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

Th. Engelder

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis

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

(Continued)

We are asked to give up the doctrine of verbal inspiration because of the alleged erroneousness of the Bible. The moderns are asking us to do that. And our own flesh is suggesting it.¹⁴ We find it impossible to do so. One reason for that is that the arguments advanced by the rationalists against the infallibility of Scripture are in conflict with sound reason. We shall demonstrate this in a later article, and that demonstration will serve a good purpose. But that is a matter of minor importance. The chief reason, the real reason, why we cannot give up Verbal Inspiration is that our Christian conscience, formed and guided by God's Word, forbids it. By doing it we should be violating the Christian faith and putting the Church and the individual believer in grave danger. To those who would entice us away from an inerrant Bible we give this answer: No Christian can declare, in his sober mind, that God's Word contains errors. And when the Christian realizes that Scripture is God's Word, he cannot, absolutely he cannot, declare that the Holy Scriptures contain errors. Nor will he ever be ready to place the Bible in the hands of his fellow-men with the warning that it is not reliable in all its statements.

No Christian will, in his sober mind, say that Scripture, the Word of God, contains a single error. Dr. Pieper says: "All objections to the divine inspiration and the inerrancy of the Bible are unworthy of a Christian." (*What Is Christianity?* p. 257.) Having quoted Luther: "When you hear people who are so blinded and hardened that they deny that what Christ and the apostles spoke and wrote is the Word of God, . . . just keep silence, do not say one word to them; say only this: I shall give you sufficient ground from Scripture; if you believe, well; if not, just go your way" (IX:1238), Dr. Pieper comments: "It is, according to Luther,

14) Dr. G. Stoeckhardt: "It is true that, through the grace of God, no tendency to sympathize with the wisdom of modern theology has as yet manifested itself in our church-body. However, we should never forget that the seed of doubt, of unbelief, is implanted in all of us by nature. And this doubting, continually arising in the natural heart, has in all ages questioned particularly the truth of Scripture, the fountain of all divine truth." (*Lehre und Wehre*, 32, p. 164. On p. 313 ff. Dr. Stoeckhardt deals with the "errors" and "contradictions" in the Bible on which our doubt feeds. See also *Proceedings of Ev. Luth. Synodical Conference*, 1902, p. 21, on the doubts aroused in the hearts of the Christians by these "contradictions.") The following lines are not addressed to the moderns, who will cast them aside as representing the outmoded theology of obscurantism. They are addressed to the disturbed Christian who needs to be shown the wickedness of his doubtings.

utterly unworthy of a Christian to refuse to accept that which Christ and the apostles spoke and wrote as God's Word and inerrant." (*Christliche Dogmatik*, I, p. 293.) The thought that the Bible is a mixture of truth and error cannot find permanent lodgment in the Christian heart.

The Christian thinks too much of his Bible for that. We look upon the Bible, and God wants us to look upon the Bible, as a most holy thing. "Halte von dieser Schrift als von dem allerhoechsten, edelsten Heiligtum." (Luther, XIV:4.) It is clothed with divine majesty. It is the *Word of God*. What is written in the Scriptures was spoken of the Lord by the prophets and apostles (Matt. 1:22). What Moses wrote is "the Word of God" (Mark 7:10, 13), and what Paul wrote "are the commandments of the Lord," 1 Cor. 14:37. The Scriptures are "the oracles of God," Rom. 3:2. And we stand in holy awe of these words, the very words of our God and Lord. Every single word and letter of Scripture is to us sacred and inviolable. "The Holy Scriptures," 2 Tim. 3:15. (See *Proceedings, Iowa Dist.*, 1897, p. 28.)

Holy Scripture is to us the most holy thing in the world. That is the attitude which God requires of the Christian. "To this man will I look that trembleth at My Word," Is. 66:2. We cannot treat it as a human book, subject to criticism and censorship. What we read in this Book we receive not as the word of men but, as it is in truth, the Word of God. 1 Thess. 2:13. When the Christian preacher proclaims the contents of this Book, he knows that he is speaking the oracles of God, 1 Pet. 4:11. With awe and reverence St. Peter read his Bible, for here "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," 2 Pet. 1:21. So Luther looked upon the Bible. "To me God's Word is above all, and the majesty of God is on my side." (XIX:337.) "You must follow straight after Scripture and receive it and utter not one syllable against it, for it is God's mouth." Even when this Book speaks of mere temporal matters, "you are so to deal with it that you think that God Himself is saying this" (III:21). Every single passage of Scripture is clothed with the majesty of God. "As for me, every single Bible-text makes the world too narrow for me." (XX:788.) John Wesley, too, "saw God at the beginning of every section of Holy Scripture. . . . To Wesley, there were two great realities — the visible Book and its invisible but ever-present Author." (See J. A. Cottam, *Know the Truth*, p. 28.) The holy awe that dominates the Christian's study of the Bible makes it utterly impossible for him to utter such a prayer as this: Dear Lord, enlighten my mind that I may separate the errors in Thy Word from the truth it contains. Whatever evil thoughts arise in the Christian's head, his heart will not permit him thus to dishonor God's Word.

Again, the Christian loves the Bible. He loves it because he owes to it everything he prizes. Searching the Scripture, he has found therein eternal life (John 5:39), certainty in doubt, comfort in affliction, strength in weakness, and all spiritual blessings. And loving this Book above all things, he will not permit any man to cast aspersions upon it and dishonor it. Do the moderns really believe that, when they besmirch and befoul the Bible, they have the approbation of the Christian?

The Christian's attitude is this: "I have rejoiced in the ways of Thy testimonies as much as in all riches. I will delight myself in Thy statutes. Open Thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy Law," Ps. 119:14 ff. Stop the mouth of those who are disfiguring its lovely beauty! — "O precious Book, a book above all books! Thou art a peaceful pool here on earth, which reflects the light of all the stars of the invisible heaven; thou art the letter sent from our eternal home to comfort us in the strange land; thou art the key of heaven for the faint-hearted pilgrim, wandering through this world filled with error, doubt, fear, and trouble; thou art the Word of our God, of our heavenly Father." (Walther, *Kasualpredigten*, p. 297.)

Moreover, this Book which all Christians love and revere, solemnly warns us against ascribing errors to it and demands instant acceptance by us of all of its statements. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God," 2 Tim. 3:16. This little Bible-text makes the world too narrow for us. If we should deny that every word of Scripture is true, we could nowhere in the wide world find escape from the judgment this text would pronounce against us. "The Scripture cannot be broken," John 10:35. Nowhere does Scripture make a misstatement. If any man dares to eliminate the least statement of Scripture as untrustworthy, he is condemned by this Scripture, and the world has become too narrow for him. It is unworthy of a Christian to refuse to accept any portion of Scripture as the inerrant Word of God. Again: "Thy Word is truth," John 17:17. And: "These sayings," the sayings of Revelation and of the entire Bible, "are faithful and true," Rev. 22:6. Will men still speak of mistakes, discrepancies, contradictions, found in certain sayings of the Bible and demand that these sayings be eliminated from the "Word of God"? If they will do so, let them ponder the awful saying of Rev. 22:19: "If any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life," etc. No; one who takes the Bible for his guide will not sit down with those who occupy themselves with making lists of "errors in the Bible."

