

The Holy Scriptures: Like Christ, Divine and Human

...Christ...says in Matt. 5[:15], “Nor do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house.” Christ allowed his hands, his feet, his sides to be touched so that the disciples might be sure that it was he, himself [John 20:27]. Why, then, should we not touch and examine the Scriptures – which are in truth the spiritual body of Christ – to make sure whether we believe in them or not? For all other writings are treacherous; they may be spirits in the air [cf. Eph. 2:2] which have no flesh or bone, as Christ had.

This is my answer to those also who accuse me of rejecting all the holy teachers of the church. I do not reject them. But everyone, indeed, knows that at times they have erred, as men will; therefore, I am ready to trust them only when they give me evidence for their opinions from Scripture, which has never erred. (Martin Luther, “Defense and Explanation of All the Articles” [1521], *Luther’s Works*, Vol. 32 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1958), p. 31).

The Holy Scripture is God’s Word, written and, so to speak, lettered and put into the form of letters (*gebuchstabet und in Buchstaben gebildet*), just as Christ, the eternal Word of God, is clothed in humanity. And men regard and treat the written Word of God in this world just as they do Christ. It is a worm and no book compared with other books. (Martin Luther, WA 48, 31 [1541]; quoted in *What Luther Says* [Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1959], p. 71)

The Holy Scripture is God’s Word, written and, so to say, spelled out and pictured in alphabetic letters, just as Christ is the eternal Word of God veiled in humanity; and what happened to Christ in the world, happens to the written Word of God also: it is considered a worm and no book over against other books. (Martin Luther, WA 48, 31 [alternate translation]; quoted in Hermann Sasse, “On the Doctrine *De Scriptura Sacra*,” *Scripture and the Church: Selected Essays of Hermann Sasse* [Saint Louis: Concordia Seminary, 1995], p. 78)

When the Apostles give their human testimony to Jesus, the Holy Ghost watches over their discourse, guards them from error, purifies, elevates, strengthens their memory, and imparts fitting words; and while each Apostle speaks in his own peculiar way, he is yet wholly imbued with the Spirit. Thus we recognize one and the same Word to be at the same time both human and divine; appearing as one, we yet acknowledge it to be two joined together, and the God-man’s twofold nature in one person is mirrored, as a two-fold, at once divine and human, witness in one and the same Word. All that the Apostles speak is at the same time divine and human. (Wilhelm Loehe; quoted in Rudolph Besser, *Christ, the Light of the World: Biblical Studies on the Eleventh to the Twenty-first Chapters of St. John’s Gospel* [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1862], p. 195)

The word of God is perfectly divine in its contents; but except where the divine form is as necessary as the divine fact, no book is more perfectly human in its form. It is inspired, for it comes from God; it is human, for it comes through man. But remember, we do not say that the human is without the divine. The Spirit is incarnate in the Word, as the Son was incarnate in Christ. There is deep significance in the fact, that the title of “the Word” is given both to Christ, the Revealer, and to the Bible, the revelation of God, so that in some passages great critics differ as to which is meant. As Christ without confusion of natures is truly human as well as divine, so is this Word. As the human in Christ, though distinct from the divine, was never separate from it, and his human acts were never those of a merely human being – his toils, his merits and his blood were those of God –

so is the written word, though most human of books – as Christ, “the Son of Man,” was most human of men – truly divine. Its humanities are no accidents; they are divinely planned. It is essential to God’s conception of his Book, that it shall be written by these men and in this way. He created, reared, made and chose these men, and inspired them to do this thing in their way, because their way was his way.

Take up the Bible – read it impartially. You see in it the unity of truth, an agreement in facts, in doctrine and in spirit. It is one book, as “our God is one God.” Just as palpably, however, do you perceive difference in form. You have before you poetry and prose, history, biography, drama, proverb and prophecy. ...

It is the great divine-human heart of the Bible, which has made it so varied in eternal freshness. How everything is permitted to shine out in its own light, and the men of all its eras permitted to make their utterances in the spirit of their own time! ... These are the contents of the books of the Old Covenant, which their mere names recall.

And what is the New Testament but an unfolding of this same divine humanity? The New Testament is the life of God in human nature. ... Through God in Christ, and Christ in man, we are led from the lineage of him in whom the blood royal of the realms of heaven and [of] earth met, to the closing book of broken seals and seals yet to be broken. But with whatever pulse your human heart may beat, God has placed in his book a heart as truly human as your own, to beat with it. ...

The great Spirit who lives in the Universe gives it glory and unity; but it is the lower part of it – the material – which gives it variety. (Charles Porterfield Krauth, *The Bible a Perfect Book* [Gettysburg, Pennsylvania: Henry C. Neinstedt, 1857], pp. 10-13)

Since the Holy Scriptures are in-breathed by God, but written by men, it lies in the nature of the case that they must have both a divine and a human element. Without the divine element there was no revelation, and without the human element the revelations no longer came to the individual who received them.

That God chooses His instruments according to His wisdom is self-evident. But we can also sense some of this when we consider the differing characteristics of the men whom He used. These appear even when they write under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Thus when we think of Moses, Isaiah, Paul, John, Peter, James, etc., we see that God used the gifts which He Himself had given His instruments. These witnesses were not robots. St. Paul can say, “We are workers together with God” [1 Cor. 3:9], but the One who guides him is the Holy Ghost.

Concerning the manner in which the fact of inspiration was brought about, there is nothing revealed to us. The various errors concerning this matter come from the desire which many otherwise pious teachers have had in seeking to explain for themselves how the activity of the Holy Ghost proceeded in this matter.

But we can as little fathom how it occurred as we can fathom the two natures in the one person of the Savior or the union of the soul and body in our own person. That we do not understand how God worked in inspiration, however, should not surprise us. We also do not know how God works in the power of nature – for example, in electricity, x-rays, and the like – powers of which men have only recently learned and whose nature no one understands. See also how St. Paul speaks of the higher revelation in 2 Corinthians 12.

Wanting to explain and to fathom the union of the divine and the human in the words of the Bible has given occasion to various errors. On the one side, the emphasis has been so laid on the divine that the human is completely laid aside. From this has come the so-called mechanical theory, according to which the holy authors are made to be mechanical pens. This explanation has no basis in the Scriptures, outside of the places where the Scripture itself speaks of it. It contradicts many places in the New Testament, in John, Luke, Paul, Peter. Neither is there as complete accord in every

detail, for example, in the Gospels, as we might expect if they were written from dictation by men who were only writing-machines. See also the beginning of Luke's Gospel and 1 John 1. So far as I know, the mechanical theory has never been used very much by teachers in the Lutheran Church, although it is found in a few of its teachers' remarks of which we cannot approve [For example, Quenstedt, *Syst. Didact. Polem.*, Cap. 4, quaest. 4, ecthesis 6].

On the other hand, this speculation over inspiration has called forth the far more dangerous departure which makes the words in the Holy Scriptures independent of the Holy Spirit and, therefore, exposes them to being mastered by people, wise in their own conceits. This speculation places such a weight on the human side of Scripture that the divine side is denied. Thus these teachers conclude that the Scriptures have been written by men and that men can surely err; therefore, even the Scriptures can also err. This false conclusion rests on the fact that the writers of Scripture are called "men" without further explaining that these men were also the Holy Spirit's instruments.

