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

(Continued)

Robert F. Horton is "smitten with amazement at the unobservant and unintelligent treatment of Scripture which alone has rendered the old theory of Inspiration possible for thinking men." (*Revelation and the Bible*, p. 120.) F. Pieper finds that "the objections to the verbal inspiration of Holy Scripture do not manifest great ingenuity or mental acumen, but the very opposite" (*What Is Christianity?* P. 243). Who is right? Let us examine a few more of the absurdities and sophistries employed by the moderns in their polemics against Verbal Inspiration.

No. 13. The moderns deal largely in bare assertions and bland assumptions. — These assumptions do not deserve to be classed with the hypotheses. Both lack proof, but while the legitimate hypothesis at least makes an honest attempt to support itself by pointing to certain facts, the assertions now before us have nothing back of them but the word of their proponents. — We are not now concerned with disproving these assertions. We are simply listing them as unsupported assertion. — Those that have been discussed above are set down here again for the purpose of proper classification; and a few new specimens are added.

1) "God cares not for trifles." That is N. R. Best's assertion. "There is a great maxim dear to the most just and most enlightened legal minds — a maxim drawn from ancient Rome, the mother of the world's jurisprudence: 'The law cares not for trifles.' It is a maxim which theology ought to adopt in honor of the heavenly Father, whose infinite mind is the native home of law as well as of revelation, and whose love desires for mankind no petty securities within tight-closed corrals but abundant life along the wide ranges of a free universe. 'God cares not for trifles.' Certainly it

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is an intellect childishly restricted which is able to imagine Him who 'upholdeth all things by the word of His power' sitting in the central rulership of the universe with concern in His thought about the possibility that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John would not get it straight whether Peter denied his Lord to two or only to one of the high priest's serving maids." (*Inspiration*, p. 79.) We will grant that "the law cares not for trifles." But we are asking for proof that, because the law cares not for trifles, God does not care for these so-called trifles of contradictions and errors in the Bible. None is offered. Nothing but rhetorical declamation is offered. We have nothing but Best's word for the axiom: "God cares not for trifles."

2) Best's negative assertion declares in the positive form: Inspiration covers only the Gospel-message, or only the important doctrinal declarations of Scripture. The moderns consider this one of their strongest arguments against Verbal Inspiration. Both the liberals and the conservatives make much of it.¹²⁹⁾ But, as a rule, they offer no proof for it. The Bible nowhere makes the statement that inspiration must be restricted to the truths of salvation. But the moderns take it to be a self-evident truth. They do not care to waste words on proving an axiom. So we have to tell them that we are not minded to accept such a far-reaching statement on their bare word, on the strength of their subjective conviction.

3) We need not be surprised that the moderns who deal with bare assumptions in the most important matters should be guilty of the same presumption with regard to less important, comparatively less important, matters. For instance, the story of Jonah is not a true story but, as H. L. Willett tells us, "is given the mold of a novel. . . . The incidents of the storm, Jonah's deliverance by the great fish (perhaps intended as a symbol of Israel's engulfment and restoration), are the dramatic embellishments of a story with a very definite purpose." (*Op. cit.*, p. 110.) Where is the proof for the statement that a novelist invented the story of the great fish and hid a comforting truth in it? No proof is offered. Prof. J. W.

129) For instance: H. L. Willett (liberal): "The finality and authority of the Bible do not reside in all of its utterances, but in those great characters and messages which are easily discerned as the mountain peaks of its contents. Such portions are worthy to be called the Word of God to man." (*The Bible through the Centuries*, p. 289.) Joseph Stump: "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 Lutheran*, Feb. 22, 1939: "The Holy Scriptures are the infallible truth 'in all matters that pertain to His revelation and our salvation,' but on secular matters the "Bible writers wrote with the background of their age and its scientific beliefs."

Horine writes in the *Lutheran*, March 18, 1937: "The book [Jonah] is considered to be not literal history but parable or allegory. . . . So Jonah (Israel) was disgorged from the mouth of the great fish (Babylon)." Where is the proof that the writer of this book did not expect his readers to take these occurrences as facts but knew that they would find an instructive parable in it? Pure romancing on the part of the moderns, and they want us to accept *their* romance as true. And Professor Horine goes on to tell us that the Lord's reference to this story does not prove it to be a true story. "He is simply using it as an illustration. . . . Just as we refer to the Prodigal Son or the Good Samaritan in precisely the same terms we should use *were their adventures historical facts*" (our italics), "so may Christ have done here." Where does Christ indicate that He is treating this story as a parable? We are certainly not ready to accept the mere *dictum* of men as valid proof. Another statement by Willett: "There are three books in the Hebrew Scriptures which have the appearance of works of fiction written with a definite bearing on current thought and intended to be tracts for the times. They are Ruth, Jonah, and Esther. . . . These are Biblical romances." (*Op. cit.*, pp. 102, 107.) To us they do not appear to be romances. Whose word counts for most?

