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## Verbal Inspiration- a Stumbling-Block to the Jews and Foolishness to the Greeks

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## Verbal Inspiration — a Stumbling-Block to the Jews and Foolishness to the Greeks

The moderns look upon Verbal Inspiration as an evil, unclean thing. They call it a foul spook. The Lutheran Zaenker, Landesbischof of Silesia, used the term "Das Gependst der Verbalinspiration" and asked the preachers of the Gospel to make it their business to lay this ghost. (See *CONC. THEOL. MONTHLY*, VIII, p. 149.) Karl Barth feels the same way. "Er straubt sich gegen den Vorwurf, er fuehre das Gespendst der Verbalinspiration wieder herauf." (*Allg. Ev.-Luth. Kircheng.*, 1935, p. 987.) The moderns look upon Verbal Inspiration as a dangerous thing. "The pitfalls of a possible theory of literal, verbal inspiration" was the term used at a meeting of Episcopalian churchmen and theologians of the Lutheran Augustana Synod held in the interest of church union. (See *Lutheran Companion*, Jan. 11, 1936.) Verbal Inspiration is "a handicap," declares H. E. Fosdick. More than that: "I reached the shocking conviction that such traditional Bibliolatry is false in fact and perilous in result" (*The Modern Use of the Bible*, pp. 181, 273). These men look upon Verbal Inspiration as a disreputable thing. No self-respecting theologian can afford to deal with it. "It is the way of obscurantism," says J. S. Whale (*The Christian Answer to the Problem of Evil*, p. 78), and *Folkebladet*, the organ of the Norwegian Free Church, stated in 1926 (Nov. 17): "Now, however, there are very few theologians, and assuredly no eminently learned ones, even of the conservative school, who hold the old doctrine of verbal inspiration." These few theologians, says Dr. E. H. Delk, "think in the forms and categories of an age long past for the modern mind. Their position is outmoded" (*Luth. Ch. Quart.*, 1936, p. 334). These men do not feel at ease in the company of theologians who teach Verbal Inspiration — and they would not feel at home in a church-body that believes in it. Writing in the

*Lutheran Church Quarterly*, 1935, p. 417, Prof. E. E. Flack, of the Hamma Divinity School in Springfield, Ohio, asks: "Is not the inspiration of Scripture too high and holy a reality to be defined in terms of stenography? Does one exalt the Word of God by dehumanizing it?" and then states: "It may be confidently asserted that the achievement of closer unity among Lutherans in this country, and indeed throughout the world, will require, for one essential, a higher view of Scripture than is represented by the theory of inspiration by dictation."<sup>1</sup> Men who feel like Dr. Flack do not like to associate with those who harbor the idea of Verbal Inspiration.<sup>2</sup> Wilhelm Moeller describes the situation correctly when he says: "Verbalinspiration! Jeder Theologe schaudert bei dem Wort ordentlich zusammen; es wirkt wie das rote Tuch auf den Stier; und wenn man sonst nicht sehr einig ist in der Theologie, links und rechts, darin ist man einig: nur keine Verbalinspiration!" (*Um die Inspiration der Bibel*, p. 63.) The moderns in the Reformed and in the Lutheran churches, liberals and conservatives alike, fear and hate this thing and deplore with Emil Brunner that the churches "are still suffering from the incubus of the old mechanical theory of inspiration" (*The Mediator*, p. 181).

The moderns abhor and detest Verbal Inspiration, and they are not at all backward about telling us why they cannot accept it with

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1) When the moderns denounce "the theory of inspiration by dictation," "the mechanical theory," they have in mind, as will be shown later on, the doctrine of Verbal Inspiration.

2) Negotiations in the interest of church-fellowship between the United Lutheran Church and the Missouri Synod came to an end because the representatives of the U. L. C. found themselves unable to accept the doctrine of Verbal Inspiration. "A point of serious difference concerned the definition of inspiration, particularly the presentation of verbal inspiration as given in the *Brief Statement* of the Missouri Synod. . . . Our commission was unable to accept the statement of the Missouri Synod that the Scriptures are the infallible truth 'also in those parts which treat of historical, geographical, and other secular matters.'" (*Minutes of the 1938 Convention of the U. L. C. A.*, p. 468.) The report of the convention appearing in *The Lutheran* of Nov. 2, 1938, states: "The doctrine known technically as 'The Verbal Inspiration of the Bible' was deemed out of accord with the Lutheran Confession." These men feel, as Dr. Flack expresses it, that there can be no close unity with bodies that hold the low view of Scripture which the doctrine of verbal inspiration implies. On the other hand, we of the Synodical Conference find ourselves unable to give the hand of fellowship to those who hold such a low view of Scripture as the denial of Verbal Inspiration implies. "Dr. E. Ryden overlooks that he can entertain no hope of fellowship with 'Missouri' as long as the official organ of the Swedish synod (Augustana) prints attacks on the doctrine of verbal inspiration." (*Lutheran Witness*, Nov. 26, 1940.) The denial of Verbal Inspiration is one of the chief obstacles in the way of Lutheran union. For that reason a discussion of this matter is always in order. For that reason the present essay is being written. Its purpose is to show, once again, that those who view Verbal Inspiration with horror are laboring under a hallucination.

a good conscience. They offer a great variety of reasons why the Church should get rid of it as soon as possible. Let us examine six of these objections. Are they well founded? Or are the objectors making a fatal mistake?

## I

They tell us, in the first place, that they cannot accept the doctrine of verbal, plenary inspiration of the Bible because of the errors, the many, the countless errors, in the Bible.

“Wir sind Wirklichkeitsmenschen,” said Theodor Kaftan. We are men who deal with realities, with facts. When we examine the Bible, we find certain facts which forbid us to believe that everything in the Bible is inspired. So say the Liberals. H. E. Fosdick declares: “So we used to think of inspiration as a procedure which produced a book guaranteed in all its parts against error and containing from beginning to end a unanimous system of truth. No well-instructed mind, I think, can hold that now. Our ideas of the method of inspiration have changed; verbal dictation, . . . uniformity of doctrine between 1000 B. C. and 70 A. D.—all such ideas have become incredible in the face of the facts.” (*Op. cit.*, p. 30.) H. L. Willett: “This is one of the chief reasons why the doctrine of verbal inspiration has been discarded as incapable of proof and incompatible with the evident facts.” (*The Bible through the Centuries*, p. 284.) Some of these men would perhaps like to retain the old teaching of the Christian Church on this point, but they cannot do it in the face of these undeniable facts. That appears from the statement of J. De Witt: “Must this beautiful conception, which anchors the soul fast to permanent and unchangeable truth and excludes every blemish from the Scriptures, be abandoned or even modified? We answer, however reluctantly, that it must surely be put aside, unless it corresponds with the observed facts and is confirmed by other than *a-priori* reasoning. . . . Indeed, we distinctly claim that facts have already been discovered that discredit the exactness of statement so earnestly affirmed.” (*What Is Inspiration?* P. 12 f.) And here the conservatives are in full accord with the liberals. James Orr stoutly maintains that, “if there is inspiration at all, it must penetrate words as well as thought, must mold the expression,” but on the very next page he declares: “In the result ‘Verbal Inspiration’ may be held to imply a *literality* in narratives, quotations, or reports of discourses which the facts as we know them do not warrant.” (*Revelation and Inspiration*, pp. 209, 210.) E. A. Garvie is another “Wirklichkeitsmensch.” In *Hastings’s Dictionary of the Bible* he writes, *s. v.* Inspiration: “The theory of verbal inspiration affirms that each human author was but the mouthpiece of God and that in every word, therefore, God

speaks. But the actual features of the Bible, as studied by reverent and believing scholarship, contradict the theory." So is Friedrich Buechsel, professor at Rostock. "Selbstverstaendlich kam die alte Inspirationslehre — die Lehre von der Verbalinspiration, die Behauptung: die Schrift stammt nicht nur ihrem Gehalte, sondern auch, und gerade ihrem Wortlaute nach, aus dem Geiste Gottes — damit in Widerspruch zu den einfachsten Tatsachen in den Schriften der Bibel." (*Die Offenbarung Gottes*, p. 112 f.; ed. 1938.) Dr. J. A. W. Haas is another Wirklichkeitsmensch: "In the problem of inspiration the facts of course refute any mechanical theory of inspiration in minute detail." (*The Lutheran*, Jan. 23, 1936.) "The irresistible logic of facts" has compelled the moderns to discard Verbal Inspiration. Strahan tells us that he and the "Protestant scholars of the present day, imbued with the scientific spirit, have no *a-priori* theory of the inspiration of the Bible. . . . They do not open any book of the Old or New Testament with the feeling that they are bound to regard its teaching as sacred and authoritative. They yield to nothing but what they regard as the irresistible logic of facts." (*Hastings' Encyclopedia*, VII, p. 346.) In the light of the facts Verbal Inspiration is a fiction.

