

## ARTICLE II.

## THE DOCTRINE OF THE "TESTIMONIUM SPIRITUS SANCTI": A CONTRIBUTION TO ITS HISTORY IN THE LUTHERAN CHURCH DURING THE SIXTEENTH AND SEVENTEENTH CENTURIES.

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THE Reformation in the sixteenth century originated, so far as the prime movers were concerned, in practical rather than in theoretical needs. Neither the first leaders nor the earliest adherents of the movement were stirred at the outset by scruples with regard to either the constitution, the authority, or the doctrine of the church of which they were members,—not more, at all events, than many of their contemporaries who remained to the end in fellowship with Rome. They objected to certain practices, and desired certain reforms; but they believed that if only a general council could be held, everything might be done or removed that was necessary. This fact has long been held by all intelligent historians to account for much that, to later and more advanced generations, naturally seems defective, half-hearted, inconsistent, inconstant, and so forth, in the procedure of the Reformers. It led to their touching practices, institutions, and doctrines only so far as practical interests directly and imperatively required it.

This applies especially to doctrine; and in particular to the doctrine of which that of the Holy Spirit constitutes an integral factor; namely, the *doctrina de Deo*. Luther expressly

disclaims having any cause of quarrel with the papacy as far as the doctrine of the Trinity is concerned. He believed in the divinity of Christ and the incarnation, in the procession of the Spirit from the Father and the Son (*filioque*), and in his personality and work, as these doctrines had been set forth by the great teachers of the Romish Church.<sup>1</sup> But the new experiences, the new life, which the Reformers realized, soon opened their eyes to errors or deficiencies or new aspects of the doctrines with which they were thus brought into more immediate relation. This is particularly true of the doctrine of the work of the Holy Spirit in the conversion, renovation, enlightenment, and certification of men. For whilst the function of the Holy Spirit in these matters had not been denied,—indeed, could not have been denied by any community that wished to retain its Christian name,—yet the whole drift of things in the Romish Church had tended to cast it into obscurity. The Holy Spirit was held, indeed, to dwell in the church as a whole; but individuals—at all events private individuals—could share in his influences solely through the church. Naturally enough, therefore, any regenerating, sanctifying, enlightening grace proceeding from him became the possession of the individual solely through the church, not directly.

But the new light and life gained by Luther, Zwingli, Melancthon, Farel, Cœcolampadius, and others demanded expression. At the outset, too, the inconsistency between their experience and the words in which it found utterance, on the one hand, and the claims and teaching of Rome, on

communities, whether free or bound down by rigid traditional creeds. Every influx of new life, every change of environment, calls for and produces modifications of the doctrinal statements which had adequately expressed and accounted for the old life. The fewer the traditional hindrances, the more easily and naturally of course does the process go on. Where great ecclesiastical organizations, with formularies having a legal as well as doctrinal significance, stand in the way, friction and conflict are sure to result; whilst injury more or less great, according to differences of temperament and constitution, is done both to the intellect, conscience, and spiritual life of those who feel that the old bottles will not bear the new wine, and yet do not see their way to resorting to new bottles.

There are two aspects of the witness of the Spirit, which, for the sake of brevity, I will term the *practical* and *intellectual* aspects. In its practical aspect, the witness of the Spirit relates to the sinner's acceptance or reconciliation with God through Christ, to the fact that his sins are forgiven for Christ's sake and his eternal salvation secured. In its intellectual aspect it relates to the divine origin and authority of the word of God, through which the message of forgiveness has come to him. In the one case, the Spirit testifies to the sinner that God has accepted him; in the other case, to the believer that the word of God is really God's word. With the latter must not be confounded what is closely akin thereto, the insight into the divine thought or mind recorded in Scripture given by the Spirit of God.

Attention was first directed, we shall find, to what I have termed the *practical* aspect of the witness of the Spirit. Following the lead of Scripture, the assurance of forgiveness through Christ and of divine acceptance was traced to the Holy Spirit. Neither the first reformers indeed, nor most of their earliest adherents, were constant in the language they used on the subject: sometimes they attributed the assurance

to God—so to speak, the whole God,—sometimes to the Father, sometimes even to the Son; but gradually usage conformed itself to Scripture, and it came to be regarded as the Spirit's specific function to bear the witness in which assurance of redemption culminated.

The second aspect of the witness of the Spirit, however, gradually arose into view, though not at first very distinctly; namely, that to the *word of God* or *Scripture*: naturally enough too, considering the prominent position assigned by the Reformation to the "word of God." In the first instance, the seeking soul accepts forgiveness on the authority of the word of God. But then the question arises, How do I know that the "word of God" is the word of God? What gives me the assurance of that?<sup>1</sup>

It is to the history of these two aspects of the witness of the Spirit then—his witness to the individual's acceptance with God through Christ, and his witness to the divine origin and authority of the word of God—that I propose to direct attention.

#### I. LUTHER.

Our first business is, of course, with Luther; whose writings contain more allusions to the subject—one might almost venture to say—than are to be found in all the others put together, with the single exception perhaps of those of Calvin: at all events, more specific allusions.

Both aspects of the doctrine of the witness of the Spirit are represented; but the practical is referred to with most

<sup>1</sup> The scriptural basis of these two aspects of the witness of the Spirit is furnished by such passages as the following: That of the *first* mentioned aspect is by "the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the

distinctness and frequency. We will begin with what he says regarding its practical aspect.

1. Luther's view of the witness of the Spirit in its *practical aspect*.

A few words regarding the state of mind through which he passed before realizing that free forgiveness of sin is offered to sinners in and through Christ, will help to set his statements on this subject in their true light.