At the same time as we reject both of these one-sided human presentations, because neither of them has basis in God's Word, we must, according to the Scriptures themselves, cling to the unshakable certainty which Scripture gives us for its unassailable authority – namely, that it gives us the whole truth completely and entirely in each of its parts. (Ulrik Vilhelm Koren, "The Inspiration of Holy Scripture," *Truth Unchanged, Unchanging* [Lake Mills, Iowa: Graphic Publishing Company, Inc., 1978], pp. 149-50)

Nothing has been revealed to us concerning the manner in which the fact of inspiration is realized. The various errors in this matter stem from the desire many otherwise pious teachers have had to explain *how* the Holy Spirit carried out this work. But we cannot understand that, any more than we can understand the two natures in the Savior's one Person – or even just the union of the soul and body in our own person. But it should not surprise us that we do not understand how God operates in inspiration. We do not even understand how God operates with the forces of nature, e.g., electricity, x-ray and similar forces which men have known anything about only in recent times and whose nature nobody understands. Consider also how St. Paul speaks about the high revelations granted to him, 2 Cor. 12.

To want to explain and understand the union of the divine and the human in the Bible has given rise to various errors. On the one hand, the emphasis has been laid so much on the divine that the human is entirely set aside. From that has come the so-called mechanical explanation, by which the holy writers have been made into pens without will. This explanation has no ground in Scripture, except in the places where Scripture itself testifies to it. It contradicts many passages in the New Testament, in John, Luke, Paul, Peter. Nor is there such a complete agreement in all kinds of details, e.g., in the Gospels, as we would have to expect, if they were written from dictation by men who were mere writing machines. Cf. also the beginning of Luke's Gospel and 1 John 1.

The mechanical explanation has, so far as I know, never been used to any extent by teachers of the Lutheran Church, although there are in some of them *expressions* which we cannot approve of (e.g., Quenstedt in his *Dogmatics*). On the other hand this speculation about inspiration has produced the far more dangerous error which makes the words of Holy Scripture independent of the Holy Spirit and therefore exposes them to be mistreated by men wise in their own conceit. They lay so much stress on the human side of Scripture that its divine side is denied. For they draw the conclusion that, since Scripture is written by men, and since men can err, therefore Scripture can also err. This wrong conclusion rests on this that "men" are named without explaining more fully that these men were also the agents or tools of the Holy Spirit. (Ulrik Vilhelm Koren, "The Inspiration of Holy Scripture" [alternate translation], excerpted in *Clergy Bulletin*, Vol. XVIII, No. 10 [June 1959], pp. 96-97)

Quenstedt says (*Systema* I, 109): “According as the holy writers were trained or accustomed to speak or write either in an elegant or in a simpler style, so the Holy Ghost used them and was ready to accommodate Himself to the natural aptitude of the men and to condescend to it.” We have an analogy to this “condescension” in Christ’s humbling Himself while in the State of Humiliation. If Christ was to fulfill the Law and suffer and die in our stead, it was necessary that He go about in Palestine not in His divine glory (else everyone from Dan to Beersheba would have fled from Him), but that He humiliate Himself and “become in fashion as a man” (Phil. 2:7). Similarly, if God would speak to men, He had to refrain from using His divine, or celestial, style and condescend to use the human style (*condescendere, attemperare*). How this was possible is, indeed, beyond our “rational discernment” (“*erkenntnismaessigen Erfassung*”), just as the *unio personalis* of God and man, and particularly the fact that the Son of God could condescend to die on the Cross without renouncing or reducing His deity, remains an impenetrable mystery to us. But as this latter fact is incontrovertibly true – for the Lord of glory, God’s Son, was crucified (1 Cor. 2:8; Rom. 8:32) – so, too, this fact is incontestable that God’s speech in Scripture, through His condescension to human speech and the human style of the writers, does not cease to be fully and entirely God’s Word, as is evident from all passages that identify the Word of Scripture and God’s Word. (Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, Vol. I [Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950], p. 234)

The Bible is, then, the Word of God with a human voice. It comes from God through man. “Through the divine overshadowing power” the divine revelation was conceived in human feeling, nurtured in human thinking, fashioned in human imagery, and brought out in human language. The revelation is perfect and plenary, for it is divine; but the medium is imperfect, and exposes its human limitations and weaknesses, and so much the more confirms the divine origin of the truths that are taught. We know, indeed, that contradictions are charged upon the Bible, but these apparent contradictions and superficial discrepancies disappear on careful study made by one who is open to conviction. They have weight only with the superficial and unwilling student. We do not maintain that there are no imperfections in the Bible, but we do maintain that there are no errors in it. As the Son of Man was no less a perfect man – hungering, thirsting, sleeping, weeping, tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin – because he was the Son of God, so the Bible with all its marks of human hands and human weaknesses is nonetheless without error, because it is the revelation of the word and will of God. (Ernst Heinrich Klotsche, “The Divine Authority of the Holy Scriptures,” *Lutheran Quarterly*, Vol. LI, No. 1 [April 1921], p. 204)

The same God who gave His Holy Scriptures watched over, guarded, and preserved them. He has made good His promise: “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My Word shall not pass away” [Matt. 24:35; Mark 13:31; Luke 21:33]. We have it with us still. And we believe, teach, and confess that the Book with such other-worldly contents, with such a history, is the inspired Word of God. We believe that holy men of God spake and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost [cf. 2 Peter 1:21]. The Holy Spirit inspired it. Men wrote it. It is God’s Book, given to us through men. Like Christ, it is both divine and human. (George Henry Gerberding, *Lutheran Fundamentals* [Rock Island, Illinois: Augustana Book Concern, 1925], p. 63)

It is necessary to emphasize both the divine and the human factors in inspiration, yet, as between the two one-sided views, it is better to lay stress on the divine, at the expense of the human factor. In every case God is the auctor primarius. The orthodox dynamic theory holds the true middle ground, in the first place setting forth the divine activity but also placing proper emphasis on the human side. *Causa efficiens principalis* is the Triune God. Compare 2 Tim. 3.16: “Every scripture inspired of God”; with regard to the Father, compare Heb. 1.1; the Son, John 1.18; the Holy Spirit, 1 Peter 1.11:

“The Spirit of Christ which was in them did point unto”; 2 Peter 1.21: “Being moved by the Holy Ghost.” *Causa instrumentalis* were the holy men of God. Compare 2 Peter 1.21. God being the auctor primarius, we may say that inspiration comprises two elements, one a negative element, whereby God preserved the writers from falsity and error, the other a positive element, whereby the writers were inspired with the true message both as to content and words. Inasmuch as men were both *causa instrumentalis* and authors in a secondary sense, we understand why linguistic imperfections crept into their writings.