4) They do indeed offer proofs for the unhistorical character of the Book of Jonah, but these proofs, too, consist of nothing but bare assertions and assumptions. First, in answer to our objection that the Hebrews would hardly admit a book of fiction into their sacred canon, they remind us of "the inveterate love of romance common to the ancient Jews with the other nations of the East." Granted that the ancient Jews and the other nations of the East had an inveterate love of romance,—the nations of the West have it, too,—that has no bearing on the question. Love of romance will not permit a religious people to justify a pious fraud in sacred matters.¹³⁰⁾ And then they point out, as corroborating the theory that the story is a parable that "the belly of a sea-monster is actually used in Jeremiah (51:34, 44) as a figure for the captivity of Israel." Again: "The myth of the sea-monster is preserved not only in the story of Jonah, but in fragmentary allusions to the leviathan, Rahab, and the dragon, in Job 3:8; 26:12, 13; Is. 51:9; cf. 27:1." Is the reader

130) R. A. Redford: "Mr. Cheyne remarks (in *Theol. Rev.*, XIV, p. 213) that 'ordinary readers, especially when influenced by theological prejudice, are unable to realize the inveterate love of romance common to the ancient Jews with the other nations of the East.' Yet surely, if that were so, it would make the fact of the admission of a mere book of fiction into the canon all the more inexplicable, for the compilers of Scripture, knowing the prevailing tendency, would be careful to exclude such a book. . . . Thirdly, there is the difficulty of reconciling such a legend about a great prophet, given in his name, with his character, unless it were true." (*Studies in the Book of Jonah*, p. 36.)

able to see the connection? Redford says: "A theory of this kind is based upon so many assumptions that it demands almost implicit faith in those who put it forth." (P. 39.) "We protest against the random assertions of the critical school." (P. 66.)

5) The Bible-story of the Creation, of the Temptation, and the Fall get the same treatment as the story of Jonah. It is said to be against the spirit of the Bible to take these stories literally; they are myths indeed, but myths which teach important spiritual lessons. They speak of "the majestic creation myth" (Georgia Harkness). "For myself, I think it (Gen. 1) holy ground" (H. E. Fosdick, *Modern Use of the Bible*, p. 52). "They declare that what has been called the fall of man, original sin, and the devil, these are, at best, great mythological theories." (J. S. Whale, *The Christian Answer to Prayer*, p. 35.) "Gen. 3 is a didactic poem." (See *Religion i. G. u. G., s.v. Suende.*) "The explanatory myth of Eve and the apple." (S. McDowall, *Is Sin Our Fault?* P. 234.) J. M. Gibson asks men to "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*"; and T. A. Kantonen chides those who "have regarded the stories of the Temptation and the Fall as mere historical narratives rather than *profound prophetic philosophy of history*" (see p. 252 above). Indeed? Where does the Bible say or indicate that? Once more we are asked to take their word for it.

6) Higher criticism, which is responsible for 3), 4), 5), is made up almost entirely of bare assertions and mere assumptions. There is, for instance, the great Redactor. We are supposed to believe in his existence and work on their mere word. Their *fiat* created him. And how do you know that the various documents which were finally fused into the documents that make up the Bible really existed? Ask the higher critics.¹³¹⁾

131) Read again Prof. J. J. Reeve's statement. "These presuppositions and assumptions are the determining element in the entire movement. . . . 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." (*Fundamentals*, III, p. 98.) And hear Prof. W. H. Green, *The Unity of the Book of Genesis* (p. 572): "The alleged diversity of diction, style, and conception is either altogether fictitious or is due to differences in the subject-matter and not to a diversity of writers. The continuity and self-consistency of Genesis, contrasted with the fragmentary character and mutual inconsistencies of the documents, prove that Genesis is the original of which the so-called documents are but several parts. The role attributed to the Redactor is an impossible one, and proves him to be an unreal personage. And the arguments for the late date of the documents and for their origin in one or the other of the divided kingdoms are built upon perversions of the history or upon unproved assumptions" (See Dr. L. Fuerbringer's article on this point in *Lehre und Wehre*, 1898, p. 206 ff.)

7) Higher criticism again: "It is probably due to the influence of Q that Mark locates the temptation at the beginning of Jesus' ministry, omitting details; but from Matthew it is evident that the story is a piece of apocalyptic symbolism, evidently 'literary' in conception, though doubtless originally oral in form. . . . This [the Transfiguration] is either an account of a resurrection appearance which has been antedated and shifted back into the Galilean ministry, or it is the account of some ecstatic experience born of exalted faith, told and retold in terms similar to the accounts of the Resurrection and hence influenced by the latter." (Quoted from Frederick C. Grant's *The Gospel of the Kingdom*, in *Kirchliche Zeitschrift*, 1940, p. 553.)

8) Some more higher criticism romancing. The writer of the article "The 'Cursing' of the Fig-Tree" in the *Luth. Church Quarterly*, April, 1936, assumes the role of the Redactor of Mark. "The condition of the story is singularly chaotic. . . . In some instances it becomes possible to reconstruct with a fair degree of probability an earlier form of a given incident than the one which Mark presents. . . . It is obvious that, if food had been lacking in Bethany, the disciples would have been hungry, too, and the story would almost certainly have disclosed the fact in some way. There is no such indication. Apparently Jesus was the only one who 'hungered.' . . . Nothing is said in the story about the owner of the tree. . . . Jesus is now said to have deprived the owner of his tree, not only without due process of law, but apparently without a thought." The Redactor then tells us how Matthew edited the original story and that "it is possible that this parable of Luke's (13:6-9) may have been the kernel from which Mark's story sprouted," and that the true story is simply this, that Jesus saw a dying fig-tree and said it would soon wither away, and so it did; the next morning it *was* withered away, and "Peter saith unto Him: Rabbi, behold, the fig-tree is withered away."

