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The Witness of Jesus and Old Testament Authorship

INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT

Differences of opinion exist within The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod on the import of the words of Christ and other statements of Holy Scripture concerning the human authorship of certain Old Testament books. Much of the concern in this issue is not intrinsically isagogical, but is rather related to the *sola scriptura* and *solus Christus* principles of Lutheranism. Some maintain that Christ and the Biblical authors clearly teach that Moses wrote the Pentateuch, Isaiah and Daniel wrote the entire books that bear their names, and David wrote Psalm 110, while others question these conclusions. This difference of opinion raises a Christological question: Can one question the designations of authorship employed by Jesus without thereby calling into question His sinless manhood, omniscience, and even His deity? It also raises a question with regard to the authority of Scripture: Can one challenge any statement of Holy Scripture on the authorship of Biblical books without thereby challenging the authority and truthfulness of the Scriptures?

At the request of President Harms the Commission on Theology and Church Relations has begun a study of these questions. As a first and major step in this study the commission has discussed the Christological aspect of the authorship problem. It has examined Jesus' statements on Old Testament authorship in the light of His general attitude toward and use of the Old Testament. It has explored particularly the relationship of the authorship question to our Lord's *kenosis*, or humiliation. Specifically, it has asked two questions: Does the fact that Jesus in the state of humiliation did not always or fully use His divine omniscience suggest anything about the nature of His references to the authorship of Old Testament books? What do Jesus' own words with regard to the Old Testament actually allow or even require us in believing obedience to affirm about the authorship of Old Testament books?

While the commission continues to explore other aspects of the authorship problem, it herewith offers the following essay to the Synod as a study document that attempts to speak directly to the Christological questions indicated above. This is done in the hope that a consideration of the materials contained in it may help the church toward an exegetically based and balanced view of the issue in its Christological-soteriological dimension. It is this dimension, surely, that rightly and inevitably makes the issue a matter of deep concern and passionate involvement for members of the church. If mutual understanding can be attained here, we shall, under the grace of God, be in a fair way to resolve the issue.

The significance and the weight of Jesus' witness to the Old Testament (more specifically, to the authenticity and integrity of certain Old Testament books) should be assessed within the larger and more specifically theological context of His use of the Old Testament in His ministry. We should ask: What will, or intent, controls or shapes His use of the Old Testament? Otherwise we may be led to ask the wrong questions of the texts and to attempt to find answers that our texts cannot give. In this connection the question of our Lord's *kenosis*, His self-emptying on becoming man, assumes critical importance. Our conception of His *kenosis* will dictate the answer to the question: Is Jesus, in His use of the Old Testament, merely a first-century Palestinian Jew, or is He the incarnate Son of God?

I. THE MEANING OF KENOSIS

The term *kenosis* is, of course, derived from the phrase in Phil. 2:7: "He emptied Himself" (*heauton ekenosen*). What is the meaning of that phrase? Both the context of the phrase and the background of the phrase in Is. 53 indicate that it relates to the *will* of the Son of God rather than to His intellect, or knowledge; it describes a self-giving rather than a self-diminution.

The *context* is hortatory. Paul is shaping the will of the Philippians, inculcating a will of selflessness and humility as the way to unity (cf. Phil. 1:27; 2:2, 4, 12, 14), by pointing to the Servant-will of the Son of God. The Greek verb rendered by "have this mind" (*phronein*) in verse 5 has a strongly volitive character, as is manifest when one compares its use in such passages as Matt. 16:23; Rom. 8:5; 11:20; 12:16; 15:5; Phil. 3:15, 19; 4:10; Col. 3:2 (cp. 3:1).

That Is. 53 constitutes the background to the Pauline hymn on the Servant Son of God (Phil. 2:6-11) seems virtually certain. Besides the verbal resemblances,¹ Paul's hymn has in common with Is. 52:13—53:12: the humiliation-exaltation antithesis; the stress on the voluntary character of the humiliation; the fact that obedience is obedience to the full, unto death. The *heauton ekenosen* of Phil. 2:7 corresponds in a very literal way to the Hebrew text of Is. 53:12 ("He poured out his soul to death"). For the significance of the Hebrew word there used, compare Gen. 24:20 (where the Septuagint renders *exekenosen*); Is. 32:15; Ps. 141:8.