St. Augustine would not do so. He wrote to Jerome: "This I have learned to do: to hold only those books which are called

the Holy Scriptures in such honor that I finally believe that not one of the holy writers ever erred." Quoting this statement, Luther endorses it and declares: "The Scriptures have never erred." (XV:1481.) Yes, and "the Scriptures cannot err" (XIX:1073). "It is certain that Scripture cannot disagree with itself." (XX:798.) "It is impossible that Scripture should contradict itself, only that it so appears to the senseless and obstinate hypocrites." (IX:356.) Luther was so filled with awe of the sacredness of Scripture that he would not and could not admit the possibility of errors and contradictions in Scripture, could not permit any portion of it to be violated and broken. "One little point of doctrine means more than heaven and earth, and therefore we cannot suffer to have the least jot thereof violated." (IX:650.)¹⁵

Listen to the host of Christian theologians who up to the present time bear witness to the inviolability of Scripture, of all of Scripture. D. J. Burrell speaks thus: "The Book claims to be inspired, 'breathed of God.' . . . Wherefore it must have been inerrant truth; since it is unthinkable that God should breathe a lie." (*Why I Believe the Bible*, p. 18.) L. Boettner: "We believe that the Bible is without an error from Genesis to Revelation. . . . This has been the historic Protestant position concerning the authority of Scripture. It was held by Luther and Calvin. In more recent times it has been reasserted by Hodge, Warfield, and Kuyper. . . . They have held that the Bible does not merely contain the Word of God, as a pile of chaff contains some wheat, but that the Bible in all its parts is the Word of God." (*The Inspiration of the Scriptures*, p. 17.) Without an error from Genesis to Revelation — let Quenstedt enlarge on that. He wrote — and the moderns quote his words again and again as a *dictum horribile*, while we find our heartfelt conviction expressed in them —: "In the canonical Scriptures there is found no falsehood, no misstatement, no error, not even the least, neither in the subject-matter nor in the words, but whatever they present, the whole of it and every part of it, is completely true, whether this pertain to the doctrines of faith or of morals, history or chronology, geography or nomenclature; no want of information, no thoughtlessness or forgetfulness, no lapse of memory, can or dare be ascribed to the penmen of the Holy Ghost as they wrote the sacred writings." (*Systema*, I, p. 112.)

And let Dr. Walther tell us who it is that wants us to find errors in the Bible. "The moderns charge this up against us as an error that we refuse to find errors in the Bible. . . . They ask us to deny with them the divine origin of the divine Word and to say,

15) "The context shows that Luther here has in mind every tittle of doctrine as expressed in the definite inviolable words of Scripture." (Pieper, *op. cit.*, I, p. 268. Look up this passage in Pieper.)

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when we read any passage of the Bible: Yea, hath God really said this? But we refuse to make these words of the *fallen angel* our own. Nay; as often as we open our Bible, and wherever we open it, there comes to us a voice charging us: 'Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord hath spoken,' Is. 7:2." (*Lutherstunde*. See *Proceedings, Iowa Dist.*, 9, p. 53.) Many today refuse to see God at the beginning of every section of the Bible. The more reason that we should say with Walther: "As Peter at the time when many fell away was the more ready to confess Christ: 'We believe and are sure that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God' (John 6:69), so we should, now that so many are becoming ashamed of the holy Book, proclaim the louder to the world: We believe and are sure that this despised Book is the truth, the Word of the living God." (*Kasualpredigten*, p. 304.)

And what Walther and Luther and Augustine said St. Paul said before them: "I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets," Acts 24:14. Can you conceive of Paul saying that it is not incumbent on him or any other Christian to receive as true all that is written in the Old Testament and in the New Testament? Can you conceive of such a situation that the Holy Spirit, who spoke 2 Tim. 3:16, would at the same time permit His Christians to reject portions of Scripture as not inspired, as erroneous? Can you understand the psychology of a Christian who honestly believes in the Bible and yet feels at liberty to break Scripture here and there? It is utterly unworthy of the Christian to speak of mistakes in the Bible. Hugh M'Intosh takes the same position as Dr. Pieper. "In regard to the greater and supreme question as to the infallibility and divine authority of the teaching of the Lord on everything on which He clearly uttered His mind, and especially on the prime root question of the truthfulness, trustworthiness, divine origin, authority and inviolability of all Scripture, I hold firmly that my great teacher" (Prof. W. Robertson Smith) "took up *the only true, safe, and tenable position on which a Christian can take his stand*. This position . . . steadfastly rejects and precludes every theory of inspiration that questions or impugns, far more that disowns or denies, the infallibility and divine authority of the teaching of the Lord on anything He ever taught, on any statement He ever made, or any word He ever uttered. . . . Book I shows especially the decisiveness and absoluteness of His teaching on the *inviolable truth, thorough trustworthiness, and divine authority of all Scripture*." (*Is Christ Infallible and the Bible True?* p. 5 f.)¹⁶⁾ "Es ist

16) M'Intosh is taking issue with those who "declare the indefinite erroneousness and illimitable untrustworthiness of Scripture" (p. 2). Let us have one more quotation on the question whether a Christian can honestly believe and with a clear conscience maintain the erroneous-

einem Christen *unmoeglich*, zu glauben, dass die Heilige Schrift sich selbst widersprechen koenne." (*Proceedings Syn. Conf.*, 1902, p. 19.)¹⁷⁾

Should, then, the Christian judge from the outset, prior to, and independently of, any scientific and critical investigation, that any given statement of Scripture is absolutely true, on the sole basis of Scripture's claim of absolute infallibility? The moderns condemn such a position as due to inadmissible *a-priori* reasoning. The writer of the preface to J. M. Gibson's book *The Inspiration and Authority of Holy Scripture* 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. . . . He makes a valuable protest against *the vice of apriorism*, which comes down on the Bible with a theory of inspiration really drawn from rationalistic expectations, instead of rising out of the Bible from its inductive treatment as faith and science alike must do." (P. XV.)¹⁸⁾ J. De Witt too, has no use for the *a-priori* argument.

ness of Scripture. "If the Bible claims to be true, trustworthy, of divine origin and authority,—the Word of God,—it necessarily follows either that the Scriptures, as originally written, were so and cannot be indefinitely erroneous and untrustworthy, or that the Bible is untrue in its root doctrine and that its fundamental claim is false. It cannot be the Word of God, but must be merely the word of not only fallible, but untruthful or incredible men. . . . If the Bible claims in the name of God to speak the truth, and if it, as alleged, is erroneous or unreliable, then manifestly its root claim is false. . . . It cannot be the product of divine inspiration; for every idea of inspiration would be violated by the supposition that men writing under the power of the Holy Ghost should make a false claim." (Pp. 361, 363.)