9) H. E. Fosdick asserts: "It is impossible that a book written two or three thousand years ago should be used in the twentieth century A. D. without having some of its forms of thought and speech translated into modern categories." (*Op. cit.*, p. 129.) One of these antiquated forms of thought is the belief in the resurrection of the flesh. Another is the "ascription of many familiar ailments to the visitation of demons" (p. 35); as S. Cave puts it: "Where Paul speaks of 'demons,' we speak of 'neurosis,' 'complexes,' and 'repressions'" (*What Shall We Say of Christ?* P. 55). For the purposes of the present section it will be sufficient that we match Fosdick's assertion with the counter-assertion: It is possible for men of the twentieth century to employ the Biblical forms of thought. In addition, we point out that the proof offered by Fos-

dick and Cave for their assumption is also nothing but an assumption: where is the proof that the "demons" Paul speaks of were common ailments?

10) True, these assumptions are frequently introduced with a "perhaps." "Jonah's deliverance was *perhaps* intended as a symbol." Mark's Redactor speaks of "a fair degree of probability." H. L. Willett answers the question "What is the Q on which the gospels are said to be founded?" thus: "It is one of the documents which scholars *have assumed* as a source, . . . *perhaps* in Aramaic, . . . *possibly* from the hand of Matthew himself." (*The Christian Century*, March 2, 1938.)¹³² We give due credit to the honesty which inspires the cautious "if" and "perhaps." But we have to point out that the higher critics are making these hypothetical assertions with a purpose. They are thereby paving the way for later dogmatic assertions. And they are certainly asking for some sort of credence for their suggestions.—Whether they introduce their assertions with an "if" or a "verily," they are asking us to subscribe to their guesses.

This, then, is the situation: we are denounced as obscurantists for believing the *dictum* of God and are invited to accept as true the *dictum* of men. We are asked to discard the oracles of God on the strength of the oracular assertions of men.¹³³ The result would be

132) *Kirchliche Zeitschrift*, 1940, p. 551, quotes from *The Gospel of the Kingdom*: "If, as also seems probable, the Marcan pericope is based upon, or at least echoes, a section in Q, then perhaps the later evangelists were really justified in both these assumptions, viz., . . ." and comments: "Providing we admit several 'ifs,' 'editors,' 'later hands,' 'as is probable,' plus 'glosses,' and 'copyists making errors,' with a few hasty generalizations thrown in, we can arrive at any conclusion we want, preserving at the same time an appearance of great critical acumen." H. M'Intosh: "Professor Schmiedel's article in *Encyclopaedia Biblica* abounds with his 'may be,' 'might be,' 'possible.' The alleged occasions of utterance *may really have been* confusions of two or more occasions. . . . Some of the words *may not have proceeded* from Jesus directly.' . . . If such hallucinations and ratiocinations were to be tolerated, then, *anything may be*, and verily the world *may rest* on an elephant, the elephant on a tortoise, the tortoise on nothing, as Schmiedel in *vacuum* certainly does. . . ." (*Is Christ Infallible and the Bible True?* p. 408.)

133) L. Gaussen: "Critical science does not keep its place when, instead of being a scientific inquirer, it would be a judge; when, not content with collecting together the oracles of God, it sets about composing them, decomposing them, canonizing them, decanonizing them; and when it gives forth oracles itself!" (*Theopneustia*, p. 324.) We shall not blame M'Intosh for dealing severely with the "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 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." (*Op. cit.*, p. IX.)

that men treat great stories of the Bible as romances and accept the romancings of the critics as true.

So we have this situation: the moderns have been telling us that the facts in the case are against Verbal Inspiration. We ask them to produce these facts. And here they are offering us a lot of assumptions!

No. 14. The moderns operate quite a bit with sophistries. We have already noted a number of cases of fallacious reasoning. Some of these, with a few additional ones, are set down here for a more particular examination.

The moderns operate with this argument: Not all parts of Scripture are of equal value; it follows that not all parts of Scripture are inspired or, as they sometimes put it, equally inspired. J. M. Gibson declares that they "who insist on every part of the Bible being equally inspired" fail in their "duty of giving the Gospel its due place of prominence" (*The Inspiration and Authority of Holy Scripture*, p. 101). S. P. Cadman wrote in the *Herald Tribune* of New York: "Do not regard the books of the Bible as infallible in every particular or of equal value in all their parts." (See *The Presbyterian*, July 12, 1928.) The Alleman manifesto makes the defenders of Plenary Inspiration say: "All Scripture is on the same level. . . . One word is as important as another." (*Luth. Church Quarterly*, 1940, p. 354.) The meaning of these declarations is that, if a man believes that all parts of the Bible are inspired, he will have to teach that all parts of the Bible are on the same level of importance. — There is a fallacy in the argument, for the relative value of a statement has no relation to the fact of its inspiration. The argument is a prize *non sequitur*. And this is the consequence of the sophistry: Verbal Inspiration is made ridiculous. Gibson carries the ridicule so far as to pity the poor preacher who "might preach on the Bible for fifty years and never once bring the gospel in," "on the principle of all parts of Scripture being equally inspired" (*loc. cit.*). Somebody is certainly taking a ridiculous position.¹³⁴⁾

