**Of the Clarity and Certainty of the Word of God**

**INTRODUCTION**

At Zurich, as at Wittenberg, the reading and proclamation of the Word formed the main weapon in the dissemination of Reformed teaching and the purification of the Church. And it was realized that the work of reform would be done more smoothly and effectively if scriptural truth could be introduced into the monastic houses, which were the natural centres of religious life under the old regime. It was in the pursuance of this end that in the summer of 1522 Zwingli succeeded in gaining access to the Oetenbach convent, and characteristically he took as his two themes the Word of God and the Virgin Mary.

For the details concerning this venture we are indebted to the two prefaces to successive editions of the sermon on the Word in 1522 and 1524. The convent of the Oetenbach was an old-established house of Dominican nuns. It was a place of considerable wealth and influence, for all its members came from amongst the best families of Zurich, and even at the time of the Reformation it numbered some sixty professed nuns and twelve lay-sisters. For over two hundred years the spiritual direction of the convent had been in the hands of the Dominicans of the Predigerkloster. The Dominicans were from the first opposed to religious change, and they took all possible steps to prevent the nuns from coming into contact with the evangelical teaching. Zwingli, however, worked through the City Council to open up the convent to the Reformed preachers, and in 1522 a decree was passed which forced the hands of the Dominican directors. According to this order the nuns were to accept the ministrations of a secular priest, and Zwingli himself

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1 C.R., I, pp. 338-341.
2 Ibid., p. 328.
was appointed to undertake the work of instruction. The Dominicans did succeed in persuading some of the nuns to avoid Zwingli's teaching, and later to remain true to their vocation, but in order that their effect might not be lost Zwingli proceeded to publish the sermons in a revised and expanded form.

It is of interest to note that although no evidence of this incident has been preserved apart from what Zwingli himself tells us in the prefaces—even the decree of the Council has not survived—the struggle for the Oetenbach was a result or even a part of that wider battle which Zwingli was now fighting against the friars in general. The battle was joined in July, 1522, when two disputations were held in Zurich, the first on the 16th on the adoration of Mary and the Saints, and the second on the 21st on the wider topic of the authority of Holy Scripture. It is significant that these were the two topics upon which Zwingli preached to the nuns of Oetenbach. In the first disputation Zwingli was opposed by the visiting Franciscan, Francis Lambert of Avignon, in the second by the lectors and preachers of the city orders, especially the Dominicans and Augustinians. As was customary, the disputations were held before the temporal as well as the spiritual authorities. They ended in a decisive victory for the Reformed party, and the burgomaster gave judgment for the preaching of the Gospels, Epistles and Prophets rather than Thomas, Scotus and other schoolmen.

The official sentence did not end the controversy, for although the Dominican lector left Zurich, the monks as a whole were prepared to disregard the judgment. Their obstinacy was expressed in the determined exclusion of evangelical preaching from the Oetenbach convent. But this opposition led at once to forceful action on the part of the Council, and it contributed ultimately to the complete dissolution of the monastic orders. As one of the first steps the Council passed the decree ordering the convent of Oetenbach to receive a non-regular minister. The exact date of this decree is not known, but it must have been late in July or early in August, 1522.

The sermon itself is a clear and forcible statement of the all-important doctrine of the Word of God in two of its principal aspects, its power and its perspicuity. But before he takes up the two main points, Zwingli devotes a very interesting introductory section to what he evidently regards as the essential foundation of his teaching on Scripture, the concept of the *imago dei*. He takes as his starting-point the text in Gen. 1:25, drawing attention in passing to the implicit Trinitarian reference. In the light of this verse he first discusses the nature of the divine image, pointing out that it necessarily relates to the spiritual and not the physical part of man's nature. With Augustine, he allows that we may discern the image in the

for in his *Architeles*, which appeared on August 23, Zwingli made a reference to the printed form of the sermon on the Word. The sermon itself was published on September 6, so that it was probably in the press when the *Architeles* came out. As a result of Zwingli's preaching quite a few of the nuns seem to have accepted the Reformed view, some of them desiring a secular as spiritual director, and others being prepared to leave the convent altogether. But there was still a strong and resolute party which clung to the old faith. On March 7, 1523, the Council ousted the Dominicans and appointed Leo Jud pastor of the convent, and the house was eventually dissolved at the end of 1524.

Two other historical points may be briefly noted. The year 1522 was especially critical for Zwingli, for apart from the opposition of the friars he was the subject of complaints in the document *Articuli frivole dicti a Zwinglio*. This statement accuses Zwingli of contempt for the schoolmen, attacks on the monastic orders and disrespect of the Saints. It is undated, but there is little doubt that it belongs to the summer of 1522, and it shows something of the struggle which preceded the decisive victory of that year. But in securing the verdict in favour of evangelical preaching Zwingli could apparently appeal to a prior decision of 1520 which had sanctioned preaching according to the Word of God. The contents of this decree are only from Bullinger's accounts, but its existence is officially attested in an *Answer* to the Confederates dated March 21, 1524.

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2 On this conflict see Bernhard Wyss, *Die Chronik*, 1519-1530, pp. 13-20, also Bullinger, *R.G.*, I, pp. 76-78.
3 *D.C.R.*, 180. Lambert confessed himself won over, and later worked for the Reformation in Hesse, being Professor of Theology at Marburg 1527-1530. (See Jackson, *op. cit.*, p. 171 n.1.)
4 *C.R.*, I, p. 257.
5 Egl., *Analecta*, III.
6 *D.C.R.*, 184.
9 *D.C.R.*, 166.
12 *Amtliche Sammlung der älteren Eidgenössischen Abhandl.* IV, p. 399 f.
properties of mind, will and memory, but after a short discussion he concludes that the imago is most clearly revealed in the universal longing for blessedness and the natural thirst for the revelation of Word of God. The true life of man does not consist in his formation of the dust of the earth but in the inbreathing of the Spirit, which means that man is created for an eternal destiny. And in spite of the hindrances of earthly and sinful desires, in the redemptive power of Christ man can still attain again to the reality of the divine likeness (the new man in Christ Jesus), and experience the power and enlightenment of the Word of God which is the answer to his innermost longing.

The dissertation on the imago dei is not strictly relevant to Zwingli's main theme, but it has an importance of its own, and it gives to the whole sermon an added interest and force. Two points call for more specific notice. First, Zwingli apparently does not envisage any general obliteration of the divine image as a result of the fall. True, the fall affects and to some extent obscures the image, and in some cases, where worldly interests have come to dominate the whole life of a man, the desire for the Word of God and the longing for eternity are completely submerged. But deep in the heart of every man the imago dei is there, ready to be raised up to new life by the regenerative power of the Holy Spirit, and manifesting itself already in the religious aspirations and attainments of the race. As Zwingli understands it, the Christian regeneration is not a completely new creation. It is a re-creation after the likeness of Christ of that spiritual nature which at the very first was created in the divine image and similitude.

Yet with all his insistence upon the persistence of the imago Zwingli guards himself against incipient Pelagian deductions. The fact that man enjoys the divine likeness does not enable him to achieve righteousness in his own strength. There are two reasons for this. First, apart from the redemptive work of Christ the imago is always obscured to some extent by the sinful desires of the flesh. And second, the image is the image of God, and therefore it is seen fully when we reflect not our own righteousness but the righteousness of God. Certainly, Zwingli avoids that severe doctrine of a complete forfeiture of the imago which some modern writers seem to regard as the necessary corollary of the Reformed doctrine of grace. His less rigorous understanding of original sin, or at any rate original guilt, may be recalled in the same connection. But at the same time Zwingli has no intention of opening the way to a purely humanistic understanding of man's nature and destiny.

Indeed, the discussion of the imago is designed simply to lead up to and to prove Zwingli's main point. And the main point is this, that there is in all men a secret longing for the Word of God, and that where the regenerative work of the Spirit is done, it will express itself naturally and necessarily in an open and intensified desire for the divine Word. There is a very good reason why that should be the case, for it is only in the Word of God that the divine nature in man can find its true life and nourishment and consolation. The Word of God inevitably meets that part of man which seeks eternal life and blessedness because it is a word of power and a word of enlightenment; it gives life and light. And it is of these two characteristics of the Word, its certainty and clarity, that Zwingli proceeds to speak.

By the certainty or power of the Word Zwingli means its capacity to bring to pass the things which it declares or signifies. Of that capacity he finds plain confirmation in many parts of Scripture. It appears at the very outset in the divine Word by which God created the heavens and the earth. God had simply to say the words, "Let there be light," and at once light sprang forth out of darkness. It appears again in the New Testament in the redemptive activity of Christ. The sick and the maimed and the devil-possessed and even the dead were brought to Christ, and he had only to utter the command, "Be ye healed," or "Depart," or "Come forth," and the miracle of restoration was accomplished. From these clear and convincing examples Zwingli deduces that all God's sayings or promises must inevitably be fulfilled at the appropriate time. Where God himself speaks, the whole of creation must give place. It is for us then to open our hearts to the redemptive power of the Word, so that we are not overtaken by its no less certain judgments.