The human individuality was not suppressed in the act of inspiration. It was a condescension on the part of the Holy Spirit to the character of the human instrumentality, so that it may be said that the act of inspiration was a divine-human act. The holy writers were not merely mechanical instruments, such as pens or amanuenses, rather there was an auto-activity analogous to the new life that succeeds the new birth when the regenerated soul cooperates with the Holy Ghost. The human life of the Son of God may also be taken as an analogy of the divine-human character of the written Word. We acquire a false impression of the personal Word in overemphasizing either His divine or His human nature. The same holds true with regard to the Scriptures or the written Word, which is a divine-human Word. (Conrad Emil Lindberg, *Christian Dogmatics* [Rock Island, Illinois: Augustana Book Concern, 1928], pp. 388-89)

When it is stated that Scripture contains a human element as well as a divine element, this statement may be so understood as to be right; for in the Scriptures the divine truths are clothed in human language, in human forms. But this statement is not understood aright if thereby is meant that in the Scriptures the divine truths are blended with human errors. Christ was God and man in one person. In the Holy Scriptures there is also a certain union of the divine and the human element. Christ was like us in all things, but He was altogether without sin. The Holy Scriptures resemble human writings in many respects, but they are without the human liability to err. The human nature of Christ was permeated by His divine nature. The whole of the Holy Scripture, which is indeed not without its human element, is given by inspiration of God and is the Word of God. (Elling Hove, *Christian Doctrine* [Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1930], pp. 18-19)

...there is a close analogy between Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word, and the Scriptures, the Written Word. Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word, was absolutely without sin. The Holy Scriptures, the Written Word, must likewise be absolutely without error; for sin and error are closely allied. This we see from the Lord’s own words, for when He encountered the Jews with the challenge, “Which of you convinceth me of sin?” He immediately added, “And if I speak the truth, why do ye not believe me?” [John 8:46] (Carroll Herman Little, *Disputed Doctrines* [Burlington, Iowa: Lutheran Literary Board, 1933], p. 28)

We teach the verbal and plenary inspiration of the Scriptures (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21; Rom. 3:2; 1 Thess. 2:13; 2 Thess. 2:15; 1 Cor. 2:13; 1 John 1:1-4; Rev. 2:7,11,17; Jer. 1:9), but we reject the various theories (e.g., mere divine enlightenment, mechanical dictation, etc.) which have been offered as an explanation of the ‘how’ of inspiration, or by which the verbal and plenary inspiration is in any way limited or denied. Scripture teaches the fact of inspiration, but is silent on the ‘how’, i.e., on the manner or method. The latter has not been revealed and therefore remains an inaccessible divine mystery; we cannot know how God the Holy Ghost worked the miracle that human words are His Word.

We confess that Holy Scripture as the Word of God written by men is at the same time both divine and human. In defining the relationship between the divine and human side of the Bible we could use the analogy of the divine and human nature of Jesus Christ, the Word Incarnate; of the

divine and human word in absolutism; of the real presence of the body and blood of Christ in, with, and under the bread and wine in the Sacrament of the Altar. But we limit ourselves to what Scripture clearly teaches about the divine and human character of the prophetic Word. God is the prime and absolute source and origin of all revealed truth. But it pleased Him to give His Word through 'holy men' who spoke and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost (2 Peter 1:21). Thus it is God who chose certain men, whom He knew before He created them (Jer. 1:5; cf Isa. 6:8ff and Ezek. 2:1ff), to be His prophets at a certain time and to certain people. It is God who for that purpose sanctified (Jer. 1:5; Isa. 6:6f) sinful men and put His Word into their heart and mouth (Isa. 6:7; Jer. 1:9; 15:16; Ezek. 2:8; 3:2f). The fact that God dealt with each of the prophets in a different way shows that the personality, character, way of thinking and speaking of the individual man were not extinguished. It is God again who gave the command to write (Ex. 17:14; Jer. 30:2; 36:2; Rev. 1:11; 14:13) and inspired the holy writers. But they retained their individuality and were not exempt from the labour, methods and responsibility of human authorship (Luke 1:1ff; John 21:24; Acts 1:1; Rev. 1:11; Pauline Epistles; Psalms). Thus the Bible has a truly human side. We therefore teach and confess that it pleased God to give us His Word under, or in the garb of, the human word of the biblical writers.

Because Holy Scripture is the Word of God, it is the perfect (Psalm 19:7), authoritative (John 10:35), sufficient (Gal. 1:8f; Rev. 22:10), and essentially clear (2 Peter 1:19; Psalm 19:7f; Psalm 119:105) revelation of divine truth (John 17:7). Holy Scripture, being God's Word written by men and for men, presents this truth in such a way that it can be appropriated by men. With the whole true Church of God we confess the Bible to be the inerrant Word of God. This inerrancy of the Holy Scriptures cannot be seen with human eyes, nor can it be proved to human reason; it is an article of faith, a belief in something that is hidden and not obvious. We believe that the Scriptures are the Word of God and therefore inerrant. (Australian Lutheran "Theses of Agreement," VIII [Theses on Scripture and Inspiration, 1951], 8-10)

The earthly word in which God is near is not a sign, which points to a divine Word lying behind it, beyond the created world... Luther's "spiritualism" is, from his early years already, completely dominated by his "incarnationalism." Already the very young Luther saw through the essence of mysticism and enthusiasm: Man remains alone with himself when he is supposed to find God from within his own interior. ...

Luther's intention as interpreter of Scripture is not *criticism* of Scripture, but the positive *use* of Scripture in the proclamation of the Gospel, and in a critical break with all human doctrine, religious and temporal, within and without the Church. Scripture is judge, and is not itself subject to any judgement. Scripture tests and criticizes us, not we it. As sinner man possesses no criterion by the use of which he might be able to distinguish between God's Word and man's word in Scripture. Therefore Scripture must come to us primarily in the form of law and the letter, and say: This you *must* believe, because it is *God's* Word, also before it has accredited itself as such before your conscience.

Luther's belief in inspiration is not an unpurified scholastic element in his conception of Scripture; it has its roots deep in the centre of his doctrine: The testimony of the justification of the ungodly through faith alone. Luther's concept of inspiration is a genuine Reformation idea, the belief in verbal inspiration is an indispensable piece of the Protestant doctrine of Scripture. ...

Luther's belief in inspiration and the scholastic doctrine of inspiration differ, because Luther breaks with the whole monophysite framework of medieval theology. ...also his conception of Scripture is determined by his confession of the Incarnation. (E. Thestrup Pedersen, *Luther som Skriftfortolker* [Copenhagen: Nyt Nordisk Forlag Arnold Busck, 1959], pp. 455, 459-60; quoted in Kurt E. Marquart, "Truth and/or Consequences," *Lutheran Synod Quarterly*, Vol. VIII, No. 2 [Winter 1967-68], pp. 10-12)

...[There is] one thing Christian theology can never admit, namely, the presence of “errors” in the sense of false statements in Holy Scripture. The holy writers may have used, as they actually have [used], sources, traditions, methods of a prescientific historiography, and literary forms of the ancient Orient we do no longer possess. Their language may be figurative, their narratives sometimes bordering on legend and poetry or even using such forms of expression. Yet all this has been written by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. In a way that is and always will remain inscrutable to human reason these truly human writers wrote God’s Word. The inspiration of Holy Scripture has often been understood as an analogue to the incarnation. It seems that this view is becoming more and more the common possession of Christendom, especially since it has been introduced into Roman Catholic theology and approved by the encyclical of 1943 [*Divino afflante Spiritu*].