Next: Paul himself said that Inspiration did not keep him from human error; he said: "We have this treasure in earthen ves-

134) M'Intosh: "Nor does the advocacy of inerrancy require or imply holding the equality in value of all parts of Holy Writ, as has so often falsely been averred. . . . In actual fact and in habitual conception they hold them to be equally true and inerrant, but not equally important. . . . The simple-minded earnest Christians regard the Scriptures, and the Church has ever regarded them, as of almost infinitely diversified value, — just as Creation is, though every part and particle of it is nevertheless the product of God." And now pay attention to the further remark: "Yes, it is because they hold it to be all inspired of God, and therefore all inerrant, that they hold all to be of real though not of equal value; which the others do not and cannot." (*Op. cit.*, pp. 463 f.)

sels."¹³⁵) — But St. Paul is not referring to Inspiration here. When Paul speaks of inspired words, he tells us that they are supplied by the Holy Spirit, not by man's wisdom; they are unaffected by human frailty; they are words absolutely true. Here he is praising God for carrying on the work of the ministry of grace through weak vessels, frail men.¹³⁶) It is contemptible sophistry to make out of a true statement of Paul a statement which he would denounce as false. The pettifogger employs such tactics. He tries to make the witness say that black is white.

Note the sophistry contained in the following statement: "I am not overlooking the passages of Scripture quoted by Calvinistic theologians in support of their doctrine of Scriptural infallibility. . . . The point here that is relevant to our thought is that even such supernatural guidance would not render these written reports any more certain than human language can be. . . . Of the earth, earthy, its words carried by men to facilitate their understanding, description, and cooperative control of earthly things, human language simply cannot be a literal vehicle for conveying God's infallible will and wisdom to men. . . . We have found that, if God should super-

135) J. M. Gibson: "The defenders of the authoritative inspiration of the Scriptures have postulated as a necessity of the case the emancipation of all the writers of Scripture from the effects of human weakness and limitation." But "the treasure is in earthen vessels. . . . We cannot claim perfection for any of the organs or vehicles of inspiration." (*Op. cit.*, pp. 32, 144.) G. L. Raymond: "We have this treasure," says Paul in 2 Cor. 4:7, 'in earthen vessels.' . . . Now, if all other earthen vessels—crystals, flowers, and animals—leave some of their material influence upon the evident divine plan to shape them in accordance with a divine law, why should not the human mind also leave some of its more powerful mental influence upon the truth which the mind receives, transmits, and, to a certain extent, interprets?" (*The Psychology of Inspiration*, p. 154.) The following statement shows that the moderns make use of St. Paul's words to support not only the thesis that the Bible contains mistakes but also their thesis that the imperfections and mistakes in Scripture enhance the value of Scripture (Assertion 7). W. Sanday: "We do not think it likely that God would allow the revelation of Himself to be mixed up with such imperfect materials. But we are no good judges of what God would or would not do. *His ways are not our ways.* Out of the imperfect He brings forth the perfect. It is so in the world of nature, and it is so in the world of grace. *We have our treasure in earthen vessels.* The vessels may be earthen, but the treasure which they contain is divine. . . . If the Bible had been so [more perfect than it is], it could never have been in such close contact with human nature. Its message could never have come home to us so fresh and warm as it does. As it is, it speaks to the heart, and it does so because, according to a fine saying in the Talmud, *it speaks in the tongue of the children of men.* . . . The body, the outward form, may be of the earth, earthy, but the spirit by which it is pervaded and animated is from heaven." (*The Oracles of God*, p. 29.) — Italics in the original.

136) See Kretzmann's and Lenski's commentaries. Luther: "Our hands and tongues are indeed perishable and mortal things, but through these means, through these perishable and earthen vessels, the Son of God wants to exhibit power." (VI: p. 144.)

naturally reveal Himself and His teaching to men, this revelation could not be absolute or infallible to any finite man. (R. W. Nelson, in *Christendom*, IV, p. 400 ff.)¹³⁷ The sophistry consists in the subtle mixing up of the terms "absolute," "perfect," and "infallible," true. True enough, the infinite cannot be compressed into, and expressed by, the finite. Human language cannot express the full meaning of divine things. But only the unwary reader will be led by Professor Nelson to conclude therefrom that God is unable to give us, by means of the human language, a true knowledge of divine things. In the words of Dr. Pieper: "We have not, indeed, a full, complete, perfect knowledge of God, but we do have a correct knowledge, such as befits the weakness of the earthly life. . . . The 'absolute knowledge of God' belongs to the *sine mente soni* [sounds without sense] with which the vocabulary of certain philosophers and philosophizing theologians abounds." (*Chr. Dog.*, II, p. 40.) When God gave man his language, He took care to supply it with all the terms needed to express so much of the divine wisdom as we need to know at present, to know with absolute certainty. Gibson's quips about the heavenly language, the "perfect language" in which a "perfect revelation" would have to be written, and the "miraculously reconstructed humanity" called for by this "unknown language" (see preceding article, Note 108) reveal his ignorance of the distinction between full knowledge and correct knowledge. Note also the equivocation in his use of the term "whole truth." The Bible does not reveal the whole truth; we know only "in part"; and there are divine mysteries which we shall never fathom. On the other hand, the Bible *does* reveal the whole truth, all and everything we need to know for our salvation.

