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The Principles and Teachings of the Dialectical Theology

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The Principles and Teachings of the Dialectical Theology.

(Continued.)

The principles ruling the dialectical theology are not those of the Reformation. Brunner repudiates the *formal* principle of Protestantism, the *sola Scriptura*. He refuses to accept Scripture as the sole authority, the only source and basis of doctrine. The bare words of Scripture cannot establish a doctrine. "In earlier days this discussion [concerning the Virgin Birth] used to be cut short by saying briefly, 'It is written'; that is, with the aid of the doctrine of verbal inspiration. To-day we can no longer do this, even if we would." (P. 323.) Brunner is consistent. Since he rejects the real inspiration of Scripture, he cannot accept the written word of Scripture as a real authority. Since it is in itself the word of man and the word of man is subject to error, it cannot demand instant and unquestioning acceptance. We heard Brunner say that "the literal words of the Pauline tradition" are not "beyond the reach of criticism" (p. 544). Then we hear him say that "facts whose historical details are still uncertain are therefore a most unsuitable foundation for faith" (p. 378). We certainly accept that rule. And therefore Brunner cannot conscientiously find in the non-inspired, unreliable word of Scripture a suitable foundation for faith. Brunner believes in "the authority of the Bible," but not in the sense that the real, bare, actual words of the Bible possess divine authority. That is "materializing" the authority of the Bible. "The doctrine of verbal inspiration materialized the authority of the Scriptures." (P. 343.) He means, "In Protestantism everything was staked upon the Bible and within orthodoxy upon the legal authority of the actual letter of Scripture. Hence, when this foundation was destroyed, the whole building began to totter. . . . The orthodox doctrine of verbal inspiration has been finally destroyed." But "the Reformers had a quite different conception of the authority of the Bible" (p. 105). It is clear

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that Brunner denies the authority of the words of Scripture as they are written. In his *The Word and the World* he declares: "This materialistic, or to be more exact, this idolatrous acceptance of Bible authority has done great damage to Christian faith. . . . Luther would never have approved of the opinion of later orthodoxy that everything in the Scriptures, just because it is in the Scriptures, is equally inspired by the Holy Spirit." (Pp. 92. 94.) We can understand why, when Brunner quotes the "well-known phrases: *sola gratia, sola fide, soli Deo gloria*" (p. 295), he omits the *sola Scriptura*.

And still we are told that the dialectical theology is rejuvenating the principles of the Reformation. "Emil Brunner, staunch proponent of the theology of the Reformation" (*Luth. Church Quarterly*, July, 1935, p. 211). "Karl Barth's amazing success as a mentor of German theology in bringing it back from speculative labyrinths to the Bible itself" (*l. c.*, p. 293). And Brunner himself insists that he is in full accord with the "reformers" in the matter of the formal principle.

Is he in accord with the Reformed "reformers"? Chas. Hodge answers: "All Protestants agree in teaching that 'the Word of God as contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments is the only infallible rule of faith and practise'" and quotes a number of Reformed symbols, for instance, the *Thirty-nine Articles*: "Whatsoever is not read therein (in Holy Scripture) nor may be proved thereby is not to be required of any man that it should be believed as an article of faith." (*Sys. Theol.*, I, p. 150.) The founders of the Reformed faith did not consistently apply this principle. Frequently they bowed to the authority of reason. But they subscribed to the principle of the absolute authority of the actual letter of Scripture.

Is Brunner in accord with Luther? "The Word of God shall establish articles of faith and no one else, not even an angel." (*Smalc. Art.*, *Trigl.*, p. 467.) Brunner, too, says that the only authority is the Word of God, but there he is not speaking the language of Luther and of the Lutheran Confessions. In Lutheran language the Word of God is Scripture. Brunner refuses to identify Scripture with the Word of God. But when the Lutheran Confessions speak of the Word of God, they mean Scripture. "The Word of God shall establish articles of faith" is equivalent to saying: "In this way the Holy Scriptures alone remain the only judge, rule, and standard, etc." (*Formula of Concord, Trigl.*, p. 779.) And: The Augsburg Confession "has been taken from God's Word and is founded firmly and well therein"; "*e Verbo Domini est desumpta et ex fundamentis sacrarum litterarum solide extracta.*" (*l. c.*, *Trigl.*, p. 850 f.) *Verbum Domini* and *sacrae litterae* are one and the same thing. The Bible is the sole authority. Not only "within orthodoxy," but also in the theology of Luther everything was staked upon the Bible, the authority of the actual letter of Scripture. Brunner should