17) "Holy Scripture cannot contradict itself. The Christian is sure of that, sure in advance, even before investigating the 'contradictions.' For (1) Scripture, being the Word of God, is true. . . . (2) Holy Scripture is inspired. . . . (3) Otherwise Scripture could no longer be the norm and rule of the Christian faith and life. . . . These considerations leave no room for argument; it is impossible for the Christian to think that Scripture could contradict itself." (Pp. 14—19. Get these *Proceedings* and study the full argument.)

18) Dr. Gibson writes: "I was brought up to believe that the whole fabric of our faith rested ultimately on the foundation of a book which, though written by many different authors, was yet from beginning to end not their work at all but that of God. They were simply God's penmen, and what they wrote was at His dictation." "This is the method which has till quite recently been most popular with the defenders of the authoritative inspiration of the Scriptures: they have postulated as a necessity of the case the emancipation of all the writers of Scripture from the effects of human weakness and limitation." The proper method is to "form a theory of inspiration not at the beginning but at the end of the inquiry." "According to that preconceived theory of inspiration it was supposed that men inspired of God . . . could speak with absolute scientific precision on every subject they touched." "Those who find rest in the conviction that they have in their possession a book every line and word of which is beyond the reach of error, have an ultimate authority not a whit better than that of the Romanist." (Pp. 4, 32, 36, 90, 115.)

He understands our position quite well: "The *a-priori* argument is very simple and intelligible. No evidence to the contrary is entitled to the slightest consideration. . . . If the *a-priori* argument be valid, all personal deficiency must have been miraculously supplied. There can be no failure of memory or lack of information . . . , no inapt quotation, no dialectic flaw." But he will have none of it. "This beautiful conception must be abandoned." "It must be confirmed by other than *a-priori* reasoning." This is the only proper method: "We shall then be prepared to produce a definition *a posteriori*, reasoning from the effect to its cause, from the consequent to the antecedent, from the revelation that lies before us in the Bible to the principle and method of the originating divine activity" (*What Is Inspiration?* pp. 9, 12, 42.)

Is any particular passage true? The obscurantists say: Since it is inspired, it is true. But "there are not a few passages in the Bible which cannot be regarded by Protestants as in any true sense inspired," declares Hastings, *Encyclopedia*, VII, p. 346. "After a free and fair investigation," applying the *a-posteriori* method, these many passages have been found to be mere human, false statements. "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 and the New Testament with the feeling that they are bound to regard its teaching as sacred and authoritative." And Prof. T. V. Kantonen tells us that, because we fail to apply the *a-posteriori* method, great portions of Holy Scripture become useless to us; we fail to find the truth that shall be revealed to those who reject the story as it is told in Scripture as true. "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." (*Luth. Church Quart.*, July, 1935, p. 211.)

Now, do we plead guilty to the charge of apriorism? We certainly do; only we have no sense of guilt about the matter. We are apriorists all along the line. On the general question: Does the Christian accept the Bible as the inspired Word of God because the Bible teaches us that it is inspired or does he accept it as such only after a thorough scientific investigation and demonstration? Theo. Kaftan, speaking for himself and the men just quoted, says: "We do not regard as authoritative what Scripture teaches concerning itself, but our judgment of what is the divine truth is based on the impression which Scripture makes upon us (insofern die Schrift sich bei uns 'durchsetzt')." (See Pieper, *op. cit.*, p. 362.) Dr. Stoeckhardt makes this answer: "What Scripture says con-

cerning itself, its nature and origin, settles the matter for us." (*Lehre und Wehre*, 32, p. 280.) Dr. Stoeckhardt is an apriorist, and so are we. And we are thoroughgoing apriorists. The special question: Is a given statement in Scripture true? finds, for us, its answer in the general statement of Scripture: All Scripture is true. In approaching any Bible difficulty our mind is made up from the start: this passage is absolutely true. There may be difficulties about it, but the question: Is it true? does not present any difficulties to us. Dr. De Witt represents us as saying in this case: "No evidence to the contrary is entitled to the slightest consideration." Yes, we do say that, only that we say in addition: There can be no evidence to the contrary. We know *a priori* that any "evidence" to the contrary that may be adduced is false. And when Dr. Kantonen charges us with "rejecting *a priori* the results of constructive historical criticism," we only ask to amend it by substituting "destructive" for "constructive."

Dr. J. W. Horine is dumbfounded when he hears us say such things. Reviewing Dr. W. Arndt's book *Bible Difficulties; "an Examination of the Passages of the Bible Alleged to Be Irreconcilable with Its Inspiration,"* he says: "Naturally, the author is a Fundamentalist, his viewpoint being that of the absolute inspiration and verbal inerrancy of the Bible in all its parts, which is the position of the Evangelical Lutheran Missouri Synod. The examination proceeds, and the conclusion is drawn, from the two premises: Every single statement of Scripture is literally true; the reader of Scripture must have faith enough to believe it to be true." (*The Lutheran*, July 28, 1932.) Yes, we take that position.

And we cannot take any other position. It is the only position befitting the Christian theologian. Let the Unitarians say: "No statement can be accepted as true because it is in the Bible" (see *Popular Symbolics*, p. 402), the Christian theologian cannot say it. He cannot thus dishonor his Bible. He holds Holy Scripture in such honor that he firmly believes that not one of the holy writers ever erred (Augustine), and he holds Holy Scripture in such honor that he accepts all and any of its statements without demanding further proof. What, tell Scripture to step aside for a while and call in some puny historian or scientist and, after hearing his verdict, tell Scripture: "Now I can accept your statement"? No, no; with the Christian it is axiomatic: "The Scriptures cannot err. . . . It is certain that Scripture cannot disagree with itself." "For it is established by God's Word that God does not lie, nor does His Word lie." (Luther, XX: 798.) But that is apriorism — God's Word cannot lie because God's Word says it cannot lie! Of course it is, and the Christian cannot be anything but an apriorist in this matter. A Christian is one who believes God's Word; how, then,

can he demand that before he gives credence to any statement of God's Word, its truth must first be established by some other authority? The *ipse dixit* of Scripture suffices for the Christian.

"Philippi had not yet attained the Christian attitude towards Scripture when he wrote the words 'One dare not *from the outset* refuse to grant the possibility of the occurrence of minor discrepancies. . . . We therefore would not like to declare with Calov, at least not *a priori*: "No error, even in unimportant matters, no lapse of memory, . . . can anywhere occur in Scripture."' But he took the right position, the only one befitting a Christian, when he retracted this statement in the third edition of his *Glaubenslehre* and declared Calov's *a-priori* position to be the correct one." (Pieper, *op. cit.*, p. 339.) — In the preface to his book *The Modern Use of the Bible*, a book dealing with the many "mistakes" of the Bible, H. E. Fosdick says: "The position represented in this book will of course be distasteful to those bound by a theory of literal inerrancy in their approach to the Bible." Fosdick is right. But he might have used a stronger word than "distasteful." We abominate and hate that approach to the Bible which operates with the possibility of errors in the Bible. And he is right again when he speaks of us as being "bound." We no longer approach Scripture with the "open mind" of the Unitarian, who claim the liberty to accept or reject so much of Scripture as his critical investigation permits or compels him to do. We are "bound," bound by the *a-priori* attitude that "Scripture cannot be broken."

