I. THE DIVINE AUTHORITY OF HOLY SCRIPTURE

Holy Scripture possesses divine authority, that is, in all that it says it is entitled to the same faith and obedience that is due God. We have seen that Christ and His Apostles took this position toward the Scripture of the Old Testament (Luke 24:25): “O fools and slow of heart to believe all that the Prophets have spoken.” (Luke 24:25–27; 44–47; John 10:35; 2 Tim. 3:16–17; Matt. 4:4–7.) And Christ and His Apostles demand that we give the same obedience to their own Word in the New Testament (John 8:31–32: “If ye continue in My word, then are ye My disciples indeed”; 1 Cor. 14:37–38; Gal. 1:8). He that rejects, or even only criticizes Scripture, affronts the very Majesty on High; he is committing a crimen laesae maiestatis divinae. Hence Christ’s warning: “The Word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the Last Day” (John 12:48).

This divine authority of Scripture is absolute. It is not founded on the personal repute of the holy writers nor on the endorsement of Scripture by individuals, or any number of men, or even by the Church Universal. The divine authority of Scripture rests solely on its nature, on its theopneusty. It is a correct theological axiom: “Scripture is αὐτόπιστος (worthy of credence on its own account) because it is θεόπνευστος.”

If it is asked how the divine authority of Scripture is recognized by us, or how the Scriptures became a divine authority for us, we distinguish between Christian certainty (fides divina) and natural, or scientific, certainty (fides humana).

Christian certainty is created solely by the self-testimony of Scripture, by the Word of Scripture, which through the power of the Holy Ghost operating in it, not by the employment of human proofs, creates faith in itself and eo ipso secures its acceptation. This is clearly taught in 1 Cor. 2:4–5. The Apostle there reminds the Corinthians how they came to believe the divine preaching (τὸ μαρτύριον τοῦ θεοῦ) which they heard from him. First he says negatively: “My speech and my preaching was not with entic-

104 Baier-Walther, I, 119: “The authority of Holy Scriptures is founded in its theopneusty, in its having God as its author. It does not depend on a causa minus principalis. Even as other writings do not get their authority from the amanuenses, just as little does Sacred Scripture get its authority from the Church, since the Church was not the author, or efficient cause, of it.”


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ing words of man's wisdom”; then he adds in positive form: “but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,” and finally points out the purpose of using such a method, of refrainng from all human proof: “that your faith should not stand in [be based upon] the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.” Christ employs the same method. He says of His preaching in the days of His flesh: “If any man will do His [the Father’s] will [namely, to hear Christ’s Word and to believe on Him, John 6:40], he shall know (γνώσεται) of the doctrine whether it be of God or whether I speak of Myself” (John 7:17). We may express this important truth in this form: The Word of Scripture, being the Word of God, is an object of perception that creates its own organ of perception, faith, and thus Scripture itself bears witness to its divine authority.

This is the so-called testimonium Spiritus Sancti internum. It is a mistake to assume that a person hears this testimony of the Spirit only when his emotions are stirred. It is already present in and with the Spirit-wrought faith in the Word of Scripture. By working faith in the Word of Scripture, which faith has its seat in the spirit of man, the Holy Ghost bears witness of the divinity of the Word of Scripture to the spirit of man. According to 1 John 5:9–10, he who believes God’s witness of His Son has God’s witness in him (ἐν αὐτῷ). Furthermore, the words of 1 Thess. 2:13: “When ye received the Word of God, which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the Word of God,” state that the Thessalonians already by their reception of the Word, i. e., by their faith in the Word, became convinced of the divinity of the Word. That is the reason why Scripture calls faith in the Word of God a seal, or confirmation, of the truthfulness of God (John 3:33: “He that hath received His [Christ’s] testimony, hath set to his seal that God is true”). For this reason Scripture says of him who does not believe God’s witness: “He that believeth not God hath made Him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son” (1 John 5:10).—This truth that Christian certainty of the divinity of Scripture springs from the self-authentication of Scripture is of the greatest practical importance. When Christians are assailed by doubts as to the divinity of Scripture, they must have intercourse with Scripture, that is, they must read, hear, meditate on Scripture and thus permit it to act on themselves. Then the self-testimony of the Scriptures, the testimonium Spiritus Sancti internum, will dispel all
doubts.