read Luther's treatise *Dass diese Worte Christi: "Das ist mein Leib,"* etc., *noch fest stehen*. Luther bases his doctrine of the Lord's Supper, of the Real Presence, on four little words of Scripture. He does not inquire what the "spirit" might say to the contrary, what might be the real "Word of God" back of this written word. He stakes everything on the actual letter of Scripture. Brunner and those who think that the dialectical theologians are disciples of Luther should study these expressions of Luther: "Since the Holy Scripture is among the Christians the empress" (XX, p. 763); "Here are the plain, clear words; they say: 'This is My body'"; "This enthusiasm is fighting against plain, clear Scripture"; "I shall, in contempt of the devil, treat at this time only one solitary passage: 'This is My body'"; "This one single verse is strong enough to silence their idle, wicked twaddle" (p. 767 ff.); "*Mir ist also, dass mir ein jeglicher Spruch die Welt zu enge macht. Nun sie aber ueberhin flattern und denken, es sei Menschenwort, ist's leicht, dass keine Schrift sie zwingt*" (p. 788); "Please count and examine every letter; you must not skip over the statements of Scripture so lightly"; "I insist that they produce clear Scripture" (p. 813 ff.); "Let them get a boy to spell out to them these words: 'This is My body'" (p. 846). Those were the days when the discussion used to be cut short by saying briefly: "It is written." Brunner is not following in the footsteps of Luther.

He does indeed insist on the "authority of Scripture," on "the Scripture principle." "It belongs to the very nature of the Christian religion that all its theological statements should be examined in the light of the Scriptures and that without the authority of Scripture behind them they should be pronounced invalid, or at least, not binding." (P. 171.) "The Scriptural principle of the Christian Church" must not "be thrown away." (P. 326.) "The apostolic witness to Christ is the basis of our faith in Christ, and the basis of the Church." (P. 574.) What can these statements mean in the light of the statements quoted in the preceding paragraph? In the first place, this looks very much like a contradiction. "All theological statements should be examined in the light of the Scriptures. . . . Without the authority of Scripture behind them they should be pronounced invalid." That is Brunner speaking on page 171. "The process of producing arguments and proofs based on Scripture is untenable on general grounds. . . . It is here especially unfortunate." That is Brunner speaking on page 324. Can we be accused of captiousness if we pronounce these statements to be somewhat contradictory?

In the second place, it may be that, when Brunner disqualifies Scripture as the source of the saving doctrine, but still demands that all theological statements should be examined in the light of the

Scriptures, he is speaking under the influence of that vagary of modern theology which holds that, while men derive their theology from some other source than Scripture, they must use Scripture as a *norm* and see whether their teachings agree with Scripture. Hofmann, who taught that the Christian consciousness is the source of the Christian knowledge, still says: "Certainly, Scripture and the Church will, under normal conditions, offer exactly the same truths which we have found within ourselves. But to find them there is the second business *after* the first one." (*Schriftbeweis*, 2, I, 11.) Hofmann is willing to have Scripture pass on what his Christian I has produced. (Cp. Pieper, *Chr. Dogmatik*, I, 67.) The second founder of this *Ichtheologie* within the Lutheran Church, Frank, operated with the same vagary. "The Christian consciousness draws the dogmatical truths out of itself; however, only in harmony with the testimony of the records" (Scripture) "as to Christian knowledge." (*System der christlichen Wahrheit*, I, p. 91.) Frank is pleased to know that what the I of the theologian has produced is going to agree with what the first Church recorded in Scripture. (Cp. *Lehre und Wehre*, 42, p. 70; 25, p. 120.) It may be that Brunner, when speaking of the authority of the Bible, is in part influenced by a similar conception. But then he should not have used these general terms "authority of the Bible," "Scripture principle." And he should not forget that he has rendered the Bible useless for this purpose. Since the Bible is not inspired and contains erroneous statements, that particular statement of the Bible which the theologian is using as norm may be one of the erroneous ones.

In the third place, we shall find that Brunner constitutes the "Word of God" as the real-authority. And when we understand his use of the term "Word of God," we shall know how he can both assert the authority of Scripture (for the Word of God comes to us in Scripture) and deny the authority of Scripture (the bare word of Scripture as opposed to the "Word of God"). Still we are not satisfied. Such a use of language is not justifiable.

What is the fundamental principle of the dialectical theology? This: the Word of God establishes the doctrine; the Word of God is the source of all saving knowledge; the Word of God is the source of spiritual life; the Word of God creates faith; the Word of God confers all spiritual blessings. We certainly subscribe to all of that. The "authority of Scripture" rests on this, that the "Bible is the Word of God"; that is "the Scriptural principle of the Christian faith" (p. 326 — quoted verbatim in the preceding article). "Faith tends towards mysticism if . . . men maintain that it is possible to hold direct, immediate communion with the exalted Lord not mediated through the Word. This is the fanaticism which would turn the believer into a prophet!" (P. 585.) "Faith arises out of the Word of

God." (P. 160.) But when Brunner tells us in what sense he is using the term "Word of God," we cannot subscribe to these statements. What, then, does this term mean?