It is a holy bondage. We are bondsmen of Scripture. That is to say that God has bound us. He requires us to accept His Word without questioning. And it is a willing bondage. It is nothing to be ashamed of. Man does not degrade himself by submitting his judgment to the judgment of the Lord God Almighty. And we would not want it otherwise. It is the only safe position to take. We close our eyes and blindly follow the lead of Scripture. Scripture will never deceive us. Following the lead of your critical investigations, you will go astray. We want to remain bondsmen of Holy Scripture.

This attitude is distasteful to Fosdick and the Unitarians and the moderns. They say it is based on prejudice, which does not permit a fair impartial judgment. They speak of our judgments as being biased and warped, they speak of assumptions and prepossessions and partisanship. Well, we are partisans of Scripture, uncompromising partisans. It is impossible for us to be unbiased in this matter. We should consider it sinful not to take the side of Scripture at once. Open mind? Our mind is made up, before the discussion on any passage opens, that Scripture is right and the critics are wrong. In fact, we do not allow any discussion. This

is a matter which is not debatable. The apriorists, thank God, are not open to argument. They are a stubborn lot.¹⁹⁾

In secular affairs, where men deal with men, we are not so stubborn. There we have an open mind. The jurymen dare not make up his mind beforehand. He must first examine the evidence produced. It would be dishonest, immoral in the highest degree, if the judge permitted his preconceived opinion to affect his conduct of the trial. We have no use for prejudiced judges. Moreover, we do not open any book written by man with the idea that we are going to subscribe to all of its statements. We do not accept the pronouncement of the philosopher and the finding of the scientist and the judgment of the historian on their mere say-so. They must substantiate their *dicta* by irrefutable proof. But we dare not ask God and God's Book to submit to the same treatment. It is a wicked thing when the Unitarians and the other liberals place God's Book on a level with men's books—both subject to man's criticism. That was a horrible statement we quoted above: "As faith and science *alike* must do." Science is based on induction; faith accepts the *dictum* of God. N. R. Best says: "Predetermination of the outcome takes the honesty out of any inquiry." (*Op. cit.*, p. 131.) That applies where men deal with men, but it does not apply where God's Book is concerned, and just there Best applies it. On the preceding page (130) he declared that those who accept the miracle stories of the Bible as true take a wrong position when they say: "Whatever is told in this book you must believe just because it is found there." He has forgotten the fine statement

19) This apriorism is nothing strange in Christianity. It is ingrained in the very faith of the Christian. On no point of the Christian faith are we open to argument. We do not argue the articles of the Christian faith but we assert them. We would lose them if we awaited the assent of reason, logic, science. The right attitude, safe for us and profitable for the unbeliever, is expressed in "the admirable axiom of Dr. C. F. Deems: 'Believe your beliefs and doubt your doubts. Do not make the common mistake of the skeptics, doubting your beliefs and believing your doubts.'" (Quoted in *Many Infallible Proofs*, by A. T. Pierson, p. 26.) Pierson continues: "Or as Goethe says again: 'Give us your convictions; as for doubts, we have enough of them already.'" You do not serve the unbeliever by taking a wobbling position on any question concerning the Christian faith. — It is a pity that men know this principle but refuse to apply it in the matter of Inspiration. N. R. Best cannot believe in Verbal Inspiration and the inerrancy of Scripture because he insists on applying the *a-posteriori* method, and this same writer states that, in appraising the qualities of Scripture, he proceeds "on the *frank assumption* that a revelation of God has become an actuality in the volume of the Bible" and that this "assumption is of course a *premise of faith*, rather than a conclusion of logic. Even if occasion permitted the matter to be argued, argument would never demonstrate it. The ways of God, like the being of God, transcend syllogisms" (*Inspiration*, p. 12). And this assumption is created in us by God. Through Scripture He has established in us this premise of faith. The *a-priori* certainty is God's work and gift.

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he made on page 12, concerning the "premise of faith." He has so completely forgotten the truth that faith is above reason that he can write on page 130: "If we have been at all right in arguing that the Bible is not only lawfully open to the investigations of human reason but is divinely calculated to invoke (even provoke) such investigation. . . ." Predetermination of the outcome takes the honesty out of any inquiry as between man and man, but the refusal to take the bare word of Scripture for establishing the truth of its statements dishonors God and disgraces the Christian.

Just by the way, why should the moderns indulge in such violent harangues against the wrong of *a-priori* reasoning, denouncing our attitude as due to prejudice and bias, when they are indeed guilty of this very thing? The liberals are unable to approach the Bible with an open mind. They approach it with the *preconceived opinion* that it is a human book, subject to errors. They meet its claim that it is God's Book with *suspicion*. They set up the *premise* that they know as much about these things as Scripture. They oppose to the premise of faith the premise of unbelief. They oppose the *ipse dixit* of Scripture with the *ipse dixit* of their own reason. H. M'Intosh hits it off pretty well when he writes: "If it should seem that I have severely handled any writers, it is only those who have roughly handled the Word of God and wrongly condemned the inspired writers, . . . who denounce every independent man that, after the example and on the authority of Christ and of His inspired apostles, would dare to uphold the Bible claim or to differ from the false but *oracular assertions* or to refuse to accept the *infallible ipse dixit* of those presumptuous speculators who are vain enough to *claim for their own crude, ephemeral productions what they deny to the oracles of God* and to the very words of even the Son of God." (*Op. cit.*, p. IX. — Italics ours.) Read the article by Prof. J. J. Reeve on "The Presuppositions of the Higher Criticism" in *Fundamentals*, III, p. 98 ff. "These presuppositions and assumptions are the determining elements in the entire movement. . . . It is their philosophy or world-view that is responsible for all their speculation and theories. . . . These presuppositions appealed to me very strongly. . . . But upon closer thinking I saw that the whole movement with its conclusions was the result of the *adoption of the hypothesis of evolution*. . . . The use of the Redactor is a case in point. This purely imaginary being, unhistorical and unscientific, is brought into requisition at almost every difficulty. . . . Their minds seem to be in abject slavery to their theory. Their mental attitude being biased and partial, their methods are partial and the results very one-sided and untrustworthy. . . . *They feel instinctively* that to accept the Bible statements would be the ruin of their hypothesis." That certainly is apriorism of the deepest dye!

It was in connection with the question of the reality of the miracles recounted in the Bible that Best charged us with "pre-determining the result of the inquiry." Well, Ph. Schaff tells these people: "The reality of the miracles cannot be disposed of by a simple denial from *a-priori* philosophical prejudice." (*Hist. of the Chr. Church*, I, p. 859.) And this is what Philippi tells them: "The furious search for discrepancies is due primarily to the wicked attitude of the moderns, which boasts of having cut out all assumptions and presuppositions (*Voraussetzungslosigkeit*); they claimed the right to cut loose from the presupposition that Holy Scripture is the Word of God. In place of that, however, they sat down in the temple of God and *presupposed that they were God.*" (See Pieper, *op. cit.*, p. 291.) Professor Reeve adds this: "When one makes his philosophy his authority, it is not a long step until he makes himself his own god. His own reason becomes supreme in his thinking, and this reason becomes his lord." (*Fundamentals*, III, p. 113.)