True, objections are raised against this self-attestation of Scripture. Rome, in the interest of the supremacy of the Pope over Scripture, and modern theologians, in the interest of severing faith from the written Word, accuse us here of arguing in a circle (idem per idem).\(^{105}\) This objection is groundless, for the method objected to, that we become certain of a thing through perceiving it, is in universal practice. He who seriously questions this method has become a hopeless agnostic. Now, faith in the written Word is nothing more or less than the perception, called forth by the Word itself, through the operation of the Holy Ghost, of this Word as being the Word of God. Philippi (Glaubenslehre, 3d ed., I, 136) mentions the fact that Strauss calls the doctrine of the testimonium Spiritus Sancti internum “the Achilles’ heel of the Protestant system” and also speaks of an argument in a circle. Philippi answers: “That is the same thing as when a blind man accuses his seeing neighbor of arguing in a circle, claiming that the sun shines, since he sees by its light.” That is the answer which the old Lutheran theologians gave.

\(^{105}\) Compare the chapter “Theology and Certainty.”

Gottfried Hoffmann (d. 1728) writes: “As the first principles are known of themselves and shine in their own light, and as in the realm of nature light bears witness of itself and has no need of an outside light, so, too, the testimony of the Holy Ghost has no need of outside testimony, but shines in its own light and abundantly proves itself to be divine by its own divine efficacy and power, in which it rejoices, although another cannot be persuaded of this unless he himself attentively reads Scripture and thus shares in this internal testimony” (Synopsis Theologiae Purioris, p. 86).

Besides the Christian certainty (fides divina) of the divinity of Scripture, which is produced by the self-attestation of Scripture, there is also a purely human conviction (fides humana, or “scientific certainty”) of the divine authority of Scripture, which is based on arguments of reason. Our old theologians call these arguments of reason “arguments which show that the divine origin of Scripture is recognizable by, or credible to, human faith” (Baier-Walther, I, 121). All divine works bear the divine stamp, by which reason can see that they are not the product of man. One will hardly mistake an artificial flower for a natural one. Now, Scripture is as much a work of God, “God’s Book,” as

is the created universe. And as a natural, rational observation of the creation reveals God as its Creator (Rom. 1:18 ff.), so, too, a natural, rational study of Holy Scripture points to God as its author. When we compare the Holy Scriptures according to content and style with other “Bibles” in the world, e. g., with the Koran, the other Sacred Books of the East, etc., when we think of the victorious march of Christianity through the world, though its teaching is an offense to the Jews and foolishness to the Greeks, when we recall the astounding effects of the religion taught in the Scriptures on individuals and whole nations, then a reasonable reason cannot do otherwise than conclude that the Scriptures must be divine and confess that it is more reasonable to grant the divinity of Scripture than to deny it. This is the domain of apologetics.

As to the value of the arguments that produce a human, or scientific, conviction of the divinity of Scripture, a twofold extreme must be avoided: overestimation and underestimation. It would be overestimation if we imagined that any one could be converted by such rational arguments. A man becomes a Christian, in every single case and until the Last Day, only in one way: by way of contritio and fides;

106 See the lengthy quotation from the Koran in Baier-Walther, I, 130 f. Max Mueller on the contents of the “Sacred Books of the East”: “One refrain through all—salvation by works .... Our own holy Bible, our Sacred Book of the East, is from beginning to end a protest against this doctrine .... It contains that faithful saying, worthy to be received by all men, women, and children, and not merely by us Christians—that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” On the style or manner of expression consult Luthardt, Apol. Vortraege, I, 208 f.; Rousseau and Pascal, quoted by Luthardt, pp. 263, 265.


108 The assurance of being reconciled with God by faith in Christ's satisfactio vicaria, the holy life, patience in suffering, readiness to depart. Max Mueller: “Let us teach Hindus, Buddhists, Mohammedans, that there is only one Sacred Book of the East that can be their mainstay in that awful hour when they pass all alone into the unseen world.”

109 It is generally admitted that nothing civilizes nations more quickly and more surely than Christianity.

110 See Proceedings of the Western District, Missouri Synod, 1865; also the extensive compilation of the arguments producing the fides humana in Baier-Walther, I, 121–131.


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that is, he must experience the divine judgment of condemnation, which the Law, speaking through Scripture, produces \( (terrores conscientiae) \) and believe in the remission of his sins through the Gospel, proclaimed in Scripture. This way of coming into His kingdom is taught by Christ when He instructs His disciples “that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations” (Luke 24:47), and when He Himself proclaimed: “Repent ye, and believe the Gospel” (Mark 1:15). Only after a person has in this manner become a sheep of Christ’s fold, only after the Holy Ghost has entered his heart by faith in the forgiveness of sins, does he know that the Scriptures are God’s Word, the voice of the Good Shepherd; in other words, only then does he have the Christian certainty, the \( fides divina \), the \( testimonium internum Spiritus Sancti \) as to the divinity of the Holy Scriptures (John 8:37, 43, 47).