By the clarity of the Word Zwingli does not mean so much the lucidity of that which is spoken or written (although like all the Reformers he did regard the divine message as essentially plain and straightforward), but the power of the Word to bring with it its own inward enlightenment and assurance in spite of all appearances to the contrary. To make his meaning clear and to confirm the truth of his teaching Zwingli gives several illustrations and texts from the Old and New Testaments. He instances the case of Noah, who received a message...
which his contemporaries might well have understood just as he himself did. But because they did not receive it in humility and faith, they did not perceive its truth, they were not granted the insight into the divine purposes which turn to the salvation of Noah. Noah received the Word humbly and in faith, and the Word brought with it its own enlightenment and conviction even though there was no external guarantee of its authenticity. Other instances which might be cited are those of Abraham and Moses, and the truth illustrated in the Old Testament is stated in such New Testament passages as John 3:27 and 6:44 and I Cor. 2:12, which make it plain that inward faith and understanding are not the product of human intelligence or scholarship but of the Spirit of God working directly through the Word itself. Zwingli's conclusion is that we must all open our hearts and minds to the Word, for in so doing we shall fulfill our true destiny as the sons of God and experience the power and the enlightenment which are proper only to the Word.

A noteworthy feature of the sermon is that Zwingli does not offer any precise definition of the Word of God, nor does he make any attempt to differentiate between the Word spoken and the Word written, or to fix the relationship between the two. In the section on the certainty of the Word it is noticeable that the examples quoted by Zwingli are illustrations of the power of the spoken word rather than the written word. The commands of God at creation and the redemptive utterances of Christ were primarily words spoken by the tongue rather than words inscribed in a record. There is no doubt, of course, that Zwingli does not equate the record of Scripture with that direct and living utterance, and he does not say how or why that identification is to be made, and he clearly does not believe that the Bible exhausts the whole significance of the concept. Indeed, the impression is distinctly left that the power and effectiveness of the record depends upon that divine operation by which the external letter becomes the living spiritual message of God himself. In one sense it is perhaps a weakness in the discussion that Zwingli does not indicate how the transition may be made from the Word as utterance to the Word as record. But in another sense it is a gain, for it means that Zwingli is preserved from that static and theoretical conception of the Bible which is the evangelical counterpart of ex opere operato views of the sacraments. By refusing to make an exact equation of the Word and the Bible Zwingli holds fast to the truth that the Word in its full and true sense is living speech. The Word is mediated through written documents, but it has its character and effectiveness as Word only in so far as it is directed and applied by the Holy Spirit.

A second point which calls for emphasis is that the the clarity envisaged by Zwingli is something far more than an ordinary lucidity of thought and expression. Naturally, Zwingli had no wish to deny that the essential message of the Bible is within the grasp of any ordinary rational intelligence. For that reason the lay Christian may understand the Bible just as well as the learned exegete or theologian, although, of course, the work of the scholar is useful and necessary in order to elucidate more difficult passages and to fix the precise meaning of individual words or sentences. But because the Bible is essentially straightforward in its teaching, it does not at all follow that everyone will receive or comprehend it. To do that there is need of an inward illumination as well as the light of rational understanding. The truth of God must be perceived as well as seen. It must be comprehended as well as understood. And the clarity of which Zwingli speaks is the enlightenment which makes possible such inward comprehension or perception. It is the illumination which comes when the Holy Spirit applies the message to the penitent and faithful recipient.

In this respect Zwingli has a fine apprehension of that twofoldness of the Word of God which is obscured, or at any rate misunderstood, when the truth of the Bible is thought of in terms of abstract proposition rather than dynamic truth. He sees that the Word is a Word of life and light, but he sees too that the Word does not automatically give light and life to all who read and understand. It does so only where a true response is kindled. In other words, it calls for a decision of faith. And where there is that decision, as in the case of Noah or Abraham, there can be no doubt as to the inward meaning or truth of the Word. It carries with it its own enlightenment and assurance. But where there is no such decision, even if the Word is outwardly understood, it is not inwardly comprehended or received, and that which is light and life to the believer is to the unbeliever darkness and destruction.

The appeal to the Word of God made by the Reformers was not merely an appeal to the outward text of the Bible correctly interpreted and understood. And the importance attached to the Word was not merely due to the desire to replace one external authority by another. The appeal of the Reformers was
to a living and effective Word which verifies itself inwardly to all those who are prepared to hear it in penitence and faith. And that Word is authoritative not because its authority can be outwardly demonstrated but because it is inwardly apprehended. The Word is in fact the means by which God makes known his redemptive will and summons his hearers to decision. The clarity of the Word is the self-illumination and self-attestation by which the inward meaning and truth of the Word are guaranteed to those who accept it in faith.

A further point is that this conception of the clarity of the Word gave to Zwingli an assured knowledge of biblical truth which he could nowhere find in the confusion of academic theological discussion. All the Reformers had to face an acute problem of certainty in their presentation of truth. How could they know that their interpretation was the right one when the greatest scholars differed amongst themselves, and the majority of theologians past and present were arrayed decisively against them? In tackling this problem they saw that it was not enough to appeal simply to the external text of Scripture, for plain though the text might be, it could be interpreted and applied in many different ways. True, the Reformers did insist, and quite rightly from their own standpoint, that a true and straightforward exegesis would support their own particular interpretation. But they were keenly aware, first, that they could not base the correctness of their understanding upon the superiority of their scholarship, and second, that to attain to a true interpretation of the text there is need of something more than an ordinary linguistic equipment or exegetical acumen. The certainty which they enjoyed rested ultimately upon the immediacy of inward understanding, the internal testimony of the Spirit. And it was because Zwingli was conscious of this inward and spiritual enlightenment that he could point scornfully to the confusion which results when certainty is looked for in some external and merely human authority. The Papacy, the Fathers, the Friars: all these make claims to intellectual endowment or religious attainment. He has a sure and inflexible knowledge of the truth, not merely because he understands the plain statements of Scripture, but because the Holy Spirit has given him an inward apprehension of the divine teaching which Scripture proclaims. And he argues that everyone who approaches the Bible in prayer and in faith must inevitably come to the same general apprehension of its truth as he himself enjoys.

As we have already seen, the nature of Zwingli's teaching upon the clarity of the Word makes it plain that he was not advocating an abstract biblicism such as that evolved in later Protestant orthodoxy. But we must not exaggerate. Zwingli had no reason to deny the particular inspiration of the written Word, and he saw no specific need to lay any pronounced emphasis upon it. Certainly, there is no evidence in the sermon that he favoured that decisive separation between form and content which some modern theologians have proclaimed as the true Reformed insight. Yet Zwingli does see clearly that the Word is more than the external letter of Scripture, and that it has its effect and carries with it inward conviction only in so far as the Holy Spirit applies it as the living Word. The sermon is in fact a plea for a dynamic conception of the Word and its operation. Naturally, the Word is expressed in the external forms of speech and writing. But its power and authority do not lie in the external expression. The speech and writing have necessarily a rational meaning, but the true significance is perceived and known only where it is brought home to the individual by divine power. There is power and clarity in the Word, but it is the power and clarity of the creative activity of God the Holy Spirit and not of some static relationship between the text of the Word and its true meaning and operation. And that means that in the last resort the Word is present in fulness only where it is the living and miraculous utterance of God himself.

Surveying the sermon as a whole, we must allow that it suffers from the faults which mar almost all Zwingli's writings. It is tendentious in purpose, and its formlessness betrays the customary overhastiness of composition. The scriptural examples are unnecessarily numerous, and there is too much exegesis of passages which are not directly related to the main theme. Yet in spite of these obvious defects there is a fine power and freedom in the statement, and the vitality of the thought and the originality and freshness of the treatment combine to make it one of the more impressive and important of the earlier theological writings. In style it belongs unmistakably to Zwingli's own age, but in thought it has a relevance which marks it as a work of more permanent value.
Editions

The sermon was first published on September 6, 1522, in Zurich. The name of the printer was not given, but it was undoubtedly the work of Christopher Froschauer. This first edition was careful and accurate. Another edition came out probably in the same year, and most likely in Augsburg, but it did not carry either the printer’s name or the date or place of publication. For the most part it followed the first edition, but it corrected a few errors, introduced some new ones, and replaced many dialect forms by those more commonly used in the German-speaking world. Christopher Froschauer issued a new edition in 1524, this time giving his name. The edition was substantially the same as that of 1522, but a new and longer preface was introduced, leading to some rearrangement of the type, and a few errors were also corrected. A further edition by Froschauer was almost exactly identical with that of 1524.13

Translations

The sermon was translated into Latin by Gwalter under the title De certitudine et claritate verbi dei liber (G). Christoffel gave a rendering in modern German in his Zeitgemässige Auswahl, I (Zurich, 1843). An early translation into English was that of John Veron, who published it under the rather misleading title, A Short Pathway to the Right and True Understanding of the Holy and Sacred Scriptures (Worcester, 1550).

The present translation is based on the original edition as reproduced in the Corpus Reformatorum (Zwingli, Volume I).

13 For full details of these editions, with title-pages, see C.R., I, pp. 332–337.
14 Opp. Z., Tom I, fol. 160b–179a. It will be noted that Gwalter put certitudine before claritate, thus bringing the order of the title into line with that of the treatment.