Now, what are the facts on account of which the doctrine of verbal, plenary inspiration, the doctrine of the absolute infallibility of the Bible, cannot be true? They are, primarily, the errors in the Bible, the mistakes and blunders committed by the writers of Scripture. The list which enumerates these alleged errors is a long one, and the compilers of this list warn us that, as human knowledge increases, the list will grow in length. The various sections of this long list are labeled: Scientific errors (blunders in natural history, historical errors, etc., etc.); statements in conflict with the findings of higher criticism; contradictions in the Bible (inexact, false quotations; unfulfilled prophecies; and just plain contradictions). And every single one of these "facts" disproves Verbal Inspiration.

Georgia Harkness feels that she must repudiate Verbal Inspiration because of the facts established by science. "The revolt against Fundamentalism has centered upon the other great pitfall of reliance on the authority of the Bible, namely, the disregard of historical and scientific fact that ensues from belief in its literal inspiration. The battle is not yet won. Like the poor, literalism is always with us." (*The Faith by which the Church Lives*, p. 57.) In order to win the battle they remind us that Moses, or whoever wrote this part of the Bible, was weak, for instance, in natural history. See Lev. 11:5, 6! Everybody knows that the "hare" and the "coney" do not chew the cud! "This presents," says Robert Tuck, "a striking illustration of the unscientific character of the

Scriptures. They record popular fallacies in matters of science. Moses repeats the common opinion of his day in all such things as natural history." (*Bible Difficulties*, p. 343.) And see Prov. 6:8! Contrary to the popular opinion that Solomon was wiser than all men, well posted in zoology, including entomology and the other branches of natural history (1 Kings 4:31-33), he did not know much about ants. "The scientific skeptic affirms that the ant, being a carnivorous insect, could not gather her food in the harvest and that the very nature of that food would prevent it from being laid up in store; and that Solomon committed the blunder of many amateurs, in mistaking the white cocoon of the ant-pupae, properly known as ant-eggs, for grains housed for future use." A. T. Pierson, from whose book *Many Infallible Proofs* this is quoted (p. 133), hears the scientific skeptic ask: "What, then, becomes of Solomon's inspiration? If he blunders in science, he may have blundered in theology." (The question of who is committing all these blunders will be answered in a later article.) Our list contains numerous examples from the other branches of science. Studying them, H. L. Willett concludes: "Nor were the writers of the Bible safeguarded supernaturally or in any other manner from the usual historical and scientific errors to which men of their age were liable. Their work is not a text-book of either of these subjects." (*Op. cit.*, p. 284.) Joseph Stump, of the U. L. C., comes to the same conclusion: "The holy writers were inspired with a supernatural knowledge of God and of His will, and on these subjects their words are final and infallible. On scientific matters they neither knew nor professed to know more than other men of their day." (*The Christian Faith*, p. 319.) The scientific information they give is unreliable. "Wer etwas ueber naturwissenschaftliche Dinge wissen will," says Professor Baumgaertel of Rostock, "gehe zum Naturwissenschaftler." (W. Moeller, *op. cit.*, p. 31.) And when the professor of natural philosophy is not in accord with Scripture, you will have to say that the professor is right and Scripture is wrong. "Does not modern science contradict the Scriptures?" asks Dr. A. J. Traver in the "Young People Column" of *The Lutheran* of Feb. 22, 1939. Yes, indeed, he answers, but that is to be expected, for the "Bible-writers wrote with the background of their age and its scientific beliefs." "The Bible is true in all matters that pertain to religion," he writes in the issue of May 10, 1939, but "it is not a text for biology or chemistry." Just admit that the Bible abounds in scientific blunders. "Is Scripture inerrant?" asks Prof. J. Aberly in the *Luth. Church Quarterly*, April, 1935, p. 124, and tells us that "the question must be faced whether there may be factual errors in the sacred records," and goes on to point to the errors "in matters of psychology" which the Biblical writers com-

mitted and their errors "in cosmology." These errors are so glaring that the Christian youth must be warned against accepting them as truth. Writing in the *Luth. Church Quarterly* of July, 1939, p. 299, Prof. O. F. Nolde says: "Pupils may later discard the scientific import of the story" (the creation story). "They ought forever to accept the story itself because of literary and religious merit." And so the commissioners of the U. L. C. are unable to teach Verbal Inspiration, to teach that "the Scriptures are the infallible truth 'also in those parts which treat of historical, geographical, and other secular matters.'"

Historical errors are here mentioned by the U. L. C. theologians. Georgia Harkness, too, speaks of the disregard of *historical* and scientific fact that ensues from belief in the literal inspiration of the Bible. The list of historical blunders found in the Bible is a long one. They used to say that writing was unknown at the time of Moses, so that Moses was not the author of the Pentateuch. (Thus von Bohlen; see *CONC. THEOL. MONTHLY*, IV, p. 178.) It was written centuries later. The battle of the four kings against the five kings, related Gen. 14, is pure fiction or, at best, wild exaggeration. Wellhausen wrote in 1889: "That four kings from the Persian Gulf should, 'in the time of Abraham,' have made an excursion into the Sinaitic Peninsula, that they should on this occasion have attacked five kinglets on the Dead Sea littoral and have carried them off prisoners, and finally that Abraham should have set out in pursuit of the retreating victors, accompanied by 318 men servants, and have forced them to disgorge their prey — all these incidents are sheer impossibilities, which gain nothing in credibility from the fact that they are placed in a world which has passed away." (See *Fundamentals*, II, p. 26. Also *Lehre und Wehre*, 59, p. 259.) — The Hittites occupy much space on the blacklist we are studying. "Many regarded the Biblical statements regarding this mysterious people as mythical and an indication of the general untrustworthiness of Biblical history. A prominent English Biblical critic declared not many years ago that an alliance between Egypt and the Hittites was as improbable as would be one at the present time between England and the Choctaws." "In 1904 one of the foremost archeologists of Europe said to me: 'I do not believe there ever were such people as the Hittites.'" (*Fundamentals*, II, pp. 15, 31.) — Daniel, or whoever wrote the Book of Daniel, blundered badly in his reference to Belshazzar. "The scientific skeptics laughed at the credulity of the simple souls who take the Bible as their guide though it asserts that Belshazzar was king when Babylon fell and on the night of its capture was slain." (A. T. Pierson, *op. cit.*, p. 140.) Does not history tell us that the king of Babylon at that time was Nabonidus? As late as 1937 this

item was kept on the black-list. The expert on the *American Weekly* declared that Nebuchadnezzar never had a son by the name of Belshazzar and that Babylon fell to Cyrus and not to Darius the Mede. (See *CONC. THEOL. MONTHLY*, VIII, p. 397.) "Darius the Mede is not a historical figure," says J. De Witt, on the authority of an "accomplished scholar" (*op. cit.*, p. 48), and N. R. Best finds that "the lordly manner in which Darius at the end of the chapter wrote to call the peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth sounds very little as if he were aware of having the mighty Cyrus or any other potentate as overlord" (*Inspiration*, p. 92). Baumgaertel-Rostock: "Einen 'Meder' Darius hat es nicht gegeben." (*Allg. Ev.-Luth. Kirchengz.*, 1926, No. 45.)