The arguments which call forth only a human faith \( (fidem humanam) \) would be underestimated if we declared them to be utterly worthless. Also Christ and His Apostles used them on occasion.\(^{111}\) Such rational arguments serve to show how frivolous are the judgments of unbelief against the divinity of Scripture. These arguments may be used to good advantage also in the case of Christians who are afflicted with doubts as to the divine character of Scripture. These doubts arise from the unbelieving flesh of the Christians, and through these rational arguments the flesh of the Christians is outwardly checked and subdued.\(^{112}\)

Arguments of reason, historical arguments, etc., can also be of service in the conversion of a person by inducing those outside the Church to read or hear the Word of God itself and so

\[ \text{“Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God” (Matt. 22:29). Christ is appealing not only to the Scriptures, but also to something which is known even to natural reason—to the omnipotence of God. He thereby declares that the doctrine of the Sadducees contradicts not only Scripture, but also reason. Paul tells the Corinthians the same thing (1 Cor. 15:34). Also Peter (Acts 2:15) operates with an argument of reason. Paul (Acts 17:28) appeals to “certain of your own poets.”} \]

\(^{111}\) Gerhard, \textit{locus “De Scriptura Sacra,” }§ 20: “When in their temptations believers begin to doubt the authority of Scripture, then one must deal with them as with those who deny it. For doubt is very close to denial.”

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come to faith in the Word by the operation of the Holy Ghost through the Word.—But we must not imagine that the presentation of such arguments of reason is a necessary prerequisite for the proclamation of the Word of God. The assertion that the “Christian assurance of truth” goes hand in hand with the “other truths possessed by mankind” is part of the basic error of modern theology. It is based on the erroneous opinion, as Ed. Koenig correctly remarks, “as though Holy Scripture were incapable of exerting an authority in consequence of which men yield ready assent to its statements” (Der Glaubensakt des Christen, 1891, p. 118 f.). We must always bear in mind that the self-attestation of Scripture as the Word of God is entirely independent of all rational arguments and of all human witness, whether coming from individuals or from the “Church.” The objection that the self-attestation of Scripture pertains only to its contents, not to its words, has already been refuted as unscriptural and senseless (see the chapters “Theology as Doctrine” and “The Verbal Inspiration of Holy Scripture”).

The question has frequently been raised how one can know whether he has the faith wrought by the Holy Spirit or only a human conviction of the divine authority of Scripture. Christians, too, are bothered about this matter. And it must be conceded that people are often self-deceived. Those who do not have the testimony of the Holy Ghost often think they have it; and those who fear they lack it actually may possess it. Now, who has this witness and who does not have it? We again draw attention to the following:

1. Since according to Scripture the witness of the Holy Ghost is never given without the Word of the Apostles and Prophets, but always through this Word, it is manifest that all opinions concerning the Scripture on the part of those who actually sever themselves from the Word of Scripture are not the witness of the Holy Ghost, but merely human fabrication and fiction.

2. Likewise those lack the internal testimony of the Holy Ghost as to the divine authority of Scripture who are prompted merely by arguments of reason or by human authority—such as the authority of the pastor, the parents, or other men—to regard Scripture as the Word of God.

3. Nor can those have the testimonium Spiritus Sancti who persistently deny the vicarious satisfaction of Christ, since the Christian faith is fides Christi “crucifixi,” and only with this faith does the Holy Ghost enter


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the heart of man, to enable him to judge correctly concerning divine things, and that includes Scripture. Philippi says on this point (Glaubenslehre, 3d ed., I, 135): “It is only the faith in the plenary sacrifice, brought in lowliness on the Cross for our sins by Him who is our Lord and our God, which brings the Spirit of sonship and the assurance of our inheritance and imbues us with the powers of eternal life. And since the Church teaches men to find the righteousness of God and of life solely by faith in the propitiatory blood, it has appealed to the Word of God as attested by the Holy Ghost and to the absolute and exclusive authority of this Word, which has its infallible seal in the Spirit.” Our missionaries in heathen countries, our home missionaries, and our institutional workers do not therefore begin with rational arguments for the divinity of Holy Scripture, but they preach “to one and all” (“in den Haufen hinein”) repentance and remission of sins. And when faith in Christum “crucifixum” has once been created, there is no need to worry about securing faith in the divinity of Holy Scripture.—This covers the case of Johann David Michaelis (d. 1791), whose contention that “during his entire life” he never once perceived the witness of the Holy Ghost as to the divinity of Scripture has gained him a nearly worldwide renown in theological circles. We may leave the question undecided whether “during his entire life” fits his case. But it is clear that in his later life he did not have, and could not have had, the testimony of the Holy Ghost, for then he denied the Scripture doctrine of the satisfactio Christi vicaria and based the divine remission of sins on the moral improvement of man. The Holy Ghost does not confirm pagan work-righteousness, but testifies externally in the written Word and within the heart by working faith in the written Word that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.\(^{13}\)