To the dilemma formulated by Paul Claudel, “either the Bible is a human work...or else Scripture is a divine work,” [Jean] Steinmann has rightly replied, “One might as well say: Either Jesus Christ is man or he is God” [*Biblical Criticism*, p. 14]. ... The time may come when the Christological decision of Chalcedon will become the pattern of a solution of the doctrine of Holy Scripture and its inspiration. Between the Monophysitism of Fundamentalists who fail to understand the human nature of the Bible and the Nestorianism of modern Protestant and Anglican theology that sees the two natures but fails to find the unity of Scripture as a book at the same time fully human and fully divine, we have to go the narrow path between these two errors. We must never forget that the Chalcedonense [formulation] has been authoritatively explained in the doctrine of the “enhypostasia.” The human nature has its hypostasis in the divine. So Holy Scripture is first of all and essentially God’s Word. The human word in the Bible has no independent meaning. What would the Books of Samuel and even the Epistle to the Romans mean outside the Bible? God has given us these writings as his Word. (Hermann Sasse, “Inspiration and Inerrancy: Some Preliminary Thoughts,” *The Journal Articles of Hermann Sasse* [Irvine, California: New Reformation Publications, 2016], pp. 102-03; originally published in *The Reformed Theological Review*, Vol. XIX, No. 2 [July 1960])

It does not take a great deal of intellectual acuteness to see that the two questions, “Yea, hath God said?” and “What think ye of Christ?” are inextricably interwoven with each other, and a wrong answer to the one will, in the end, always bring with it a wrong answer to the other. Either Jesus is what the Bible says he is, or he is someone whom we can never know. Either God reveals himself to us in the Bible, or he does not reveal himself to us at all as the Redeemer of the world. If we lose the inerrancy of Scripture we will also eventually lose the infallible Christ.

He is already being lost. It has become the fashion in our day to draw a parallel between Christ as a divine-human person and the Bible as a divine-human book, and the opponents of the inerrancy of Scripture do not tire of accusing those who hold that there are no errors in the Bible of Docetic tendencies. But in doing so, they only succeed in revealing themselves as being in the grip of Nestorian heresy, and they show that they understand neither the doctrine of the communication of attributes nor the doctrine of original sin.

Those who will not admit that there are errors in the Bible, they say, will not let the Bible be a human book. They ridicule an inerrant Bible as one that would have had to fall fully written from heaven. Since the book is human, said the *Lutheran Quarterly* a decade ago, “it must contain inaccuracies, mistakes, and contradictions.” This, too, is an old heresy which every Lutheran rejected on the day of his ordination. The first article of the Formula of Concord lays down the Biblical principle that original sin is not part of the essence of man, that is, a person does not need to be a sinner in order to be a human being, and that while it may be true that “to err is human,” one can no more say “to be human is to err” than one can say “to be a quadruped is to be a horse.”

If the argument that since the Bible is a human book it must contain errors is to stand, it will

not be long until men will say that since Jesus is a true human being He must be a sinner. We are already close to this in the Lutheran Church. Far and wide in our Church we hear voices raised against the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, and here and there also against the Messianic character of Old Testament prophecy. And when we call the attention of those who hold such views to the words of our Lord, "Moses wrote of me," we are just as likely to hear the blasphemous rejoinder, "Well, what of it? Jesus was a human being. He could make mistakes." Shall we keep on asking them, "What think ye of Christ?"

We said that such people are in the grip of Nestorianism. The Nestorians would not let one and the same person be both God and man. Rather, they held that in the human Jesus dwelt the divine. So these modern opponents of Scripture will not let the Biblical statements be both human and divine at the same time. What men say here and what God says in this book is not really the same thing. The divine meaning is hidden within and beneath the inadequate human words. The sharp distinction, therefore, that they draw between the Word of God and the words of men written in the Bible, which prompts them to ask again and again, "In what sense is the Bible the Word of God?", and to answer that the Scriptures are the Word of God only in a derivative sense, is an echo of the Nestorianism which divides the person of Christ into two parts and finally says that God did not die on Calvary. (Siegbert W. Becker, "Attacks on Inerrancy and Inspiration" [delivered at the Lutheran Free Conference, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, March 15-16, 1961])

...it is not surprising that men who 10 years ago were saying that the Bible cannot be perfect because it is a human book, today are ready to assert that the Lord Jesus too, since He was a true human being, was mistaken in many things. It is only another demonstration of the truth that, when men lose the Scriptures, they must eventually also lose Christ. For just as Christ is human and divine, so the Scriptures, too, are both human and divine. The words are human words spoken and written by men, but they are also divine words spoken and written by God through human agency. The holy writers were His scribes, His penmen, whom He used to produce the sacred Scriptures, just as the king of Assyria was the rod of His anger which He used to punish recalcitrant Israel. There is no warrant, therefore, for any attempt to separate the divine words from the human words, or to distinguish the divine message from the human assertions in this book. (Siegbert W. Becker, "The Inspiration of Scripture," *This Steadfast Word* [Lutheran Free Conference Publications, 1965], p. 40)

Searching the Scriptures through the centuries in order to know Jesus Christ and describe Him as He is presented in the words and illustrations of Scripture, the congregation of Christ and true teachers have again and again summed up their findings in three simple sentences, which in turn have been combined to express the full truth concerning Him. These sentences may be formulated this way: 1. God has become man, God is man. 2. A human being is true God. 3. Jesus of Nazareth is true God and true man, the God-man.

Stealthy enemies of the Scriptures have often said that the church has never presented a doctrinal confession concerning Scripture. God knows how often this assertion has been used erroneously in the name of the church to belittle and nullify the Scriptures in the church of Christ. The truth of the matter is that no one has yet sincerely and personally acknowledged and believed the divine and human natures of Christ without also having acknowledged and believed the true unity of the divine and the human in the Scriptures. Therefore, in harmony with the analogy between the incarnate and the inspired Word, it follows that: 1. God has spoken and written in a human manner through the prophets and the apostles. 2. The human words and writings of the prophets and apostles are truly divine. 3. The Holy Scriptures are truly divine and truly human. (Olav Valen-Sendstad, *The Word That Can Never Die* [Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1966], pp. 33-34)

When we represent the incarnation and inspiration as being analogous to one another, this means that in spite of the apparent difference between these two divine acts, significant points of similarity between the manner in which God conducts Himself in the incarnation and in inspiration are discoverable. Let us therefore try to define the limits of this analogy properly.

As we have observed, the *incarnation* consisted in this, that God's eternal Son for His person assumed flesh and blood as His human nature and became man in such a way that the historical speech and work of Jesus are completely identical with the historical speech and work of the eternal Son. *Inspiration* consisted in this, that God's eternal Spirit chose and called particular people whom God created (cf. Jer. 1:5; Gal. 1:15), in order to place within them, at a fixed time and place, thoughts and words which God willed to speak and reveal regarding His nature and His counsel (Amos 3:7). ...