Just as "pouring out the soul to death" serves in Is. 53:12 as a final summary of the Servant's ministry, so in Phil. 2:7 *heauton ekenosen* serves as a heading, or thematic announcement, of the history of the humiliation of the Son of God. The *kenosis* of Phil. 2 is, then, an act of will; Christ is the acting subject of the first half of the hymn (vv. 6—9), as He is the object of God's action in the second half (vv. 10—11). *Kenosis* describes His whole life as a ministry of self-giving, culminating in a self-giving into death. This ministry as described in Phil. 2 necessarily involves self-consciousness of Sonship and the prerogatives of Sonship, a knowledge of the alternative to humiliation, and this too at every point of the ministry. Obedience without freedom is no longer obedience. Renunciation without knowledge of what is being renounced is no longer renunciation. And a Servant ministry performed without genuine obedience and genuine renunciation would no longer be an act of grace, a redemptive act. One might also note that other New Testament descriptions of the Incarnation in which Christ is the acting subject imply this same self-consciousness on the part of the Son of God incarnate. (2 Cor. 8:9; Gal. 2:20; Gal. 1:4; Eph. 5:2; 5:25; Rom. 15:3, 8)

Our Gospels are one long documentation of this volitive sense of the *kenosis* of our Lord. For the related questions of whether this *kenosis* involves a limitation of His knowledge the evidence is as follows.

¹ For a discussion of the verbal resemblances, see J. Jeremias in *TWNT*, V, pp. 708—709.

II. THE *KENOSIS* OF JESUS AND HIS KNOWLEDGE AS PORTRAYED IN THE GOSPELS

A. GENERAL

The gospels, both the Synoptics and John, use language of Jesus which, if pressed, would imply ignorance on His part. Thus He marvels (Matt. 8:10; Mark 6:6); He asks for information (Mark 5:30; 6:38; 8:5; 9:21; John 11:34); He is disappointed in an expectation (Mark 11:13). These instances of "ignorance" are probably the sort of thing that is inevitable in any phenomenological depiction of Jesus' way on earth. Most of them occur, it might be noted, in close connection with massive disclosures of His extraordinary authority. They hardly constitute grounds for long theological conclusions.

More important is the one case where Jesus expressly professes ignorance (Matt. 24:36; Mark 13:32; for Luke, cp. Acts 1:7), and that too on an important point, the time of His return. It should be noted, however, that in the preceding verses Jesus has claimed for His words an authority and an enduring validity that surpasses even that which He claims for the Law in Matt. 5:18. Furthermore, He here speaks of "*the* Son" in relationship to "*the* Father" in a manner reminiscent of one of His mightiest Christological self-attestations in Matt. 11:27. And Jesus stresses the exceptional character of this ignorance on His part: "*not even* the Son" knows that day and hour.

This eschatological "ignorance" of Jesus is, therefore, carefully circumscribed. And it remains, for our understanding, psychologically opaque: to know the Father in the sense of Matt. 11:27, to know the future of the world and the church, to know of the judgment and the world to come, and not to know the day and hour of His own return—this remains for us an inexplicable juxtaposition, something we can say but cannot think, and reminds us of the limitations set to our understanding of our Lord.

The larger question of whether Jesus was "mistaken" in His eschatological expectation can only be touched on here (Matt. 24:34). Was His expectation what is usually called *Naberwartung*, and was He therefore mistaken in it? Regin Prenter in his sane and Biblically grounded discussion of this question in his *Schoepfung und Erloesung* has strongly maintained that the alternative *Naberwartung-Fernerwartung* sets up a false dilemma and that the emphasis of Jesus is rather on the suddenness, the complete incalculability, of His coming.² "As a thief in the night" (Matt. 24:23) remains the characteristic note of His proclamation on this point, and it was thus that His apostles understood Him. (1 Thess. 5:2; 2 Peter 3:10; Rev. 3:3; 16:15)