The one, all-controlling motive of his life from shortly before entering the monastery at Erfurt until he found peace, was to attain to a certitude of the favor of God. Following the teachings of the Romish Church, he endeavored to merit it by prayers, by attendance on mass, by all sorts of self-inflicted privations, sufferings; and when these failed, by appeals to mediators such as the Virgin, St. George, St. Vincent, and the like. "I did not believe in Christ," says he, "but deemed him a strict, terrible judge, as painted sitting above a rainbow." There was nothing he was not ready to do or suffer in order to purchase peace; in point of fact, he came near succumbing to the austerities which he imposed on himself in conjunction with the inward struggles through which he was led.<sup>1</sup> His realization of divine pardon and experience of sanctifying grace constituted the first steps in the Protestant discernment of the significance of the witness of the Holy Spirit:—the *first steps*, I repeat, for Luther's view of the witness of the Spirit was by no means coincident in origin with his realization of divine pardon and inward peace. Nor did he regard veritable forgiveness on the part of God and the inward witness thereto as inseparable. On the contrary, he held that God often forgives those who believe, without, as it were, directly assuring them of the fact; he deals with them, both outwardly and inwardly, in such a manner that they fancy him to be still angry with them and to have a purpose to condemn

<sup>1</sup> See Köstlin, i. 24 ff., 31 ff.

them for time and eternity, though nothing could be further from his mind. What he designs is to prevent their forgetting the fear of God when the days of rejoicing shall come.<sup>1</sup> But he does not stop there; on the contrary, not only does he accept us as righteous through Christ, but also eventually bestows on us the *consciousness* of forgiveness and grace. He gives us "a good conscience, by letting us hear his secret whisper or prompting (*einrönen*), Thy sins are forgiven thee. Then we attain joy and gladness."<sup>2</sup>

One or two quotations will show us the position he reached:—

"Assurance is a thing of prime necessity in Christian teaching; for I must be certain what I am to think of God; or, rather, what he thinks of me. . . . It is a horrid error which the Papists have taught the people, that we ought to doubt about the forgiveness of sin and the grace of God. 'Thou must see thyself to be a sinner,' say they; 'and indeed such a sinner that thou canst not possibly be sure of blessedness.'"<sup>3</sup>

On the contrary,—

"God gives us the Spirit of Christ, who is also a Son, in order that with and through him we may cry Abba, Father. This crying a man is aware of, when there is no hesitation or doubt in his conscience, and he is certain, not only that his sins are forgiven, but that he is also the child of God. Sometimes, indeed, he may become doubtful whether he is a child, and may think of God as an angry, stern judge. But childlike confidence is sure at last to gain the upper hand again; otherwise all is lost. . . . We too know that we are poor sinners; but it is not here a question of what we are and do, but of what Christ is, has done, and still does for us. We speak not of our nature, but of God's grace. We may therefore have personal certainty; we can recognize *the crying of the Spirit* in our heart. If thou art not sensible of this crying, pray without ceasing till God hear thee. Thou shouldst not, indeed, desire to hear nothing but that crying in thee, for thy sin also cries out and troubles thy conscience; but the Spirit of Christ must and ought to outcry that cry of sin; that is, inspire thee with a confidence stronger than thy doubts. . . . Wherever there is faith in Christ, the Holy Spirit works

"God pours the Holy Spirit into our hearts, and he says in our hearts that it is truth so and not otherwise. . . . Besides that such has taken place and is proclaimed to us in the word of the gospel, the *Holy Ghost writes it inwardly in our hearts, for those who hear it are inwardly so set on flame that their heart saith, 'That is true,* even though I must die a hundred deaths for it!' . . . If one be asked, 'How dost thou know it?' one must reply, 'I hear it thus in the word, in the sacrament, and in the absolution: but besides all, the Holy Spirit tells me as truly in my heart as I hear it here in the creed, that Christ became man, died, and rose again from the dead for me; even as St. John saith (1 John ii. 27).' What the Holy Ghost writes in the heart agrees with what stands in the Holy Scriptures." <sup>1</sup>

2. Luther's view of the witness of the Spirit in relation to the word of God.

According to Luther, we receive the forgiveness of sin through the mediation of the "word of God;" which word of God, in harmony with the then prevailing doctrine of the Romish Church, he took to signify what was contained in the Scriptures.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, he uses the terms "Scripture" and "word of God" interchangeably,<sup>3</sup> regarding it as absolutely free from error.<sup>4</sup> He constantly assaults the position of those who put their reason above or alongside of the word, or who look for direct revelations over and beyond what is contained in Scripture.<sup>5</sup> He himself indeed had arrived at assurance of salvation, not by the reading of Scripture, but by what one may call the *preaching* of a brother monk;<sup>6</sup> and later on he taught that the "whole church is full of the forgiveness of sins," meaning that every Christian had a right to proclaim the absolution and remission of sin in the name of Christ. But this was because at the back of the church—the creator of the church—was the word of God, or the Scriptures.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Müller in St. u. Kritiken, 1856, p. 339.

<sup>2</sup> Köstlin, i. 156.    <sup>3</sup> Köstlin, ii. 252; Heppe, iii. 16.

<sup>4</sup> Köstlin, i. 242.    <sup>5</sup> Köstlin, ii. 285 ff.    <sup>6</sup> Köstlin, i. 156; Dorner, 238, 241.

<sup>7</sup> Köstlin, i. 222; cf. Heppe, iii. 228, 243 ff.