When we compare the speaking of Jesus with that of the prophets and apostles, we may say that the difference between incarnation and inspiration is that as a result of the incarnation there was a time when God spoke here on earth as a human being, while as a result of inspiration there was a time when God spoke and wrote here on earth within, by, and through people (cf. John 3:34; Heb. 1:1). The *similarity* between incarnation and inspiration consists in that just as God's Son has united Himself so intimately with flesh and blood through His incarnation that human nature has become His attribute, so also God's Spirit has united Himself so intimately with the spiritual functions of certain people through inspiration that they operate by the power of God's Spirit and become God's instruments. Therefore the words which these inspired people spoke are just as completely and fully *God's Word* as they are the word of *human beings*.

... Now we will briefly attempt to see the significance of God's speaking and writing human words. Our New Testament informs us that no prophetic word has come by means of man's own will but only by the impulse of the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21). The Spirit of Christ was in them (1 Peter 1:11). He ordered them to write and also directed what they should write (Rom. 16:26). He gave them the words with which they were to present and explain spiritual things (1 Cor. 2:13). With this inspiration they actually received a revelation, i.e., an unveiling and a clear conception of God's plan of grace and its mysteries (Eph. 3:3). Therefore the speaking and writing of these inspired people was not simply their own, but God spoke within, by, and through them (Matt. 10:20; Ex. 4:12). Inspiration embodied a specific consciousness of being brought face to face with the invisible God (Num. 12:8; Ex. 33:11 ff.). Thus, in a manner inexplicable to us in its details, we have been initiated into the counsel of God (Amos 3:7; Jer. 23:18,22). God's Spirit communicated the content of that which they perceived and also brought about the formulation of its thoughts and expressions (1 Cor. 2:10 ff.). Thus the prophetic and apostolic word is truly and directly *God's Word*. This applies to the occasionally inspired words they spoke as well as to those they wrote.

When inspiration at times is presented as a divine *dictation* of what should be written (e.g., Rev. 2:1,8,12), this restrictive dictation is accompanied by the freer and more permissive relationship expressed by the commission: "Write what you see" (cf. Rev. 1:11,19). We must bear in mind that these inspired people were not mechanical typewriters. Rather they were *loving hearts*. They had offered themselves to the Lord (Is. 6:8 f.) to do His work and speak His Word regardless of what it might cost them. Therefore the first thing they did with the words they received by inspiration was to apply them to their own relationship with God. Indeed, in inspiration God spoke His Word through weak, frail, and sinful people – but they were also pardoned, believing, and holy people. Consequently only pardoned, believing, and holy people can be congenial (of one spirit) with the prophets and apostles.

We say that Scripture is God's Word because "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God" (2 Tim. 3:16). We know that this statement offends. However, this cannot be allowed to restrain us. Whether Scripture speaks about heavenly or earthly matters, Law or Gospel, historical or geographi-

cal subjects – in each and every instance, word for word, Holy Scripture is *God's Word*. ... Now, positive theologians, for example, contend that only those portions of Scripture in which God speaks directly are His Word. They say that Scripture indeed contains God's Word but that in the reported material there is much that is not God's Word, since mistakes and contradictions can be observed in it.

What is really the case with the so-called mistakes in the material reported in Scripture? It is remarkable that the nature of these so-called mistakes generally varies to correspond to the hearts and eyes that are contemplating them. In the course of the years I have made repeated attempts to probe theological claims that this or that is a "mistake," or in contradiction with something else in Scripture. In doing so, I have invariably experienced the following: When, in trying to understand the "contradictions" of which the theologians spoke, I applied what I choose to call a synthetic-integrative method in a *both-and* assumption, i.e., that both parts are correct, I discovered that surprisingly simple connections arose consistently to establish harmony. ... The synthetic-integrative method removes most of the difficulties from the Scriptures. I won't go so far as to say that all difficulties are removed from Scripture. But the difficulties that remain become more deeply entrenched when viewed with a skepticism which is analogous to viewing the words and activities of Jesus with skepticism. ... The form of Scripture is analogous to the humble form of God's Son also in this respect: People take offense – until the Spirit persuades them and they begin to love both Jesus Christ and Scripture. ...

Just as God's Son during His earthly life was a source of perpetual offense because of His humble and unimpressive appearance (Is. 53:2 ff.), so Scripture is also a source of offense because of its humble form. Spiritually blind and dead people have never been able to see the divine glory of Jesus in His state of humiliation, but see only what is "human" and "deficient." Similarly, spiritually blind and dead people cannot see the divine glory of Scripture in its historical form, but see only "mistakes" and "contradictions." Jesus Christ was accused of blasphemy in His day. This, of course, is no longer the thing to do. Instead, Scripture is accused all the more of fostering untimely, immoral, and obsolete (antiquated) impressions of God. And yet, all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in the person of Christ, and the prophetic Word is a mighty light which enlightens us through the Holy Spirit. ...the believer is offended neither at the humble appearance of Christ nor of Scripture. (Olav Valen-Sendstad, *The Word That Can Never Die*, pp. 47-52 [emphases in original])

The doctrine of the inerrancy of the Holy Scripture is an article of faith, just as inspiration is an article of faith. It cannot be proven that the Bible is free from what appears to our human reason to be a contradiction or an inaccurate reference or even a "mistake" or "error"... ...the Scripture itself claims to be: God's Word in the guise (*Verhüllung*) of human words. It has pleased God the Holy Spirit to give us his Word in the form in which men of an ancient time and of an ancient culture wrote history...

As the Word of God, as his revelation, the Bible partakes of the manner in which God reveals himself whenever he comes to us. Just as Christ's divine nature is hidden deep under his human nature – just as his body and blood are in, with, and under the bread and wine of the Sacrament, even so God's written and oral Word is always hidden under the human word. Just as monophysitism and docetism with their denial of the genuine humanity of our Lord lost the Savior of Sinners and spread without change into Islam, even so decetism and monophysitism in viewing the Bible must likewise miss the essence (*Wesen*) of the Scripture as the true, saving word of God and must end in sectarianism, as we see it in the Fundamentalism of the English-speaking world. ...

The task of the Lutheran Church is to understand the Bible, as Luther did, as Jesus Christ's book, because it is the book of the Holy Spirit, who in the entire Bible, from first to last page, bears witness to Christ. In saying this we know well that, just as Christ's human nature has its *hypostasis*

(personal existence) in the divine nature, even so in the Bible the human side of the Scripture also has meaning and essence (*Wesen*) only by virtue of the fact that in it the pure Word of God is given to us. (Hermann Sasse, “Concerning the Bible’s Inerrancy” [1966], *Scripture and the Church: Selected Essays of Hermann Sasse*, pp. 335-36)

One fairly old disguise, known already to Dr. C. F. W. Walther, goes like this: As Christ is God and Man, so Scripture also has a divine and a human side. Now, in the past, theology has concentrated too exclusively on the divine side. Today we must do more justice to the human side, without of course in the least denying the divine side. We must avoid monophysitism and docetism in our doctrine of Scripture. But if the human side of Scripture is taken seriously, we must allow for minor mistakes – to err is human – on the part of the holy writers. Otherwise inspiration is a mechanical dictation.