² Regin Prenter, *Schoepfung und Erloesung* (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1960), p. 516. "The Return [of Christ] is, just because it is really the end of the history of this world, equally near at all times; for it is not to be brought on by any historical process of development. One can only watch and pray. . . . Therefore it is nonsense to say that Jesus was "mistaken" in His expectation of the nearness of His Return (Mark 9:9; Matt. 10:23; Mark 13:30). Jesus is not mistaken, no more than anyone else is mistaken if he expects the Return at any moment. . . . Talk of a "delayed Return" can arise only when men have ceased to watch and pray and have instead begun to speculate and muse about the time of the Return. In the New Testament this thought therefore occurs only on the lips of mockers (2 Peter 3:3-10)."

The two notices in Luke concerning the "development" of the child Jesus (Luke 2:40; 2:52) hardly afford a sufficient basis for a theory of an intellectual *kenosis*. Luke here uses traditional Old Testamental language (cf. 1 Sam. 2:21, 26; 3:1), which is certainly expressive of the genuine humanity of our Lord but hardly affords material for far-reaching Christological constructions. We should remember also that we have no analogies for His childhood; even the growth of a sinless child is without parallel in our experience, and that a child should have grown up sinless in Nazareth remains an impenetrable mystery. Above all, the one glimpse of Jesus' childhood given by Luke (2:41-52) shows Jesus possessed of a high self-consciousness of His being and mission: Jesus in the temple is either a disrespectful son of Joseph and Mary — or the Son of God.

On the other hand, the Gospels attribute to Jesus a knowledge that goes far beyond anything attributed even to great men of God, such as the prophets. Jesus knows "what is in man";³ He is fully and vividly aware of the scope and purpose of His mission on earth;⁴ the evidence is particularly full and explicit concerning Jesus' knowledge of His impending Passion: Jesus knows that He must suffer and die and rise again;⁵ He knows His betrayer;⁶ He knows His "hour";⁷ He knows even the future of the church, of Israel, of Jerusalem, of the world; He knows of judgment and the life of the world to come. (E.g. Matt. 24—25)

Above all, He "knows" God in a sense and in a fullness that He shares with no man (Matt. 11:27). This knowledge is, of course, not merely or even primarily intellectual. Both the context of the saying and the usage of the word "know" make that plain. But there is a noetic element in it, an element that is more prominent in the Lucan form of the saying: "No one knows who . . . the Father is except the Son." (Luke 10:22)

B. JESUS' KNOWLEDGE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

For the purposes of this study it will be enough simply to recall the well-known and profoundly significant fact of Jesus' wide and deep acquaintance with the Old Testament and the fact that His language and thought is saturated with "Old Testament."⁹ This study is more directly concerned with the *kenosis*-will of Jesus as it finds expression in His use of the Old Testament. That will is expressed in His call to repentance and in His proclamation of the kingdom of God present and operative in

³ John 2:24-25; Matt. 9:4; Luke 6:8; 7:39-40; 9:47; 19:5; John 1:47-48; 4:17-18, 29.

⁴ Compare the "I am come" and "I am" sayings.

⁵ E.g., Matt. 16:21; 17:22-23; 20:18-19; 17:12; 26:2; John 12:24; 18:4.

⁶ Luke 22:21; John 6:70-71; 13:11.

⁷ John 12:23, 27; 13:1; Matt. 26:6-13, cf. 26:2.

details of the coming events.⁸ He knows the eschatological reach of His mission: the

⁸ Matt. 21:2-3; Luke 22:10-13.

⁹ For a good brief treatment, see Paul Feine, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments*⁸ (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1951), pp. 20—23.

His person. These two cannot, of course, always be cleanly separated since the call to repentance and the proclamation of the Kingdom are organically interrelated: in calling men to repentance Jesus is bidding men turn to the Kingdom which has drawn near in His person, and in proclaiming the Kingdom He is summoning men to repentance, that they may not lose its blessings.

