14 Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority,¹⁴ or to

governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right.

1 Timothy 2:1,2 I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone—² for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.

Apology, Art. IV (II), p 126, 22-25: Now, we think concerning the righteousness of reason thus, namely, that God requires it, and that, because of God's commandment, the honorable works which the Decalog commands must necessarily be performed, according to the passage Gal. 3:24: "The law was our schoolmaster," likewise 1 Tim. 1:9: "The law is made for the ungodly." For God wishes those who are carnal, gross sinners to be restrained by civil discipline, and to maintain this, he has given laws, letters, doctrine, magistrates, penalties. And this righteousness reason, by its own strength, can, to a certain extent, work, although it is often overcome by natural weakness, and by the devil impelling it to manifest crimes.

b) God does this through his use of temporal rewards and punishments.

Exodus 20:5,6,12 You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me,⁶ but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.¹² Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you.

Ephesians 6:2-3, "Honor your father and mother"—which is the first commandment with a promise—³ "that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth."

Consider the Book of Proverbs, *passim*.

2. With sinful mankind God uses his law to bring sinners to a knowledge of their sinfulness (mirror).

a) The following passages speak about this work of God.

Romans 3:20 No one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.

Romans 7:7,8 What shall we say, then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! Indeed I would not have known what sin was except through the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, "Do not covet."⁸ But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of covetous desire. For apart from law, sin is dead.

Acts 2:37 When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?"

2 Corinthians 3:6,9 He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant—not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.⁹ If the ministry that condemns men is glorious, how much more glorious is the ministry that brings righteousness!

b) God’s ultimate aim in doing this is to supply what the sinner needs through the gospel.

Matthew 5:17 Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.

Galatians 3:13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.”

Galatians 4:4,5 When the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law,⁵ to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.

Isaiah 53:4-6 Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted.⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.⁶ We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

c) Thus the law is not against the gospel, but is preparatory to it.

Galatians 3:21 Is the law, therefore, opposed to the promises of God? Absolutely not! For if a law had been given that could impart life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law.

Romans 7:7 What shall we say, then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! Indeed I would not have known what sin was except through the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, “Do not covet.”

3. With a Christian God uses his law in three ways.

a) God uses the law as a mirror, to keep the believer in the humble attitude of a sinner desiring nothing but grace.

Formula of Concord, TD, Art. VI, p 968, 21: So, too, the doctrine of the law, in and with the exercise of the good works of believers, is necessary for the reason that otherwise man can easily imagine that his work and life are entirely pure and perfect. But the law of God prescribes to believers good works in this way, that it shows and indicates at the same time, as in a mirror, that in this life they are still imperfect and impure in us, so that we must say with the beloved Paul, 1 Cor. 4:4: I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified. Thus Paul, when exhorting the regenerate to good works, presents to them expressly the Ten Commandments, Rom. 13:9; and that his good works are imperfect and impure he recognizes from the law, Rom. 7:7ff ; and David declares Ps 119:32: *Viam mandatorum tuorum cucurri*, I will run

the way of your commandments; but enter not into judgment with your servant, for in your sight shall no man living be justified, Ps. 143:2.

b) God uses his law as a rule, to point out and make clear the works that are pleasing to him.

Formula of Concord, TD, Art. VI, p 968, 20: So, too, this doctrine of the law is needful for believers, in order that they may not hit upon a holiness and devotion of their own, and under the pretext of the Spirit of God set up a self-chosen worship, without God's Word and command, as it is written Deut. 12:8, 28, 32: You shall not do ... every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes, etc., but observe and hear all these words which I command you. You shall not add thereto, nor diminish from it.

Formula of Concord, TD, Art. VI, p 964, 12: Thereafter the Holy Spirit employs the law so as to teach the regenerate from it, and to point out and show them in the Ten Commandments what is the good and acceptable will of God, Rom. 12:2, in what good works God has before ordained that they should walk, Eph. 2:10.

c) God uses his law as a curb, to restrain the desires of the Old Adam.