Of the Clarity and Certainty or Power of the Word of God (1)

THE TEXT

When in the beginning of creation Almighty God purposed to create the wonderful creature man he deliberated1 with himself as follows: “Let us make man in our image and likeness; let him have dominion over the fish of the sea, the fowl of the air, the cattle and all the earth, and everything that creepeth upon the earth! And God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him” (Gen. 1). In this passage we see from the words “let us” that God is speaking of more than one person, although he is still speaking of himself. For if he had been speaking of only one person he would have said, “I will make.” But when he says, “Let us make” he is undoubtedly speaking of the three Persons who are one God. This is revealed specifically by the next words, which are “after our likeness,” and immediately afterwards “in the image of God,” for he does not say “after our likenesses,” which would have suggested a plurality of essences or gods. However, it is not our present task to speak of the unity of the one God and the trinity of Persons,2 for we have before us another subject, namely that which follows in the self-deliberation of God, that man is created in the divine image and after the divine likeness. At this point we must enquire with what part of our nature we are made in the divine image, with the body or the soul. Now if we are made in the divine image in respect of the body, then that means that God has a body composed of different members and that our body is a copy of his. But if we grant that, then it follows that God is a being which has been constituted and may finally be dissolved.3 But this is a negation of the constancy of the divine essence, and it is therefore non-Christian, heretical.

1 erwog er sich, deliberare (G).
2 entflugt (auseinandergerissen).
3 entflehte (auseinandergerissen).
and blasphemy. For in John 1 it says: "No man hath seen God." But if no one has ever seen God, how can we say that he is formed in any particular way, as did the heretic Melitus and the Anthropomorphites, who rashly presumed to say that God has human form. These men were not doubt led astray by the fact that eyes, ears, a mouth, a face, hands and feet are all ascribed to God in Scripture. But in Scripture these members are used simply to indicate the works of God, which we understand most clearly when we speak of them in the form in which they appear amongst men. We see with our eyes, therefore Scripture ascribes eyes to God when it wishes to indicate his perfect knowledge and perception of all things. It ascribes ears to God because in his omnipresence he hears and takes knowledge of all our prayers or blasphemies or secret counsels. And a mouth, because he reveals his will by his Word. And a face, to signify the bestowal and withdrawal of his grace. And hands to signify omnipotence, and feet the speed and swiftness with which he overtakes the wicked. To prove this from Scripture would take too long, as it is beside our present purpose. But it was because he did not understand this biblical usage that Melitus fell into the error of making God in the image of man, which is a heresy, for in Deuteronomy 4 Moses says to the children of Israel that God did not show them his face lest they should express or represent him after the similitude of any figure, the likeness of male or female or any creature, lest they should set up his image and similitude and worship it, which is idolatry. And Christ himself says in John 5: "Ye have not . . . seen his shape." We are not thinking here of the humanity of Jesus Christ, for he took to himself all the nature and frailty of man apart from the defect of sin. But the human nature of Christ was a form of humanity and not of deity, and he did not have it from all eternity, but took it upon himself late in time when he was conceived and born of the pure virgin, Mary.1

It remains then that it is in respect of the mind or soul that we are made in the image of God. The exact form of that likeness it is not for us to know except that the soul is the substance upon which likeness is particularly stamped. The opinion of Augustine and the early doctors is that the three faculties of intellect, will and memory,2 which are distinct and yet constitute the one soul, are a similitude of the one God in its essence. For the soul does not even know itself in its substance and essence. And in the last analysis we can only conclude that the activities and faculties of the soul, will, intellect and memory, are merely the signs of that essential likeness which we shall never see until we see God as he is in himself, and ourselves in him: 1 Cor. 13 "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known"; I John 3 "We know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." Let everyone ponder well this saying of John. I know, of course, that in the symbol Quicunque Athanasius says that as the reasonable soul and flesh are one man, so God and man are one Christ.6 But this is only a similitude and not the express image. We are here speaking of God at a time when he had not assumed human nature and yet formed man in his own likeness. Therefore it is right to conclude that man is not in the divine image in respect of the body, for it was only later that God assumed bodily form, but in respect of the soul.

Now there are many ways in which we experience the divine likeness within us more specifically than we do with the three faculties, intellect, will and memory. I do not reject the opinion of Augustine, but I think that there are many things which give us an awareness of the divine likeness apart from those which Augustine singled out as the chief. There is in particular that looking to God and to the words of God which is a sure sign of the divine relationship, image and similitude within us.7 We will explain this first by means of an illustration and then from Scripture. When we compare man with plants and trees, we find that the plants do not pay any heed to man or his words. This is because they are so far removed from man's nature that there is no relationship, communion or fellowship between them. But the irrational brutes do take note of man, however slightly, for they are much closer to man's nature in

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1 frivärlich, impudens (G).  
2 intellectus, voluntas et memoria (G).  
3 den prästen der sünde, i.e., original sin.  
4 fräuleinschaft, cognatio (G).  
5 intellec/t, volun(lar e/memoria (G).  
6 anthropomorphites (G).  
7 theo/te/vo der tria/ni ty of the Persons. This I do not dispute, so long as we are not led astray by the three faculties and imagine that in God as in us there is a conflict of will. For we must remember that in God there is no duality or contradiction as there is in us; for the desire of the flesh which we call our will struggles against the will of the mind and spirit, as St. Paul teaches in Romans 7. Now we have never seen God as he is in himself. Therefore we can never know in what respect our soul is like him in its substance and essence. For the soul does not even know itself in its substance and essence. And in the last analysis we can only conclude that
fears eternal loss, desiring like all else to return to its first begin­
of eternal blessedness, at least they have the fe<lr of etemal
the place whence they come." If therefore there are those who

for this present
distress, a desire which would never have concerned us, any
more than it does the beasts or plants, had it not been native
to us, inasmuch as we are all created in the divine
image and partake of the divine nature and kindred, as it is
written in Psalm 4: “Lord, the light of thy countenance is
lifted up upon us.” It is for this reason that we thirst after God and
believe his word above all things. For everywhere we find
the universal desire for eternal blessedness after this present
distress, which by nature they have within themselves some concern for eternity, whether it be
eternal life in quiet expectation, they begin to experience
already that eternal perdition which in the world to come they
will keep theBe until later. The three quoted, with the sayinK
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believe his word above all things. For everywhere we find
the universal desire for eternal blessedness after this present
distress, a desire which would never have concerned us, any
more than it does the beasts or plants, had it not been native
to us. The fact that there are writings, the utterances of
Sardanapoli and Neros and Heliogabali (8) and suchlike filthy
creatures, in which there is neither the desire for eternal bliss
nor the belief that there is a blessedness after this present life
does not affect the argument. For if they do not see the need
of eternal blessedness, at least they have the fear of eternal
loss. For every human spirit looks forward to eternal joy and
fears eternal loss, desiring like all else to return to its first begin­
ning, as Solomon shows in Ecclesiastes 1: “The spirit or wind
whirls leisurely about continually and searcheth out all things and
returneth again according to his circuits. All the rivers run into
the sea; yet the sea is not full; and the rivers return again unto the
place whence they come.” If therefore there are those who

1 righteous, lit. swine.

2 anfehtungen—a favourite word of Zwingli, signifying sinful desires or temptations.

3 us den biz (lehm) oder stoub. . . .
into his nostrils the breath or the air of life." This breath of life which the eternal God breathed into Adam undoubtedly imparted and implanted within him the longing not for a material but for an eternal life, so that he has always a yearning for that which first gave him life and breath. For as Psalm 32 (A.V. 33) says, "all the host of heaven was made by the breath of his mouth." Much more did the inbreathing of that life-giving breath inspire in Adam an imperishable longing for life. And when the word breath or air or wind is used, we must understand always the Spirit of God. For in Scripture the Spirit is called a breath, etc. For as we live physically by the inbreathing of air, so the Spirit of God is that true life in which all things live and from which they derive their life. For the Latin word spiraculum, in English "breath", is the equivalent of the Greek pneor, in English "blast" or "air" or "wind." And in Genesis 2 the next words are: "And man became a living soul." (10) Which plainly show that man is created for eternal life, for if he died body and soul like the beasts it would not have been necessary to add the words "a living soul". For earlier, in the account of the creation of the beasts, it does not say: they became a living soul. Nor does it say that God gave them life with the breath of his lips. Nor does it say that God took the earth and formed the beasts out of it, as it does in the account of man's creation— in the Septuagint choum labon tes ges. What it does say is this: "And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so." And first, we see here that God commanded the earth to bring forth the beasts. But in the creation of man he himself takes the earth and forms it into a man. Again, when he says "the living creature after his kind" he makes it clear that the soul of creature is its life, but only according to its kind or nature, which is transitory and perishable. Finally, he does not say of the beasts that they are made a living soul. But he does say that of man. And he does not add any weakening or qualifying clause like "after his kind," which would be equivalent to saying: Man is made a living soul, but only according to his nature, just as the beasts are living according to their nature. No: without any addition he says "a living soul." We see then at once that by creation man belongs to that order of creatures whose nature it is to live essentially and physically and never to perish. But all our dil-

gent weighing of the Scriptures would be useless if we could not sustain our interpretation of the divine likeness within us by authentic Scriptures: that is, that inasmuch as we are made in the divine image we have a particular longing after God.