The question as to the exact meaning of the expression "word of God," and its relation to Scripture, is not quite easy to answer. My own impression, however, is, that the usage of the Reformers and their contemporaries will be best understood in the light of the fact that, down even to our own day,

But wherein consists the certainty of the word? Here we are brought to that aspect of the *testimonium Spiritus Sancti* which chiefly busied the minds of the second generation of Protestant theologians. If assurance of salvation is taught by the word, and if our assurance is to be a divine assurance, must we not have a divine assurance regarding the word? Let us see what Luther says on the subject. He constantly and decidedly refuses to make the validity of Scripture depend on the authority of the church; and when met by Augustine's statement, "Evangelio non crederem, nisi ecclesiæ crederem," says it should be, "Evangelio non crederem nisi me ecclesiæ commoveret autoritas," interpreting "authority" as persuasive influence, and thus putting the whole truth into a nutshell.<sup>1</sup>

Nor would he seem to have attached much, if any, real importance to most of the so-called proofs for the divine inspiration and authority of Scripture ordinarily advanced by apologists. Indeed, he rarely touches on them, perhaps because the divine authority of Scripture was not questioned by any with whom he had to do.<sup>2</sup>

Yet he says to the Christian:—

"Thou must be as certain that it is the word of God as that thou livest; nay, even more certain, for thy conscience must alone stand thereon. Even if all men, yea, the angels and the whole world, came to a conclusion about anything, shouldest thou not be able to conclude likewise, thou art lost. For thou mayest not make thy judgment depend on the Pope or any one else: thou thyself must be so skilled as to be able to say, 'God speaketh this; that, he speaketh not: this is right; that is wrong.' Otherwise it is impossible to stand. If thou reliest on the Pope and councils, the Devil may come and whisper, 'Suppose it were false? how, if they had erred?' and then thou art thrown down. Therefore thou must be certain, and be warranted in saying with all boldness, 'This is the word of God, and I am ready to venture for it body and life and a hundred thousand heads if I had them.'"<sup>3</sup>

it is not uncommon for upholders of inspiration in its most rigid sense to use regarding "sound" sermons some such language as "they were the true word



But whence is the Christian believer to draw this certainty? "Though he attached great importance for the begetting of faith to the impression produced by the concordant testimony of the church, he still conceives the proper ground of faith in the gospel for every individual to be, that it is God's word, and that he *inwardly find it* to be true—true, even though an angel from heaven, and all the world, were to assert the contrary."<sup>1</sup> Now it is the *Holy Spirit*, he maintains, who enables us to feel this when we use the Scriptures. What he says of the action of the Spirit in the genesis of faith applies also to faith in Scripture itself. In a passage in which he is speaking of the relation of external signs to the use of faith he says:—

"The true hearer of the divine word can add thereto that it is not the word of man, but of a certainty the word of God: for *God teaches him inwardly*; he is drawn by the Father. The true *divine faith* believes the word, not on account of the preacher who has uttered it, but *feels* that it is certainly true."

"The *word* must of *and by itself* satisfy the heart, and so lay hold of the man that he shall, as it were, be taken prisoner by it, and feel that it is true and right. So did the Samaritans believe, according to John."<sup>2</sup>

In another place he says:—

"God himself must speak to thy heart, saying, 'This is God's word,' else it is undetermined. God caused the same word to be preached by the apostles, and he still causes it to be preached. But, even if the Archangel Gabriel from heaven were to preach it, what can it help me? I must have *God's own word*; I want to hear what *God* says. The word may be preached to me, but no one can put it into my heart save God alone: *he must speak in my heart*, otherwise nothing comes of it; for, if he keeps silence, it remains unspoken. Therefore from the word which God teaches none shall separate me; and I must know *that* as certainly as I know that three and two make five. Who can settle that for me? No man; but the truth alone, which is so certain that no one can decry it."<sup>3</sup>

Utterances like the following: "It is the Holy Ghost who enables us to discern that the Scripture is truth;" the application of what he says about the relation of the Spirit to

<sup>1</sup> Köstlin, ii. 252.

<sup>2</sup> Köstlin, ii. 255. See John iv. 42.    <sup>3</sup> Dorner, 228.

the genesis of faith by means of the word; to faith in the Scriptures themselves: "The true hearer of the divine word can set to his seal that it is not the word of a man, but veritably the word of God, for God teaches him inwardly; he is drawn by the Father; true, divine faith believes the word, not for the preacher's sake, but *feels* that it is certainly true": "the word itself must so satisfy the heart, and convince the man, that he shall be, as it were, taken prisoner by it, and know it to be true and right"—lead Köstlin to ascribe to Luthur, "mit aller Bestimmtheit die Lehre vom testimonium spiritus sancti und von der fides divina."<sup>1</sup> It would seem to me, I confess, more exact to say that what he actually does, in these and the other quotations I have given, is to plant the germ or sow the seed of the doctrine; or, perhaps, rather to provide the materials on which other minds should operate—at all events, if we understand by doctrine the classification, correlation, and explanation of facts and experiences. No man of prominence in the recent history of the church ever had, perhaps, firmer hold of the reality: no wiser words than Luther's have been spoken with regard to the church, Scripture, and the action of the Holy Spirit, in relation alike to the certain assurance of salvation and the conviction of the divine origin and authority of Scripture; but his mission was rather to discover and proclaim than to formulate and systematize Christian truth.<sup>2</sup> And it were well if all Christian thinkers would remember that in this, as in other domains, it is *first* experience, *then* science; and that, whilst experience may exist without science, science without experience is apt to

hand, was rather a scientific orderer than a productive originator, like his friend. In many respects the two were a perfect contrast—the one naturally disposed to the mystical, the speculative, passionate and impulsive, impatient of forms; the other practical, unwilling to take flights into regions where he could not clearly see his way, conciliatory, calm, reflective, moderate, and disposed to compromises. Considering that Melanchthon was a Suabian, and Luther a Saxon, one would have expected Luther to have been Melanchthon, and Melanchthon Luther. These differences made themselves markedly felt in connection with the subject under consideration.<sup>1</sup> Melanchthon's references to the witness of the Holy Spirit in both its aspects are not only rare, but vague, if, indeed, they can be called references at all in Luther's sense. And this is the more surprising in view of his life-long intimacy with Luther and the harmony with which they co-operated.