The New Testament writers, too, are guilty of many blunders. Even St. Luke, who claims that he had "had perfect understanding of all things from the very first," "having accurately traced everything from the start" (Luke 1:3), garbled the story of Christ from the very start. "It has been maintained by many scholars in modern times that the census is either a fiction or a blunder. . . . It is affirmed that Quirinius never governed Syria during the life of Herod." (See Kretzmann, *Pop. Commentary*, New Testament, I, p. 278.) And this same Luke did not know the difference between a proconsul and a propraetor. "It has been only a few years since the destructive critics had nothing but scorn for any one who accepted Luke's statement (Acts 13:7) that the island of Cyprus was ruled by a 'proconsul.'" (L. Boettner, *The Inspiration of the Scriptures*, p. 53.)

The chronology, too, of the Bible is in bad shape. Prof. H. C. Alleman's *The Old Testament—a Study* declares: "It is impossible to be dogmatic about Bible dates. The chronology of the Bible is not a matter of divine revelation." (P. 21.) Nor were the genealogical lists written by inspiration. Not even the genealogy of Jesus is reliable. Dr. P. E. Scherer said over the radio: "The genealogies [of Jesus] are not to be regarded as inspired documents; they are included as 'honest attempts to ascertain the truth.'" (*The Lutheran*, Feb. 20, 1936.) And so the moderns, Reformed and Lutheran, liberal and conservative, cannot believe that the Scriptures are the infallible truth "also in those parts which treat of historical, geographical, and other secular matters."

These men charge the Bible with many errors on the authority of science, of common, lower science. And with many, many more errors on the authority of higher science. When men deal with facts, observe the phenomena of nature, etc., they are engaged in what we shall call lower science. But when they depart from the realm of observed facts and go into the realm of speculation, assume the right to pass judgment on things that lie beyond the



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area of observation, we shall call that higher science. They call it, in effect, "higher" science; they pride themselves on the progress which the modern mind, trained in scientific methods, has made beyond the childlike age of man, when man was ready to believe almost anything. The modern "scientific" mind can no longer do that.

And so the Modernist is compelled to charge the Bible with a lot of additional errors. His scientific mind cannot accept the miracles recorded in the Bible as facts. And therefore he can no longer believe in Verbal Inspiration. Let H. E. Fosdick speak in the name of higher science. He "used to think of inspiration as a procedure which produced a book guaranteed in all its parts against error." "But all such ideas have become incredible in the face of the facts." Here are the facts: "The modern mind finds itself in a cosmic system which is regular with a vengeance. . . . What happened to the idea of miracle when this onrush of *inductive science* overtook it is clear. . . . An ax-head might usually sink in water, but there was no reason why God should not make it float if He wished to do an extraordinary thing. It was surprising when He did it, but it presented *no intellectual problem whatever*. No laws were broken, because *no laws were known*. No Hebrew ever dreamed of such a thing as a mathematical formula of specific gravity in accordance with which an ax-head in water ought invariably to sink. . . . Without the slightest idea of laws to be suspended or broken, the writers of the Bible described the unusual activities of God and indiscriminately treated as miracles such things as the Red Sea held back by a wind and God's restoration of sinners to His favor, resurrection from the dead, and God's sending rain upon the soil, a fish swallowing a man, and the exaltation to safety of those who mourn. . . . When, then, one has said all that needs to be said about the new views of the Bible, about *critical processes of study*, how empty is the issue of it all if it does not liberate our minds free from handicaps, etc. . . . To be a Bible Christian, must we think, as some seem to suppose, that a fish swallowed a man, or that the sun and moon stood still at Joshua's command, or that God sent she-bears to eat up children who were rude to a prophet, or that saints long dead arose and appeared in Jerusalem when our Lord was crucified?" (*Op. cit.*, pp. 30, 136 f., 141, 181.)<sup>3)</sup>

3) One more quotation from Fosdick, to show what he is unable to believe and what he is able to believe: "There are some narratives of miracles in the Bible which I do not believe. . . . Joshua making the sun stand still *may be poetry*, and the story of Jonah and the great fish *may be a parable*. . . . Certainly, I find some of the miracle-narratives of Scripture *historically incredible*." (*Op. cit.*, p. 163 f. Italics here and above our own.) Fosdick is able to believe that when the writer of Josh. 10:12 wrote: "Then spake Joshua," etc., he did not mean to say

A. Harnack agrees with Fosdick and declares: "Miracles, of course, do not occur. That the earth once stood still in its course, that an ass spoke, that the tempest was stilled with one word, we do not believe that and never again shall believe it." (See *Lehre und Wehre*, 49, p. 4.) The archbishop of York, W. Temple, agrees with Harnack and Fosdick: "Some have attached the divine guarantee to the actual statements contained in the Bible when literally understood. Because they accept the Bible as the Word of God, they regarded themselves as pledged to believe and to teach that the world was created out of nothing in a week or that strange astronomical occurrences took place in connection with the battle of Bethoron." (*Revelation* [1937], p. 102.)

Dr. Delk agrees, in principle, with Dr. Fosdick. He says, in the *Lutheran Quarterly*: "The theologian must not only indicate the content and significance of any science and discipline as related to theology; he must know *the processes and technique* of such sciences in order to properly value and schematize the whole religious problem. . . . He must know the few *large conclusions* of modern thought and so relate them to the fundamental and permanent elements of religion that his preaching shall be vital and addressed to his contemporaries in education and culture." And applying the "scientific technique," he must and will accept evolution, as Dr. Delk does, and reject the Bible account and cast away Verbal Inspiration, as Dr. Delk does. (See *Lehre und Wehre*, 59, 146 ff.) Dr. A. T. Kantonen follows Dr. Delk in agreeing with Dr. Fosdick with respect to the functions of higher science. In his "Canned Theology" article (*The Lutheran*, Dec. 12, 1935, to Jan. 2, 1936) he calls for "the application of *scientific and historical methods* to the study of the Bible," for "a change in the *methodology* of Lutheran scholarship," and warns the Church against "holding to an erroneous *pre-Kantian conception* of truth as a static quantum." "The Church needs to interpret the eternal verities *in the terms of the age.*" Drs. Kantonen and Delk and Fosdick, whose minds are trained in scientific methods, cannot possibly accept Verbal Inspiration.

The Bible is in conflict with science, say the moderns, and, what is worse in their estimation, in conflict with higher criticism. True, the Bible is decidedly in conflict with higher criticism. And the devotees of higher criticism consider that the unpardonable error. How can those portions of the Bible be true which do not agree with the sacred pronouncements of higher criticism? And

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that Joshua actually spoke or that the sun actually stood still, but that he was writing a poem and hoping that in the last days a man would arise who would be able to interpret the mysterious words "And the sun stood still."