Let Dr. Walther reply, adapting the words of Luther, and of the Formula of Concord, VIII, 40: “Beware, beware, I say, of this ‘divine-human Scripture!’ It is a devil’s mask; for at last it manufactures such a Bible after which I certainly would not care to be a Bible Christian, namely, that the Bible should henceforth be no more than any other good book, a book which I would have to read with constant sharp discrimination in order not to be led into error. For if I believe this, that the Bible contains also errors, it is to me no longer a touchstone but itself stands in need of one. In a word, it is unspeakable what the devil seeks by this ‘divine-human Scripture’” [*Lehre und Wehre*, 1886, p. 76].

Does this mean that the analogy between the Incarnation and Inspiration is invalid? On the contrary! Properly applied it supports precisely the orthodox, Biblical position: the human side of Scripture implies error as little as the human nature of Christ implies sin! The analogy is violated precisely by those who smuggle in errors under the guise of Scripture’s humanity! And it is just the adherents of the strict, orthodox doctrine of the Bible who see Inspiration as of a piece with the Incarnation; for they oppose the idealistic flight to some “spiritual meaning” or “depth dimension” above, beyond or behind the concrete particularity of the Biblical text!

Analogy, however, implies similarity, not identity. Like parables, analogies may therefore not be pressed unto blood. Thus not everything that can and must be said about the Incarnation, can be applied also to Inspiration. It is very misleading, for instance, to speak of a “Chalcedonian relationship” between the human and the divine aspects of Scripture. Not all of the four adverbs applied by the Council of Chalcedon to the Personal Union of the Natures of Christ, can be transferred to inspiration, or, for that matter, to other analogous relationships, such as the Sacramental Union of Christ’s body and blood in the Eucharist. ...

Obviously all four terms apply to the Personal Union. But the body and blood of Christ are not *indivisibly* and *inseparably* united to the bread and wine, which after the Communion are subject to normal natural processes which no longer involve Christ’s body and blood. When it comes to Inspiration, we must agree that Scripture is God’s Word without any possibility of *division* or *separation* between human and divine. But we can hardly say that the human word of Scripture is God’s Word “without confusion” and “without change,” as if human and divine words were and continued to be distinct entities existing simultaneously in some sort of reciprocal relationship. This suggests that the Word of God is after all something which floats above and beyond the external words of the Scriptural text. But this is...utterly unbiblical Platonic idealism! Scripture itself is God’s Word, *logia tou theou*, Rom. 3:2, and not merely something connected with that Word, however closely. No flight from the text to a Word behind it is permissible. There is no danger of “confusing” the human word of Scripture with God’s Word, because God has “changed” or translated His message into our language, so that there are no longer two parallel, distinguishable elements when it comes to the meaning of the message. Our old theologians expressed this by speaking of the human

element of Scripture as the “materia” (language, vocabulary) and of the divine as the “forma” (the intended sense or meaning of the human words used by God in Scripture). (Kurt E. Marquart, “Truth and/or Consequences,” pp. 54-57)

We have already alluded to the argument that if these men [the Biblical writers] could say and write only what God wanted, and were not free to make mistakes, then their freedom as human beings was compromised or destroyed. This argument sets up a false antithesis. It completely ignores the possibility that some men may want exactly what God wants. In other words, what God wants to say and what the prophet wants to say may be exactly the same. Christians, who are new creatures in Christ, and who recognize that the will of God is holy, while their own natural will is corrupt and depraved, will be happy if their own will is subjected to the will of God. Augustine prayed: “*Da quod iubes, et tunc quod vis* (Give what You command, and then command what You want).” That prayer displays a far more Christian attitude than the argument that human freedom is destroyed by the doctrine of Inspiration as it has been taught in traditional Lutheranism. When by the grace of God the depraved will of man has been prevented from defiling His Word, we ought to see in this a reason for gratitude instead of making it a basis for criticism. What Christian would refuse the blessing if God would offer him the privilege of living for just one day in full accord with God’s will? What child of God would in such a case feel that God is destroying his freedom? The angels who delight in doing the will of God surely do not feel that their freedom is curtailed because they have no desire to serve the devil!

Closely allied to this argument is the assertion that if the possibility of error is excluded, the very humanity of the writers is destroyed. A well-known Lutheran magazine some years ago implied this in an article dealing with the Inspiration of the Bible, in which it stated that since the Bible is human, “it must contain mistakes, inaccuracies, and contradictions.” The lack of cogency in this argument is recognized when we remember that while it is perfectly correct to say that to err is human, it is not true that to be human is to err. The Lutheran Confessions cut the ground out from under this argument when they demonstrate on the basis of Scripture that human nature and original sin are not one and the same thing. To be human does not mean to be sinful or necessarily to be subject to error. The Lord Jesus stands as a living proof of that fact. Though He was a true human being, He was not subject to error, even though some modern Lutherans have also committed the blasphemy of saying that the Son of God was mistaken in some of the opinions which He held. It is therefore a manifest error to claim that since human beings are subject to error, and the Bible is written by men, the Bible too must contain mistakes. (Siegbert W. Becker, *The Scriptures: Inspired of God* [Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1971], pp. 39-41)

... Luther’s view of the Bible is shaped not by abstract notions of inspiration but by the great “model” of the Incarnation. ... But if the Incarnation is the model for inspiration, then the full humanity of the Bible implies error no more than Christ’s humanity implies sin or error. On the contrary, Luther’s incarnational-sacramental understanding of [the] Scriptures honours God’s Word precisely in its humblest outward details. The mystery of the Bible is holy ground; criticism is sacrilege. (Kurt E. Marquart, *Anatomy of an Explosion* [Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1978], p. 50)

The Bible does not teach that God laid aside the personality, character, human gifts, etc., of the men whom He used in writing the books of Scripture. They were no mechanical amanuenses. Rather, He used them as they were, sanctifying, enlightening and guiding them in such a manner that the outcome was the Bible, which is true in its every part.

Both in Roman Catholic and Protestant theology parallelism or correspondence has been seen between, on the one hand, the *divine and human “natures” of Christ* and, on the other hand, the

divine and human “natures” of the Bible. As the Second Person of the Trinity became true man in Christ, who was true God and true man in one person, so the Bible also is at the same time truly divine and truly human, God’s word and man’s word in one Book.

Liberal critics have claimed that the true humanity of the Bible implies its erroneousness, since *to err is human* (Lat. *errare humanum est*). They have charged the biblical-conservatives with a *docetic-monophysitic* error when they hold that Scripture is inerrant. The monophysitic errorists of the ancient Church taught that Christ’s divine nature “swallowed” His human nature so that He actually was all divine. His human nature was merely apparent; He seemed (Gr. *dokein* = to seem, appear) to be a true man, but this was mere illusion. The liberals say that the biblical-conservatives regard the Bible as so fully divine that its human side becomes merely apparent.