It should also be pointed out that, in elaborating his statement that "such supernatural guidance would not render these written reports any more certain than human language can be," Professor Nelson confines himself to the discussion of whether spiritual things can be revealed in human language. But "the Calvinistic [Lutheran, Biblical] doctrine of Scriptural infallibility" covers not only what Scripture says concerning God's will and wisdom, concerning divine things, but also what Scripture says concerning earthly things, scientific, historical matters and the like. Many, perhaps most, of the attacks against the inerrancy of Scripture are directed against the latter class of statements. And now Professor Nelson makes the *general* statement that inspiration would not render

137) G. L. Raymond has a similar statement: "The exact fact seems to be that the spiritual, which is infinite in its nature, necessarily becomes finite when limited, or—what is the same thing—made definite by being expressed—and too often *suppressed*—in terms applicable only to material conditions." (*Op. cit.*, p. 308.)

these written reports any more certain than human language can be. The statement is too sweeping. Whether anything certain can be said about divine things we have just discussed. But will any one question, will Professor Nelson question, whether human language is capable of expressing earthly things in exact language? Whatever the limitations of human language are, the holy writers, the Holy Ghost, found very exact words to set forth the fact that Jesus was born while Cyrenius was governor of Syria. Here is the statement that heaven and earth were created in six days. Human language has no words, indeed, to *define* "created," but it has the facilities to express the fact that in six days God created heaven and earth in exact terms. The ax-head did not sink. Any doubt in the mind of any linguist about the meaning of these words? No human words can explain the miracle, but the inspired language on this point is not subject to the least doubt. The least that Professor Nelson could do was to say in a footnote: "My statement is too sweeping. I should have said that on many points in dispute between the inerrantists and the errorists the written records speak a language which is certain and exact."

The sophistry hidden — clumsily hidden — in the assertion that Luke's statement concerning his careful historical investigations proves that he did not claim inspiration for his writing has received sufficient attention. See Assertion No. 2, c. The same with regard to the distinction made between "factual truth" and "religious truth" (parables, etc.). See Assertion 2, d and Assertion 4, b. But our task is not yet finished. Other sophistries need attention. And because these are put forth with particularly loud clamor and receive great popular acclaim, we shall discuss them in separate sections.

No. 15. The statement that the Bible is out of harmony with science finds wide acceptance. It is bandied about as an axiomatic truth.¹³⁸⁾ But it is not a true statement. It is a sophistry, and men accept it so readily only because they fail to see the equivocation with which it operates. (1) The term "science" is used as equivalent to the term "scientists." What the scientists say, or rather, to use precise language, what some scientists say, is labeled as the findings of science. And many are enmeshed by the sophistry. They know that science does not lie. What is established as a fact

138) H. L. Willett: "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." (*The Bible through the Centuries*, p. 284.) A. J. Traver: "Does not modern science contradict the Scriptures?" (*The Lutheran*, Feb. 22, 1939.) Clarence Darrow, at a forum conducted in St. Louis, May, 1931: "The various parts of the Bible were written by human beings who had no knowledge of science, little knowledge of life, and were influenced by the barbarous morality of primitive times."

—and the sole business of science is to establish facts—must remain a fact. The Bible cannot deny facts, cannot be out of harmony with science. And now certain “findings” of renowned scientists which the Bible does deny are presented to them as the findings of science, and thoroughly bewildered, they conclude that the Bible is out of harmony with science and cannot be the inerrant Word of God.

What they should say to the moderns is this: “We must wait for science to have reached a settled conclusion before any legitimate argument or any well-grounded objection to the Bible can be fairly deduced from it. How opposite to this and how inconsistent with candor and common sense the course usually pursued by opponents of revelation, we need scarcely pause to describe. As soon as any idea has been started by some scientific man which seems to conflict with the received view of Christians,—an idea thrown out, perhaps, as a mere conjecture, or a theory, novel, peculiar to himself, and as yet untested,—some are ready to exclaim, and to trumpet it in all the newspapers: ‘Ah, Moses was mistaken! The Bible is in error! The learned Professor So-and-so has just discovered it. There can be no mistake about it *this* time. Science never lies!’ True, science never lies. And so, figures never lie; but they often deceive, they are often misinterpreted and misapplied. Our inference, our understanding, our observation of the facts, or our induction from the facts may have been fallacious.” (B. Manly, *The Bible Doctrine of Inspiration*, p. 239.) The Bible does not contradict a single established fact of science. The statement that the Bible is out of harmony with science should read: The Bible is out of harmony with pseudoscience. What Solomon says about the ants is declared to be false by a certain number of scientists, not by science.