how can any man who honestly believes in higher criticism believe in Verbal Inspiration? *Christendom* says: "Modern historical and literary criticism, not to mention modern 'science' generally, has rendered it (the Protestant dogma of the plenary verbal inspiration of holy scripture) increasingly untenable." (I, No. 2, p. 242.) And Dr. Delk agrees. "Higher criticism has set theology free from that tyrannous literalism and false idea of inspiration which made all attempts at the adjustment of theology with modern thought in history, science, and philosophy either impious or revolutionary. . . . No theory of verbal inspiration is any longer tenable." (*Lutheran Quarterly*, 1912, p. 568.) Now, what do the higher critics and their disciples believe, teach, and confess? First, that many portions of Scripture were not written by the men whom Scripture names as the authors, but by men who, for purposes of their own, for good purposes, palmed them off upon the unsuspecting Church under the name of some great prophet. In plain language, some of the Biblical documents are forgeries. "Source-criticism" has established that. Moses wrote very little of what goes by the name of "the books of Moses." For instance: "The functions of the Levites are recorded, in a late hymn of the tribes of Northern Israel, put by the authors of Deuteronomy into the mouth of Moses." (H. L. Willett, *op. cit.*, p. 63.) The prophet Daniel did not write the book of the prophecy of Daniel. This book was not written at the time of the Babylonian Captivity. Prof. R. T. Stamm is incensed at those who "tear the book of Daniel out of its origin in the revolt of Judas the Maccabee against King Antiochus Epiphanes in 168 B. C." (*The Lutheran*, July 3, 1940)<sup>4</sup> H. L. Willett: "The Book of Daniel is often classed with the prophetic books by uncritical readers. . . . At the time of the Maccabean uprising the Book of Daniel seems to have appeared, whose purpose was to inspire the loyal with courage to persevere in their constancy until the dark days of persecution should cease and the tyrant should fall. This it was confidently expected would take place within an interval not too long to be endured. This measure of time, as in other apocalyptic works, was usually described as three years and a half." (*Op. cit.*, pp. 114, 119.) Willett has a chapter on "the Making and Remaking of the Old Testament." Nor did St. Paul write all of the Pauline epistles. He did not write the Pastoral Letters. Prof. W. C. Berkemeyer writes in the *New Testament Commentary*, p. 581 f.: "We must conclude that behind the Pastoral Epistles and in them there is a genuine Pauline tradition. . . . They are sub-Pauline but based on genuine Pauline tradition. . . . It seemed legitimate in that age to put words on the lips of a man

4) To be exact, an unidentified Jew took up his pen in *January*, 164 B. C. to write this book. Kautzsch says so.

whose mind was being interpreted," to practice a mild *fraus pia*. And did St. Mark write all of his gospel? Read the story of the making and remaking of this gospel in the *Lutheran Church Quarterly*, April, 1936, on "The 'Cursing' of the Fig-tree." Jesus really did not curse the tree but simply "said in effect: Your usefulness is over, — the tree was dying. . . . Those who got *these* original words of Jesus from the Twelve would repeat them to others, and so on down the years *until* some day some brother with the gift of insight, as he would probably put it, would sense a far more intimate connection between the words of Jesus and the death of the tree than had previously been thought of. For the first time it would seem to this person that the tree must have died not merely *as* Jesus saw and said as it *would*, but *because* He said it *should*, in short, because He cursed it. . . . This person must have left the resulting chaos just as he made it, without a thought of editing out the incongruities just as Mark would have done — and did."

Now, any one who accepts these theories of higher criticism as gospel-truth (Wellhausen's documentary-historical-evolutionary theory or any later similar theories, also those covering the New Testament) cannot in good conscience accept Verbal Inspiration. He cannot have the Holy Ghost engage in forgeries.

In the second place, the higher critics get their disciples to believe, teach, and confess that Holy Writ contains, both in its spurious and in its authentic sections, much that is fiction. Believing that, they cannot believe Verbal Inspiration. They certainly cannot let the Holy Ghost present fiction to men as truth. And so the Rostock professor F. Buechsel, who tells us, "Der historisch Geschulte wird . . . legendaere Stuecke [in der Heiligen Schrift] feststellen," cannot but conclude: "Der Gedanke der Inspiration von Worten muss aufgegeben werden." (*Op. cit.*, pp. 77, 115.)

Name some of these legendary stories! (You need not mention the "miracle-myths." We had plenty of that above.) Well, Abraham is a legendary figure. Adam and Eve, too. M. Jastrow, a Jewish critic, declares that the Biblical tradition is nothing more than an adapted form of specifically Babylonian folk-lore, that the episodes of Gen. 3 "all are pictures that belong to the naivest folk-lore period of primitive culture," and Prof. H. C. Alleman, in *The Old Testament — a Study*, asks: "What is meant by 'the Hebrew Tradition'?" and answers: "Consult M. Jastrow, Jr., *Hebrew and Babylonian Tradition*."<sup>5</sup> J. M. Gibson: "The first form which is found in the history of the world's literature is that of myth and legend. . . . If we would only think ourselves back

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5) Read the article of Dr. W. A. Maier "The Old Testament at Gettysburg," in *CONC. THEOL. MONTHLY*, VI, p. 267 ff.

to the conditions of the olden time, so far from finding fault or suggesting difficulty, we should recognize the marvelous grace of God in so lifting up the best legendary literature of the world, such as the story of the Garden of Eden or of the Fall, as to make it the vehicle of high and pure revelation." (*The Inspiration and Authority of Holy Scripture*, p. 157.)<sup>6)</sup>

Georgia Harkness states that "the majestic creation myth with which the Old Testament opens was written late in the priestly post-exilic era" (*op. cit.*, p. 140, and *Christendom* I, p. 492) and finds the account of the creation in Genesis to be the poetic expression of some profounder or larger truth.

Prof. T. A. Kantonen agrees with them. "Relying upon the theory of the verbal inspiration of the Bible, rejecting *a priori* the results of constructive historical criticism, the adherents of this approach have regarded the stories of the Temptation and the Fall as mere historical narratives rather than profound prophetic philosophy of history." (*The Luth. Church Quart.*, July, 1935, p. 211.)<sup>7)</sup>

Then, there are books in the Bible which are pure "fiction"—fiction in the sense of novels and romances. "Historical novels" is the term employed by Best (*op. cit.*, p. 91). Willett calls them "Biblical romances," "works of fiction written with a definite bearing on current thought and intended to be tracts for the times." "They are Ruth, Jonah, Esther." "The Book of Jonah . . . is given the mold of a novel. The Jonah of this book can hardly be called the hero of the narrative. Nor can he be described as the villain of the plot. . . . Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that he is the fool of the story, for his character appears as a foil for the real lesson of the book. . . . The incidents of the storm, Jonah's deliverance by the great fish, are perhaps intended as a symbol of Israel's engulfment and restoration." (*Op. cit.*, pp. 59, 107, 110.)

6) In the introduction to this book Principal Forsyth says: "Dr. Gibson began in the old theory of inspiration, in which he would have remained had his been a metallic, inert, or mechanical mind," had he not taken a course with the higher critics.

7) Professor Kantonen discards the story of the Fall as unhistorical. Professor Nolde wants the pupil later to discard the scientific import of the creation story. They are still in the lowest grade of the school of higher criticism. The higher grades have learned to discard still more Bible-stories. *Christendom* is in the highest grade. We have quoted one sentence from its essay above. The full statement reads: "The account of the creation in Genesis, the Christmas-story of the Incarnation, the resurrection of the body of Christ, . . . the doctrine of the resurrection of the body, the doctrine of the Virgin Birth and the divinity of Christ,—all these conceptions, intended at first quite literally, have for many devout Christians today only a symbolic function. . . . Hence they are still scrupulously retained, lovingly cherished, but considered as poetic expressions of some profounder or larger truth than that which their formulators realized."

These findings of higher criticism being true, how can one still retain the doctrine of verbal inspiration? Even if the Holy Ghost would want to write historical romances, He could not attempt to palm them off as history. And so the modern man, as J. S. Whale puts it, has been freed from the prison-house of verbal infallibility. "It is no use shilly-shallying here; loyalty to truth in the shape of literary and historical criticism forbids it." (*The Christian Answer*, etc., p. 77.)

The next section of the black-list enumerates the unfulfilled prophecies. Willett: "The hopes of the Book of Daniel were not realized in the manner anticipated. But they kept the faith of the people alive through days of peril and distress. And in that fact they proved their worth." (*Op. cit.*, p. 125.) Baumgaertel-Rostock lists an even more serious case: "Die zentrale Weissagung, die messianische, hat sich nicht so erfuehlt, wie die Propheten sie dachten. Die nationalen ueberspannten Erwartungen mancher prophetischer Worte, die als Gottesworte ausgegeben sind, traten nicht in Erfuehlung." (See W. Moeller, *op. cit.*, p. 26.) G. Adam Smith: "Isaiah's forecast of Judah's fate was therefore falsified by events," "discredited by contemporary history." Isaiah was a "visionary" (*Modern Criticism and the Preaching of the Old Testament*, pp. 25, 140, 141).