(1) Many passages might be quoted from his writings in evidence of the fact that he understood what the certain *assurance* of God's nearness and forgiveness meant, and that he unhesitatingly recognized the action of the Holy Ghost on the soul; but he does not seem to have got the length of regarding the witness of the Spirit as a constitutive element of the higher Christian life.

"The object of faith, namely, the revealed grace of God, is a living, active thing; accordingly faith itself is an act of confidence stirred in us by the Holy Ghost. Every divine work, whether of creation or redemption, is an expression of the divine power and goodness. This is received by the believer; he himself is laid hold of and is brought by it near to God, far away from those who content themselves with the cool acceptance of historical facts. Faith therefore is laying hold on a God-given certitude, or confidence in the divine mercy promised through Christ, which, when it enters the soul, gives peace, excites to thankful confidence, and spurs on to the free and joyous fulfilment of the law. . . . We are justified when, having been cast down by the law,

<sup>1</sup> See Gass, *Geschichte der prot. Dogmatik*, i. 35; cf. Nitzsch, *Deutsche Zeitschrift f. Christl. Wissenschaft*, etc., 1855; and article "Melanchthon," in Herzog's *Real-Encycl.*, 1st ed., 277 ff., 289 f.

we are lifted up again by the word of grace, which is promised in Christ, or by the gospel, which forgives sins; and when we cling to it in faith, not doubting that Christ's righteousness and resurrection are ours, that his satisfaction is our propitiation; in short, not doubting that our sins are forgiven and that God is gracious."<sup>1</sup>

When treating of the relation between the word and the Holy Spirit in conversion, he says:—

"The Spirit of God is efficacious along with the word, raising and helping the heart. Let us not then grieve the Holy Spirit, but assent to the word of God, and obey the Holy Spirit."<sup>2</sup>

"Without the knowledge of the gospel, and without the Holy Spirit, there can be no inner obedience."<sup>3</sup>

"Three factors co-operate in conversion: the word of God; the Holy Spirit, whom the Father and Son do send, that he may kindle our hearts; and our own will, consenting to and not resisting the word of God."<sup>4</sup>

The following passage, however, the last clause of which occurs repeatedly in his "Loci" and "Examen Ordinandorum,"<sup>5</sup> seems to imply that so far as he recognized the witness of the Spirit at all, he identified it with what we should call one of the fruits of the Spirit:—

"When our terrified minds are lifted up by faith, the Holy Spirit is at the same time given, and he stirs in our heart new emotions, congruous to the law of God. He is called the Spirit of grace, in so far as he testifies in our hearts that God is propitious; inasmuch, namely, as he *moves our hearts to assent to the promise*, and to settle that we are received by God."

(2) Nor can much more be said with regard to the witness of the Spirit to the divine origin and authority of the word. As is implied in the passages quoted under the last head, he held that the "word of God" is one of the necessary co-operative "causes" of conversion; and although he had primarily in view the "certi et immoti articuli fidei, combinationes et promissiones divinæ," when he spoke of the

<sup>1</sup> Gass, Geschichte, etc., i. 29 f.

<sup>2</sup> Corpus Doctrinæ Philipp. (Strassburg, 1580), p. 421, quoted by Müller, Stud. u. Kritiken, 1856, p. 346 f.

"word of God" in this connection,<sup>1</sup> in all probability, after Luther's manner, he identified the word and the Scriptures, though more naïvely than formally.

It is somewhat remarkable, considering that the Reformation took its stand, or is supposed to have taken its stand, on the Bible as a divine authority, in opposition to the assumptions of Rome, that Melanchthon, its first theologian, should not have devoted a single special paragraph to the question of the Scriptures in his "Loci;" and that neither of the two Confessions, in the compilation of which he took a leading part, namely, the "Confessio Augustana" and the "Confessio Saxonica,"<sup>2</sup> should contain an article on the Scripture. In the fifth of the former, however, references are made to the *verbum Dei*, and the fanatics are condemned who seek illumination *sine verbo Dei et extra evangelium*, supposing that they can have the Holy Spirit *sine verbo Dei*.<sup>3</sup> The first article of the latter is headed "De Doctrina," and in it God is said to be gathering "æternam ecclesiam *voce doctrinæ* quæ scripta est in libris prophetarum et apostolorum;" at the same time, it affirms that *all the* writings of the prophets and apostles are embraced *vera fide*.<sup>4</sup>

He touches the subject in the "Loci" under the section, "On the Difference between the Old and New Testaments;" verges on a recognition of the witness of the Spirit in the section, "On the Signs of the Church," where the words occur: "Those who wish to be disciples of the gospel listen,

<sup>1</sup> So Klaiber, "Das Testimonium S. S.," etc., in Dorner's Jahrbücher für deutsche Theologie, Vol. ii. p. 4. As indeed, one might say, is equally true of **most** theologians and preachers, practically considered. For all discrim-

in order that they may know God. In them, when they assent with fear and faith to the word of God, a *light is kindled*, by which they are aided to *discriminate between the gospel and human wisdom*, and may duly receive the articles of the doctrine regarding God," etc.<sup>1</sup>