It does not mean Scripture. It has some relation to Scripture, but the written word of Scripture is not of and in itself the Word of God. Scripture is one thing, the "Word of God" another thing. Brunner will stake all on the authority of the "Word," but the argument "It is written" makes no impression on him. (P. 323.) And he has told us plainly: "He who identifies the letters and words of the Scriptures with the Word of God has never truly understood the Word of God." (*The Theology of Crisis*, p. 19.) The dialectical theology differentiates sharply between the Word of God and the word of Scripture. F. Gogarten, a Lutheran adherent of this school (the present state of theology makes such an alinement possible; a Lutheran may join what is essentially a Reformed school of thought and still retain his standing as a Lutheran), says: "*Es ist in der Tat nicht so, dass fuer den protestantischen Glauben an Stelle des lebendigen roemischen Papstes der tote papierne Papst des Bibelbuchstabens getreten waere. Sondern der protestantische Glaube ist auf das lebendige, gegenwaertige Wort der Bibel gerichtet.*" (Quoted in *Schrift und Bekenntnis*, 1928, p. 100.) What is written in the Bible in so many letters and words is not the same as the "Word" of the Bible.

What, then, is this "Word"? It is hard to understand what the dialecticalists mean by this term. It seems they cannot tell us plainly what is in their mind. A writer in the *Lutheran Church Quarterly* says: "I am not sure that I understand all that Barth means by the Word of God and that I grasp all the implications of his presentation" (1935, p. 293). The same difficulty is encountered in studying Brunner. Let him speak for himself. "Scripture knows of no other 'Word of God' save that which has been given, and given in the form of an event. . . . The Word of God must be a free gift, through which God imparts Himself in saving power to the soul." (P. 214.) Then on the next page: "Faith is related — quite consciously and definitely — to this actual Word, this Word which is an event. *To be determined by this event, this fact of the Word, this Word Incarnate, is faith.*" (Italics in the original.) Again: "This is the revelation of the living God, the marvelous Word of the Scriptures, Jesus, the Christ" (p. 315); "Jesus is the Logos. He is the Word God has to speak to us" (p. 232); "God comes in the Word, in the Personal Word" (p. 334). Once more: "God by His Word cancels the existence of sin. . . . This Word is Christ. That this Word, the Alpha and the Omega, speaks to us once more as to those who belong to Him, this is the reconciliation. . . . The Word is the reality which restores what was lost, wounded, broken. . . . Justification simply means that this

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objective transaction becomes a 'Word' to us, the Word of God. When I know that it is God who is speaking to me in this event,—that God is actually speaking to me,—I believe. Faith means knowing that this fact is God speaking to me in His Word." (P. 524.) "Word of God" in the vocabulary of the dialectical theology designates that transaction by which God, revealing His will to the believer, puts him into possession of the benefits of Christ's death. It may mean a lot more than this. But this is the basic meaning: the believer knows that he has forgiveness of sins because God's Word to that effect came to him, "because God speaks through Christ [the personal Word] to me and thus speaks in me" (p. 526).

How is Brunner's "Word of God" related to the Bible? He does not hesitate to say that "the Bible is the Word of God" (p. 326). But you must take these words in the Brunnerian sense. In the first place, he does not mean the whole Bible. He assures us that parts of the Bible are erroneous. These parts cannot of course be called God's Word. And only so much of the Bible counts as sets Christ before us. Not the whole Bible is God's Word. "The word of God in the Scriptures is as little to be identified with the words of the Scriptures as the Christ according to the flesh is to be identified with the Christ according to the spirit. . . . A better witness than Martin Luther we can scarcely call up. No man ever lived who knew better than he what the Bible is to the Christian. And Martin Luther placed side by side these two statements: 'The Scriptures alone are God's Word' and 'They are the cradle in which Christ is laid.' Need it be mentioned that he busied himself with Biblical criticism? He who would know what constitutes the *Word of God in the Bible*" (italics our own) "must devote himself to Biblical criticism, and, let it be understood, to searching, fearless, radical criticism." (*The Theology of Crisis*, p. 19 f.)¹⁾ And in the second place, in what respect is what is left of the Bible after radical criticism has finished its work