In some cases the prophets themselves recognized that they had been mistaken in their prophecies and revised and corrected them. Baumgaertel: "Hesekiel 26: Der Koenig von Babel wird Tyrus einnehmen. In Kap. 29 ist der Prophet zu einer Selbstkorrektur gezwungen: da die Einnahme nicht erfolgt ist, wird dem Nebukadnezar Aegypten als Ersatz in Aussicht gestellt." (*Op. cit.*, p. 25.) C. H. Dodd (Oxford) repeats Baumgaertel's charge concerning Ezekiel: "Ezekiel withdrew his forecast of the fall of Tyre (Ezek. 26-28, 586 B. C.; 29:18, 568 B. C.). Ezekiel's dirge over Tyre was indeed somewhat 'previous,' for Tyre was a flourishing city and continued to flourish for centuries after the prophet had predicted its doom." "Jeremiah found his expectations in several points falsified." Isaiah, too. This proves, says Dodd, that some of its (the Bible's) greatest writers contemplate the possibility that they may be mistaken or even confess that in some points they have been mistaken." And, believe it or not, Dodd even offers this as proof: "Jeremiah at one time wondered if he had really been deceived. Jer. 20:7: 'Thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived.'" (*The Authority of the Bible*, pp. 15, 65.)

All of which proves, says Dodd (p. 9) and Willett and Baumgaertel and all the rest, that "no balanced mind" can hold the doctrine of verbal inspiration, the teaching that "every statement of Scripture, whether concerning the mysteries of the divine Being,

the processes of nature, or the facts of history, past or future, is exactly and literally true." Can the Holy Ghost utter unfulfilled prophecies? Would He raise false hopes in the hearts of the persecuted Jews, just to tide them over their present afflictions? The anonymous writer of the so-called prophecy of Daniel might have had such an idea, but those who teach that the Book of Daniel was given by inspiration are charging the Holy Ghost with the commission of a *fraus pia*.

Next we have the alleged misquotations. This black-list starts out with Matt. 27:9: "spoken by Jeremy the prophet." That is an error, the critics say. The reference should have been to Zechariah (11:12, 13). Indeed, it is an error, says De Witt, due to a "lapse of memory." "A simple lapse of memory, utterly unimportant," but an error nevertheless (*op. cit.*, p. 38). Heb. 10:5 ("A body hast Thou prepared for Me") and Ps. 40:6 ("Mine ears hast Thou opened") are next put on the list and many other "inexact" quotations. It is charged that the writers were careless in these instances, or if they were careful, they suffered a *lapsus memoriae*.

A variety of the case of misquotation is found in those instances where the writer wilfully misquoted. H. L. Willett: "In the text cited (1 Tim. 5:18: "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox," Deut. 25:4) Paul appears so anxious to enforce his teaching about the rights of Christian presbyters and evangelists, including himself, to share in the temporal blessings of their disciples that he treats the Old Testament text as though it had no application to the domestic creatures for whose benefit it was obviously intended and related only to the ministry of the Gospel." (*Christian Century*, March 16, 1938.)

De Witt says this matter is unimportant, that is, for his theory of inspiration, but tells us plainly that it gives the death-blow to Verbal Inspiration. Introducing his chapter of misquotations and other inaccuracies, he says: "We have now reached the most ungracious part of our task — that of mentioning inaccuracies in the Bible which make it necessary to reconstruct the theory of inspiration as generally accepted. . . . The definition referred to" (Verbal Inspiration) "as untenable claims absolute inerrancy for the whole." (*Loc. cit.*)<sup>8)</sup> K. F. A. Kahnis, one of the instigators of

8) Even James Orr, who is for plenary inspiration, is ready to give up Verbal Inspiration, because "Verbal Inspiration' in the result may be held to imply a *literality* in narratives, quotations, or reports of discourses which the facts, as we know them, do not warrant." (*Op. cit.*, p. 210.) When he goes on to tell "the advocates of verbal inspiration" that "the end is gained if the *meaning* of the saying is preserved, though the precise form of words varies," the warning cannot be meant for us. We hold with him that the precise form of words may vary.

the revolt, within the Lutheran Church, against Verbal Inspiration, puts it this way: "Is not that conception of inspiration which ascribes to the Holy Ghost . . . all these inaccurate quotations . . . derogatory of the Holy Ghost?" (See F. Pieper, *Christliche Dogmatik*, I, p. 297.)

To be sure, if the premise of Kahnis and De Witt and Willett is correct, the conclusion is inevitable. If a man is convinced that the writers of the New Testament were careless in quoting from the Old Testament or let their memory play them tricks or took liberties with the statements of the prophets, they could not have written by inspiration of God. The moderns believe that they are fighting for the honor of God in repudiating Verbal Inspiration. They say: You must not saddle the Holy Ghost with these glaring mistakes.

The *index errorum*, finally, contains a list of alleged contradictions in the Bible. It is a long list. Ancient heathen writers, Celsus and Porphyry, worked on it. The infidels Voltaire and Paine and Ingersoll worked on it. The rationalist Lessing worked on it. And now the moderns have taken up the work. They are engaged in "a furious search for discrepancies."<sup>9</sup> The more discrepancies they find, the better. For these discrepancies, *Unstimmigkeiten*, contradictions, are the heavy artillery in the assault on Verbal Inspiration, the *Panzerdivision*, against which Verbal Inspiration cannot stand. "The Bible contains contradictions—this has been ever considered the weightiest and most serviceable objection against Verbal Inspiration. They say there are contradictions and there could be no contradictions if the Holy Ghost were the real author of the sacred books and had dictated every single word; the infallible Holy Ghost cannot contradict Himself, can He?" (A. Hoenecke, *Ev.-Luth. Dogmatik*, I, 367.) The moderns, by convincing themselves that the Bible contains contradictions, have convinced themselves that they cannot with a good conscience retain the old teaching of the Church on inspiration.

To cite a few instances, Baumgaertel proves his thesis "Die Inspirationslehre der alten Dogmatik ist unhaltbar" thus: "Die Sintflut dauert nach 1 Mos. 7:4 und 17 vierzig Tage, nach 7:24 betraegt sie hundert und fuenfzig Tage." (He adduces a lot of other proofs, but this will do for Baumgaertel.) H. L. Willett proves his statement that "the Bible is not an inerrant record" thus: "The

9) That is Philippi's phrase: "Die moderne Differenzjagd." (See Pieper, *op. cit.*, p. 291.) And it is Luther's phrase. "Wiewohl die Historie denen, die sich befeissigen, dass sie allzugenau die widerwaertigen Sprueche in der Schrift klauben, deucht ganz verworren zu sein, werden sich doch christliche Leser leichtlich darein finden." (II, p. 1024.)



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Hebrew records waver between the statement that Moses wrote the words of the Law, Ex. 24:4; 32:28; Deut. 31:24, and insistence upon the fact that Jahve Himself wrote them, Ex. 34:12, 18." (*Op. cit.*, pp. 67, 318.) In his elaboration of the theme "The Mirage of Inerrancy" N. R. Best says that "the Bible-reader needs only to compare the twentieth chapter of Exodus with the fifth chapter of Deuteronomy and note the differences between the recital of the Ten Commandments in these two passages." (*Op. cit.*, p. 72.) Later on he offers this: "An instance of the tireless zeal with which these rationalistic efforts<sup>10</sup> are carried on is the labor that has been spent to explain how it happened that King Saul did not recognize the youth who fought Goliath if that youth, according to the letter of the history, had already been Saul's favorite harper in his own court. The higher critic says: 'Two traditions'—and lets it go at that." (*Op. cit.*, p. 121.)