In Colossians 3 Paul writes: "Lie not one to another. Put off the old man with his deeds and put on the new, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him." The old man is that which partakes of the weakness of the nature of Adam and allows itself to be seduced and overcome by temptations because of the power of the flesh. What the new man is we learn from Paul's own words: it is that which is freed from the inordinate desires of the flesh and increases more and more in the knowledge of God, bringing out and clarifying and making brighter the image of the creator, according to the full meaning of the Greek. And on the basis of the fact that he is the image of God this new man studies more and more to come to knowledge—the knowledge of him that created him and impressed this image upon him—in order that he may be made new. For the old man obscures and darkens the new, which is not called the new because it is created later in time, but because it is always fresh, because it is not defiled by the shameful weaknesses of the flesh, and because it is ordained to possess eternity, in which there is neither age nor sin. (11) Paul brings out the same point in Ephesians 4: "Put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts. Be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and the holiness of truth. Wherefore putting away deceit or falsehood, speak every man truth with his neighbour, for we are members one of another." Note that the man who is created after God is called a new man because he studies righteousness and truth, which can never age, for God himself is righteousness and truth.

These passages will be sufficient, we feel, to prove our point, that we are made in the image of God and that that image is implanted within us in order that it may enjoy the closest possible relationship with its maker and creator; and if it were not that the old man, which that not merely ages but decays and perishes, is so powerful in his assaults and temptations, the new or inner man would seek more fully after God and live a more godly life. But as it is, there are times when it can hardly give us the power even to long or strive after him in whose image

11 aribeiname (beasts of burden).
12 later und alles mindern hindan gesetz, sine omni diminutione aut exceptione (C).
13 prästen.
14 heylige der warheit.
we are created. And we have that power most of all when the body is weakest, as St. Paul says in II Corinthians 12: "When I am weak, then I am strong." It is when he is sick in the body that he is strong in the soul, which equips itself to follow after God by nature of the divine image, although it is never able to attain to him because of the hinderances of the flesh. For that reason Paul rejoices again when the old man is humiliated and destroyed and the new is able to win back its true form, II Cor. 4: "But though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day." Note that if it is renewed, that means that it had already been created and formed and set up, and having decayed and crumbled, it is now restored to its first estate, in which we perceive the original creation of the divine image. Paul speaks similarly to the Romans in chapter 7: "For I know that in me—that is, in my flesh—dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not; but the evil that I would not, that I do. If I do that which I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me, for I delight in the law of God after the inward man—which is created in the divine image—has a desire to live according to the law and will of God, but that it is opposed by the outward man—in the members of which—that is, in which—sin dwells, that is, a proneness to sin. For by the word Paul here means the weakness which gives rise to sin. Now from this passage of Paul we must not jump to the erroneous conclusion of the Sophists, who say: Note that there is something which we can do of our own nature. Not at all. For tell me, what is it that we have of our own nature? For if the image is our own, then we are an image of ourselves. And if it is of God, how can we call it our own? You see then that we ourselves are absolutely nothing and in the flesh we can do nothing. Therefore immediately after the complaint that he is brought into captivity to sin St. Paul cries out: "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

15 zu seiner ursprünglichen erste, in pristimum statum (G).
16 der sündlich prästen, i.e., sinful weakness.
17 streng schryen.
18 i.e., one who is zealous for.
Matthew 22: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind," and, Mark 12 adds, "with all thy strength." But if we love him in that way, there is no word which can give greater joy or comfort than his Word, for he is our Creator and Father. And there is no word which can give greater joy or comfort or fear to a man than that of the father whom he loves. It was with that Word that Christ answered the devil in Matthew 4: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Such is the life and power of that Word, which sustains the soul of man as food sustains his body, but more so and in a different fashion. For he who keeps the Word or sayings of God will not see eternal death. So then we have come to the point where, from the fact that we are the image of God, we may see that there is nothing which can give greater joy or assurance or comfort to the soul than the Word of its creator and maker. We can now apply ourselves to understand the clarity and infallibility of the Word of God.

And first:

**THE CERTAINTY OR POWER OF THE WORD OF GOD**

The Word of God is so sure and strong that if God wills all things are done the moment that he speaks his Word. For it is so living and powerful that even the things which are irrational immediately conform themselves to it, or to be more accurate, things both rational and irrational are fashioned and dispatched and constrained in conformity with its purpose. The proof may be found in Genesis 1: "And God said, Let there be light; and there was light." Note here how alive and strong the Word is, not merely ruling all things but creating out of nothing that which it wills. You may discover for yourselves many other proofs which for the sake of brevity we will here pass over. (13) The earth is commanded to bud and the waters to bring forth and bear fish, and it is done that very day. Such is the might of that eternally empowering Word. Again, in Genesis 3, God said to the woman Eve: "I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee." And it all came to pass that very day, and will continue as long as life in the body. At the same time he said to Adam: "Cursed be the ground when thou tillest it; in labour shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground out of which thou wast taken." Note here how toil and death were laid inescapably upon man by the all-powerful Word of God. Again, when the human race corrupted itself more and more, God shortened the span of life to 120 years (Gen. 6). And so it is to the world's end. Again, he told Adam and Eve that in the day that they ate the forbidden fruit they would die (Gen. 2). And this assuredly came to pass as God had said (Gen. 3). Again, God told Noah to make an ark, because it would rain forty days and forty nights and all living creatures would be destroyed (Gen. 7). And assuredly it came to pass, for even the heathen have written about the flood, although they give Noah the name of Deucaleon. (14) Again, by his angels God declared that he would destroy Sodom and Gomorrah and the other cities, and it did not fail to happen as he said (Gen. 19). Again, Lot and his family were commanded not to look behind, and Lot's wife was disobedient, therefore she was turned into a pillar of salt (Gen. 19). Again, God told Abraham: "I will certainly return unto thee according to the time of life; and Sarah thy wife shall have a son, etc." (Gen. 18). Sarah herself did not believe, for she was some eighty years old, but it came to pass as God had said (Gen. 21). The Scriptures of the Old Testament are full of illustrations of the certainty of God's Word, for all the passages mentioned are taken from the one book Genesis, and indeed from only one part of that book. If I were to begin to tell of the great miracles which God promised Moses that he would work in Egypt and amongst the children of Israel, all of which he most certainly performed, or of what he accomplished through Joshua, Gideon and Jephtha, or through Samuel, Saul, David and Solomon, I should never come to an end. Read these things for yourselves or take note and ponder them when you hear them preached.

We will now turn to the New Testament and consider the strength and certainty and power of God's Word as we find it there.

The divine declaration to Zechariah by the angel Gabriel seemed at first sight completely incredible, for his wife Elisabeth had always been barren and both of them were now advanced in years. And because he did not believe, Zechariah was deprived of the power of speech. But that which he
regarded as impossible assuredly came to pass—such is the strength and certainty and life of the Word of God—and John the Baptist, the righteous forerunner of the Messiah, was born. The pure Virgin Mary was taken aback when the Word of God was so alive and sure that without any detraction from her purity that holy thing should not remain and be fulfilled. In Luke again the angel said to her: "And he shall be great," meaning Christ. And when has the world seen anyone greater than he? Alexander and Julius Caesar were great, yet their dominion hardly extended over half the world, but believers in Christ have come from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, and indeed the whole world has believed in him and recognized and magnified in him the son of the Most High, and of his kingdom there is no end. For where shall we find a ruler with dominion and authority as ancient as that of the faith of Christ, a faith which will never be destroyed, even though it be preserved only amongst the few? Indeed, this divine prophecy is visibly fulfilled before us every day. And when Christ grew and began to teach and to work miracles, all things were subservient to him and fashioned themselves in accordance with his will. The leper said to him: "If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." And he replied: "I will, be thou clean." And from that hour his leprosy was cleansed, for God willed it, and the words "Be thou clean," had the power to accomplish it (Matt. 8). To the centurion he said: "Go thy way, and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee." And his servant was healed in the self-same hour. Note that in this case the certainty of healing was made dependent upon the faith of the centurion, to teach us a sure trust in God and the work of God (Matt. 8). To the ruler he said: "Thy son liveth", and it was so (John 4), though he was not even present, to teach us that nothing is too hard or distant for the Word of God to accomplish. To the man who was blind and deaf and had an impediment he said: "Ephphatha, that is, he opened" (Mark 7), and all his bands were loosed. To the blind he said: "Receive thy sight: thy faith hath saved thee," and immediately he received his sight (Luke 18). To Matthew he said: "Follow me," and he followed him without delay (Matt. 9). To the man lying on the bed he said: "Thy sins be forgiven thee," and so that the outward sign might give the assurance of inward cleansing he said: "Arise, take up thy bed and go into thine house." And he arose and departed to his house (Matt. 9). To the woman bowed together he said: "Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity"—by the laying on of hands he gave her a sure sign, or perhaps testified to his good will (15)—and immediately she was made straight (Luke 13). Over the loaves and fishes he pronounced a blessing and they were increased, so that many thousands ate of them and there still remained far more than there had been at the first, as we may see in all the Gospels. He rebuked the unclean spirit, and immediately it left the man possessed by it (Matt. 17). He commanded the disciples to cast their nets on the right side and they would find, and immediately they caught 153 great fishes (John 21). He commanded Peter to come to him on the water, and immediately he bore him up (Matt. 14). From heaven he told Ananias that Paul was a chosen vessel to him to bear his name before kings and princes of the earth and the children of Israel (Acts 9), and so it came to pass. When Paul was journeying towards Rome, and the shipwreck intervened, he told him that no one would be lost, but only the ship, and that is how it turned out (Acts 27). These passages from the New Testament will be quite enough to show that the Word of God is so alive and strong and powerful that all things have necessarily to obey it, and that as often and at the time that God himself appoints. And let us beware lest we murmur against God like the ungodly in the days of Ezekiel, chapter 12, who said that the Word spoken by the prophet was prolonged: for the forbearance of God is not negligence, but a respect for the most convenient time. Not that this respect is at all necessary to God, but beneficial to us, for with God there can be no time, seeing he is eternally present. (16) With God, in fact, there is no such thing as past or future, but all things are naked and open to his eyes. He does not learn with time or forget with time, but with unerring knowledge and perception he sees all things present in eternity. It is in time that we who are temporal find the meaning and measure of longness or shortness. Yet what seems long to us is not long to God, but eternally present. If you think that God often fails to punish a wicked individual