The subject is also approached in a paragraph of the preface to the "Loci." After expounding the *causæ certitudinis* in philosophy, namely, sensuous experience, intuitive principles, as, e. g., that  $2 + 2 = 4$ , and logical inference or demonstration, he goes on to say, that in the—

"doctrine of the church the *causa certitudinis* is the revelation of God, who is true, and which is confirmed by certain and pre-eminent divine testimonies; as, for example, the resurrection of the dead, and many other miracles. But (he adds), *quia res sunt extra judicium humanæ mentis positæ, languidior est assensio, quæ fit, quia mens movetur illis testimoniis et miraculis et juvatur a Spiritu Sancto ad assentiendum.*"<sup>2</sup>

But even this is said with regard rather to the contents of Scripture, to the gospel, to the saving doctrines or substance or facts; in a word, to Jesus Christ and his work for the remission of sins, than to the Scriptures as a whole.

The contrast between Melancthon and Luther as to the witness of the Holy Spirit is clearly great. Into the probable reasons of the difference I cannot now enter. That the believer may and ought to have a firm confidence that he is forgiven and accepted by God, for Christ's sake; that the Holy Spirit co-operates in the generation of faith, and is given to believers; that the Scriptures were the word of God; that they were given by the inspiration of the Spirit; and that the Spirit's light and guidance are needed for the understanding of the truths of salvation, as of Scripture generally—all this he accepted; and yet there is the contrast noted.

2. Melancthon's contemporaries and successors down to

Communes," etc., appeared in various parts of Germany, all more or less based on his work or even designed to illustrate it. But none of them would seem to have shown an adequate appreciation of Luther's treatment of the subject we are considering. Their references to it, at all events, are marked by the vagueness which we have found to be characteristic of those of their theological leader Melancthon.<sup>1</sup> There is no lack of insistence on the possibility of certain assurance of forgiveness, especially where it was necessary explicitly to oppose the Romish error, so vigorously denounced by Luther, that it is presumptuous and perilous for a sinner to be so certain: and no doubts are hinted as to the divine origin of Scripture.

(1) Passing over Urbanus Regius, Brenz, and others, let us see what position is taken up by *Martin Chemnitz*.<sup>2</sup> By him, who was above all others the great polemic against the authority, doctrine, and practices of the Church of Rome, one would have expected the doctrine of the witness of the Spirit to be distinctly stated and formulated. It is all the more striking as it became customary at a later period to lay special stress on the witness of the Spirit in disputes with Rome. "Substantially," as is remarked by Klaiber,<sup>3</sup> "not only Chemnitz, but the vast majority, if not all the Lutheran systematic theologians of the sixteenth century,—certainly till Hunnius,—contented themselves, as did Melancthon, with general statements regarding the *efficacia Scripturæ Sacræ*. Neither in his 'Loci' nor his

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Heppe, iii. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Born Nov. 9th, 1522; died, April 8th, 1586. His two chief works were the *Examen Decretorum Concilii Tridentini*, etc., 1565-1573; and *Loci theologici*, etc., edited by Polyc. Leyrer. He began his career by lecturing at Wittenberg on Melancthon's "Loci." After he was made Superintendent

'Examen' does Chemnitz mention the *testimonium Spiritus Sancti*." He does not even devote a special section of the "Loci" to the doctrine of Sacred Scripture. When he makes occasional references to Scripture, as, for example, in the "Locus de Deo,"<sup>1</sup> he goes no further than to say that God has adjoined to his word *certum aliquod testimonium*, understanding thereby principally the miracles of revelation and the marvellous deliverances vouchsafed to his people. So also in the "Theses de Verbo Dei" appended to the "Loci" (iii. 568), he restricts himself to the remark that God "confirmed his word by remarkable miracles," and caused it to be written and handed down by witnesses "approved by divine authority and sure evidences."

"In the 'Examen,' his aim is to show, not so much how the revealed word proves itself to be such to man, as rather why the *written* word should be the full and exclusive source and rule of faith. Owing to the uncertainty that characterizes oral tradition, God himself arranged that his word should be committed to writing, and be preserved in its purity, by means of 'Scriptures divinely inspired.'"

Hence the use and authority of the written word. The authority of the word is mainly due to its inspiration.

"In order that the entire matter might be most sure and certain, in opposition to all sorts of impostures, God chose out certain men for the work of writing, and equipped them with many miracles and divine testimonials, that there might be no doubt that what they wrote was divinely inspired. The rôle of the early church was primarily only that of an historical witness to the fact that certain writings were composed and approved by the apostles, which apostolic authorship and approbation constituted their canonical dignity. The tendency of his entire argument is to deny to later tradition the right to set itself in evidence of authenticity and to limit the same to the early church. He makes no mention of the *testimonium Spiritus Sancti*."

(2) Mention should be made of another theologian who supplies an almost direct proof that the doctrine of the witness of the Spirit, especially in relation to the word of God, had lost its significance, or even dropped out of mind, namely *Selnecker*,<sup>2</sup> who, though at first a zealous disciple of Melancthon, afterwards became his theological opponent.

<sup>1</sup> Loci, ed. Leyrer, tom. i. 55.

<sup>2</sup> Heppe, Dogmatik, i. 96 ff.