2) While some cite certain spurious facts against the Bible, others operate with spurious findings deduced from facts, alleged or real facts. In the statement “The Bible is out of harmony with science” the term “science” is sometimes used as an equivalent with speculative science, “inductive science.” But that is an equivocation. Science deals only with the truth; the conclusions of “inductive science” are in many cases false. They are the result not of observation but of reasoning, and the reasoning of the scientific philosopher is often at fault. Since the Fall the reasoning power of man is greatly impaired.¹³⁹⁾ And we are certainly not going to accept some of the deductions and all of the speculations of fallible scientists as absolute truth. But these speculations are being

139) “Freilich, liebe Freunde, wenn die Vernunft noch waere, wie sie Gott den Menschen anerschaffen hat, dann waere sie ein Licht, das uns leuchten koennte.” (*Proc., Western Dist., 1865, p. 56.*)

labeled as "science," and playing upon the respect we have for science, the sophists hope that we will buy their goods as having real scientific value. Surely we know that what real science teaches is true and cannot be in conflict with the Bible.¹⁴⁰ But science *in concreto*, that including the theories and guesses of the scientists, cannot claim the dignity and authority of true science. We will not be duped by the identification of these two terms attempted by the moderns.

We tell them, in the words of Dr. S. G. Craig: "It is one thing to say that the Scriptures contain statements out of harmony with the teachings of modern science and philosophy and a distinctly different thing to say that they contain proved errors. Strictly speaking there is no modern science and philosophy, but only modern scientists and philosophers — who differ endlessly among themselves. It is only on the assumption that the discordant voices of present-day scientists and philosophers are to be identified with the voice of science and philosophy that we are warranted in saying that the Bible contains errors because its teachings do not always agree with the teachings of these scientists and philosophers. Does any one really believe that science and philosophy have already reached, even approximately, their final form?" (See L. Boettner, *The Inspiration of the Scriptures*, p. 62.) When they reach their final form, — in heaven, — they will agree with the Bible.

3) The statement that Scripture is out of harmony with science is applied to a special case when the moderns declare that the advanced scientific knowledge of our age has rendered the belief in miracles ridiculous. We have examined the statement that "science does not recognize miracles" under Assertion No. 8 and found that it operates with the fallacy of the *μετάβασις*. We are now pointing out that it operates with the fallacy of equivocation. Recall R. Seeberg's statement "In those days it was easy to believe in miracles. Every one feels at once how far we have advanced beyond the naive views of the men of antiquity. . . . The Biblical writers did not possess the exact knowledge of the cosmic laws which we have." Hear H. E. Fosdick seconding him: "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

140) Dr. Walther: "We know for certain that there is no contradiction and that there can be no contradiction between Christian theology and TRUE science, science in abstracto." Walther adds, of course, that "nevertheless we do not by any means regard it as the task of the theologian, nor as possible at any time, to bring our Biblical theology into harmony with science as it exists in *concreto*" (*Lehre und Wehre*, 1875, p. 41. See Pieper, *op. cit.*, I, p. 191).

had 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." (*Op. cit.*, p. 137.) Right, says A. Harnack in his *Wesen des Christentums*: "Als Durchbrechung des Naturzusammenhangs kann es keine Wunder geben." (See *Lehre und Wehre*, 1902, p. 31.) Others ridicule, on the same grounds, the belief that God rules sickness and health and at times directly intervenes for the good of His people. A. G. Baldwin: "The attributing of the various plagues to the direct intervention of a God offers difficulty to any one whose knowledge of modern science gives him a different concept of cause and effect. But we must remember that these stories were not written in a scientific era." (*The Drama of Our Religion*, p. 49.) J. S. Whale: "The view that God antecedently wills the lightning stroke, shipwreck, cancer, cannot save itself, especially in a scientific age. It is a matter of common observation that 'Streams will not curb their pride The just man not to entomb, Nor lightning go aside To give his virtues room; Nor is that wind less rough That blows a good man's barge.'" (*The Christian Answer to the Problem of Evil*, p. 33.) Now, when these men claim that science discredits the miracles of the Bible and the miraculous interventions of God, they are making the same equivocal use of terms as we noted under (1) and (2). It is a *spurious* philosophy, a *spurious* science, which they call in as witness for their side. And their witness cannot qualify as an expert.

Besides, the statement under consideration operates, like all sophistries, with a truth which becomes a half-truth and with fallacious deductions. It is true that science has made great advances. But it has not advanced quite so far as Seeberg's argument calls for. J. A. Thomson told us that we know "only a few of the real laws of nature." Dr. A. Lorenz informed us that the farther the medical scientist advances in his studies, the more he "realizes how little he knows." Our medical men confess that they do not know exactly how the plague originates and how it spreads and ends. A thousand questions of sickness and health have them baffled. So Seeberg and Whale are operating with half-truths.

And it is less than a half-truth when Fosdick declares that the action of the ax-head and the other miracles "presented *no intellectual problem whatever*" to Elisha and the other prophets. The prophets and the apostles were not quite so "dumb."