20 lit. of God—gottesworigen.
or nation, suffering their arrogance far too long, you are completely mistaken. For note that they can never escape him. The whole world is before him, where then can they hide from his presence? Most certainly he will find them (Ps. 138) (A.V. 139). And if you think that he does not punish or save according to his Word you are quite wrong. His Word can never be undone or destroyed or resisted. For if it could, if God could not always fulfill it, if some other were stronger than he and could resist it, it would not be almighty. But it must always be fulfilled. If it is not fulfilled at the time when you desire, that is not due to any deficiency of power but to the freedom of his will. For if he had to act according to your will, you would be stronger than he and he would have to consult you. But what could be more nonsensical? God will never leave his Word powerless, as he says in Ezekiel 12: "O you that are rebellious, I will say the word and will perform it." And just after: "The word which I have spoken shall be done." The whole teaching of the Gospel is a sure demonstration that what God has promised will certainly be performed. For the Gospel is now an accomplished fact: the One who was promised to the patriarchs, and to the whole race, has now been given to us, and in him we have the assurance of all our hope, as Simeon said in Luke 2. "For what can he withhold when he delivered up his own Son for us, and how shall he not with him freely give us all things?" (Rom. 8)

So much then concerning the power or certainty of the Word of God. And now,

**The Clarity of the Word of God**

Before we begin to speak of the clarity of the Word we will first forestall the objections of those who might resist it, saying: Where is this clarity? If God wants his Word to be understood, why does he speak in parables and riddles? Answer: first note that I do not undertake to give you this reply because I think that we are under an obligation to answer your insolent questions, or that the counsels of God stand in need of vindication by us, or that any man may know the grounds of all God's actions. But so far as the clear testimony of Scripture permits, I will stop your mouths, that you may learn not to blaspheme (1 Tim. 1). The fact that in times past God taught by parables but in these last days has revealed himself fully by the Lord Jesus Christ indicates to us that God wished to give his message to man in a gentle and attractive way, for it is of the nature of that which is presented in parables and proverbs and riddles that it appeals to the understanding of men and brings them to knowledge and indeed increases that knowledge: Eccles. 39. "The wise man will seek out the heavenly things of grave sayings, and be conversant in dark parables." (17) For when the parable or proverb has provoked us to search out its hidden meaning, once we have found it we value it more highly than if it had been presented to us plainly. So then, as it says in Psalm 48 (A.V. 49): "My mouth shall speak of wisdom, and the meditation of my heart shall be of understanding: I will incline mine ear to a parable, I will open my dark saying upon the sweet harp"—the heavenly and divine wisdom reveals its will to men in the form of sweet parables, so that those who might otherwise be dull and unwilling are persuaded to listen, and the truth which is discovered is received the more firmly and valued the more highly, and the divine lesson is busy and active all the longer in the understanding, and its roots sink deeper into the heart. Illustration: Who could ever give us a better picture of the unequal fruits of the Word of God than Christ himself did in the parable of the sower and the seed (Matt. 13)? And this parable provoked the disciples to search out and to find the lesson concealed within it. But it repelled the ungodly, not that the parable itself did it, but their own un receptive heart, which would not allow itself to be taught or provoked to give heed to that which is required, as the prophet Isaiah foresaw in chapter 6: "Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed. Then said I (that is, Isaiah), Lord, how long? And he answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate, and the Lord hath removed men far away." In the passage already mentioned Christ used these words of Isaiah, showing that the greatness of their sins and iniquities had blinded them, so that they opposed God and angered him, with the result that that which was spoken to all men to salvation, and was intended to provoke them to knowledge, turned to their hurt because of their sins, although to believers it was profitable to salvation, as he himself says shortly afterwards in Matthew 19: "For whosoever
hath, to him shall be given, but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath." The meaning is this: that he who desires the divine message, and has something of the Word of God, to him it shall be given, or better, he who comes to the Word of God, not bringing his own understanding but— as Hilary (19) says—having a mind to learn from the Word of God, that man already has something, that is, he is not looking to himself, but gives himself wholly to God and to the voice of God. Do you not think that he really has something? Therefore to that man it shall be given. But whosoever hath not, that is, he who comes to the Scriptures with his own opinion and interpretation and wrests the Scriptures into conformity with it, do you think that he has anything? No. From him will be taken away the opinion and interpretation which he thinks he has, and it will be with him according to the saying in Wisdom 2: "For their own wickedness hath blinded them, so that they did not receive the things of the spirit of God!" O good Christians, (20) how far do you suppose many of us are from the divine displeasure? We see the shamelessness of sin, we see everywhere covetousness and self-will, and even our righteousness is hypocrisy and men-pleasing. But when it is proposed to rebuke and expose and amend our evil deeds by that evangelical doctrine which is the Word of God, we refuse to listen, we stop our ears, and that which God has sent for our good we reject so long and so often that at the last judgment falls. In II Chronicles 36 you will find that time and time again God warned the children of Israel, and when they did not amend at last he let them be taken away captive out of their own land: "And the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling-place: but they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and minused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, till there was no remedy. Therefore he brought upon them the king of the Chaldees, who slew their own land: "And the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling-place: but they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and minused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, till there was no remedy. Therefore he brought upon them the king of the Chaldees, who slew their own land: They burnt all the palaces thereof with fire, and destroyed all the goodly vessels thereof." Note what calamities ensue when the Word of God is despised and contemned. And note too that failure to believe the Word of God is a sure sign that the wrath of God will soon overtake us. The Word of God and the messenger of the Word are a sweet smell or savour (II Cor. 2); but a savour of life to some, and of death to others. Illustration. Consider a good strong wine. To the healthy it tastes excellent. It makes him merry and strengthens him and warms his blood. But if there is someone who is sick of a disease or fever, he cannot even taste it, let alone drink it, and he marvels that the healthy is able to do so. This is not due to any defect in the wine, but to that of the sickness. So too it is with the Word of God. It is right in itself and its proclamation is always for good. If there are those who cannot hear or understand or receive it, it is because they are sick. So much by way of answer to those who rashly maintain that God does not want us to understand his words, as though it were his will to bring us into danger. (21) If we fail to understand him, it is because we are out of favour. A son knows that he enjoys his father's favour even when his father speaks roughly to him or rebukes him. He is outside his grace only when he does not speak to him at all either to teach or admonish. So too it is the most bitter punishment and a sure sign of imminent calamities to be deprived of the consolation of the Word of God.

We will now turn to consider the clarity and light of the Word. May God be glorified, and may he put the right words in our mouth that we may give them clear utterance, Amen.

When the Word of God shines on the human understanding, it enlightens it in such a way that it understands and confesses the Word and knows the certainty of it. This was the inner experience of David, and he spoke of it in Psalm 118 (A.V. 119): "The entrance of thy words, O Lord, giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple." meaning, those who in themselves are nothing, resembling the child whom Jesus set in the midst of his disciples to teach them humility (Matt. 18), saying: "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." This concurrent or prevenient clarity of the word found outward representation at the birth of Christ when the glory of the Lord shone round about the shepherds, and then the angel began to speak with them (Luke 2), and the shepherds believed the words of the angel and found all things as he had said.

I. First then we will demonstrate the clarity of the word with some illustrations from the Old Testament, then from the New.
1. When Noah was commanded to build the ark he believed God, that he would indeed destroy the whole earth with the flood. That he did so was not due to any human enlightenment, otherwise the many who paid no heed but built houses and married and lived according to their desires would easily have sowed doubt in his mind, saying: Ah, but that which was told you is simply a delusion presented to your mind no doubt by an apparition. It may be seen, then, that the Word of God brought with it its own enlightenment, by which Noah knew that it was from God and not from any other (Gen. 6).

2. When Abraham was commanded to offer up his son Isaac he believed that the voice was the voice of God. That he did so was not by any human enlightenment or perception, for Abraham had been promised salvation in the seed of Isaac (Gen. 21). But now God commanded him to sacrifice his son Isaac whom he loved (Gen. 22). Looking at it from a human standpoint Abraham must inevitably have thought: The voice is wrong. It is not of God. For God gave you this son Isaac, by your beloved wife Sarah, as a special token of his friendship. And in so doing he promised that of his seed the Saviour of all men should be born. But if you slay him, the promise is nullified, and the gift is contradicted: It is not of God. For God gave you this son Isaac, whom he loved, in order that the voice might be of God, and when he awoke he said: “Truly the Lord is with me.”