His works may be regarded as constituting the transition in Saxony from Melanchthonianism to the later Lutheranism. He was one of the first to treat with some care the *locus de Scriptura Sacra*; but the argument from the witness of the Spirit is not included among the eleven reasons which he adduces in favor of the *certitudo Scripturæ Sacræ*, though there is a reference in passing to its practical aspect. The list is pretty nearly the same as that which it became usual for theologians to give: (*a*) their divine authority and revelation; (*b*) their antiquity; (*c*) miracles such as were inimitable by and impossible to the Devil, as, e.g., the exodus of Israel from Egypt; (*d*) the fulfilment of prophecy; (*e*) the nature and majesty of the doctrines divinely revealed therein; (*f*) their style, which demonstrates the presence and glory of the Holy Spirit; (*g*) the harmony of the Old and New Testaments; (*h*) the conservation and propagation of the doctrine; (*i*) the multitude of godly men, martyrs, and confessors; (*j*) the universal experience of believers, to whom has been given the *witness of the Spirit that they are truly the sons of God*; (*k*) the fury of the Devil, blasphemers, heretics, tyrants, who in all ages have opposed the doctrine of the prophets and apostles, but whom God always repressed and punished.<sup>1</sup>

The same position was taken up by Heerbrand, Sarcerius, Hafsenreffer, Heshus, and the minor lights, whether less or more completely non- or anti-Melanchthonian, down to or with the exception of Hunnius, who seems to have been the first to take a new departure.

### III. THE NEW DEPARTURE.

The first theologian of the Lutheran Church to treat in a

1. *Aegidius Hunnius*.<sup>1</sup>

With regard to its practical aspect he speaks as follows:—

“In what way dost thou prove that believers are able and ought to be certainly assured that they possess the favor of God? This is evident, first of all, from the immovable fixity of the divine promise. . . . The second ground is the sealing of the Spirit. For truly, in order that we may not be compelled, after the manner of the Gentiles and Romanists, to remain in doubt regarding the grace of God, God confirms his grace towards us, not only by a verbal promise, but by a most sacred oath; yea, also seals it efficaciously by his Spirit in the hearts of the elect, in order that they might certainly know themselves to be the sons of God. Which thing is clear from the indubitable testimony of Holy Scripture; see, for example, 2 Cor. i. 22, ‘*Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts;*’ further, Eph. i. 13, ‘*Ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise;*’ also Rom. viii. 15, 16. Since then the Holy Spirit is called by Christ the Spirit of truth (John xv. 26), yea, is truth itself (1 John v. 6), and he seals the grace of God in each individual believer, and bears witness to all believers that they are the sons of God, it follows that those serfs of antichrist, the Romanists, are guilty of a diabolical lie, when they pretend that those who are justified neither can nor ought to be confident of enjoying the grace of God. For what else is this but blasphemously to allege that when the Holy Spirit bears witness with the spirit of believers, that they are sons of God, it is nevertheless right to doubt whether this witness of the Divine Spirit be true or false?. Which verily is to inflict an enormous insult on the Spirit of grace.”<sup>2</sup>

As to the matter of inward certitude, others before Hunnius had been distinct enough. Indeed, this was a point on which all Protestants insisted, in opposition to the Romanists. But the predecessors of Hunnius did not connect it as distinctly as he does with the witness of the Spirit, though he does not enter into an examination of its method and scope. He refers to the *intellectual* aspect of the Spirit’s witness when adducing arguments for the divine origin and

<sup>1</sup> Born, 1550; died, 1603. Author of a collection of “Disputationes”

authority of Scripture. It is the fifth in the list; and his words are as follows:<sup>1</sup>—

"God himself seals the certitude of the truth of the prophetic and apostolic doctrine in the hearts of his saints by the earnest of his Spirit. And this argument is of all others, as the surest, so the most efficacious for the confirmation of the authority of the Scriptures, when the entire multitude of believers throughout the earth feels in its heart that these Scriptures, together with the promises which they contain, are fortified by the sentence and suffrage of God himself; yea, indeed, by a more than trans-celestial and plainly divine seal. Not that unbelievers are able to perceive the strength of this evidence; it is discernible only by believers, who understand that the grace of God and the certainty of the divine promises are ratified by the earnest of the Spirit."<sup>2</sup>

As the writer to whom I am indebted for this quotation remarks, it is interesting to note, first,—

"The transition made from the subjective sealing of the grace of God by the Holy Spirit to the certainty of the divine promises, and from these latter to the Scriptures in which they are contained; and then how he repudiates the idea that it can be an argument or demonstration for others. In the connection in which the words occur Hunnius also carefully distinguishes the argument from the witness of the Spirit from two others which in later days—even, one might say, in our own day—were substituted for it: that, namely *à consolatione* which the Scriptures afford in all circumstances of the inner and outer life; and that '*ab effectibus quos in vita hominum gubernanda declarat,*' in other words, from the moral influence exercised by the Scriptures."<sup>3</sup>

2. Still more clearly in a certain respect, though not yet in a thoroughly satisfactory manner, does *Leonhard Hutter*<sup>3</sup> express himself with regard to the theoretical aspect of the subject. Distinguishing between the objective, so to speak, external *ground* of the authority of the Scriptures, namely, their divine origin, and the *way* in which we become assured of this same divine origin and authority, he says with regard to the latter (see quæst. i. prop. i.):—

<sup>1</sup> See also the same author's *De Mysterio Spiritus Sancti, et Veritate Verborum Sacrorum*.