The moderns, too, as we have just seen, are apriorists. That does not in itself prove that *our a-priori* reasoning is right. But we mentioned it for two reasons. We thought it might cause them to moderate their voice a bit when they are denouncing *our* apriorism. And it gives us occasion to point out that the "assumption" that there can be no errors in the Bible differs *toto coelo* from the assumption that reason has a voice in determining the truth of a given Scripture-passage. The first is a good thing, demanded by God and created by God in us. The other is a wicked thing. It springs from the wicked pride of reason.

One more remark on the subject of the apriorism of the Bible Christian. None but a believer can take this position. We take it because the Bible assures us, and God thereby creates in us the assurance, that the Bible cannot err. One who does not believe that the Bible is God's Word and that every word of the Bible is God's truth cannot agree with us. He cannot but denounce our position as unreasonable and untenable. It is hopeless to argue with him. But we did not set out to argue with him. Our sole purpose, at the present time, is to point out to the Christian that it should be impossible for him to speak of, and think of, errors in the Bible. The vehement asseverations of the moderns to the contrary ought not to make any impression on us. The fact that they cannot grasp our argument must not lead us to doubt the certainty of our position. The attitude of the Christian must be that he meets all objections with the stubborn *a-priori* argument: The Scriptures cannot err. The professor of science may say to the Christian: "The Bible? Why, I didn't suppose that any intelligent person today believed the Bible!" "Oh, yes," answers

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the Christian with assurance, "I believe it all. You see *I know the Author.*"²⁰) The skeptic cannot say that. But do not permit his doubts and subtleties to shake *your* assurance. Believe your beliefs — they are based on God's Word — and doubt your doubts!

The skeptic does not know what to make of such an attitude. Dr. G. A. Buttrick, president of the Federal Council for 1940, says the thing is incredible. "Probably few people who claim to 'believe every word of the Bible' really mean it. That avowal, held to its last logic, would risk a trip to the insane asylum." (*The Christian Fact and Modern Doubt*, 1935.) Well, we are of those — and they are not just a few — who believe every word of the Bible, and we really mean it. We shall say it as long as we retain our Christian sanity. Sane faith cannot speak otherwise. Faith is the product of God's Word, and "the faith produced by the Word is divinely convinced that the Word, every word of Scripture, is the divine truth" (*Conc. Theol. Monthly*, XI, p. 809).

Faith listens to the voice of God speaking through Holy Scripture. It will listen to no other voice. *It will not listen to the voice of rationalism.* It is rationalism which denies the absolute inerrancy of Scripture, and when the Christian listens to this voice, he disgraces himself.

We have already pointed out that the rationalist refuses to trust the bare word of Scripture and must necessarily take the *a-posteriori* position. Let us discuss this point more in detail. We say that the rejection of Verbal, Plenary Inspiration and the denial of the absolute inerrancy of Scripture springs from rationalistic considerations. We say that these men set reason above Scripture. We do not have to say it. They say it themselves. The Unitarian who told us: "No statement can be accepted as true because it is in the Bible," proceeds to tell us: "All its teachings must be subjected to the authority of reason and conscience." Voltaire tells us that he cannot accept the accounts "of God's strange and supernatural dealings with the Israelites in Egypt and in the desert" because "they are revolting to reason." (See D. MacDill, *The Mosaic Authority of the Pentateuch*, p. 15.)²¹) And it is not only the Unitarian, the rationalist, and Voltaire, the scoffer, who champion the rights of reason. J. De Witt, too, insists that reason has the right to correct Scripture. "If, besides the divine truth that Scripture embodies, it also contains partial truths, which are sometimes as misleading as falsehood, and moral incongruities and monstrosities from which our souls recoil, how shall

20) Margaret Bottome gave that answer. See *Lutheran Annual*, 1941, p. 25.

21) E. Lewis: "The motto of rationalism may be said to be: 'Prove all that you believe by what you indubitably know.'" (*A Philosophy of the Christian Revelation*, p. 147.)

I separate the gold from the dross? By the use of my reason? Would you have me become a rationalist? Yes, rather than be a sophist or a simpleton, if one becomes a rationalist by making use of his reason, including conscience and every spiritual faculty with which God has endowed him, strengthened and enlightened by the word, and life, and spirit of Christ. . . . Our enlightened moral instinct rejects it" ("the old inspiration") "unreservedly and forever." (*What Is Inspiration?* P. 179 f.) The liberals say with Walter M. Horton: "To rely upon revelation apart from other truth is as bad as to rely upon prayer apart from action or upon providence apart from intelligent forethought. Revelation is no substitute for reason. If reason without revelation is blind, revelation without reason is a dazzling, unintelligible light. What Matthew Arnold said years ago about the *homo unius libri* still holds good: the man who knows only Scripture does not even know Scripture. . . . There are some ancient misunderstandings about revelation which do not seriously threaten us at present, after the debates of the last half century. We are not likely again to identify God's eternal Word with the Book which contains the record of its revealing, or to insist that everything in that Book is infallibly correct and verbally inspired. We are not likely to suppose that the authority of revelation extends into the sphere of fact and law, where natural science is supreme." (Article in *Revelation*, 1937, p. 263 f.)

Why, they even tell us that Scripture inculcates the principles of rationalism and asks us to run its statements through the crucible of reason. S. P. Cadman: "The authority of the Bible is established by divine revelation, but it is also addressed to human intelligence. The Book itself invokes finite reason and appeals to its decisions. . . . Plainly, the Scriptures do not outlaw man's judgment on their contents. Why should we do so?" (*Answers to Every-Day Questions*, p. 258.) And N. R. Best, who writes on "The Mirage of Inerrancy," gives chapter and verse for that statement. "Utterly vain is it to talk of not employing reason on the Bible. . . . When did the Creator ever brand man's reason as unholy—unfit to handle the sacred things of either His deeds or His words? . . . Every page of the Bible might be justly inscribed with the invitation which stands in living letters on the first page of the *Prophet Isaiah*: 'Come now and let us reason together, saith Jehovah.' Reason is God's joy—not His 'black beast.'" (*Inspiration*, p. 117 f.)

A voice from Germany. Baumgaertel: "The refusal to recognize the physical sciences" (as censor of the scientific statements of the Bible) "bars the way to the church for the educated classes. Do not ask the educated man to bring this *sacrificium intellectus*."

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He cannot and must not do that." (See Moeller, *Um die Inspiration der Bibel*, p. 35.) A voice from America. R. T. Stamm, Gettysburg, calls this a "false dilemma," an "either-or fallacy": "either submission to the authority of the Scriptures or the assertion of the proud pretensions of human reason," and thus elaborates his thesis: "We must never forget that it is impossible to construct a systematic theology without employing the same human reason which too many of our writers have tried to deprive of all validity at the outset! And such writers are often the proudest of men, claiming to boast only in the Lord, while their self-confident assurance in the completeness and finality of their own dogmatic construction of revelation equals or excels the 'pride' of the most arrogant humanistic or communistic opponents of religion, who call upon the name of reason and modern science to justify their dogmatism."²² It is not a question of revelation or reason, but of revelation given, received, interpreted, and applied through the human reason which is energized and guided by the Spirit of God." (*Luth. Church Quart.*, April, 1940, pp. 124, 129.)