3. When Moses had brought the children of Israel into sure straits, between the mountain, that is, as Josephus says, between the horse and the wall, that he would indeed destroy the whole earth with the flood. That he did so was not due to any human enlightenment, otherwise the many who paid no heed but built houses and married and lived according to their desires would easily have sowed doubt in his mind, saying: Ah, but that which was told you is simply a delusion presented to your mind no doubt by an apparition. It may be seen, then, that the Word of God brought with it its own enlightenment, by which Noah knew that it was from God and not from any other (Gen. 6).

4. Jacob knew the voice of the One who stood at the top of the ladder and said: “I am the Lord God of thy father Abraham and Isaac, etc.” And the fact that he did so, and did not dismiss the voice as an empty dream, was not due to his own understanding: for where had he seen God, or heard his voice so as to be able to recognize it? But the Word of God gave him such clear understanding that he had no doubt that it was the voice of God, and when he awoke he said: “Truly the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not.” Tell me, you that are wise, on the authority of what council or arbiter did he accept God’s Word as true or believe that it was really God’s? You see, cavillers, that God’s Word brought with it its own clarity and enlightenment, so that he perceived clearly that it was God’s, and believed in it steadfastly, and in all the promises which it contained (Gen. 28).

5. Micaiah recognized as the Word of God the vision which God gave him and the message which accompanied it. And the fact that he did not dismiss it as a phantasy was not of man but of God (1 Kings 22). For when 400 prophets stood up against him and contradicted Micaiah, especially Zedekiah who smote him on the cheek and said: “Which way went the Spirit of the Lord from me to speak unto thee?” the opposition of so many prophets of repute and the power of the two kings Ahab and Jehoshaphat ought naturally to have made him think: You cannot possibly be right, you either did not see or understand

24 mit mütlichen worten, verba molestissima (G).
rightly. And if he had had no other light but that of the understanding there can be little doubt that that is what would have happened. But the Word of God revealed itself to him and brought with it its own clarity, holding and assuring the understanding in such a way that he held fast by that which he had heard and seen. Tell me, you who are wise—in your own understanding—what would have become of the truth of God if the divine vision and word had been surrendered to the multitude of prophets? (23) And where was the man who could pronounce Micaiah to be right, as indeed he was? For the other prophets all promised the two kings victory. Micaiah told them that they lied: there would be no victory. And it came to pass according to the saying of the man who was taught of God without any intervention by man, and all the rest spoke falsely.

6. Jeremiah when he was commanded to do so proclaimed the Word of God without fear, even though the people dared to lay hands on him and destroy him because of it. And the fact that he did so was because he had a firm trust in the Word of God and had been taught by God to understand it (Jer. 26).

7. Through the Word of God in 1 Kings 18: “Go, shew thyself unto Ahab; and I will send rain upon the earth,” Elijah perceived and accomplished the whole matter with the priests of Baal. And the fact that he did so was not of his own understanding, but by divine enlightenment, which taught him how to carry through the whole affair apart altogether from the judgment of man—for Elijah believed that he was completely alone (1 Kings 19, Rom. 11).

These seven passages from the Old Testament will be enough to show conclusively that God's Word can be understood by a man without any human direction: not that this is due to man's own understanding, but to the light and Spirit of God, illuminating and inspiring the words in such a way that the light of the divine content is seen in his own light, as it says in Psalm 35 (A.V. 36): “For with thee, Lord, is the well of light, and in thy light shall we see light.” And similarly in John 1.

11. We will now turn to the New Testament passages.

In John 1 it says that the Word, or Son, of God was the true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world, but if the light lighteth every man, undoubtedly it is his own light itself: for however bright and clear a thing may be, it cannot light every man unless it is clarity itself: and if it is to continue lighting every man, it must necessarily be eternal. For all things that are clear are necessarily clear by virtue of clarity. Note, you cavillers, who have no trust in the Scriptures, that it is the Word of God, which is God himself, that lighteth every man. Away then with that light of your own which you would give to the Word of God with your interpreters. (24) In John 3, John the Baptist says: “A man can receive nothing except it be given him from above.” If we are to receive and understand anything it must come from above. But if that is so, then no other man can attain it for us. The comprehension and understanding of divine doctrine comes then from above and not from interpreters, who are just as liable to be led into temptation as Balaam was. See II Peter 2.

The Samaritan woman was clever enough to say to Christ (John 4): “I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when he cometh, he will tell us all things.” And our theologians have not yet learned that lesson. Ask them if they understand the words: Christ is caput ecclesiae, that is, Christ is head of the congregation or church which is his body. They will answer: Yes, they understand them very well, but they may not do so apart from the official pronouncements of men. (25) What poor creatures! Rather than allow themselves to be vanquished by the truth, they deny that they are men, as if they had no ordinary intelligence and did not know the meaning of caput. And all that in order to subject the truth to the Caiaphas's and Annas's, its official interpreters. (26) It is not of the slightest account to them that Christ himself said (John 6): “They shall all be taught of God,” in the words of Isaiah 54. But if all Christians are taught of God, why can you not leave them the certainty and freedom of that teaching according to the understanding which God himself has imparted? And that God himself is the teacher of the hearts of believers we learn from Christ in the words immediately following, when he says (John 6): “Every man that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.” None can come to the Lord Jesus Christ except he has learned to know him of the Father. And note who the teacher is: not doctores, not patres, not pope, not cathedra, nor concilia, but the Father of Jesus Christ. And you cannot say, we are taught of men as well. No, for just before he says: “No man can come to me, except my heavenly Father draw him.” Even if you hear the gospel of Jesus Christ from an apostle, you cannot act upon it unless the heavenly Father teach and draw you by the Spirit. The words are clear;
enlightenment, instruction and assurance are by divine teaching without any intervention on the part of that which is human. And if they are taught of God, they are well taught, with clarity and conviction: if they had first to be taught and assured by men, we should have to describe them as taught of men rather than of God.

But Christ says (John 6): "Therefore I said, that no man can come to me, except it be given him of my Father." But if the Father gives it, as the text says, then what need is there of any other teacher, or guide or interpreter? For just after, when Christ asked: "Will ye also go away?" Peter spoke on behalf of all the disciples and his answer was this: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Note that the disciples did not know of any other teacher who could minister comfort to them and teach them the words of life. And yet you try to convince me that I am not able to understand his words but must first learn them from some other man. And note, too, that the apostles have no doubts, but speak as those who are taught of God and not of man: "We believe and are sure." You say: If only God had taught me! Answer: I perceive that God has not taught you: for if he had taught you, then like the disciples you would know for certain that he had done so; indeed, the words themselves would show you. For "he that is of the earth is earthly: he that cometh from heaven is above all (John 3). If you ask further, How can I be taught of him so that I know with certainty that this or that doctrine is according to his will? there is just one answer: Ask of him, and he will give you all that is needed; for he knows what is needed far better than you do yourself; for he says: "He that asketh, receiveth, etc." (Matt. 7). At this point faith must stretch itself. It must be as strong as the mustardseed (Matt. 17). But I am afraid that the words of Christ which follow in John 6 might well be applied to you too: "There are some of you that believe not." (27)

In Matthew 11 Christ gives thanks to God his heavenly Father, saying: "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babels, for so it seemed good in thy sight." Note that Christ gives thanks because God has concealed the heavenly wisdom from the wise of this world. And yet you would re-direct the hearts that are taught of God to the selfsame wise of this world? He reveals that wisdom to babels, to the humble; the high and mighty he cannot reach, for he will not cry, as Isaiah says: "His voice is lowly." With all the pomp and circumstance of their horses and servants and music and triumphs they cannot hear. (28) But you say: Their wisdom is from God, and you prove it with the fine example of Caiphas, saying that even though they are wicked, God still uses them to proclaim the truth. But tell me, what do they tell us about God? For myself, I never hear them speak about God at all. It is all voices, and holy fathers, and ancestors, and the throne of Peter, about which we do not read anything either in the Gospels or in the teaching of Peter himself. Oh what they would give if only that throne were mentioned in the Gospel. They speak of it everywhere but they still cannot find any solid support for it in the teaching of the Gospel. They will be found in himself. He does not say: Go to those who are robed in hoods and purple. For there is no certainty there. It is when God gives a man certainty that he is nourished and refreshed and will never hunger or thirst again. But if he has already been nourished by God, why tell him to turn away from this bread to the Fathers?

In the same way St. Paul applies the saying of Christ in John 6: "They shall all be taught of God," and in the same context (Heb. 8 and 10) the prophecy of Jeremiah 31 is also quoted, where God himself says: "I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." Note that he will write the law itself in our hearts, for he continues: "And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest." Note that God instructs with such certainty that there is no need to ask of man; for God himself

26 lit. to high horses—off dis hohen ros.
27 je triumpha—the well-known cry at Roman triumphs.
28 zu den gehiibten, purpersten. In this context haube may perhaps be used for mite.
28.8.—6
instructs the heart of man, and there is no need of anyone else.