“1. It is evident to us, not only from the testimony of the primitive church, but also from internal *κριτηρια*, such as miracles, the constancy of martyrs, and the like. . . . We do not, however, attain to full and saving *πληροφοριαν*, till the same Spirit by whom the books were written and published testifies in our minds to their canonical authority *by those internal κριτηρια*. God speaks also to us to-day, not indeed *ἀμέσως*, immediately, yet mediately; not indeed through the church, but through the *θεοπνεύστους* Scriptures; and the Holy Spirit testifies to-day in us concerning or to the divine authority of the Scriptures” (quæst. ii. prop. i.).<sup>1</sup>

Whilst Hutter clearly assigns to the witness of the Spirit the highest position among the arguments for the divinity of Scripture, he leaves us in doubt or uncertainty with regard to the precise nature and mode of that witness. Some of his words, strictly taken, would warrant the conclusion that the Spirit testifies by means or through the medium of the internal *criteria*; and that, though he uses them, his testimony is not only indistinguishable from, but even identical with, theirs.<sup>2</sup> Other words, however,—for example, those in the last clause,—might bear a somewhat fuller meaning. The truth seems, after all, to be, that he was feeling his way towards, rather than actually expounding, a clear and definite formulation of what he felt to be the teaching alike of the church, the Scriptures, and experience.

Nothing material is added to the subject by later theologians like J. Gerhard, J. A. Osiander, Quenstedt, and others. They do but distinguish, define, correlate, with greater exactness and logical consistency. For the rest, one can scarcely speak of development, and therefore not of history. It is remarkable that scarcely a single theologian seems to have dreamed of looking at the subject from the psychologi-

know, was *Hieronymus Kromayer*,<sup>1</sup> a younger contemporary of J. A. Oslander. He says:—

"The Holy Spirit bears witness to our spirit in such wise that we at once know that it is given by him, and that it is divine. For as we learn by the fact itself that we live while we live, and believe while we believe; so, whilst the Holy Spirit confirms the truth in us, whilst he *operates* by the word *and testifies* concerning the word within, we in like manner experience, in the act itself, that he operates and testifies within. And as one who believes does not look out for reasons, from which it may appear to himself that he believes, but is sensible himself of his own faith, so also, in relation to the internal *operation and witness* of the Holy Spirit, he who experiences it has no need of a new argument to convince himself that that operation and witness are divine; for he perceives at once a sense of divinity in the very act itself and in the preternatural motion of his own heart."<sup>2</sup>

4. The well-known divine, *David Hollaz*, is worthy of more than a passing mention with regard to the witness of the Spirit. So far as Scripture is concerned Hollaz distinguishes three grades of certitude:—

"The absolute and highest, the middle, the lowest. The highest degree of certitude in our assent to the Holy Scripture is brought about by the internal witness of the Holy Spirit."<sup>3</sup>

"The chief and ultimate reason for believing with divine faith (*fide divina*) that this written word, and what we either read, hear, or believe out of the Scriptures, is true and divine, is the authority of God alone, now revealing externally, then sealing internally," etc.<sup>4</sup>

The nature of this witness he describes as follows:—

"The witness of the Holy Spirit is a supernatural act of the Holy Spirit, whereby, after having communicated his own divine energy to Holy Scripture, he so strives, opens, illuminates, and bends the heart of man to the obedience of faith, through the medium of the said word attentively read or heard, that a man who has been illuminated by external spiritual motions verily perceives that the word presented to him has proceeded from God, and accordingly gives it undisturbed assent. . . . As often as the divine word of the law and gospel is attentively read or heard, a teachable man *perceives* its heart-stirring force, and *gathers* from internal acts of his heart and super-

<sup>1</sup> See his *Theologia Positiva-polemica*, etc. (Leps., 1671).

<sup>2</sup> Quoted by Klaiber, *l. c.*, p. 18.

<sup>3</sup> Klaiber, *l. c.*, p. 14. His chief work was the *Examen Theologicum Acromaticum universam Theologiam Thetico-polemica[m] complectens*, published 1707.

<sup>4</sup> See Klaiber, *l. c.*, p. 16.

natural motions that God speaks with him. Those acts, so far as the intellect is concerned, are a light of supernatural knowledge and inspired holy thought; as far as the will is concerned, are spiritual motions, such as sorrow for sin, desire to learn and progress, pious love towards God, revealing a sweet inclination to enjoin on the intellect, already enlightened with some spiritual light, an unshaken acceptance of the things that are to be believed—spiritual joy.”<sup>1</sup>

In another place, meeting an obvious difficulty that had arisen, he says:—

“But if we ask, Is that Spirit a divine or an evil Spirit? we fall back on the proof from the effect, which is divine and saving, that the Spirit, who testifies within to the divine origin of Scripture, must be divine, most holy, most good.”<sup>2</sup>

From what he says here and elsewhere, it would seem that in the judgment of Hollaz—

“the internal witness of the Spirit concerning the authenticity of Sacred Scripture coincides as to substance with the efficacy of the Scripture. So far as the Sacred Scripture, attentively read and carefully meditated, illumines the intellect of a man, so that he clearly recognises its *θεοπνευστων*, and draws his will to consent thereto, this effect the Holy Spirit produces by means of the word properly used. For the effective energy which we ascribe to the word of God for the production of illumination, conversion, renovation, and confirmation is truly divine, and differs in nothing, as to substance, from the energy of the Holy Spirit working in the hearts of men; although there is a difference in the mode of wielding the power, inasmuch, namely, as that which belongs to the Spirit of and through himself, as the principal cause, belongs to the word participatively, as the instrumental cause.”<sup>3</sup>

5. I will conclude this review of Lutheran teachings with a reference to *J. G. Baier*,<sup>4</sup> whose “Compendium of Positive Theology” supplied theological instruction to many generations of German students.

(1) He touches on the practical aspect of the witness of the Spirit only very briefly, as follows:—

“Those who believe are both able and accustomed to know, with infallible

<sup>1</sup> Klaiber, *l. c.*, p. 17.      <sup>2</sup> Klaiber, *l. c.*, p. 32 (Hollaz, p. 120).