1. *The Old Testament in the Service of Jesus' Call to Repentance: "Have you not read?"*

The revelation which Jesus brings (and is) is *culminating* revelation: "The time is *fulfilled*, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the Gospel" (Mark 1:15). The "law" governing Israel's relationship to God's new revelation is therefore: "To him who has will more be given, and he will have in abundance; but from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away." (Matt. 13:12)

It is therefore an integral part in Jesus' call to repentance to bid Israel "have" what God has given Israel, to "have" the Old Testament revelation, to appropriate and use fully the given gift lest by neglecting and desecrating that gift the men of Israel make God's further and final giving impossible. The men of Israel with whom Jesus was dealing were *sola Scriptura* men; Jesus sought to make of them *tota Scriptura* men in order that they might receive and accept Him, the last Word of God. That is why, on His lips, words like "Have you not read?" and "Go and learn what this means" are such significant words.

In the Sabbath controversy of Matt. 12:1-8 the "Have you not read?" question occurs three times. Jesus points the Pharisees who judge His disciples to be guilty of profaning the Sabbath to the Former Prophets (1 Sam. 21:7), to the Law (Num. 28:9), and to the Latter Prophets (Hos. 6:6). He bids them really have what they have in their Bible, really hear the Word of God, which can give them eyes to see and hearts to understand what God is now doing in Him who is greater than David, more than the temple, and the very incarnation of the mercy of God. Jesus is bidding these men repent, to turn from their preconceived notions of sanctity to Himself, and to receive in Him all that the Sabbath, the temple, and the anointed king prefigured and promised.

The controversy concerning the traditions of the elders in Matt. 15:1 ff. shows us Jesus seeking to break through the encrustation of a petrified piety in order to reach the conscience of scribe and Pharisee. He does so with the words of the Old Testament, the Word of God. He points these men, entangled in the loveless casuistry of Korban (which was, in a way, a "correct" exegesis of the First Commandment: the claim of God overrides every other claim), to the will of God which asked of Israel a love for God and a love for man in indissoluble unity. He shows them what had become plain in His temptation: that it is a satanic will which uses one word of Scripture to cancel out another. He bids them turn from a cloven and perverted worship to a whole and pure service.

"Have you not read?" recurs in the controversy concerning marriage and divorce in Matt. 19:1 ff. As in the case of Korban casuistry, so in the matter of the casuistry of divorce, which had made "successive polygamy" a legitimate way of life in Judaism,

Jesus confronts man with the living God of the Old Testament, the God who in Creator-love and Creator-care for man had bound man to woman with an indissoluble bond. The thought of this same question, if not the words, occurs also in Jesus' answer to the man who asked the question concerning the good that must be done to gain eternal life (Matt. 19:16 ff.). Jesus points him to the one good God, the God of the Old Testament, whose word and will are clear and inescapable. And the same question is implicit when Jesus indicts a commercialized religion in search of guaranteed security with the words of Isaiah concerning the house of God as a house of prayer and with Jeremiah's condemnation of a temple worship that has made the temple a den of robbers. (Matt. 21:13)

The parable of the Wicked Husbandmen, that searching and penetrating parable of repentance (Matt. 21:33-44), in its way asks the "Have you not read?" question too. It begins and ends with citations from the Old Testament, the Song of the Vineyard from Isaiah (5:1-7) and the word concerning the Rejected Stone (Ps. 118:22-23). And when Jesus seeks to break through the cool, ironic rationality of the Sadducees, He uses the Old Testament word of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of the living and not of the dead, to give them eyes for the power of God whose Word still speaks to them in their Bible (Matt. 22:29-32). The words "You know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God" are still another version of the question: "Have you not read?" Still another form of the same question appears in father Abraham's reply to the rich man in the parable: "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them." (Luke 16:29)

"Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand this?" (John 3:10). Jesus' reply to Nicodemus' incredulous "How can this be?" is still another version of His repentance-creating question. The teacher of Israel who knows the Scriptures has read them to little purpose if these Scriptures have not given him any sense for the inexplicable workings of the Spirit of God.