Dr. G. A. Buttrick, President of the Federal Council for 1940, contributes this: "The second besetment was the discovery of contradictions in the Bible. These need not be pursued from Dan to Beersheba. If only one self-refutation is found, the doctrine of literal infallibility is slain and pursuit is needless." Name one or two of these contradictions! "There are two accounts of creation, and they do not agree. There are two accounts of David's census-taking: in the Book of Samuel we are told that God instructed him to number the people, and in the Chronicles, that Satan 'moved' him. . . . In retrospect it seems incredible that the theory of literal inspiration could ever have been held." (*The Chr. Fact and Modern Doubt.*)

De Witt has this: "Such, too, is the discrepancy between Matt. 20:29, 30 and Luke 18:35. In the former we have two blind men crying after Jesus as He *went out from Jericho*, in the latter, of one blind man as He *drew nigh* to that city. This makes it necessary to reconstruct the theory of inspiration as generally accepted." "The difference between the gospels about the hour of crucifixion" also makes it necessary. Once more: "If error were impossible under the divine afflatus, we should not find the martyr Stephen, when 'full of the Holy Ghost,' making unconsciously at least two statements that contradict the Old Testament." (*Op. cit.*, pp. 37, 38, 73.)—Kahnis points out the difference in the records of the institution of the Lord's Supper and declares that it would be derogatory to the Holy Ghost to make Him the author of these records.

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10) Best is charging the verbal-inspirationists with rationalism. "It may seem a jesting *'tu quoque'* to say of the literally orthodox in Bible-studies that they are more inveterate rationalists than the higher critics, whom they so unanimously condemn." We shall study this curious phenomenon in a later article.

The moderns make much of the difference in the wording of the inscription on the cross. One of them puts it thus: "The Fundamentalist asserts the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures. Permit me to remind the Fundamentalist that, while each of the four gospels cites the inscription on the cross, no two give it the same words. What, then, of verbal inspiration?" — The "contradiction" between Acts 9:7 and Acts 22:9 also figures prominently in the list of errors. Saul's companions heard the voice, and they did not hear the voice! (See L. Boettner, *op. cit.*, p. 55.) And then there are the contradictions in the story of the resurrection! St. John, for instance, mentions only one woman going to the tomb. Matthew two, Mark three, Luke still more. Matthew and Mark speak of one angel, Luke and John two angels. Etc., etc. Lessing used to make much of these glaring contradictions. (See *Lehre und Wehre*, 32, p. 321.)

The latest manifesto against Verbal Inspiration was issued by Dr. H. C. Alleman: "By the theory of verbal inspiration we are justified in expecting that we shall find no errors or contradictions or even any imperfections in what the Bible has to say concerning Christ and His ministry. . . . There should be no discrepancies in the statements concerning the Savior. If He can be quoted as saying in John 10:35 (as the verbal inspirationists hold) that 'Scripture cannot be broken,' and if that means that it is without error or contradiction, how are we to square this statement with those instances, particularly in the Sermon on the Mount, in which He deliberately breaks Scripture? For example, does not Matt. 5:39 abrogate Ex. 21:24, and does not Mark 7:19 repeal Lev. 11? . . . It would seem that there should be no uncertainty as to when the Last Supper was celebrated, whether in connection with the Passover (the Synoptists) or at the weekly social-religious meal Kiddush (the fourth gospel). Matt. 21:7 says the disciples placed their garments upon *them* (the ass and the colt) and He sat on *them*. Does that mean that Jesus sat upon both animals? In Mark 2:26 Jesus says that David got the showbread from *Abiathar*; according to 1 Sam. 21:1-6 it was from *Abimelech*. Matthew and Luke both correct Mark at this point by omitting the name. Neither of them thought that Mark was 'errorless.'" (*Luth. Church Quart.*, Oct., 1940, p. 356.)<sup>11)</sup>

The Biblical writers are even charged with holding opposing principles and teaching contradictory doctrines. H. L. Willett, for instance, finds "Jonah" in opposition to Ezekiel. "The book of

11) A somewhat complete list of these "contradictions" is given in *Lehre und Wehre*, 39, pp. 33—273; *Proceedings, Synodical Conference*, 1902, pp. 5—56; and in Dr. W. Arndt's books *Does the Bible Contradict Itself?* and *Bible Difficulties*.

Jonah is a prophetic answer to the narrower nationalism of Ezekiel, Joel, and Esther. . . . Ezekiel was a nationalist of pronounced views." (*Op. cit.*, pp. 59, 108.) And H. E. Fosdick contributes this: "For one thing, we are saved by it" (by discarding Verbal Inspiration and using the new approach to the Bible) "from the old and impossible attempt to harmonize the Bible with itself, to make it speak with unanimous voice, to resolve its conflicts and contradictions into a strained and artificial unity. . . . Listen to Ecclesiastes: "That which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts. . . . Man hath no preeminence above the beasts," Eccl. 9:4-6 and 3:19. And here is a passage from First Corinthians: "This mortal must put on immortality," etc., 1 Cor. 15:53-55. No ingenuity of exegesis ever can make those two agree. The fact is that at the beginning Hebrew religion had no hope of immortality." (*Op. cit.*, p. 24 f.)

Things are in a bad shape in the Bible. It takes the "new approach," higher criticism, to bring order into the confusion. "Higher criticism has explained the seeming contradictions and conflicts of Biblical statements which were in former periods the targets of captious and often successful attack." (H. L. Willett, *op. cit.*, p. 264.) Higher criticism explains for instance, as N. H. Best has told us, the baffling fact of Saul's not recognizing David by the simple expedient of assuming "two traditions." The baffling fact is not, of course, explained. The difficulty remains, but the *fact of the contradiction* is explained by assuming two sources and a high degree of inefficiency in the compiler. And the Holy Ghost is cleared of the charge of having made an incredible statement, which charge must stand, as long as Verbal Inspiration stands.

And so, because of these mistakes and contradictions in the Bible, Verbal Inspiration must be cast out. Paine and Lessing and Alleman say with C. H. Dodd: "The theory of 'verbal inspiration' maintains that the entire corpus of Scripture consists of writings every word of which was directly 'dictated' by the Deity. . . . Any attempt to confront this theory of inspiration with the actual facts which meet us in the study of the Biblical documents leads at once to such patent confusions and contradictions that it is unprofitable to discuss it." (*Op. cit.*, p. 35.) These men *cannot* believe in it, cannot teach it. Granted that the Bible contains many mistakes or even one mistake, verbal, plenary inspiration cannot be maintained. We are here in full accord with them. "It is, of course, useless to contend that the sacred writers were infallible if in point of fact they err." (C. Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, p. 169.) "So God once breathed through human lips upon a series of parchments which are called the Scriptures. . . . Wherefore it must have been inerrant truth, since it is unthinkable that God should breathe a lie." (D. J. Burrell, *Why I Believe the Bible*, p. 18.) The thesis

that, if the Bible contains mistakes, God cannot have inspired these portions of the Bible is absolutely true. And since Paine and Lessing and Alleman are convinced that the Bible is full of errors, they must reject Verbal Inspiration. James Brooks, in an address before theological students in 1880, declared: "The theory now so popular that the words of Scripture are not inspired has been *invented to account for the supposed errors* in the Bible. If you come to anything that does not agree with your ideas, you fall to this theory to the dishonor of God's Word." (See *Lehre und Wehre*, 57, p. 129; 32, p. 303.) Hugh M'Intosh raises the same charge: "The truth is, the reasons that led to the adoption of this theory" (which denies Verbal Inspiration) "were not originally derived from Scripture at all. They do not even profess to found it on direct, explicit passages. They were first used by the foes of the Christian faith — by the Rationalists and infidels — who, in their hostility to Christianity, seized eagerly upon the difficulties and discrepancies of Scripture. . . . Our new apologists, not seeing their way to meet these objections, and thinking by mistake that, if they maintained the truthfulness, trustworthiness, and divine authority of Scripture, they were logically bound to solve all these difficulties; and fancying that they could without loss and with much advantage yield this ground to the enemy, . . . therefore they abandoned the true Bible claim and surrendered to the foe the position that had for centuries been held so well." (*Is Christ Reliable and the Bible True?* P. 597.) And this serious charge is readily admitted by the foes of Verbal Inspiration. De Witt plainly told us: "The inaccuracies in the Bible make it necessary to reconstruct the theory of inspiration as generally accepted." Marcus Dods says: "The fact that those who record the sayings of our Lord greatly differ in their reports appears to be incompatible with the idea of verbal inspiration" (see *THEOL. MONTHLY*, 7, p. 257) — the theory of verbal inspiration must be reconstructed. Hans Rust insists: "Eine falsch beratene Theologie versuchte im 17. Jahrhundert dem fehlbaren Menschenwort der Bibel durch die Lehre von der woertlichen, ja buchstaeblichen Inspiration der Heiligen Schrift das Fragwuerdige zu nehmen und damit das Aergernis des fehlbaren Menschenwortes aus dem Wege zu raeumen. Man erklaerte kurzerhand, die Bibel koenne keine Irrtuemer enthalten" (*Vom Aergernis des Menschenwortes in der Heiligen Schrift*, p. 30) — that was ill-advised; we must get rid of this mistaken notion. H. E. Fosdick: "We used to think of inspiration as a procedure which produced a book guaranteed in all its parts against error." But when one who "knows modern biology hears that, when a dead body touched the skeleton of Elisha and sprang to life again, or that after our Lord's resurrection many of