But we will grant that the Biblical writers knew less than we do with regard to such things as the mathematical formula of specific gravity. (Be careful, however, even here; you know little on the question of how much less they knew.) What does that prove for Seeberg's and Fosdick's contentions? Nothing. All the advances that science has made and will make have no bearing on

the question of miracles and any other direct intervention of God. What you know about the cosmic laws—even if you had a full knowledge of all the cosmic laws—does not give you the right to ask for the floor when this question is debated. The miracle is not a problem of science.—By the way: if the prophets' belief in miracles had been due to their lack of scientific knowledge, how will you account for the fact that leading men of science today find it possible to believe in the direct intervention of God?—Do not appeal to science in order to make the prophets ridiculous! You are making yourself ridiculous by committing the fallacy of citing the cosmic laws against the miracles. In a court-room you would be stopped by the objection: "Irrelevant!"

The second fallacy is committed when they use the "cause and effect" argument. To be sure, every effect has a cause, but every effect does not have a *natural* cause. The fact that the rising streams in Whale's poem usually entomb the careless traveler—that is a law of nature—does not prove that supernatural causes cannot nullify the natural effect of the torrent. The argument used by Whale and the others is called the fallacy of accident.

4) Practical application. We shall not revise the Bible for the purpose of harmonizing it with "science." We are asked to do that. Charles Gore says "it is disastrous to set religion in antagonism to science or to seek to shackle science, which is bound to be free." (*The Doctrine of the Infallible Book*, p. 8.) But that does not appeal to us. It would not be scientific. For the assertion that Scripture is not in harmony with science rests, as we have seen, on an equivocation. There is no room in true science for equivocations, untruths. And it would not be the Christian procedure. We heard Dr. Pieper say that it is unworthy of a Christian to let human opinions correct the Word of God (*op. cit.*, I, p. 577). It is, therefore, as we heard Dr. Walther say, not the task of the theologian to bring theology into harmony with science, as it exists *in concreto*. That would be disastrous. Those who make the practical application of the false theorem under consideration and attempt to harmonize Scripture with science by deleting what some scientists do not like suffer a terrible loss. "Modern theology, fearful for the future of the Church, has made an appeasement with science. It has agreed to retain and maintain only so much of Scripture and the Christian doctrine as will pass the test of 'science.' . . . The result is that modern theology has lost the divine truth. It has renounced Holy Scripture as the infallible truth and the sole authority and corrupted all the chief articles of the Christian doctrine, taking the very heart out of them." (*Proceedings, Delegate Synod*, 1899, p. 34.) If you think that the Bible-theologian Pieper is here using immoderate language, hear Georgia Harkness: "Then

liberal theology came to terms with science, purging religious thought of much error" (a liberal is speaking), "but moving so far in the direction of capitulation to the scientific method that it almost lost its soul." (*The Faith by which the Church Lives*, p. 142.)

No. 16. The quibble: "The Bible is not a text-book of science" is used to buttress the contention that the Bible does not claim exactness and infallibility for everything it states, that inspiration covers only spiritual matters and does not extend to scientific matters. Dr. A. J. Traver: "The Bible is true in all matters that pertain to religion. It is not a text for biology or for chemistry. It knows nothing of electricity or of airplanes. There is no reason that it should. These are matters for the investigation and discovery of the human mind." "It is not necessary that men should know how to fly in order to be saved from their sins. Bible-writers wrote with the background of their age and its scientific beliefs. *The one thing that they were called to do was to reveal God to men.*" "Inspiration includes only the knowledge essential for knowing God and His plan for man. It would seem absurd to turn to the Bible for knowledge of electricity or biology or chemistry or any of the sciences. In this field of human knowledge, men can discover truth by searching after it." (*The Lutheran*, Jan. 23, 1936; Feb. 22, 1939; May 10, 1939.)¹⁴¹⁾

The moderns make much of this argument. They never fail to use it. You can hardly find a modern treatise on the inspiration and fallibility of Scripture in which the author does not, sooner or later, produce the clinching argument "The Bible is not a text-book of science." Here the conservatives use the same language as the liberals. "Nor were the writers of the Bible safe-guarded 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 on either of these subjects. . . . They referred to the facts of nature as they were known in their day. But the

141) Similar statements. J. Stump (U. L. C.): "It must be borne in mind that the Bible is a religious book, and not a text-book on science. 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." (*Op. cit.*, p. 319.) R. F. Grau (Lutheran, Koenigsberg): "If the morality of the Old Testament is imperfect, how can we attribute perfection to things which have much less relation to the kingdom of God, such as its cosmological, astronomical, chronological ideas? These things must rather be judged by the canon which Jesus set up in the words: 'Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?' (Luke 12:14.) Jesus would ask you, and I ask you: Who has given you the right to look for cosmology, astronomy, etc., in the Bible, which is the book of salvation, of faith? Here the rule applies: Render unto science and cultured progress the things which belong to science, and to God and faith the things that belong to faith." (See *Lehre und Wehre*, 1893, p. 327.)