Another Johannine variant of the same question appears in the words of Jesus in John 5:36-40. The Jews are searching the Scriptures, and for the right reason; they seek eternal life. And yet they do not have in it the word of the Father of Jesus, the Light of the world, as a word abiding in them. And this not-having manifests itself in their refusal to believe in Him whom the Father has sent, the One to whom the Scriptures bear witness—a terrifying example of how man can "have" and yet "not have" and so lose even what he "has." A similarly drastic call to repentance occurs in John 5:45-47. (If you would believe the writings of Moses, you could believe My words.)

2. The Old Testament in the Service of Jesus' Proclamation of the Kingdom Present in His Person.

Both the Synoptics and John portray Jesus as interpreting His purpose and mission in Old Testament terms, by means of reminiscences of, allusions to, and quotations from the Bible of Israel. In the Synoptics Jesus points up the significance and greatness of His forerunner, the Baptist, in Old Testament terms: John is a prophet (and more

than a prophet), the messenger promised in Malachi, the returning Elijah of the last days. (Matt. 11:9-14)

The programmatic opening proclamation of Jesus in Matthew (4:17) recalls the substance and the promises of the Old Testament with the term "kingdom of the heavens"; in Mark the phrase "the time is fulfilled" (1:15) makes the reference to the Old Testament more explicit; and in Luke the programmatic utterance of Jesus is the reading of an Old Testament text in the synagogue at Nazareth, with the interpretation: "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." (4:16-21)

The fact that the coming of the kingdom of God in the person of Jesus is God's Yes to the Law and the prophets is made plain not only in explicit statements like Matt. 5:17 but also in such touches as Jesus' command to the healed leper to show himself to the priest and bring the offering prescribed by Moses. (Matt. 8:4)

Jesus makes clear the ultimately universal character of His mission, proleptically actualized in the faith of the Gentile centurion, by employing the Old Testament picture of the eschatological pilgrimage of the nations to the Mountain of God and the great banquet prepared for all men: "Many will come from east and west and sit at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. 8:11; cf. Is. 2:2; Micah 4:1; Is. 25:6-8)

Jesus seeks to give the Pharisees eyes to see in His gratuitous forgiveness (expressed in table-fellowship with publicans and sinners) the work of the God of the Old Testament whom the prophets described as the Physician of Israel (e.g., Hos. 14:4), the God whose will, according to Hosea is: "I desire mercy and not sacrifice" (Hos. 6:6), the God whom Ezekiel had portrayed as the seeking Shepherd of the lost. (Matt. 9:12-13; Luke 15:1-7; Ezek. 34:11, 16)

Jesus' way to the cross is marked by Jesus Himself as ordained by the Old Testament prophetic word; He goes up to Jerusalem to die in order that all that was written by the prophets might be fulfilled; He is numbered with the transgressors because what is written "must" be fulfilled in Him (Luke 18:31; 22:37). He is the mysterious Smitten Shepherd of whom Zechariah spoke (Matt. 26:31; Zech. 13:7). The offensiveness of His unspectacular and "unsuccessful" Messianic way is part of the counsels of the God of the Old Testament who brings forth perfect praise out of the mouth of babes and sucklings (Matt. 21:16; Ps. 8:3) and makes the Stone which the builders rejected the Head of the corner in the triumphant structure which He erects. (Matt. 21:42; Ps. 118: 22-23)

Jesus' eschatological discourses are a veritable tapestry of Old Testament words and conceptions: the words of the Old Testament prophets, the days of Noah, the days of Lot, the fate of Lot's wife — these are the warp and woof of Jesus' apocalyptic utterances. There is really only one novelty in them, and that is the fact that it is His own return which constitutes the conclusion of the age and the consummation of all things.