You cannot insult these men — those who operate in the name of reason alone and those who operate in the name of reason and revelation; those who appeal to plain reason and those who appeal to "enlightened" reason (see De Witt and Stamm) — by calling them rationalists. When MacDill (*op. cit.*, p. 22) says: "It is true indeed that the leaders among them [the higher critics], those who have thought out their hypotheses to their logical conclusions, are *thoroughgoing rationalists* — veritable infidels, but they prefer not to be recognized as such, at least for the present," they will take exception to "veritable infidels," but not to the phrase "thoroughgoing rationalists." They will tell him: You are right, and we are proud of the title; we only deplore that the rest of our rationalistic brethren are less consistent than we are.

This applies also to the "conservative" theologians who feel bound to reject Verbal, Plenary Inspiration because their study of science and history has convinced them that the Bible abounds in errors.²³ They are not, indeed, "thoroughgoing rationalists."

22) We might have omitted this sentence as not touching our immediate subject. But we wanted to give Dr. Stamm a chance to tell us as plainly as he could what he thinks of the *a-priori* theologians, the verbalists.

23) See pertinent statements in the preceding article. Here are some more: "Isolated facts in the statements of Scripture must be corrected by science." (E. Brunner, *The Mediator*, p. 167.) "With the sacred historians the record of fact as fact and apart from its significance in the unfolding of the divine purpose is something very secondary and subordinate. . . . I know of nothing which should isolate them" (these narratives) "and prevent us from judging them as we should other similar narratives." (W. Sanday, *The Oracles of God*, p. 68 f.) — It is sometimes most difficult to decide where to draw the line between "conservative" and liberal theologians.

They do not find as many errors as the plain-reason men and the enlightened-reason men. But they apply the same basic principle. They permit science and history (their knowledge of science and history) and *their* judgment of what is right and proper to correct Scripture. But that is a form of rationalism. We might even say that it is the heart of the creed of rationalism. The case of the conservatives is correctly diagnosed in a letter written by a theologian in Germany to one of them: "You point to contradictions-which you cannot solve with your reason, acknowledging at the same time that you realize the limitations of your knowledge. I am in the same case. . . . You take, in spite of the fact that you recognize the limitations and insufficiency of your knowledge, a *rationalistic position*; I, because I dare not trust the judgment of my limited reason in divine matters, submit to the judgment of my Lord and Master Jesus Christ. With you it is a matter of reason, with me a matter of faith." (See *Lehre und Wehre*, 69, p. 305.) Pieper also diagnoses it as a case of the rationalistic disease (*op. cit.*, p. 295). So does M'Intosh: "All theories of indefinite erroneousness legitimately tend to, and naturally end in, rationalism, or the supremacy of reason over revelation. . . . I know that many who hold the less pronounced views of the erroneousness of Scripture will strongly object to be in this respect classified with avowed rationalists and infidels. . . . Nevertheless, it is shown that, however much they may differ from these in many important matters and though they hold with us the core of the Christian faith, yet in this vital and radical matter, which underlies all the other matters, there is no essential difference; that *they are all radically the same in their rationalistic principle*; and that there is no possible resting-place for any clear and thoroughgoing mind between holding the thorough truthfulness, entire trustworthiness, and divine authority of all Scripture and holding explicitly or implicitly the supremacy of reason over revelation." (*Op. cit.*, pp. 29, 38.)

And here is Walther's diagnosis: "If the possibility that Scripture contained the least error were admitted, it would become the business of *man* to sift the truth from the error. . . . The least deviation from the old inspiration doctrine introduces a *rationalistic germ* into theology and infects the whole body of doctrine." (*Walther and the Church*, p. 14.)

"If the *possibility* that Scripture contained the least error were admitted . . ."—that leads us to examine the theological principle of those theologians who are ready to admit that Scripture contains no known error but are reluctant to teach that Scripture *cannot possibly contain* errors. Those theologians who carry around with them long or short lists of alleged errors in Scripture are badly

infected with rationalism. But those theologians, too, who find themselves unable to teach the absolute inerrancy of Scripture in all of its statements until science and history, etc., have demonstrated the truth of all of these statements, are suffering with rationalism, with incipient rationalism.

There are theologians, of the conservative group, who refuse to say that Scripture cannot possibly make erroneous statements. We have already mentioned the case of Philippi, who at one time said: "One dare not from the outset refuse to grant the possibility of the occurrence of minor discrepancies." O. Bensow: "We do not know of a single case where it has been conclusively shown that an error has crept in, while we do know of many cases where the alleged error was proved to be the truth." But he adds: "In these peripheral regions errors *might possibly* have occurred, due to the fact that the writers retained their human auto-activity." (*Die Bibel—das Wort Gottes.*) Meusel: "Most of the alleged contradictions and errors may be and have been solved. But a small residuum remains which makes it impossible for us to maintain, after the aprioristic-absolute manner of our old dogmaticians, the literal inerrancy of Scripture and to say: *Nullus error vel in leviculis*. . . . *If it should be shown* that a geographical mistake had been made or that Matthew's memory was at fault (27:9), that would not destroy the divine and inspired nature of Holy Scripture." (*Kirchl. Handlex., s. v. Irrtumslosigkeit.*) W. Sanday speaks in a similar strain: "If it should be proved that the Law, as we have it, was not written by Moses or that the 110th Psalm was not written by David. . . ." (*Op. cit., p. 109.*)²⁴

"If it should be shown . . .!" These men are living in constant fear that the inerrancy of Scripture might be disproved—by whom? By the scientists and the historians and the philosophers, etc. They are afraid that Scripture cannot hold its own against human scholarship and wisdom. And so they look to human scholarship to *establish* the claim of Scripture to plenary inerrancy. There is something else besides Scripture on which they base their belief in the truthfulness of Scripture, and basing it on the findings of science and the assent of reason is—subtle rationalism. The *Journal of the American Lutheran Conference*, Dec., 1938, says: "How can we know the human framework of the Bible is true—the history, the geography, the biography, the science . . . ?

24) H. M'Intosh, too, shies at "absolute inerrancy." "That most extreme and unwarrantable, if not unintelligible, title 'the absolute inerrancy' of Scripture"; "the narrow, negative, and at least questionable ground of absolute inerrancy" (*op. cit., pp. 14, 442*). At the same time he declares: "Even the extremest position of absolute inerrancy is not destitute of an apology, and may offer a valid and apparently irrefutable defense." (P. 21.)