In this allegation the liberals have ignored or deliberately misinterpreted the christology of the Council of *Chalcedon* (451 A.D.): in emphasizing that Christ is true God and true man in one person this council did *not include fallibility in Christ’s true humanity*. In alleging that in the case of the *Bible its true humanity includes fallibility, the liberals deny true parallelism between the true human natures of Christ and of the Bible: As Christ’s true humanity did not include fallibility, neither does the true humanity of the Bible imply erroneousness.*

The liberal critics who hold that Christ, to be sure, was inerrant as to His divine nature but in His human nature, as man, was erring as men are, have fallen into a *Nestorian* heresy: They deny the true unity of His person as God-Man, claiming that His human nature acted and spoke in relative independence of His divine nature.

In his encyclical *Divino afflante Spiritu* (1943), Pope Pius XII (1939-58) employed this parallelism correctly: The Bible uses truly human modes of expression (*dicendi genus*) in reporting the words and acts of God; but this does not deny its divine truth or inerrancy. As the Word, the Second Person of the Trinity, being of the same essence with God, became true man in Jesus, but without sin, so also God’s word in Scripture is truly human in its various forms of speech, with the exception of errors and mistakes (*quoad omnia humani sermoni assimilia facta sunt, excepto errore*). (Uuras Saarnivaara, *Can the Bible Be Trusted?* [Minneapolis: Osterhus Publishing House, 1983], pp. 38-39 [emphases in original])

...the decisive question is in what sense the Bible is God’s Word: in the full sense and without limitation, or only in respect to specific contents or a central truth.

Can the analogy of the two-nature doctrine of Christology help us make progress in giving an answer? Sasse...adduces the well-known Luther statement: “The Holy Scripture is God’s Word, written and (if I may say so) spelled out and formed in letters of the alphabet, exactly as Christ the eternal Word of God is clothed in his humanity...and exactly as Christ is treated and dealt with in the world, so it is also the case with God’s written Word. It is considered a worm and no book in comparison with other books” (comment on Psalm 22:7; 1541). In connection with this passage it is to be noted that Luther does not develop his doctrine of Scripture out of Christology or in an analogous manner. He was a stranger to such systematizing. He simply compares two facts which for him stand firm independent of one another, namely, the entrance of God’s Word into human language and, on the other hand, the incarnation of the Logos. In doing so, a similarity suggests itself to him. But he doesn’t then draw the conclusion from this that the case of Christ and that of the Scripture are in every respect analogous. Rather, he establishes a further analogy: As Christ was despised in his state of humiliation, so also the Scripture is despised. Both are also facts that cannot be contested individually.

...the analogy to Christology cannot be adduced as proof that Scripture can be subject to error... One can compare the *external* weakness and humiliation of Jesus with the *external* weakness and humility of the Scripture and see therein an analogy as Luther did. One can also compare the

truth of Jesus' own words with the *truth* of his Spirit-given word in the Scripture. But one cannot compare the *external* weakness of Jesus with the content of the Bible, from the former postulate errors in the Bible, and then draw an analogy therefrom that places two totally different items on the same level. ... The despised Jesus with his human mouth and in human speech spoke the truth in all matters and in every respect; in exactly the same way the despised Word of God, proclaimed and recorded by men in the power of the Holy Spirit, is in every respect the truth.

...one ought to be more careful in accusing the Scripture doctrine of the Early Church and early Protestantism of being Monophysitic, if one affirms the Christology of Chalcedon and the Formula of Concord as scriptural. For this accusation is understandably raised by those who also consider the doctrine of the Formula of Concord on enhypostasis and the *genus majesticum* as Monophysitic. They claim that the Formula of Concord denies the true humanity of Christ, since a person who has no human "self" of his own and, on the other hand, shares in the divine attributes, is not a human being. [As] Seen from the vantage point of our knowledge and experience, that is indeed logical reasoning, but not as seen from the vantage point of Scripture. Would not a similar conclusion – based on our usual experience with the words of men – lie before us, if without proof supported by statements Scripture makes of itself, we [incorrectly] insisted that absolutely inerrant words simply are not words of men? Is it really robbing the apostles and prophets of their humanity if they, in carrying out their great commission, were so filled and guided in their spirit by the Spirit of God that their witness was totally reliable? If we, in any case, just as little exclude the possibility of a miracle in connection with the *inverbatio* as in the case of the *incarnatio*, then we are taking the statements seriously which Scripture makes about itself... (Gottfried Wachler, "The Inspiration and Inerrancy of Scripture" [Part 2], *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, Vol. 82, No. 1 [Winter 1985], pp. 43-47)

Believers simply trust God as he speaks through every word of the Bible. They remember that the Bible, because it is God's Word, is not their own playground, and they dare never turn his Word into a wax sculpture, which they shape according to their own inclinations. For "no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation" (2 Peter 1:20 RSV). The Holy Spirit moved those whose prophecies are conveyed to us in Scripture's pages; human activity – human thinking and then human speaking and then human writing – was involved. But the impulse from which those words came lay with the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21). ...

God is present in the pages of Scripture. God is not imprisoned or boxed up in these pages, but God is there, waiting for readers who encounter his power in words of both Law and Gospel. He condemns sin and expresses his wrath from its pages although fallen human creatures encounter the crushing or irritating power of his Law throughout life. He bestows his promises, and through them life, in its pages as well, as the Scriptures testify of Jesus Christ (John 5:39). God bursts forth from the pages of Scripture to do his work. God's presence not only stands behind the words of the Bible by virtue of the Holy Spirit's inspiration. God's presence remains in the Scripture as he works through it to deliver the power of salvation in the Gospel to all who use it in their own lives and in the lives of others.

The verbally inspired Scriptures are at the same time cast in human language, composed under the Spirit's inspiration by human beings who were writing these documents as other documents were written at their time. God acts in history. He revealed himself by sending "a strong east wind" to divide waters and thereby save his chosen people (Ex. 14:21-29). He directed his people's exile and their return from exile (Neh. 1:8-9). He was born as a fully human creature, a Jew, at a specific time in human history to be "crucified under Pontius Pilate," as believers confess and thereby anchor God's primary revelation firmly in human history. So also God reveals himself in Scripture's pages in a totally human way. He has taken human language written in normal human fashion,

set in specific contexts in human history, as the means by which he conveys his saving truth and power to us. (Robert Kolb, *The Christian Faith: A Lutheran Exposition* [Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1993], pp. 197-98)

We are aware that no clear-cut definition automatically attaches to mention of the “higher critical” or “historical critical” method. As used in this volume, these phrases refer to a study of Holy Scripture undertaken according to such presuppositions as the following: the earthly Jesus had no divine self-consciousness, nor did He make messianic claims for Himself; the miracles recorded in the Old and New Testaments are, either in whole or in part, the product of communal or individual myth-making or legend formation; Biblical prophecy deals only incidentally or not at all in the prediction of future events. Against such infidel preconceptions we confess that Holy Scripture resembles the fully divine and fully human person of Christ in being at one and the same time entirely the product of its human authors and wholly the result of the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Our refusal of the extra-baptismal pursuit of higher or historical criticism does not, however, entail unawareness of the historical development of the Biblical writings or unthinking rejection of any and all source hypotheses, but simply proceeds from acknowledging that the actual sense of a Scriptural statement, when interpreted in context and according to the rule of faith, is a deliverance of the Holy Spirit from which no creature may piously differ. (John R. Stephenson, *Eschatology* [Fort Wayne, Indiana: The Luther Academy, 1993], p. 5)

...if God is to inspire authors, then what can he inspire, but first, their thoughts and, secondly, their *words*? How can 2 Timothy 3:16 be understood other than in terms of *verbal* inspiration?