Romans 7:18 I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.

Romans 8:7 The sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.

Galatians 5:17 The sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want.

Mark 9:43-48 If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, where the fire never goes out.⁴⁵ And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than to have two feet and be thrown into hell.⁴⁷ And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell,⁴⁸ where "their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched."

Formula of Concord, TD, Art. VI, p 968, 19,24: But as far as the old Adam is concerned, which still clings to them, he must be driven not only with the law, but also with punishments; nevertheless he does everything against his will and under coercion, no less than the godless are driven and held in obedience by the threats of the law, 1 Cor. 9:27; Rom. 7:18, 19. . . . For the old Adam, as an intractable, refractory ass, is still a part of them, which must be coerced to the obedience of Christ, not only by the teaching, admonition, force and threatening of the law, but also oftentimes by the club of punishments and troubles, until the body of sin is entirely put off, and man is perfectly renewed in the resurrection, when he will need neither the preaching of the law nor its threatenings and punishments, as also the gospel any longer; these belong to this mortal and imperfect life.

d) Yet the Christian is not “under law” though he is never to be without the law.

1 Corinthians 9:20,21 To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law – μή ὢν αὐτοῦς ὑπὸ νόμον), so as to win those under the law.

²¹ To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God’s law but am under Christ’s law – μή ὢν ἀνομος θεοῦ ἀλλ’ ἔννομος Χριστοῦ), so as to win those not having the law.

Psalms 119:32 I run in the path of your commands, for you have set my heart free.

Romans 6:14 For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.

Romans 10:4 Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.

1 Timothy 1:9 We also know that law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious; for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers,

e) A special point to be noted here is the abrogation of ceremonial law, including Sabbath law.

1) The concept of the Sabbath Day existed prior to and was regulated by the Lord's Sinaitic covenant with Israel.

Genesis 2:2-3 By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. ³ And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.

Exodus 16:26 Six days you are to gather [manna], but on the seventh day, the Sabbath, there will not be any.

Exodus 20:8-11 Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. ⁹ Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁰ but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. ¹¹ For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

Exodus 31:13,17 Say to the Israelites, “You must observe my Sabbaths. This will be a sign between me and you for the generations to come, so you may know that I am the LORD, who makes you holy. ¹⁷ It will be a sign between me and the Israelites forever, for in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day he abstained from work and rested.”

Exodus 35:2 For six days, work is to be done, but the seventh day shall be your holy day, a Sabbath of rest to the LORD. Whoever does any work on it must be put to death.

Ezekiel 20:12 Also I gave them my Sabbaths as a sign between us, so they would know that I the LORD made them holy.

2) All Sabbath regulations were annulled through Christ's redemptive work which ratified the new covenant. That which was prefigured in the Sabbath rest has become reality in Christ and to be enjoyed through faith.

Colossians 2:16,17 Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. ¹⁷ These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.

Jeremiah 31:31,32 "The time is coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. ³² It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them," declares the LORD."

Galatians 4:9-11 But now that you know God—or rather are known by God—how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable principles? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again? ¹⁰ You are observing special days and months and seasons and years! ¹¹ I fear for you, that somehow I have wasted my efforts on you.

Galatians 5:1 It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

Luke 6:1-5 One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grain fields, and his disciples began to pick some heads of grain, rub them in their hands and eat the kernels. ² Some of the Pharisees asked, "Why are you doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?" ³ Jesus answered them, "Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? ⁴ He entered the house of God, and taking the consecrated bread, he ate what is lawful only for priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions." ⁵ Then Jesus said to them, "The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath. (Also see Luke 6:6-11, Matthew 12:1-8 and Mark 2:18-28 for parallel lessons.)