We not only may but we must study these things critically, to see if the Bible statements are supported or contradicted by known facts from other sources. . . . It is my growing conviction that it is possible to arrive at a reasonable faith in the substantial truthfulness of the human framework of the Bible." (Italics ours.) This Lutheran theologian is not satisfied with the bare statement of Scripture. His faith calls upon critical investigation and human wisdom to help out the Bible. He wants a "reasonable" faith. (See *Conc. Theol. Mthly.*, XI, p. 812.) This is certainly a rationalistic aberration. Men who admit the possibility of errors in Scripture and thus make it the business of man to sift the truth from error and to establish the truth of Scripture are, as Walther said, introducing a rationalistic germ into theology. It is a case of incipient rationalism. If that is not checked, it will develop into the virulent form.

It is rationalism which, as we have shown, denies the absolute inerrancy of Scripture and its corollary, Verbal, Plenary Inspiration. And now we say: When the Christian listens to the voice of rationalism, he disgraces himself. It is unworthy of the Christian to have dealings with such a wicked thing as rationalism.

The wickedness consists, first, in this, that rationalism is engaged in a criminal business. Scripture has outlawed its business. God's Word commands us to "bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. 10:5) and to accept Scripture, every statement of Scripture, as God's truth, as authoritative and binding. Carnal reason, however, refuses to do this. It claims supreme authority for its own judgments. It assumes the right to criticize and correct Scripture. And the Christian should find it impossible to listen to the voice of rationalism for one moment. The Christian stands in holy awe of Scripture, the Word of his God and Savior, and shudders at the bare thought of speaking one word against it. He loves Scripture, in which he has eternal life, and burns in holy wrath against those who call its truthfulness in question. When Satan asks him to forsake Scripture and follow reason, he cries out: How can I do this great wickedness and keep company with "Satan's paramour" (Luther, XX:232)? The Christian will not be seen in the company of her who speaks in dishonor of Holy Scripture. If he listens to such a voice, he dishonors himself.

Hear Walther again: "If the possibility that Scripture contained the least error were admitted, it would become the business of man to sift the truth from the error. That places man over Scripture. . . . Human reason is made the *norma* of truth, and Scripture is degraded to the position of a *norma normata*." Carnal reason delights in degrading Scripture. And the Christian, who

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trembles at God's Word, is horrified when he finds that his flesh, too, holds Scripture in derision.

The Christian should find it impossible to listen to these criticisms and corrections of Scripture because, in the second place, they spring from carnal pride. Pride, arrogance, conceit, is a wicked thing at all times, under any form. That already is wicked pride when men, because of their superiority, real or fancied, speak contemptuously of the others. But when they assume the right to criticize and correct Scripture, they have reached the limit of conceit and arrogance. We shall not say much of the former case. We can easily bear it when these men look down upon us as pre-Kantian obscurantists and call us verbalists, who, as De Witt puts it, cannot take an "intelligent view of inspiration" (*op. cit.*, p. 17). We cannot bear it so well when he speaks contemptuously of "the Reformers, who knew nothing of the refinements of exegetical science" (p. 18).²⁵ But we cannot bear it at all when, in speaking of the Old Testament writers, he says: "We, who have attained *higher forms* in the world-wide schoolroom of the great Instructor of men" (p. 182).

That is insufferable conceit, wickedness beyond expression, when men presume to censor, revise, rectify and improve Scripture. De Witt and all the other critics, liberal and conservative, claim to know more about certain things than the Biblical writers. But what does that mean? Assuming the right to correct Scripture, that, says Walther, "places man over Scripture."²⁶ And that really means, it places man over — God. The critics may repudiate this charge on the plea that they have found that these portions of Scripture which they eliminate are *not* God's Word. But God is telling them that every word of Scripture is His word; and

25) The judgment of Dr. H. R. Mackintosh is not quite so coarse, but equally unacceptable. "It does not seem as if the Reformers (who had many other pressing questions to work at) quite realized where the new evangelical thought of Scripture was to lead or what it implied for exact Biblical study. . . . It ought to be said frankly that Luther often clings to the older notion of a verbally inspired Bible. He actually speaks of the Holy Spirit as the *Author* of the books of Moses; he submitted his judgment undoubtingly to Scriptural statements on points of natural science. . . . The same is true of Calvin. . . . This was obviously bound to lead to conclusions which in a Christian writer are strange and unwelcome." (Written for *The Doctrine of the Infallible Book*, by Charles Gore, p. 58.)

26) Walther again, as quoted in *Proceedings, Iowa District, 1897*, p. 36: "The eighth thesis of Superintendent Kier emphatically states that 'it has not pleased God to perform the miracle of having His witnesses speak and write inerrantly.' It thus asserts that what the prophets and apostles preached was shot through with errors and — oh, what Satanic pride! — that the preachments of the moderns which separate the pure Word of God in Scripture from — what blasphemy! — the rubbish, are much better than the discourses of the prophets and apostles."

whether they believe it or not, it remains God's Word, and whether they realize it or not, they are disputing the truth of God's Word. They are setting themselves above God. "Self-deification" — that is a hard saying. But here strong words have to be used. Philippi used them: "They presupposed that they were God." Professor Reeve used them: "When one makes his philosophy his authority, it is not a long step until he makes himself his own god." M'Intosh used them. Speaking of "the old and fatal issues of the common rationalistic principle, namely, that every varying man must become a judge and authoritative standard himself"; he says: "Having got rid of an infallible Bible and an infallible Christ, he must reach the supreme absurdity — an infallible self, 'Lord of himself that heritage of woe,' as Byron says" (*op. cit.*, p. 32), self-deification. What we say about these men is what they say about themselves. The old rationalist Loeffler said: "Our reason is manifestly God in us." (See *Conc. Theol. Mthly.*, XI, p. 322.) The First Unitarian Church in Cleveland said on its bulletin-board: "Man is greater than any of the Scriptures." (See *Lutheran Witness*, LX, p. 5.) And if you say that a certain statement of Scripture is not true because your knowledge of science says so, you are committing self-deification. Can a Christian, in his sober mind, declare that a certain statement of Scripture contains a discrepancy because his knowledge of science says so?

Now, self-conceited pride and Christianity do not go together. The spirit of the Christian is humble. Particularly in dealing with Scripture, he effaces himself. He is nothing; Scripture is everything. If he cannot solve a contradiction, it does not take him long to put the blame on his ignorance. If he cannot square Scripture with science, he puts the blame on his ignorance and the ignorance of the learned scientist. Augustine was a humble Christian and said: "If I come across a passage which seems to conflict with the truth, I do not doubt for a moment that either the copyist or the translator made a mistake or that *I may not have understood the matter*. It would be a sin to have doubts respecting the inerrancy of the apostles and prophets." (Quoted in Moeller, *op. cit.*, p. 56. See also Luther, XV:1481.) Luther was a humble Christian and declared: "When Moses writes that God made heaven and earth and all that is in them in six days, let the six days stand. . . . If you cannot understand how it could have been six days" (or how the ax-head could float or the fish swallow Jonah), "then accord to the Holy Spirit the honor that He is more learned than you." (III, p. 21.) Luther was a humble Christian; and when he found that he could not straighten out the chronology of Scripture on a certain point ("Bei Abraham verlieren sich sechzig Jahre"), he would not side with "those rash men who in the case of a Bible

difficulty are not afraid to say that Scripture is evidently wrong," but said: "I conclude the matter with a humble confession of my ignorance, for it is only the Holy Ghost who knows and understands everything." (I:721.) God looks for such an attitude in the Christians. Philip Schaff: "The holy awe of Scripture, the sense of its awful majesty (which we more or less miss in the entire Schleiermacher-school) requires that in cases where our knowledge is not able to clear up the difficulty we humbly bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ." (*Geschichte der Apostolischen Kirche*. See Pieper, *op. cit.*, p. 294.) James Bannermann: The rationalist "comes to the Bible and sits over its contents in the attitude of a judge who is to decide for himself what in it is true and worthy to be believed, . . . not in the attitude of the disciple who within the limits of the inspired record feels himself at Jesus' feet to receive every word that cometh out of His mouth." (See B. Manly, *The Bible Doctrine of Inspiration*, p. 16.) Which attitude will you take?