The Lutheran upholder of verbal inspiration sees no reason to downplay the full reality of the human writers of the Scripture, with all their distinctive individual characteristics; indeed, such a procedure would amount to an unbecoming rebuff to the incarnation of God. Since our models are the chalcedonian understanding of the incarnate Person and the eucharistic presence of the sacred body and blood not alongside of or instead of, but precisely “in, with, and under” the bread and wine, we shall have no taste for a Docetic-Monophysite “transubstantiated Scripture.” The inspiration of the Spirit is discerned “in, with, and under” the pen of the sacred writer, whose own labors must under no circumstances be minimized. ... Yet the analog of the incarnate Person must be taken utterly seriously. The genuine creatureliness of our Lord’s humanity is not surrendered, but rather only appreciated aright, by recognition of his sinlessness (Heb 4:15). The miraculous preservation from error of the sacred writers is a precise parallel of the sinlessness of Jesus. *Errare est humanum* is not a Lutheran sentiment, and must be understood in the light of the distinctions propounded in FC II. Theological scholarship can prove the errorlessness of Holy Writ just as little as historical investigation can demonstrate the sinlessness of Jesus. Both affirmations are, in the strict sense, articles of faith, propositions believed *because the Bible says so*. (John R. Stephenson, “Inerrancy,” *Logia*, Vol. II, No. 4 [Reformation/October 1993], p. 7 [emphases in original])

...the act of divine inspiration does not eliminate the human agency of the prophets and the apostles. Although God determines the entire process of the production of Holy Scripture through the power of His inspiring Spirit, He nevertheless does so in, under, and through the human personalities of the individual authors. Although the Bible is the inerrant Word of God, the books of Bible did not fall from heaven. Nor is there anything in Scripture to suggest that its authors used different means of historical research or literary production than other persons within their respective cultures. The Bible is the Word of God present in and through human words, and thus possesses both a divine and a human nature. For this reason confessional Lutheran theologians have rightly seen the divinity and humanity of the Scriptures as analogous to the two natures in Christ. As the two natures in Christ

came together through the supernatural intervention of the Holy Spirit in the virgin birth, so too God caused the authors of Scripture to express the divine Word through human words by means of the supernatural work of His Spirit. As God incorporated Christ's human nature into the *hypostasis* of the Son (*enhypostasis*) from the seed of Abraham and the body of the Virgin Mary, so too the Spirit incorporated the language and personal characteristics of the individual authors into the act of the Spirit-breathed composition of the Bible. As there are two wills in Christ, divine and human, which act in perfect harmony through the unity of the single person of the Son (*Dyothelitism*), so too the human authors of Scripture were shaped, sanctified, inspired, and enlightened by the power of the Spirit to communicate God's truth always freely in an absolutely perfect and truthful manner through their own human agency. Last, as Christ's human nature was invested with the fullness of divine glory (*genus majesticum*), so too the human words of the Bible contain within their very syllables the coming of the risen Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Nevertheless, the analogy between the incarnation and the inspired Word has not been without criticism in confessional Lutheran circles. In his work on *The Inspiration of Scripture* Robert Preus raises a number of objections in the light of his dialogue with the Lutheran scholastics. First, Preus asserts that the analogy is unknown in the Age of Orthodoxy. Although Preus is correct that the analogy was uncommon in the theologians of scholastic orthodoxy, Francis Pieper [in *Christian Dogmatics*] notes that Quenstedt in his dogmatics describes the condescension of God to His people in the act of inspiration as being reminiscent of the incarnation. Beyond this, the analogy can be found in the...work of Luther himself..

Preus makes the second objection that the theologians of scholastic orthodoxy considered the incarnation unique and without analogy. Although it is correct to say that the incarnation is unique (i.e., one of a kind), the theologians of Lutheran orthodoxy certainly did use analogies for it, a point that Preus himself admits. If this is the case, then by their own admission the incarnation must clearly possess some analogies, and drawing analogies between Scripture and the incarnation cannot be prohibited. Along similar lines, the premise of many of Preus's criticisms seems to be that since there are differences between the act of inspiration and the incarnation, all analogies are unwarranted. Nevertheless, analogies are by definition not one-to-one correspondences, and merely noting differences between the two does not invalidate analogical similarities.

Third, Preus objects that due to the anhypostatic nature of Christ's humanity, the analogy with the divine and human elements in inspiration fails completely. Since Christ's humanity is without personality within itself (*anhypostasis*), according to the analogy the human personalities of the authors of Scripture would be abrogated.

However, in view of what we have argued above, this conclusion does not follow. The fact that Christ's humanity lacks a distinct personality apart from the Logos does not abrogate the fact that it possesses all the distinctive components of normal human nature. The key to this doctrine of Christ's anhypostatic humanity is that these components of human nature in Christ find their center of identity in the person of the Logos. Seen in this light, Christ's anhypostatic humanity is in reality a very fitting analogy for the event of inspiration. In inspiration the individuality and agency of the author's humanity are not abrogated. Rather, because of the revelatory event of inspiration they become instruments of God's Spirit and Word. In this sense the words and agency of the inspired author cease to find their center of identity inside the autonomous intentionality of the author. Instead, they find their center of identity in the eternal Word and Spirit of God supervening on the author's agency in the production of the inspired text.

Finally, Preus objects that in describing the Bible as the inspired Word of God, it is difficult to distinguish the divine and human elements in Scripture, which again suggests a problematic analogy with the incarnation. At least in the abstract, the incarnation can be described in terms of a union of distinct divine and human natures with attending attributes.

Although it is correct to state that one cannot go through the Bible and distinguish what is purely human from what is purely divine, it is nevertheless possible to abstract from the event of inspiration what is divinely derived and what is humanly derived. The words of the Bible are created human words. These words were placed on the pages of the Bible by human agents. Likewise, the divine Spirit and the Word that acted upon the human authors to write the Word of God are clearly the divine element in Scripture. If one objects that because of the doctrine of verbal inspiration the combinations and configurations of words are in themselves divine, it could be countered that in the virgin birth the humanity of Christ also was directly created and shaped by a miracle worked by the Spirit of God. In positing a view of the inspiration of Scripture as analogous to the incarnation, confessional Lutheran dogmatists give a fully Chalcedonian account of the coming of God's eternal Word into human speech. The Ebionitism of Protestant liberalism/historical criticism is avoided, along with the Docetism of the Ante-Nicene and modern Fundamentalist approaches. (Jack D. Kilcrease, *Holy Scripture* [Fort Wayne, Indiana: The Luther Academy, 2020], pp. 138-40)