Jesus discloses the significance of His Supper and His death to His disciples by means of the hallowed term "covenant" (Matt. 26:28), a term that recapitulated the whole Old Testament history of God's elective love and fidelity, of Israel's failure and

apostasy, and of the promise of a new creative covenant-act of God to restore His doomed people and to save a lost mankind. Before His judges, in the language of Daniel and Ps. 110, Jesus states the claim that will send Him to the cross. On the cross He prays the Psalter. And the risen Christ opens up the Old Testament Scriptures for His disciples and opens the mind of His disciples for the Scriptures. (Luke 24:25-27, 32, 44-47)

The situation is not essentially different in the Gospel According to John. John records that Jesus' contemporaries were amazed at His knowledge of the Scriptures (John 7:14-15), and the words of Jesus as recorded by the fourth evangelist have the same quality of Scripture-saturation as those recorded by the Synoptics. To cite but a few examples: Jesus attests Himself to Nathanael in language that recalls the vision of Jacob; Jesus claims to be no less than the House of God and the Gate to heaven (John 1:51; Gen. 28:12 ff.). To His people generally, too, Jesus states His claim and makes His appeal in terms of the Old Testament, in terms of the serpent lifted up by Moses in the wilderness (John 3:14), of bread from heaven (John 6:32 ff.), of the living waters of God (John 7:38), of Father Abraham (John 8:30-59), of the Good Shepherd whose selfless love is in shining contrast to the self-seeking will of the former shepherds of Israel (John 10:11 ff.). Even though His own, the Jews, receive Him not, He holds fast to the God of the Jews and the revelation given by Him: "Salvation is from the Jews" (John 4:22). And He sees in their demonically gratuitous hatred of Himself the fulfillment of the psalmist's words: "They hated me without a cause." (John 15:25; Ps. 69:4)

Even so small and random a sampling as this is enough to suggest where, for Jesus, the center of gravity lies: in the content, the functioning, and the power of the Old Testament Word of God.

C. JESUS' "ISAGOGICAL" KNOWLEDGE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

1. *Jesus and the Canon of Israel*

Jesus presupposes and accepts the canon of His people. His attitude does not appear in any set utterance on the canon but is clear from utterances like Matt. 23:35 (Abel to Zechariah, Gen. 4 to 2 Chron. 24) and Luke 24:44 (Law of Moses, Prophets, Psalms — the threefold division of the canon).

How completely functional Jesus' attitude toward the Jewish canon is, appears in His reply to the Sadducees' question (Matt. 22:31-32). He deals with them on the basis of their canon, the Torah. His criticism is not that they have an inadequate canon but that they do not face up to and take seriously the canon which they have and therefore do not know the power of the God who called Himself the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob long after Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had died.

Historically speaking, Jesus' positive attitude toward the Jewish canon is not a self-evident thing. If we think of the canon merely as a Judaic historical development, there is no reason, a priori, why Jesus' attitude toward the canon should be any less critical than it was toward many other aspects of the Judaic tradition, such as Judaic

legalism (egocentric religiosity, harshness toward sinners), the Judaic attitude toward divorce and their humiliating treatment of woman generally, the Jews' attitude toward Samaritans, their fevered nationalism, and their calculating apocalyptic. The canon is not merely a tradition of men; its formation is an act of God, and Jesus honored all acts of God.

2. *Jesus and the Authorship of Old Testament Books*

Jesus mentions four Biblical authors by name: Moses, David, Isaiah, and Daniel.

Moses. If we omit strict parallels, we find that Jesus speaks of Moses 12 times. Moses prescribed the gift to be offered by a cleansed leper (Matt. 8:4); he permitted divorce (Matt. 19:8), or wrote the sentence permitting divorce (Mark 10:5); he uttered the Fourth Commandment (Mark 7:10); Exodus is Moses' book (Mark 12:26); Moses "showed" in the narrative of the burning bush that the dead arise (Luke 20:37); all that is written in the law of Moses must be fulfilled (Luke 24:44); Moses the great intercessor will become the accuser of unbelieving Israel (John 5:45); Moses wrote concerning Christ (John 5:46); only he who believes Moses' writings can believe Jesus' sayings (John 5:47); Moses "gave" the Law to Israel (John 7:19); Moses "gave" circumcision to Israel (although circumcision is originally associated with the promise, not with the Law, John 7:22). To this one may add the words of Abraham in the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, since Abraham is here the mouthpiece of Jesus (Luke 16:29, 31), for a total of 14 references.