When a man charges Scripture with unsolvable contradictions and errors, put that down to his self-conceit. It is the part of Christian humility to put the failure to solve the Bible difficulties down to your own limitations and insufficiencies. Long ago Origen said: "If ever, in reading the Scriptures, you happen to stumble on some thought which becomes to thee a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense, *blame none but thyself*; doubt not that this stone of stumbling and rock of offense has some great meaning. . . . When you have been unable to find the reason for that which is written, blame not the holy letters; lay the blame on thyself alone." (See L. Gaussen, *Theopneustia*, p. 327 f.)

De Witt cries out: "Would you have me become a rationalist? Yes, rather than be a simpleton." Luther declares: "We must become fools, complete fools (simpletons) in Christ." (XVIII:39.) The Christian, in his sober mind, declares himself for Luther, against the rationalist. He is not ashamed of being a simpleton in the eyes of the wise philosopher. He is ashamed of the foolish pride of his rationalizing flesh.

The Christian cannot bear to hear men talking about the mistakes in the Bible, for, in the third place, he is a believer and the talk about the mistakes in the Bible is plain unbelief. Unbelief — that is a harsh word. Indeed it is; it denotes the greatest crime of which man is capable. But this talk about being unable to accept Verbal, Plenary Inspiration because of suspected errors in the Bible is the voice of unbelief, plain, common unbelief. When the rationalist Harnack declares that he cannot and will not believe that the sun stood still, and when the rationalist Fosdick declares that he finds some of the miracle-narratives of Scripture

historically incredible (see preceding article), conservative theologians are horrified at such ebullitions of unbelief. But when these same conservatives insist that they have found many discrepancies and erroneous statements in the Bible and therefore cannot believe, teach, and confess that all Scripture is given by inspiration, they, too, are, on this point, rationalists, unbelievers. Scripture plainly states that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God." They say: Not all of Scripture is inspired. This particular statement we cannot believe. Scripture states: "Scripture cannot be broken." No, no; we cannot believe that statement to its full extent. "Thy Word is truth." Not absolutely and in all respects, say the conservative rationalists. A thousand times Scripture says that the writings of the prophets and apostles are God's own Word. And the conservative rationalists say a thousand times that they can no longer, at this time and age, teach verbalism. Are they, on this point, believers or unbelievers?

How often must God say a thing so as to get men to say the same thing? Can God say more plainly than He has said that God spoke by and through the prophets and that the Holy Spirit gave the apostles utterance? And when the rationalists say that they cannot accept Verbal Inspiration, could they say more plainly that they are, on this point, unbelievers? Prof. James B. Green says: "The Law and the Prophets, the teaching of Jesus and the preaching of Paul, these are declared to be the Word of God. It has been estimated that the Bible in various ways asserts its own inspiration some three thousand times. How often does the Bible have to say a thing before men will believe it?" (*Studies in the Holy Spirit*, p. 49. See *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Vol. 97, p. 417.)

Luther cries out in holy wrath: "But it is cursed unbelief (der verfluchte Unglaube) and the odious flesh which will not permit us to see and know that God speaks to us in Scripture and that it is God's Word, but tells us that it is the word merely of Isaiah, Paul, or some other mere man, who has not created heaven and earth." (IX:1800.) And the Christian is filled with dismay when his flesh urges him to criticize Scripture and reject certain statements as incredible. How *can* the believer bring himself to accept the findings of rationalism, of unbelief? Here are two warring, irreconcilable principles. How can faith make appeasement with unbelief? The ideology of rationalism, which sits in judgment on God's Word and refuses to accept what some scientists tell us not to accept, is incompatible with the attitude of faith, which bows to Scripture and believes though it does not see. Let the rationalist conjure the believer by all that holy science and holy philosophy stands for, the believer should say and will finally say: "I believe *all* things which are written in the Law and the Prophets," Acts 24:14.

Unbelief is, in truth, the sin of sins, odious to God and odious to the Christian. "Let us ever bear in mind that every one who denies the inspiration of Scripture is *eo ipso* a critic of Scripture, and one who criticizes Scripture — which, as God's Word, will not be criticized but *believed* — comes under the fearful judgment of God described in Matt. 11:25." "The same faith and obedience that is due to God is due to Scripture in all that it says. He who rejects or even only criticizes Scripture insults the Majesty of God. He is committing a *crimen laesae majestatis divinae*." (Pieper, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 280, 371.)

All objections to the divine inspiration and the inerrancy of Scripture are unworthy of a Christian.

TH. ENGELDER

(To be continued)

Modern Humanism¹⁾

"Humanism," in the words of Walter Lippmann, "to replace the conception of man as the subject of a heavenly King takes as its dominant pattern the progress of the individual from helpless infancy to self-governing maturity."²⁾ Modern Humanism has been labeled as scientific or literary or philosophic humanism and more recently as Religious Humanism. Humanism parades under the name of religion and claims to be "a cult or belief calling itself religious but substituting faith in man for faith in God." C. F. Potter, an exponent of so-called Religious Humanism, defines it as "faith in the supreme value and self-perfectibility of human personality." In the words of Prof. E. E. Aubrey the Religious Humanists endeavor to emancipate "religion from a theism which obstructs the full exercise of man's courage and initiative for human improvement."³⁾ According to Prof. J. Auer a humanist does not necessarily deny the existence of God, but he will insist that a true religious experience is possible without the belief in God in the theistic sense.⁴⁾ Humanism is the rankest kind of rationalism. In the final analysis there is little practical difference

1) The material in this article is essentially the same as that presented in a series of lectures on "Modern Isms" at pastors' institutes in 1940.

2) Webster's *New International Dictionary*.

3) Aubrey, *Present Theological Tendencies*, 1936, pp. 167, 174n.

4) *Humanism States Its Case*, 1933, pp. 79, 80, quoted in Dakin, *Man the Measure, an Essay on Humanism as a Religion*, 1939, p. 20. Incidentally the title of Dakin's book is significant, for the motto of all humanists is: Man is the measure and standard of all truth. Dakin offers an exhaustive study and a keen analysis of every significant phase of Humanism.