Matthew 11:28-30 Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

Hebrews 4:1-11 Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it. ² For we also have had the gospel preached to us, just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard

did not combine it with faith. ³ Now we who have believed enter that rest, just as God has said, “So I declared on oath in my anger, ‘They shall never enter my rest.’” And yet his work has been finished since the creation of the world. ⁴ For somewhere he has spoken about the seventh day in these words: “And on the seventh day God rested from all his work.” ⁵ And again in the passage above he says, “They shall never enter my rest.” ⁶ It still remains that some will enter that rest, and those who formerly had the gospel preached to them did not go in, because of their disobedience. ⁷ Therefore God again set a certain day, calling it Today, when a long time later he spoke through David, as was said before: “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.” ⁸ For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken later about another day. ⁹ There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; ¹⁰ for anyone who enters God’s rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his. ¹¹ Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience.

Augsburg Confession, Art. XXVIII, p 90, 52-63: It is necessary that the chief article of the gospel be preserved, namely, that we obtain grace freely by faith in Christ and not by certain observances or acts of worship devised by men. What, then, are we to think of the Sunday and like rites in the house of God? To this we answer that it is lawful for bishops or pastors to make ordinances that things be done orderly in the Church, not that thereby we should merit grace or make satisfaction for sins, or that consciences be bound to judge them necessary services, and to think that it is a sin to break them without offense to others. . . . Of this kind is the observance of the Lord’s Day, Easter, Pentecost, and like holy days and rites. For those who judge that by the authority of the Church the observance of the Lord’s Day instead of the Sabbath-day was ordained as a thing necessary do greatly err. Scripture has abrogated the Sabbath-day; for it teaches that, since the gospel has been revealed, all the ceremonies of Moses can be omitted. . . . There are monstrous disputations concerning the changing of the law, the ceremonies of the new law, the changing of the Sabbath-day, which all have sprung from the false belief that there must be in the church a service like to the Levitical, and that Christ had given commission to the apostles and bishops to devise new ceremonies as necessary to salvation. These errors crept into the church when the righteousness of faith was not taught clearly enough.

Large Catechism, p 602, 79-86: The word holy day (*Feiertag*) is rendered from the Hebrew word *sabbath* which properly signifies to rest, that is, to abstain from labor. Hence we are accustomed to say, *Feierabend machen* [that is, to cease working], or *heiligen Abend geben* [sanctify the Sabbath]. Now, in the Old Testament, God separated the seventh day, appointed it for rest, and commanded that it should be regarded as holy above all others. As regards this external observance, this commandment was given to the Jews alone, that they should abstain from toilsome work and rest, so that both man and beast might recuperate and not be weakened by unremitting labor. . . . This commandment, therefore, according to its gross sense, does not concern us Christians; for it is altogether an external matter, like other ordinances of the Old Testament, which were attached to

particular customs, persons, times, and places, and now have been made free through Christ.

For further reading, the following works are recommended:

Martin Luther, “How Christians Should Regard Moses”, *LW 35*, p 155-175.

Martin Luther, “Against the Sabbatarians” *LW 47*, p 57-92.

Martin Luther, “Sermon on the Third Commandment,” [prelude to the Large Catechism], *LW 51*, p 141-144.

VI. The Word of God is a means of grace, not through the law, but through the gospel which it proclaims. By synecdoche (the whole for the part) “God’s Word” is often called a means of grace.

1. The law is, indeed, filled with divine power, but it is a death-dealing power.

2 Corinthians 3:6-9 He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant—not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. ⁷ Now if the ministry that brought death, which was engraved in letters on stone, came with glory, so that the Israelites could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of its glory, fading though it was, ⁸ will not the ministry of the Spirit be even more glorious? ⁹ If the ministry that condemns men is glorious, how much more glorious is the ministry that brings righteousness!

2. It is only the gospel that can create faith and give spiritual life.

Galatians 3:21,22 Is the law, therefore, opposed to the promises of God? Absolutely not! For if a law had been given that could impart life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law. ²² But the Scripture declares that the whole world is a prisoner of sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe.

John 20:31 But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

Romans 1:16,17 I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. ¹⁷ For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.”