Again, in I Corinthians 2 Paul says: "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things which are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but with those which are taught in the Holy Ghost." Note that the gifts which God gives are known by the Spirit of God, not by the clever display of the words and wisdom of man, which is the spirit of this world. But you say: I consider that a council of bishops also has the Spirit of God. But do you not see that they are too lofty and distant for him? He does not allow himself to be known by the spirit of this world; he reveals himself to babes. How should the poor carpenter entrust himself to such princes (or beggar-princes, as the common man would call them)? If we are to incline to his grace, there is no room for princely graces, for titles are of this world and not of God. God reveals himself by his own Spirit, and we cannot learn of him without his Spirit. He gives himself truly to all those who surrender self and come to him. Indeed, he himself invites us to come (John 7): "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink, etc." And you may be no less certain that God will enlighten them as he does others if only they will seek it with humility.

In Acts 9 Paul was thrown to the ground and rebuked: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" And when he asked: "Who art thou, Lord?" he received the answer: "I am Jesus whom thou persecust." And the fact that he knew that it was Jesus was not due to his own understanding or judgment but to the light of God which surrounded him with a visible radiance; for otherwise the passion to destroy the name and glory of Christ would not have allowed him either to recognize that voice or to follow it.

John says (I John 2): "Ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him." Now first note that this anointing is the same as the enlightenment and gift of the Holy Ghost. You will see, then, that once God has taught us with this anointing, that is, his Spirit, we do not need any other teacher, for there is no more error, but only the pure truth in which we are to abide. But at this point our opponents say: How can I know that my belief is of the Spirit of God unless it is known and recognized to be of God or to be the teaching of God by those whose office it is to do this? (29) Answer: I will give you the same answer as Jesus did to the Jews, when they asked him by what authority he worked miracles, and he retorted with a counter-question, but one which revealed an understanding of their intention, saying: "The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men?" So I will ask you the counter-question: Tell me, you fools, when the rabble of carnal divines that you call fathers and bishops pronounce upon a doctrine about which there is a doubt, are you enlightened, and do you know with absolute certainty that it is as they say? You answer: Yes. Oh, like the foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that you believe deceitful men and do not believe those words of God which are the truth itself? How are you ever to overcome your obtuseness, that you do not believe the Spirit of God who offers you the truth, but put your trust in fallible men, who can do nothing without the grace and spirit of God, subscribing and defending the abuses of which they are guilty? You believe that men can give you certainty, which is no certainty, and you do not believe that God can give it you. Do you not know that the mind and understanding of every man must be brought into captivity to the obedience and service of God, and not of men? But I see your error, and in God's name I will show it you. You do not know that it is God himself who teaches a man, nor do you know that when God has taught him that man has an inward certainty and assurance. For you do not know what the Gospel really is. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. The word Gospel is the equivalent of good news or tidings which God gives to men in matters of which they are either ignorant or doubtful. Illustration: (30) A man is longing for his soul's salvation, and he asks a Carthusian: (31) Dear brother, what must I do to be saved? And the answer will undoubtedly be this: Enter our order, and you will assuredly be saved, for it is the most rigorous. But ask a Benedictine (32) and he replies: It is worth noting that salvation is easiest in our order, for it is the most ancient. But if you ask a Dominican (33) he will answer: In our order salvation is certain, for it was given from heaven by our Lady. And if you ask a Franciscan, (34) he will say: Our order is the greatest and most

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10 Gintz—a wag, used as a representative name for the lower orders.
things to the necessary doctrine of the Spirit. Illustration: When one said to him: "Thy mother and brethren are without, desiring to speak with thee" (Matt. 12), he drew their attention away from the physical relationship to the relationship with God, and he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said: "Behold, my mother and my brethren. For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." Similarly, when the woman who had been healed cried out: "Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked," he gave them instruction about a spiritual and divine birth: "Blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it." It was not that he disowned his mother, but he showed the significance of what she had done. She had received the Word of God, and in the same way those who hear his Word are received and born of the Spirit of God. She bore him as a pure virgin, and in the same way those who receive the Word of God and exercise and nourish themselves in it bring forth wonderful fruit. And so too when he was with the two sisters they both acted rightly, but he took Mary Magdalene as the starting-point for his lesson, that to choose the good part which shall never be taken away is to receive him and to seek him: for none will ever allow himself to be taken away from him. And for that reason he says to Martha: "Thou art careful and troubled about many things," and then proceeds to the discernment of the one good thing: But one thing is necessary to salvation, and Magdalene has found it; hold it fast. And do you see what that one thing is which is necessary to salvation? Or rather, who that one thing is? You answer, Christ. You have judged rightly. Hold fast to him and never forsake him. But do you imagine that only you who are cloistered and cowled can find Christ and hear his Word? On the contrary, you are the very last to hear his teaching. For you have laid hold of other things, and you hold fast to those things and find comfort in them.

It says of Magdalene: She heard his Word: that was the good part which she had chosen. And so it is with every soul. Once it is enlightened by God, it can find no assurance or consolation or encouragement in the word of man, but only in the Word of God; and like the disciples in John 6 it says: "Lord, to whom shall I go? Thou hast the word of life," that is, Thy Word quickens and restores and gives life, so that the soul is comforted and bound to thee, and cannot trust in any other word but thine.

*34 das schwerlich leben, vita contemplativa (G).*
But when you are called of God you say: How am I to prepare myself, so that I may be certain to attain his grace? I reply: Put all your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, that is, rest assured that as he suffered for us there is atonement before God for us to all eternity (1 John 1). The moment you believe, know that you are drawn by God, and that which you regard as your own work is that of the Spirit of God secretly at work within you. For in John 6 Christ says; "No man can come to me except my Father which is in heaven draw him." Note that if you seek him and find him and cleave fast to him you are drawn by the Father, otherwise you could never have come to him.

The reason why I have spent so long over this proof is this: Those who defend the doctrines of men say: It is quite true that above all other doctrines we ought to esteem the evangelical doctrine, that is, the doctrine which is declared and taught by God—so much they will allow, praise be to God—but we understand the Gospel in a different way. And if there is a conflict between your understanding and ours, someone will have to decide between us and have authority to silence the one who is in error. And this they say in order to subject the interpretation of God's Word to men, thus making it possible to rebuke and suppress the evangelical preachers by Caiaphas and Ananias. In direct contradiction to the teaching of Paul, that all interpretation and thought and experience should be made captive to the will and service of God, they try to subject the doctrine of God to the judgment of men. Now take note of the answer: In the first place, by the Gospel we do not mean only the writings of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, but, as we have said, all that God has revealed to man in order that he may instruct him and give him a sure knowledge of his will. But God is one, and he is a Spirit of unity, not of discord. Hence we may see that his words have been drawn by the Father, otherwise you could never have come to him.