1) Brunner is distorting the words of Luther. Luther never said that parts of the Bible are God's Word, other parts not. The statement quoted does not say it. Luther simply says: "*Hier [in der Schrift] wirst du die Windeln und die Krippe finden, da Christus inne liegt. . . . Schlechte und geringe Windeln sind es, aber teuer ist der Schatz, Christus, der drinnen liegt.*" (XIV, p. 4.) The statement simply declares that the Scriptures contain Christ. It can never be made to say that only parts of the Scripture have to do with Christ—that only parts of Scripture are God's Word. And in this same paragraph you can hear Luther identifying the words of Scripture and the Word of God. "*Bitte und warne treulich einen jeglichen frommen Christen, dass er sich nicht stosse an der einfactigen Rede und Geschichte, so ihm oft begegnen wird, sondern zuefue nicht daran, wie schlecht es immer sich ansehen laesst, es seien eitel Worte, Werke, Gerichte und Geschicht der hohen goettlichen Majestaet, Macht und Weisheit*"—these poor, weak, simple words of the Bible are altogether and throughout (eitel) words of the great God!

God's Word? In themselves these words are not the Word of God. We need the Bible, surely; but only in this sense that God gives us the Word through this medium. "We need the Bible because through this tradition alone can we know and understand Christ." "Nothing can stand between God's Word and myself, neither the Bible nor the Church nor a creed, *although God gives us His Word through these media.*" (Italics ours. Brunner, *The Word and the World*, pp. 85. 75.) So, in a loose manner of speech, we may call the Bible the Word of God. ("God's Word is only indirectly identical with the Bible word, although we have the one only through the other" [*The Word and the World*, p. 102].) Strictly speaking, only under certain conditions do the words of the Bible become to us God's Word: only then when God speaks them to our souls. God's Word is what we hear God speaking within us, independently of, albeit through the medium of, the Bible word. When the unconverted read the Bible, are they dealing with God's Word? No, for the "Word of God must be a free gift through which God imparts Himself in saving power to the soul." Justification becomes God's Word to us. Only to the believer does God's Word come. (See above.) "This testimony [of the apostles], this Word about Christ, becomes to us in the perceptions of faith the very Word of God." (P. 575.) "That which creates the power to obey is the Word, the Gospel of Jesus Christ, as it is attested as God's Word by the Holy Spirit." (P. 589.) "Nothing can stand between God's Word and myself, neither the Bible, etc. Believe I *must* in His own Word alone, and believe I *can* only because and when He speaks His own Word within me through His Holy Spirit." (*The Word and the World*, p. 75.) The Bible is not God's real, own Word. You must distinguish between the Bible and the Holy Spirit. The Bible is not sufficient to impart the saving knowledge. You must wait for the Spirit.

Barth's position is the same. It has been summarized thus: "*Nur wenn ein Wort unser Herz trifft, ist es nach Barth Gotteswort, sonst Menschenwort, sei es in der Schrift selbst, sei es in der Predigt.*" (CONC. THEOL. MON., 1935, p. 846.) A. Keller, an adherent of Barth, thus summarizes Barth's teaching: "When we call the Bible the Word of God, we are not referring to the human interpretation of God's Word, but only to the act of faith by which we believe in the God who speaks in the Bible *wherever, whenever, and through whatever words He will.*" (*Religion and Revolution*, p. 66.) Barth sharply distinguishes between the word of the Bible and the word of the Spirit. He keeps on repeating, on one page: "*Schrift und Geist,*" "*Schrift und Geist,*" "*Geist und Schrift*" (*Das Wort Gottes und die Theol.*, p. 186). On the same page: "We appeal to the open Bible *and* to the Spirit, who speaks out of it to the spirit." Page 189: "*Das durch Schrift und Geist verkuendigte Wort Gottes.*" Otto Fricke