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the saints long deceased arose"; when one who "knows modern physics reads that light was created three days before the sun and that an ax-head floated when Elisha threw a stick into the water" (*op. cit.*, pp. 30, 34), he feels the need of constructing a new theory of inspiration. Prof. J. Aberly, too, calls for a reconstruction of the old doctrine. "I found that I could not meet these" (modern men) "by falling back on the claim that this Bible was the literal Word of God. . . . It compels one to do what Dr. E. Stanley Jones found himself compelled to do, to shorten his lines of defense. He states that, when he went to India, he felt called on to defend the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, but he soon found it necessary to retire into the citadel and limit himself to Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. . . . One may well ask the question whether men have not been repelled at times by a mishandling of the scriptures. . . ." (*The Luth. Church Quart.*, April, 1935, p. 116 f.)

When, therefore, E. Brunner feels that "we have to chisel off the incrustations of the past from the Bible" (*The Word and the World*, p. 102) and D. F. Forrester, that "the wheat must be sifted from the chaff and what is warped and ill balanced must be corrected" (*The Living Church*, Feb. 11, 1933), and H. C. Alleman, that "the pure Scriptures must be separated from their dregs and filth" (*The Lutheran*, Jan. 14, 1937), it is but natural that they call for a theory of inspiration which permits them to go ahead. And when they go ahead and chisel off the incrustations and junk one part of the Bible after the other, Dr. Willett commends "those devout and scholarly men who have labored nobly to disengage the Bible from the cerements of traditional views" (*op. cit.*, p. 262).

They feel that they are doing a good work and feel that it would be immoral if they retained Verbal Inspiration. Yes, *immoral*. E. Brunner says it would not be honest. "The orthodox doctrine of verbal inspiration has been finally destroyed. It is clear that there is no connection between it and scientific research and *honesty*." (*The Mediator*, p. 105.) And J. A. W. Haas uses stronger terms. "The claims of a mechanically infallible Bible, verbally perfect, do not hold in the light of the facts. But facts cannot be set aside without injury to truth and *damage to moral sincerity* when they are clearly recognized." (*What Ought I to Believe*, p. 29.) J. S. Whale uses similarly strong language: "It is no use shilly-shallying here; *loyalty to truth* in the shape of literary and historical criticism forbids it. A Christian knows that he has to serve God with the mind as well as with heart and will and that the obligation to be intelligent is itself a *moral obligation*." (*Op. cit.*, p. 77.) These men are so thoroughly convinced that the Bible is full of errors that they doubt the honesty

of those who refuse to find them. Kahnis charges them with lacking the sense of truth. "Dass sich in der Schrift Widersprueche finden, kann nur Mangel an Wahrheitssinn bestreiten." (See W. Rohnert, *Die Inspiration der Heiligen Schrift und ihre Bestreiter*, p. 259.) Since, therefore, these men are honestly convinced that there are mistakes in the Bible, they are in conscience bound to fight the teaching of the verbal, plenary inspiration of the Bible. It would be immoral, on their part, to accept it. De Witt demands "if it be fairly proven that the inspiration of the Bible is a delusion," that we face that fact "like honest men. There may be infinite peril in refusing to strengthen our position" (by discarding Verbal Inspiration) "if we find that which we have hitherto occupied to be no longer tenable" (*op. cit.*, p. 13). V. Ferm is of the same mind. "The doctrine of the complete inerrancy of the Bible, upon which historic Lutheranism has built up a system of orthodoxy, can hardly, without a *loss of intellectual integrity* and vitality, be today maintained in the light of the historical method of understanding the Scriptures." (*What is Lutheranism?* p. 293.) And Johannes Haenel declares: "Den Vaetern war die Autoritaet der Schrift gestuetzt durch die Ueberzeugung, dass jedes Wort der Schrift den Verfassern von Gott diktiert sei. Bei *gewissenhafter* Wertung des Tatbestandes kann das *nicht mehr gehalten werden.*" (*Das Wort Gottes und das Alte Testament*, p. 9.)

The moderns refuse to teach Verbal Inspiration for the additional reason that it works great harm. On the last page of his book Fosdick asseverates: "From naive acceptance of the Bible as of equal credibility in all its parts because mechanically inerrant, I passed years ago to the shocking conviction that such traditional bibliolatry is false in fact and *perilous in result.*" Willett is equally emphatic: "No error has ever resulted in greater discredit to the Scriptures or *injury to Christianity* than that of attributing to the Bible such a miraculous origin and nature as to make it an infallible standard of morals and religion." (*Op. cit.*, p. 289.)

In the first place, "let it be said in all seriousness that Lutheran exegesis will be *seriously handicapped* unless it abandons once and for all the unpsychological and mechanical theories of inspiration and unhistorical views of verbal inerrancy which the application of scientific and historical methods to the study of the Bible has rendered obsolete." Prof. T. A. Kantonen said this in his "Canned Theology" articles. He and *The Lutheran* (which published these articles) want more leeway in their exegesis. The Church would suffer great loss if science, etc., were deprived of the right to improve on Scripture.

Again, Verbal Inspiration has forced many to turn their backs on Christianity. The complaint is that when men are told that

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these "erroneous" statements of the Bible (including the "false" ethical standards of the Bible—which will be treated later), are God's truth, they will inevitably become skeptical of *all* the teachings of the Bible. In connection with Verbal Inspiration and "theological obscurantism" Fosdick complains of "the intellectual stumbling-blocks over which many young people are falling when they read the Bible. . . . We are paying for it in the loss of our more intelligent young people." And he tells us of "educated laymen" who complain: "We open the church-door on a land of topsyturvy where axes float, dry sticks change into serpents, and bedeviled swine run violently into the sea." (*Op. cit.*, pp. 53, 59, 61.) J. M. Gibson: "Take the utterances which trench on the domain of science," insist that these utterances speak the truth, "and men like Tyndall and Huxley are forced into skepticism." "A man is suddenly confronted with an array of Bible difficulties to which he cannot find any satisfactory answer. . . . Because there are some things in the Bible he cannot be quite sure of, he gives it all up." "There are tens of thousands of people" in this case; they finally "reject the Bible as if it were waste paper and give up the Church of God as a discredited relic of the past." (*Op. cit.*, pp. 121, 169, 195.) Baumgaertel, too, would rather sacrifice Verbal Inspiration than call upon the men of learning to bring the required sacrifice. We heard him say: "It will not do to make allowance only for those who are deficient in intellectual training and to exact from the learned classes a *sacrificium intellectus* which they simply cannot bring. That bars them from the Church." (See W. Moeller, *op. cit.*, p. 36.) We must "shorten our line of defense," J. Aberly told us, give up the teaching that "the very words of Scripture are the Word of God," if we would gain men whose "Weltanschauung, or philosophical outlook, is different" (*Luth. Church Quart.*, April, 1935, p. 116 f.). When these men hear a sermon on the absolute inerrancy of Scripture, they are filled with alarm and fear for the welfare of the Church. Dr. E. H. Delk: "This idea of a verbal inspiration of Holy Scripture is more likely to close the ears of informed students of the Bible to Dr. Maier's message than to win them to its revelation of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (*The Luth. Church Quart.*, 1936, p. 426.) E. Brunner sounds the alarm in these words: "The destruction of the dogma of Verbal Inspiration with its emphasis on an Infallible Book, by the modern process of research in natural and historical science inevitably carried away with it *the whole Christian faith* in revelation." (*The Mediator*, p. 34.) Dr. S. P. Cadman sounded the alarm in the *Herald Tribune* of New York thus: "The claim that the Scriptures are a perfect whole has wrought more mental distress and created more skepticism than any other dogma of Christian or Jewish

theology known to me." (See *The Presbyterian*, July 12, 1928.) He makes the same statement in *Answers to Every-day Questions*, p. 253. De Witt implores us to cease and desist from such preaching: under such preaching "poor souls pass off into the outer darkness" (*op. cit.*, p. 15).