4. But everyone who believes Scripture for its own sake, accepts as divine truth what Scripture says because Scripture says it, has the inner testimony of the Holy Ghost. And note well, faith itself is the witness of the Holy Ghost. It is just at this point that those who actually have the witness of the Holy Ghost, but imagine


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that they lack it and sigh for it, make their mistake. As those who pretend to have this witness without faith in the external Word err, so also do those dear Christians who indeed believe Scripture, hold what Scripture teaches as the incontestable truth, but nevertheless imagine that they lack the witness of the Holy Ghost. They err by not identifying faith in the Holy Scriptures with the inner testimony of the Holy Ghost that Scripture is divine. Both things must be identified, because they actually amount to the same thing. It is a fact that no man believes the Word of God of himself. The natural man neither believes the terrible judgment of the Law, as it is pronounced in Scripture, nor the comforting judgment of the Gospel concerning the forgiveness of sins, as it is likewise pronounced in the Scripture. Especially the Word of the Gospel telling of the forgiveness of sins propter Christum “crucifixum” is to every natural man an offense and foolishness. But when a man believes both: the Word of Scripture that consigns him to eternal damnation and the Word of Scripture which assures him of the forgiveness of his sins for the sake of the crucified Christ, such faith is solely the work of the Holy Ghost; the Holy Ghost has convinced him internally, by working this faith in his heart, that the Word of Scripture is not foolishness, but divine truth. In other words, the objective witness of the Holy Ghost, which we have in the Word of Scripture, external to us, becomes the inner witness of the Holy Ghost when our hearts say Yea and Amen to the objective witness in the Word of Scripture. This is expressly taught, as we have seen, in 1 John 5:9–10. v. 9 speaks of “the witness of God which He hath testified of His Son,” of God’s Word. But in v. 10 the Apostle adds: “He that believeth on the Son of God”—namely, on the basis of the witness that God has testified of His Son—“hath the witness in himself,” ἐν ἑαυτῷ, in his heart.14

According to Scripture, then, the witness of the Holy Spirit is present not only when it is felt. There is such a thing as joyous feeling. A Christian has periods (days, hours, at times only moments) when he feels the truth, the sublimity, the majesty, the divinity, of Scripture so strongly that joyous emo-

14 Huther: “Instead of ἐν ἑαυτῷ Tischendorf, following A. G. K., has αὐτῷ, which is merely another way of writing it.” Huther adds in explanation: “ἐξει ἐν ἑαυτῷ, that is, for him the witness is no more merely an external one, but through his faith he has it in himself; what was external has become for him internal.”


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tions well up and flood his heart. But not only in these special periods of joy is the witness of the Holy Ghost to the divinity of Scripture present. This sensation of joy, strictly speaking, rather belongs to the effects and fruits of faith in the truth of the Word of God and thus to the external witness of the Holy Ghost (*testimonium Spiritus Sancti externum*). The inner witness of the Holy Spirit, in its first and proper sense, coincides, according to 1 John 5:9–10, with the Spirit-wrought faith in the written Word. It is present even when faith is not felt, but when the heart clings to the Word of Scripture, longs and reaches out for it with an inner yearning. Luther elaborates the point that the witness of the Spirit coincides with faith in the Word of Scripture thus: “We make no distinction between the Holy Ghost and faith, nor does He oppose faith; for He Himself is the certainty in the Word, who makes us certain of the Word, so that we do not doubt it, but without any doubt most certainly believe that it is just as God’s Word tells and reports it. But the Spirit is given to no one without and outside the Word; He is given only through the Word .... Without the oral Word the Holy Ghost does not operate.” (Erl. 58, 153 f.) The situation, then, is this: The Holy Ghost, who originally spoke His Word through the Apostles and Prophets, remains united with His Word until Judgment Day and through His Word works that faith which believes on the basis of the Word itself and not on the basis of rational arguments or human authorities. This is the Christian, or divine, faith (*fides divina*) in contrast to a mere human opinion, or conviction (*fides humana*).