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puts it thus: "*Nur in der Kirche ist das auf Grund der Schrift geredete 'Wort Gottes.' . . . Wann ist eine Predigt schriftgemaess? Wenn sie sich moeglichst wort- und sinnetreu an das Wort der Schrift anschliesst? Nein! Denn wort- und sinnetreus Wiedergabe des Bibeltextes koennte durchaus die Wiedergabe toter Worte und Buchstaben sein, und das waere dann durchaus NICHT schriftgemaess. Schriftgemaess ist eine Predigt dann, wenn sie die Schrift wiedergibt als Gotteswort. Das geschieht dadurch, dass sie sich zunaechst der Autoritaet der Schrift als dem Worte Gottes auf der ganzen Linie unterwirft, dass sie in jedem Wort der Schrift mit dem Deus dixit einfach rechnet und niemals mit diesem Deus dixit nicht rechnet, dass sie daneben in voelliger Freiheit der Schrift gegenuebersteht, indem sie sich bewusst ist, dass erst ihre jeweilige Entscheidung das betreffende Wort der Schrift zum Worte Gottes machen kann*"—the decision [intention, attitude?—whatever this may mean] of the sermon in any given case is needed to make any particular word of Scripture the Word of God. (*Zwischen Zeiten*, 1928, pp. 110. 122.) Gogarten puts it thus: "*Der Unterschied zwischen dem katholischen und protestantischen Glauben ist aber der, dass fuer den protestantischen Glauben in aller Verlebendigung und Vergegenwaertigung, die das Bibelwort erfahren muss, um ihm wirklich Gegenstand werden zu koennen, es doch nichts anderes als das Wort der Bibel ist, auf das er gerichtet ist.*" *Schrift und Bekenntnis* points out what this involves: "*Es handelt sich darum, ob der Bibelbuchstabe an sich ein totes Ding sei, das erst von aussen her 'verlebendigt und vergegenwaertigt' werden muesse, um im Herzen der Leser oder Hoerer geistliche Wirkungen, rechte Erkenntnis der Suende, wahren, seligmachenden Glauben, also Bekehrung und Erneuerung hervorbringen zu koennen*" (1928, p. 100). "*Ein totes Ding*"—the dialecticalists themselves use this term. Otto Fricke does. And according to Keller, Barth teaches that "God does not speak to us . . . in dead letters, but in an actual and dynamic Word which becomes, through the action of the Holy Spirit, a personal and ever-renewed event"; and Brunner declares that "the Law becomes God's commandment only when it is vivified by God's direct appeal" (*Rel. and Rev.*, pp. 66. 176).

The dialectical theology adheres, according to Brunner, to "the Scripture principle." Barth lauds his Church for several things, one of which "is known in church history under the name of the *Scripture principle (des Schriftprinzips)*." "It has been called the formal principle of the Reformation." (*Das Wort Gottes*, etc., p. 193 f.) They claim to be *Biblicists*. And they are so classified. (See Kattenbusch, *Die deutsche evangelische Theologie seit Schleiermacher*, p. 125; *Allg. Ev.-Luth. Kirchengz.*, Oct. 18, 1935, p. 987.) But whatever the term *Biblicism* may mean to-day, the dialectical theology is not *Biblical theology*, "*Schrifttheologie*." The source of doctrine (and

the source of spiritual knowledge, of faith, etc.) is *not*, according to this school, the Bible, but the "Word of God," as defined above. "In this Church, in this faith, Christ is the fundamental principle through the Word and as the Word" (p. 588), not through the Bible: "For the true Christian the Bible is not a divine oracle of instruction" (*The Word and the World*, pp. 83. 94. 104).

In opposing this theological principle, we, the Old-School Lutherans, cannot look for support to the modern theologians. Even the "positive" groups have set up the principle that not Scripture, but the Word of God is the source of saving knowledge. They were driven to do so because of their denial of Verbal Inspiration. Because of this denial they adopted — long before the dialectical theology arose — the theory that the Bible is not, but only *contains* the Word of God. Therefore not Scripture, this human word, but the Word of God is the source of saving knowledge. It will serve a good purpose to show that this plague-spot is not restricted to but one school, but has, in its general form and in its dialectical and near-dialectical form spread far and wide. Erich Schaefer, who is indeed closely in touch with the dialectical theology, but not exactly a representative of it, teaches: "It is God's Holy Spirit who makes the human word of the Gospel to be God's Word to us — *zum Worte Gottes an uns macht.*" (*Glaubenslehre fuer Gebildete*, p. 30.) Again: "The Spirit-wrought faith applies a sifting process to the Bible word. Through this sifting process it gets the Word of God, the Word of Christ, to which it pneumatically adheres." (*Theozentrische Theologie*, II, p. 69.) The *Allg. Ev.-Luth. Kirchenz.* last year published a series of articles by Bishop Zaenker with the significant title "God's Word in the Bible and God's Word to us." The writer states that present-day theology is concerned with "what the real Word of God is; what is God's Word in the *human* word of the Bible?" He presents the answers given by the dialecticalists, by Schaefer and by Martin Kaehler. Kaehler taught in his day — and he has a wide following to-day —: "The Christian faith has the Bible and in it God's Word. . . . God's Word and the Bible are not one and the same thing. The word of the Bible, in so far as it contains God's Word, turns into the *viva vox evangelii*, the 'living voice of the Gospel,' through which God *immediately* [*italics original*], to-day as formerly, speaks to us." (Last sentence a *summary* of Kaehler's teaching as given by Dr. Zaenker. — Oct. 4, 1935, p. 943.) Carl Stange: "Only then when the words of Scripture have found a living echo in our conscience and heart, can they be considered by us as the expression of truth. The letter of Scripture is God's Word only then when it has become a living thing in its effect upon us." (*Dogmatik*, I, p. 193.) Paul Althaus of the university of Erlangen: "We are, while bound to heed the *Word of God* in the Biblical words, not bound to the latter, the words