Isaiah. Jesus mentions Isaiah by name twice when He speaks of the "prophecy" of Isaiah (Matt. 13:14) and of the fact that Isaiah "prophesied." (Matt. 15:7-8)

Daniel. Jesus refers to Daniel by name only once (Matt. 24:15, "the desolating sacrilege spoken of by the prophet Daniel"), although Daniel is one of the Biblical books most frequently utilized by Jesus (the others being the Pentateuch, Isaiah, and Psalms).

In none of these cases can it be demonstrated conclusively whether or not Jesus is addressing Himself to the question of the authorship of entire Biblical books. But in all of them He is appealing to what is for Him and His hearers a divinely valid word.

David. David is named by Jesus as the author of Ps. 110 (Matt. 22:43, the only reference by Jesus to David as author). Here the situation is different. Jesus, taking the initiative, emphasizing the inspiration of David, stating His Messianic claim in the highest and (to Jews) blasphemous terms, argues *from* the Davidic authorship of the Psalm. It seems hardly conceivable that Jesus is simply taking over, as a controversial maneuver, the current Judaic conception of authorship and the Judaic Messianic interpretation of the Psalm and then giving it His own transcendent meaning. Such "cleverness" is, in Him, not credible.

But for the rest one must say: As isagogical evidence Jesus' references to the human authorship of Old Testament passages and books hardly permit more than the following conclusions:

1. Jesus accepted the Bible of His people as the Word of God, for Himself as for them.

2. Jesus used the designations of authorship employed by His people, without question and without comment. This does not prove anything concerning Jesus' divine omniscience or His sinless manhood. As for His divine omniscience, according to every record we possess of Jesus, this omniscience becomes visible and knowable to us only as He uses it in the service of His mission of seeking and saving the lost. He no more "displays" His knowledge than He "displays" His power; His miracles are all done for others, and His divine omniscience is in the service of His compassion. Neither the divine omniscience nor the sinless manhood of Jesus would be called into question even if it could be shown that He employs popular, traditional designations of Biblical books that may from some point of view be inadequate or inaccurate. He would not thereby be condoning or even helping to promulgate error. Nor would He be sharing in the darkness of fallen man's mind or tolerating his sin. Jesus wanted to communicate to His contemporaries; and it was their unbelief, not their notions, adequate or inadequate, concerning the authorship of Biblical books that made them lost sheep, lost coins, and lost and dead sons. He therefore uses human language in all its casual flexibility to call them to repentance and to proclaim the kingdom present in His person. In so doing He is being the obedient Son of God who loves His neighbor as Himself.

3. Jesus viewed Moses as a genuinely historical figure, the great mediator who stands at the beginning of Israel's history as a people and plays a primary role in the formation of her religious institutions and life. In this way He attests the Mosaic character of the books traditionally assigned to Moses: that is, He sees in Moses the major originative factor, as recipient and transmitter of revelation, of the content of the books. This content is, to borrow a phrase of G. Henton Davies, "a stream of material, whose source is Moses."

4. The indication of the authorship of the passages in question is never the main thrust of Jesus' utterances, whether they be Mosaic, Isaianic, or Danielic in origin. The force of the Old Testament words does not depend on the question of their human authorship. Whether Jesus says "your law" or mentions the human author "Moses," there is no evading the word spoken by God to His people.

"The words of Holy Scripture are like thousands upon thousands of messengers who go out on all the highways of the world, to accost and to summon each one of us, just where he walks, or stands, or has been left half-dead, to a confrontation with the living God," Wilhelm Vischer has said.¹⁰ — Many of these messengers are nameless. Concerning those who bear names, the evidence of the texts indicates that what was important for Jesus was not so much their names as the message they bore. This He clearly deemed to be of life-or-death importance for Himself and for all men.

¹⁰ *Das Christus Zeugnis des Alten Testaments* (Munich: Christian Kaiser Verlag, 1935), I, p. 37.