Oh you rascals—you are not instructed or versed in the Gospel, and you pick out verses from it without regard to their context, and wrest them according to your own desire. It is like breaking off a flower from its roots and trying to plant it in a garden. But that is not the way: you must plant it with the roots and the soil in which it is embedded. And similarly we must leave the Word of God its own proper nature if its sense is to be the same to all of us. And those who err in this way we can easily vanquish by leading them back to the source, though they never come willingly. But some of them are such confirmed dunces that even when the natural sense is expounded in such a way that they cannot deny it, they still allege that they cannot presume to understand it thus unless the Fathers allow that it may so be understood: on the ground that many expositors will always have a better understanding than one or two. Answer: If that is the case, then Christ himself was in error, which God forbid, for most of the priests of the time held quite a different view and he had to stand alone. And the apostles were also mistaken, for they were opposed by whole nations and cities. And even today the number of unbelievers far outweighs the number of believers: are we to conclude then that their view is right and ours wrong simply because they are more numerous than we? No. Consider for yourselves; truth is not necessarily with the majority. What then of the argument? It has no force in the present controversy. Indeed, I see that even popes and councils have sometimes fallen into serious error, especially Anastasius, and Liberius in the Arian heresy. Will you concede that? Yes. Then your case is lost, for you must allow that if they erred once there is always the fear that they will err again, and therefore we cannot trust in them with any certainty. Once we have discovered that—for: omnis homo mendax, all men are liars, deceiving and being deceived—we see that ultimately only God himself can teach us the truth with such certainty that all doubts are removed. But you say: Where can I find him? Answer: Seek him in your chamber (Matt. 6), and ask him in secret: he will see you and give you the understanding of divine truth. For as our earlier illustrations show, the doctrine of God can never be learned with greater certainty than when it is taught by God himself, for it comes from God, and he alone is truthful, indeed, he is the truth itself. This is proved by the words of I John 2
to which we have already referred: "Ye need not that any man should teach you." You hear that? We do not need human interpreters, but his anointing, which is the Spirit, teaches us of all things—all things, notice—and therefore it is truth and is no lie. But at this point they say: I have prayed to him and I am still of the same mind as before. You will not take it amiss if I say: You lie. I allow, of course, that you prayed, but not as you ought. How then should I approach him and pray to him? In this way: First, put away that view of your own which you want to read into Scripture, for it is quite valueless, as I shall clearly show. I know that you will reply that you have worked through the Scriptures and discovered texts which support your opinion. Ah! here we come upon the cauker at the heart of all human systems. (44) And it is this: we want to find support in Scripture for our own view, and so we take that view to Scripture, and if we find a text which, however artificially, we can relate to it, we do so, and in that way we wrest Scripture in order to make it say what we want it to say. Illustration: most of us have our doctrines and interpretations all ready, like someone asking a favour found axe in hand, as though to say: Grant it, or the axe will speak for me. And that is how we come to Scripture. The popes and foolish emperors and kings—suffer me, lords, to speak the truth—have made the majority of our German bishops into temporal princes (beggar-princes as the common man would call them). And in that way they have acquired power. They have a sword in their hands. And with that sword they go to Scripture. And they quote I Peter 2: regale sacerdotium: a royal priesthood. And with the sword they now force Peter: what he meant was that the clergy can be temporal princes and wield secular authority. (45) That is what the axe can do. But Peter's real meaning was that the Lord Jesus Christ has called all Christians to kingly honour and to the priesthood, so that they do not need a sacrificing priest to offer on their behalf, for they are all priests, offering spiritual gifts, that is, dedicating themselves wholly to God. Note, then, that we must not approach Scripture like that. But how are we to come? In this way: If you want to speak on any matter, or to learn of it, you must first think like this: before I say anything or listen to the teaching of man, I will first consult the mind of the Spirit of God (Ps. 84 (A.V. 85)): "I will hear what God the Lord will speak." Then you should reverently ask God for his grace, that he may give you his mind and Spirit, so that you will not lay hold of your own opinion but of his. And a firm trust that he will teach you a right understanding, for all wisdom is of God the Lord. And then go to the written word of the Gospel. But at this point—there are many who turn up their noses, not believing that if they have called upon God he will give them a different understanding, his own understanding, for they set so much store by their own human understanding that they are sure there cannot possibly be any other. But note how falsely you speak. You must be theodidacti, that is, taught of God, not of men: that is what the Truth itself said (John 6), and it cannot lie. If you do not believe, and believe firmly, leaving the wisdom of men and resting only in the divine instruction, you have no true faith. And this is not merely my own view, but St. Hilary was of the same opinion, (46) though we do not heed his help: Christ and Peter and Paul and John were all of this opinion. Thus the whole philosophical system called theologica scholastica falls to the ground, for it is merely a system evolved by man; and if it occupies the mind of a man, he thinks that divine teaching is to be judged and perverted in accordance with the infallible teaching received of men. That this is the case may be seen from the tag: "Where the philosopher leaves off, the theologian begins," which clearly means that when a man is thoroughly instructed in the human doctrine he is better able to interpret the divine, as though our light could illuminate and enlighten the divine light, and in spite of the fact that Christ says, John 5: "I receive not light from men, but I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you." For if they had had his love in them, they would not have believed any word but his: for he is the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world, and philosophy is not such a light. Proof: who was the philosopher who taught the disciples? They were weak and foolish things when God chose them to proclaim his doctrine and, as St. Paul says (1 Cor. 1), to overthrow and confound the wise of this world. Similarly today worldly or human wisdom is confounded and overthrown by those who have attained to the divine doctrine by inward longing and faith. We see, then, that the simplicity of the disciples was instructed only by God, which is an example to us, that we might seek the form of divine doctrine from God alone. The doctrine of God is never formed more clearly than

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41 Conflict. See note on p. 82. 41 nach der welt hierschen.
when it is done by God himself and in the words of God. Indeed, I make bold to say that those who make themselves, that is men, the arbiters of Scripture, make a mockery of trust in the Spirit of God by their design and pretension, seeking to wrest and force the Scriptures according to their own folly. For whenever anyone offers to arbitrate or testify he lays himself open to suspicion. Much more so in this particular case, in which there is one who bids us come to himself, and it is from him that the Word comes, and we resist, not because of the weakness of the Word, but because of the bondage of sinful lusts 43 deceiving us and wresting the Word according to their own caprice.

When you say then that an arbiter is needed to decide the issue and to compel those who are defeated, I deny it: for even the most learned of men are fallible except in so far as they are led by God. If they are not certain, God will guide them, but I myself can come to the same teacher and guide, and he will undoubtedly guide me also. 47 You say: How do you know whether he will teach you or not? Answer: From his own words in Matthew 21 and Mark 11: "All things whatsoever—that is, all things which it is right and proper for God to give—ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." Then, St. James teaches me to go to God for wisdom (James 1), saying: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering." Note that James points us to God and not to men. You say: But today we have men to preach to us: should we not ask of the preacher and doctors? Answer: No matter who a man may be, if he teaches you in accordance with his own thought and mind his teaching is false. But if he teaches you in accordance with the Word of God, it is not he that teaches you, but God who teaches him. For as Paul says, who are we but ministers of Christ and dispensers or stewards of the mysteries of God? Again, I know for certain that God teaches me, because I have experienced the fact of it: and to prevent misunderstanding this is what I mean when I say that I know for certain that God teaches me. When I was younger, I gave myself overmuch to human teaching, like others of my day, and when about seven or eight years ago I undertook to devote myself entirely to the Scriptures I was always prevented by philosophy and theology. But eventually I came to the point where led by the

43 anfechtungen, vita affectuum (G).
do not believe that those people are really bound or excommunicated before God. And why? Because God said: "When thy brother sins," not: "When thy brother is in debt, thou shalt cut him off." And I am certain that that is the teaching of God, and you will not change my view even if you bring against me all the lies and inventions of the canonists or the hypocrisy of the monks or the wrath of bloated prelates or the poison of Rome or the fire of Etna, or indeed of hell itself. And even if God did take away his grace and for fear of death I said otherwise with my lips, yet I should still know that this abuse is not pleasing to God and that it has no authority by the divine institution. But hear the fine way in which they cloak their action. They say: It is not for debt that we excommunicate them, but for disobedience, as if it were possible to discharge a debt at the very moment the excommunicator demands. And yet that is not our real answer, but this: On what grounds does a Christian owe any obedience to you in a matter of this kind? Did God command you bishops to be the world's debt-collectors? You reply: "Obedite preposito vestrjs," "be obedient to them that guide you." But does that mean: "Excommunicate men for debt"? In this and in other matters we shall not go astray if we seek only the mind of the Spirit. But if we do not, if we apply our energies to find scriptural support for our own opinions, though they are nothing but leaves and grass, we shall constantly be in error. The will of God is this, that he alone should be the teacher. And I intend to be taught by him and not by men, that is, in respect of doctrine: for in respect of sin and disobedience I will be subject to all. For it is not for us to sit in judgment on Scripture and divine truth, but to let God do his work in and through it, for it is something which we can learn only of God. Of course, we have to give an account of our understanding of Scripture, but not in such a way that it is forced or wrested according to our own will, but rather so that we are taught by Scripture: and that is my own intention. Paul says (I Cor. 4): "For with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment. Yea, I judge not mine own self. For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord." The Lord, who addressed and instructed Paul and all the apostles and all who proclaim his truth, he is to be their judge. We speak of Scripture, and this came from God and not from men (II Pet. 1). How then can

45 koppenfeitzen— Kopuzenträger—those who bear the cowl. 46 loub und gras.
Second, when the old man is killed off and removed, that 
God will graciously infill us, and in such measure that we 
believe and trust only in him.

Third, when that is done we shall certainly be greatly 
refreshed and comforted, and we must constantly repeat 
the words of the prophet: Lord, God, strengthen that which 
thee hast wrought in us. For “let him that thinketh he standeth 
take heed lest he fall,” as Paul says.

Fourth, the Word of God does not overlook anyone, and least 
of all the greatest. For when God called Paul, he said to An­ 
nias: “He is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before 
the princes and kings of the earth.” Again, he says to the 
disciples (Matt. 10): “And ye shall be brought before govern­ 
ors and kings, that ye may testify unto them concerning me.”

Fifth, it is the nature and property of the Word to humble 
the high and mighty and to exalt the lowly. That was the song 
of the Virgin Mary: “He hath put down the mighty from 
their seats, and exalted them of low degree.” And again, John pro­ 
claimed concerning Christ (Luke 3): “By him shall all the hills 
be brought low, and the valleys filled, etc.” (53)

Sixth, the Word of God always attracts and helps the poor, 
comforting the comfortless and despairing, but opposing those 
who trust in themselves, as Christ testifies.

Seventh, it does not seek its own advantage: for that reason 
Christ commanded his disciples to take neither scrip nor purse.

Eighth, it seeks only that God may be revealed to men, that 
the obstinate may fear him and the lowly find comfort in 
God. Those who preach in that manner are undoubtedly right. 
Those who cautiously beat about the bush 47 for their own 
advantage, defending the teaching of man instead of holding 
and expounding the doctrine of God, are false prophets. Know 
them by their words. They make a fine outcry: The holy Fathers!
Is it nothing that man can do? and the like. But for all their 
complaining they do not complain that the Gospel of Christ is 
slackly proclaimed.

Ninth, when you find that the Word of God renews you, 
and begins to be more precious to you than formerly when you 
heard the doctrines of men, then you may be sure that this is 
the work of God within you.

Tenth, when you find that it gives you assurance of the grace 
of God and eternal salvation, it is of God.

** Den welle uns gegeben ** to achieve the precise reference of the German 
it is necessary either to translate des by “him” or to repeat “that Spirit.”