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of men." (*Die letzten Dinge*, p. 61.) Alfred Kurz: "The Spirit-wrought faith must always first make the Word a living thing, a real and personal word of God, in order to produce the assurance of salvation. Unless the word of Scripture is infused with life in faith, the promises of Scripture are worthless for salvation and without effect." (*Die Heilsgewissheit bei Luther*, p. 223. — These views are imputed to Luther.) R. Jelke: "Inspiration does not cover everything in general, but only that which is, and is intended to be, God's Word." (*Die Grunddogmen des Christentums*, p. 20.) *The Lutheran Church Quarterly*: "Seekers for authority in Scripture cannot therefore find it in isolated portions and texts of the Bible, a procedure often followed in the effort to prove certain teachings or doctrines. The idea of verbal inspiration and the practise of literal interpretation may destroy the reality of the Bible's message. Its authority is not to be identified with the form of the language which announces the truth of God, but must be found in the light of the experience through which the word of God came to the soul of a man. . . . The word of God in Scripture, culminating in Christ and His redemptive work, comes to the soul with its demand for decision, knocking at the door which can be opened only from within. And in the opening of it is experienced that which becomes finally authoritative. . . . This is where Jesus and the writers of the New Testament placed religious authority: in the message of God certifying itself to the souls of men." (July, 1935, pp. 260. 263.) J. A. W. Haas: "There must be a clear distinction kept in mind between the Word of God and the Bible. . . . The Bible is the Word of God because it contains the Word of God. . . . The prophets and apostles spoke the Word of God. What they spoke in its essential features, but not in completeness, has been preserved in the record of revelation. . . . The record is only the container and conveyor of the living truth." (*What Is Lutheranism?* p. 176.) "The claims of a mechanically infallible Bible, verbally perfect, do not hold in the light of the facts. What the theologian calls the Word of God, namely, the spiritual content of the Bible, is an authority of freedom." (*What Ought I to Believe*, p. 29 f.) A. R. Wentz: "This revelation of God is on record for us in the Bible. Because the Bible tells us the thoughts of God toward men, it is called the Word of God. Because it was prepared under a special direction of God, so as to make its message dynamic for all ages, it is called the inspired Word of God. That Word is Christ." (*What Is Lutheranism?* p. 88.) The teaching under discussion is not confined to the dialectical school. It has spread throughout the domain of modern theology, of modern liberal²⁾ and modern "positive"

2) The liberal theologian C. H. Dodd says in *The Authority of the Bible*, on page 16: "Not God, but Paul is the author of the Epistle to the Romans, though in a transferred sense we may describe the Epistle to the

theology, including Neo-Lutheranism. The individual schools add their particular modifications, but they are one in declaring: You must not identify Scripture and the Word of God. The word of Scripture is the Word of God only under certain conditions. Not the word of Scripture, but the Word of God is the source of saving knowledge.

We stop our ears against this cry. We will not have the word of Scripture made a dead thing which needs to be vitalized in order to become effective. "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life," John 6, 63. And we have these words of Christ only in Scripture, nowhere else. The words of Scripture, they are spirit and they are life. "The Word of God is quick and powerful" (Heb. 4, 12); "liveth and abideth forever" (1 Pet. 1, 23 f.); "worketh effectually" (1 Thess. 2, 13). And this living power inheres in the *written* word of Scripture. We have no other Word of God. The apostles distinctly state that their written word partakes of the same qualities as their preached word—"whether by word or our *epistle*"

Romans as a 'Word of God,' meaning that in some way it mediates to the reader the truth which is the thought of God." The concluding chapter is entitled "The Bible as 'the Word of God'" and declares: "From what the New Testament shows us of the manner in which Jesus revealed God to men we may learn something about the way in which the Bible as a whole may become the 'Word of God' to us. . . . The traditional theory valued the Bible as giving authoritative information, in the form of dogma, upon matters known only by special revelation. . . . When the reader has discovered what the writer actually said and meant, he wants to ask further, Is this what I am to believe about God? Is it *true*? Probably no one who reads this book will think that this question has the self-evident answer, Of course it is true, *because* it is in the Bible. . . . The criterion lies within ourselves, in the response of our own spirit to the Spirit that utters itself in the Scriptures." (Pp. 294—297.) George Wehrung says: "*Die historische Forschung . . . zwingt den Glauben, sich von Menschentheorien ueber die Bibel (z. B. als Lehrbuch) frei zu machen, selbstaendig vor sie hinzutreten. . . . Das Urtheil darueber, wann Gotteswort im Menschenwort wirksam wird, kann wieder nur dem Glauben zustehen; ihm muss kund werden, wo Menschenwort in reiner Demut sagen will, was ihm aufgetragen ist, wo also Gottes Geist handelt und treibt!*"—faith must decide where God's Word operates in the human word (of the Bible), must find where the Spirit of God is acting and operating. (*Geschichte und Glaube*, p. 84.) V. Fern: "A literally infallible Bible, an assumption implied throughout the Lutheran symbols, verbally inspired, is a view that has passed by the board for good. The authority of the Sacred Writings is no longer found in 'the letter' and sustained by some artificial theory of divine inspiration, but in the appeal of its spiritual content. . . . The term 'Word of God' should be used with discrimination. It is no longer tenable to use it as a synonym for the entire Bible, in spite of the reformers. The term is a reverent one and should be applied only when it can be done with the utmost reverence. To us the 'Word of God' is the validly spiritual content which rises unmistakably in Scriptural utterances and in the pronouncement of Christ-like seers." (*What Is Lutheranism?* pp. 279. 294.)