<sup>3</sup> Klaiber, *l. c.*, p. 26; Hollaz, p. 117.

<sup>4</sup> Born, 1647; died, 1695. He was many years professor of theology at Jena. He published various works, but the one from which I am quoting was perhaps the most important, namely, *Compendium Theologiæ Positivæ*, first published at Jena in 1686.

certitude, that they truly believe—believe with divine and not merely with human faith. Not indeed always in every state; for in case of temptation, it may and does happen that even true believers will fail to perceive their own faith; but sometimes, and when they descend into themselves in a more calm and tranquil spirit; for verily, as in the case of other acts of cognition, so in that of the acts of faith in Christ, although they are supernatural, yet when reflecting on themselves, they manifest themselves to the intellect: *First*, by their very being, which is supernatural, and so far according to their supernatural nature. *Secondly*, by the supernatural witness of the Holy Spirit, in which he testifies in the mind of a believer concerning those acts reflecting on themselves, even as it is said in Rom. viii. 16. *Thirdly*, by added acts of faith, love, and the like fruits of supernatural faith—which themselves certainly and infallibly testify to the truth of supernatural faith itself."<sup>1</sup>

What he means is not quite clear. At all events, a testimony that certain acts are acts of true faith in Christ does not at first sight seem to exhaust the meaning of Paul's words, "The Spirit also beareth witness with our spirit that we are sons of God." In fact, Baier seems to stand at the turning-point, and already to be initiating the transition from the element of directness in the Spirit's witness to that of mere inference. So far as the words quoted go, the function of the Spirit's witness is to establish the truth of one of the premises from which the believer argues with infallible certainty that he is a true believer, and therefore a true son of God. But this does not seem to be the meaning of Paul's words, which he is professing to interpret.

(2) With regard to the *intellectual* aspect of the Spirit's witness he is more full and explicit, though whether he shows an adequate appreciation of its significance is another question.

"The doctrine itself of Scripture always begets the divine faith, by which the divine origin of the matter or doctrine of Scripture is recognized, provided it be read or heard with attention. It does so immediately of itself, though on the ground of a divine virtue always and indissolubly conjoined with it."

By way of further explanation he adds:—

"The ultimate reason of 'divine faith' is the divine revelation itself, con-

<sup>1</sup> Compendium Theologiæ, ed. Preuss (Berlin, 1864), § xvi. p. 395 f.

tained in the Scriptures, to which assent is given; nor is it resolvable into another distinct revelation, or any other ulterior reason of assent."

"Divine revelation or Holy Scripture by itself alone, apart from the supernatural *concursus* of God, is not a full, rational motive for supernatural assent to its dependence on God. The *words*, as such, apart from that supernatural *concursus*, cannot move the intellect to more than a simple apprehension of the things which they signify. The *things* represented to the intellect by the words, even when apprehended, are inevident in themselves; and without divine *concursus*, the will, being as it were dead to spiritual things, is not moved to enjoin assent on the intellect."

"Although the authority and efficacy of Scripture ought not to be confounded, it is certain that the latter is conjoined with the former in the measure in which God or his power—which makes Scripture efficacious—co-operates."<sup>1</sup>

"This indeed is the only argument by which 'divine faith' (*fides divina*, as distinguished from *fides humana*) concerning the divine origin of the doctrine comprised in the Scriptures is generated in individual men: it may be the case even when arguments fitted to produce human (historical) faith have not been employed. Yet it must be allowed that arguments of the latter class should as a rule be first used for the conversion of others; nay, more, they are sometimes of service, not to say necessary, to believers, when harassed by temptations and difficulties."

Elucidating the point still further he remarks:—

"The ordinary arguments serve indeed first to move and conciliate, then to convict an adversary, but not so to persuade him as either to enkindle or foster or sustain that full assurance of faith, by which, as by a celestial radiance, all the mists of a mind in conflict with itself are dissipated. Which full assurance is the benefit of the Holy Spirit, who, as Augustine saith, hath his throne in the heavens, and yet teacheth within the heart. . . . Those arguments do not enkindle divine faith, until the internal witness of the Holy Spirit is added, forming in the minds of individual believers the following minor premise and the following conclusion: 'This word, contained in these books, is such and such; therefore it is divine.' But when the efficacy of Scripture is regarded, so far as it is put forth in the hearts of men, by means of acts of illumination, conversion, and so forth, it is nothing else than that very testimony of the Holy Spirit which he, by co-operating with the doctrine of Scripture, bears in the heart concerning the divine origin of the doctrine, thus producing assent. It is thus necessary that the efficacy of Scripture



as something without which, in point of fact, they would fall short of accomplishing their purpose—he really identifies the two. At all events, if he do not exactly identify the two, he reduces the Spirit's witness to his work in rendering those other arguments efficacious. Without his co-operation with them, unless he communicate to them his energy, they will not effect their purpose; but this can scarcely be truly designated his "witness" to the divine origin of the Scriptures, whether it be an adequate interpretation of their teachings on the subject or not.

As was already remarked in connection with the practical aspect of the Spirit's witness, Baier may be regarded as standing at the parting of the ways. The generation that succeeded him soon distinctly resolved the witness of the Spirit *practically* into a matter of inference from states of mind which the Spirit was still held to have generated; *intellectually*, into an inference from the effects, especially on the moral and religious nature of man and on his feelings, produced by Scripture or by its truths—effects however which for some time continued to be deemed unproducable without the Spirit's co-operation. As far then as the Lutheran Church is concerned, Baier closes the seventeenth century and inaugurates the eighteenth, under whose ban the mind of Christendom is still largely living.