Such preaching is also harmful to ethics. C. E. Montague cites the very bad physics of the Bible bound on the modern mind by tradition and so vitiating the effect of its very good ethics. The disbeliefs generated by the physics have brought on skepticism as to the authoritative nature of the ethics. "I believe that it is not open to doubt that a large part of the immoralisms and confused egoisms of the day are due to the inevitable aftermath of a morality based on a divine power, faith in whose existence has been lost." (See M. H. Krumbine, *Ways of Believing*, p. 42.)

And still greater disaster is wrought. In the article "Ein oeffentliches Bekenntnis zur Inspiration der Heiligen Schrift in Deutschland" (*Lehre und Wehre*, 69, p. 297 ff.) Dr. Pieper writes: "The charge is made that those who still believe that Scripture is the infallible Word of God, and accordingly make Scripture the sole source and norm of the Christian doctrine, exert an evil influence on the Church. . . . This clinging to the words of Scripture, or, as it is usually put, to 'the letter of Scripture,' engenders 'intellectualism,' a mere head-Christianity, and hinders 'living,' 'warm-blooded,' Christianity." (See also *Chr. Dogmatik*, I, p. 317.) Yes, indeed, says O. L. Joseph in *Ringing Realities* (pp. 91 and 217), "if we are to escape the pitfall of barren intellectualism," we must not "imprison the reason within a Chinese wall of traditionalism," demanding a Bible which "is historically correct," free from "errors," and does not deal in "folk-lore" and relying upon "proof-texts" to establish doctrine. — What evils hath this dogma of Verbal Inspiration wrought! The moderns cannot help loathing and abhorring it. As W. Moeller puts it: "'Verbal Inspiration!' The bare word sets our theologians a-trembling."

One more reason why the moderns abhor the doctrine of verbal inspiration, of the inerrancy of Scripture: they are convinced that Scripture does not teach this doctrine, and they will not have it foisted upon the Church. The *Auburn Affirmation* declares: "There is no assertion in Scripture that their writers were kept 'from error.'" <sup>12)</sup> It is surprising that Christian theologians should make such a statement, in the face of the many Scriptural statements to the contrary (2 Tim. 3:16; John

12) The statement following this sentence comes under the heading: Harmfulness of Verbal Inspiration. "The doctrine of inerrancy, intended to enhance the authority of the Scriptures, in fact impairs their authority for faith and life and weakens the testimony of the Church."



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10:35; etc.); it is still more surprising that so many can agree with the Auburn Affirmation. Men have been able to convince themselves that the Scriptures do not claim inerrancy.<sup>13</sup> N. R. Best is able to say: "The demand for an inerrant Bible is an artificial stipulation which men would impose on the Spirit who has inspired the Scriptures, but which gets no recognition whatever within the Scriptures themselves." (*Op. cit.*, p. 96.) S. P. Cadman has found it possible to answer the question "Why do you think it incredible that God was not able to protect the inspiration of His chosen witnesses against mistakes?" thus: "Nowhere does the Book itself claim for the entire content of its literature what you assert in its behalf. . . . It is a baseless assumption that every word of Holy Scripture must be regarded as practically infallible." (*Answers to Everyday Questions*, p. 253.) C. H. Dodd can actually pen these words: "The Bible itself does not make any claim to infallible authority for all its parts." (*The Authority of the Bible*, p. 14.) And when the United Lutheran Church of America found itself unable to accept "the doctrine known technically as 'The Verbal Inspiration of the Bible'" and "its commission was unable to accept the statement . . . that the Scriptures are the infallible truth 'also in those parts which treat of historical, geographical, and other secular matters'" (see above), it asserted in effect that the Bible does not teach it. That was asserted in so many words, for instance, by the *Lutheran World*, Nov. 19, 1903. Commenting on a statement of *Lehre und Wehre*: "Die Schrift lehrt klar, dass jedes Wort der Heiligen Schrift vom Heiligen Geiste eingegeben und darum untrügliche Wahrheit ist," it said: "This strikes us as a case of orthodoxy overdone. The writer fails to cite passages in proof of the amazing statement that the Scriptures themselves teach that 'every word' contained in them is inspired by the Holy Ghost." (See *Lehre und Wehre*, 50, p. 39.)

Men who honestly believe that Scripture does not teach verbal, plenary inspiration are conscience-bound to protest against this teaching. And they couch their protest in strong language. Dr. J. H. Cotton, president-elect of the Presbyterian Theological Seminary of Chicago, declares that "the Bible is not 'letter' and that the Church's doctrine of the infallible Bible is a *heresy*." (See *CONC. THEOL. MONTHLY*, XI, p. 631.) The name for this heresy is "verbalism." Let no man plague the Church with Verbal Inspiration!

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13) Recall the statement of M'Intosh: "The truth is, the reasons that led to the adoption of this theory were not *originally* derived from Scripture at all. They do not even profess to found it on direct, explicit passages." But convinced that the Scriptures contain errors, they are driven to divest 2 Tim. 3:16 and John 10:35 of their real meaning.

This, then, is the situation: men are thanking God that he has delivered the Church from a fearful incubus. They are glad that they have been freed from "the naive acceptance of the Bible as inerrant" (Fosdick, see above) and thank God for the great progress theology has made: "When I came to the seminary years ago, I fully believed in the verbal inspiration of every book in the Bible. . . . I fancy I had plenty of company in my jejune conception and belief that the Bible in all its statements was inerrant. . . . What a change has been wrought in the sphere of New Testament scholarship during the last fifty years!" (E. H. Delk. See *THEOL. MONTHLY*, 7, p. 172.) Now they can again look the world in the face! The world no longer looks upon them as obscurantists. And they are grateful to "those devout and scholarly men who have labored nobly to disengage the Bible from the cerements of traditional views. . . . The higher criticism has forever disposed of the fetish of a level Bible; it has destroyed the doctrine of verbal inspiration." (Willett; see above.)

W. Gussmann is thankful that the Lutheran Church in Germany, at least its leaders, no longer worships this fetish and only wishes that the Lutheran Church in America could enjoy the same good fortune. "The day of Verbal Inspiration has passed, and we shall have to tell our American brethren: We cannot turn the course of history backwards." (*Luth. Zeitblatt*, Jan., 1924.) Voices from America assure him: We are with you! Dr. C. E. Wendell (Augustana Synod): "A stilted veneration for the Word betrays an inward weakness rather than a virile faith, and out of it proceeds a nervous anxiety to prove the 'complete inerrancy' of the Bible 'from cover to cover.' This may be good *Fundamentalism*, but hardly good *Lutheranism*." (*What Is Lutheranism?* P. 236.) Dr. P. E. Sherer has been warning the students at Gettysburg against this un-Lutheran Fundamentalism. He spoke to them of "the panic which resorts to such ineffective devices as Fundamentalism with its untenable theory of verbal inspiration." And the professor (R. T. Stamm) commended him for this timely warning. (See *The Lutheran*, June 9, 1937.)

The revolt against Verbal Inspiration is gaining in force.  
Must we join it? TH. ENGELDER

(To be continued)