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(2 Thess. 2, 15); "What I write unto you are the commandments of God" (1 Cor. 14, 37); "All Scripture is profitable for doctrine," etc. (2 Tim. 3, 16); "We have also a more sure word of prophecy"—the prophecy of the Scripture (2 Pet. 1, 19 f.).³⁾

The cry that the written word of Scripture is a dead thing; that "the Bible must not stand between God's Word and myself"; that "that which creates the power to obey is the Word as it is attested as God's Word by the Holy Spirit"; that "the word of the Bible must be vitalized" has been raised in the Church long before the rise of the dialectical theology, and always the Lutheran theologians have opposed it, on the basis of Scripture. The Quakers long ago raised the cry that the word of Scripture is a "dead letter," useless unless the Spirit gave it life. And before them the Heavenly Prophets and the Anabaptists said the same. Luther would have none of this. "For them [the enthusiasts] the letter is a dead thing on paper. But John says: 'These things have I written unto you' (1 John 5, 13); 'These things are written that ye might believe' (John 20, 31)." And after quoting, in addition, 2 Tim. 3, 15—17 and 1 Tim. 4, 13, he asks: "Why does the apostle command that the Scriptures be read if they are a dead thing?" (IX, p. 1514). "At the present time all the land is swarming with these spirits who, deranged by the devil, look upon Scripture as a dead letter, which cannot give life, and pride themselves on dealing with naught but the Spirit—and they lose both Word and Spirit. But here (1 Cor. 15, 3. 4) you see how St. Paul bases all on Scripture and declares that in no other way can our doctrine and faith be founded and preserved than through the external, written Word, set down in letters and proclaimed by the mouth of the preachers; for he says clearly: 'Scripture! Scripture!' (VIII, p. 1110.) The Lutheran dogmaticians took the same stand. They would not let the Quakers make of Scripture a "dead letter." Quenstedt: "We say that there is a natural efficacy in the Word of God because it naturally belongs to it, and its essence and nature are such that it could not be the true Word of God unless it contained within itself that divine power and virtue to convert men, etc." And Hollaz adds to this: "Nor is there any other Word of God which is in God or with which men of God have been inspired than that which is given in the Scriptures." (H. Schmid, *Doct. Theology of the Ev. Luth. Church*, p. 504 f.) A. Graebner: "The efficacy of the Bible is that property by which the Bible has indissolubly united with the true and genuine sense expressed in its words the power of the Holy Spirit." (*Outlines of Doct. Theol.*, § 16.) Quenstedt has a long list of men who distinguished between the word as written, the bare external word, and the powerful word of the Spirit. "Antithesis:

3) Cp. the article in this issue *Non est vis magica*, pp. 179. 184.

1. *Schwenkfeldianorum, Weigelianorum, Enthusiastarum, Anabaptistarum aliorumque fanaticorum, ut . . . Herm. Rathmanni, . . .* all of whom divide the Word of God into an inner and an external word. And only to the inner word (by which they understand the Son of God Himself or the Spirit of God coming from heaven and working in the heart of man . . .) they ascribe divine power; from the external word, as being a human voice, an evanescent sound, and dead letter, they take away all power and efficacy and divine power. . . . 7. *Tremulantium in Anglia.* 8. *Iohannis de Labadie.*" If Quenstedt were writing to-day, he would add: "9. *Barthianorum.*"

Is Barthianism indeed enthusiasm? The classic Lutheran definition of enthusiasm runs thus: "In those things which concern the spoken, outward Word we must firmly hold that God grants His Spirit or grace to no one except through or with the preceding outward Word, in order that we may [thus] be protected against the enthusiasts, *i. e.*, spirits who boast that they have the Spirit without and before the Word, . . . who wish to be acute judges between the Spirit and the letter." (Smalc. Art., *Trigl.*, p. 495.) An enthusiast is one who bases his doctrine, and grounds his faith and hope, not on the Word written in Scripture, but on the Spirit. Brunner has the same definition. "Faith tends towards mysticism . . . if men maintain that it is possible to hold direct, immediate communion with the exalted Lord not mediated through the Word. This is the fanaticism which would turn the believer into a prophet." (P. 585.) Brunner, one sees, abhors fanaticism (enthusiasm, *Schwaermerei*); but he and his associates are practising this very *Schwaermerei*, not indeed in its gross form, but in a subtle form. The very phrase used by him: "not mediated through the *Word*," reveals their *Schwaermerei*. God deals with us only through "the Word." But recall their definition of "Word." The letter of Scripture is *not* the Word of God. It only becomes God's Word through an additional action of the Spirit. The Bible must not stand between God's Word and myself. Faith is created only when God speaks His own Word within me through His Holy Spirit. (Quotation given above.) So dependence can be put on the written word of Scripture, not in itself, but only because of an intervening act of the Spirit. Brunner is not a gross enthusiast, one who has practically no use for Scripture, but he is a subtle enthusiast in that he "judges between the Spirit and the letter." God deals with us through the written word, Brunner insists; but he and his associates insist just as strongly that the written word is in itself a dead letter. It needs to be vitalized. And that is spiritualism, enthusiasm, *Schwaermerei*. The point at issue is not whether it takes the power of the Spirit to create faith. We are agreed on that. But the Lutheran says that this power is *inherent* in the Word of Scripture and the dialecticalists say it must first be put there. Much less is this

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the point at issue, whether some deal with the Word of Scripture without experiencing its power. Man has the power to make the living Word of Scripture of no effect. The sole point at issue is whether, when a man is converted, etc., he owes that to the Word of Scripture or to the power of the Spirit that was infused into the written Word at a given moment. The latter is the contention of the dialecticalists. And that is *Schwaermerei*. That separates the letter and the Spirit. Something is needed beside the written Word to save us! That is a species of the "Extra-Enthusiasticum." — Kattenbusch agrees with this verdict. "*Die These der Barthianer lautet: Gott WIRKT 'NUR' UNMITTELBAR, vom Himmel her*" (*Die deutsche ev. Theologie*, p. 128)."⁴)

What is the evil of enthusiasm?

TH. ENGELDER.

(To be continued.)

4) The dialectical theology, an offshoot of Reformed theology, comes by its *Schwaermerei* naturally. The germ of enthusiasm was lodged in Reformed theology from the very beginning. "Salvation is obtained in no other way than by the believer's putting his confidence in the written Word, in Baptism, in the Lord's Supper, and in absolution. The Reformed declare that this way of getting into heaven is too mechanical, and on hearing the Lutheran teaching, they denounce it as dead-letter worship. . . . They say: 'My sins are not forgiven except when God Himself speaks these words in my heart and makes me feel their force.' That is the Reformed view." (C. F. W. Walther, *Law and Gospel*, p. 151.) Quenstedt has in his list: "*5. Plerorumque Calvinianorum*"; and while he quotes Calvin's statement (*Institutes*, Book IV, chap. 14, § 17: that which God claims for Himself must not be ascribed to the outward action), Dr. Walther adds a quotation from Zwingli to the effect that faith is not produced by the *externa concio*, the "outward preaching," but alone by the Holy Spirit. (See Zwingli's Augsburg Confession, in Luther's works, XX, p. 1566. — Baier, I, p. 161.) Reformed theology denies that the power of the Spirit inheres in the outward Word. Second Helvetic Confession, chap. 18: "Let us believe that God teaches us outwardly in His Word through the ministers, but that inwardly He leads the hearts of His elect to faith through the Holy Spirit." O. Hodge: "It is necessary, in order to render the Word of God an effectual means of salvation, that it should be attended by the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit." "The Lutherans, on the other hand, teach that there is inherent in the divine Word a supernatural, divine virtue, inseparable from it." (*Syst. Theol.*, II, 684; III, 472. 505.) W. Shedd: "The influence of the Holy Spirit is directly upon the human spirit and is independent of the Word itself." (*Dogm. Theol.*, II, 501.) J. G. Machen: "Proclamation of the Law, in word and in deed, can prepare for the experience [the conviction of sin], but the experience itself comes from God." (*Christianity and Liberalism*, p. 67.) The Reformed "*acute discernere volunt inter Spiritum et literam*" (*Schmale. Art.*, see above). Cp. the article *Non est vis magica* in this issue, p. 177. The dialecticalists, in their own way, do the same.