themes with which they were concerned were not in these areas." A liberal wrote that, H. L. Willett. (*Op. cit.*, p. 284.) But J. Stump might have written it. He did write the equivalent. H. E. Jacobs might have written it. "According to H. E. Jacobs," says Stump, "the Holy Scriptures are the infallible and inerrant record of God's revelation of His saving grace to men.' The holy writers were not inspired, however, to be 'teachers of astronomy or geology or physics.'" (See *Lehre und Wehre*, 1904, p. 86.) — They present the argument in various forms. For instance: "Nobody in his senses ever went to Jesus for the latest news in physics or astronomy," says H. E. Fosdick (*Op. cit.*, p. 269), and Prof. J. O. Evjen: "Christ came not to teach science. . . . The Bible is not an authority on geology, surgery, agriculture, law" (*What Is Lutheranism?* P. 24), and Prof. F. Baumgaertel: "Christ never claimed that His knowledge of scientific matters was infallible, and science has a perfect right, in judging historical questions and matters connected with the origin of the Old Testament, to disregard the judgment of Jesus" (see W. Moeller, *Um die Inspiration der Bibel*, p. 50). — They set up the acceptance of this axiom with its implication as the mark of genuine Lutheranism. C. A. Wendell: "Lutheranism means three things: . . . (2) Faith in the Holy Scripture, not as a fetish, on the one hand, nor a mere human document, on the other, nor as an arsenal of theological polemics nor as a text-book of history and natural science, but as the inspired Word of God, whose purpose it is to make us wise unto salvation." (*What Is Lutheranism?* P. 242.) A. R. Wentz: "Neither will the Lutheran theologian regard the Bible as a text-book on any subject except the special revelation of God in Jesus Christ. . . . The spirit of essential Lutheranism does not rime with the literalism of the Fundamentalist, which makes the Bible a book of oracles, a text-book with explicit marching orders for the 'warfare between science and religion.'" (*What Is Lutheranism?* P. 91.) W. Elert: "Die orthodoxe Dogmatik nahm die Schrift trotz ihres Inspirationsdogmas — oder auch dadurch verfuehrt — als Lehrbuch ueber alle darin vorkommenden heterogenen Inhalte. . . . Immerhin war hier aus der Bibel, die Luther als Gesetz und Evangelium las, ein naturwissenschaftlicher Kanon geworden." (*Morphologie des Luthertums*, I, pp. 51, 377.) — They cannot get along without it. They need it for their own peace of mind. Having established to their own satisfaction that the Bible is not reliable in its scientific statements, they quiet their apprehensions as to the general reliability of the Bible by taking refuge in their dogma: The Bible does not claim plenary inspiration and full inerrancy. Examine Dr. Stump's statement "The holy writers were not inspired to be 'teachers of astronomy or geology or physics (Jacobs)', and no number of contradictions in

this sphere would 'shake our confidence in the absolute authority of Holy Scripture as an inerrant guide in all matters of faith and practice (Jacobs).'" They think, too, that they need it in order to save the reputation of the Bible and keep men from skepticism. The article "Is the Bible a Text-Book on Science?" in *The Presbyterian* of July 19, 1928, speaks of "the oft-asserted apology so timidly spoken in the hope of saving the Bible from the ruthless destruction wrought by the critics and the scientists, an apology which runs thus: 'We do not accept the Bible as a text-book on science, but we do accept it as a guide to religion and life.' When in the presence of higher critics these same religionists admit: 'We do not accept the Bible as a text-book on history, but we do accept it as a guide to religion and life.'" That describes the situation correctly. Hear, for instance, J. M. Gibson. Speaking of "the theory that Scripture was given to acquaint people with astronomy, geology, history, and everything else under the sun, and above it, too," he warns us that that "raises a host of difficulties which no ingenuity can completely remove and men like Tyndall and Huxley are forced into skepticism. . . . Make the demand that it must be a scientific revelation, and you put innumerable weapons into the hand of the enemy" (*op. cit.*, pp. 91, 169 ff.). — Indeed, they make much of this axiom of theirs. W. Sanday sums up for the moderns: "The Biblical writers were not perfectly acquainted with the facts of science: is it certain that they would be more perfectly acquainted with the facts of history?" But be of good cheer: "It is coming to be agreed among thinking men that the Bible was never meant to teach science and that the Biblical writers simply shared the scientific beliefs of their own day." (*Op. cit.*, pp. 25, 27.)

But all of this is sophistry. The reasoning is fallacious. The fact that Scripture is not a text-book of science has no bearing on the question whether its scientific statements are true. We are not now considering the fact that Scripture claims infallibility for all of its statements. We are examining the statement of the moderns that, since Scripture does not present itself as a text-book of science, it cannot be permitted to claim accuracy for its scientific statements. And we shall say that that statement is devoid of logic and common sense. No man in his senses will say that the historical data presented by a reputable historian are, of course, reliable (so far as a human writer can claim reliability) but that, when he trenches upon the domain of natural science, he is under suspicion, for he is merely a historian. When a statesman writes a paper on the international situation, will you say that, however right he may be on political questions, his historical references are *eo ipso* less reliable than those of a historian? Dare you presume that, however careful he is in his political statements, he permits

himself to become careless in stating historical facts? Moreover — and this is addressed to the conservatives among the moderns — how are you going to prove your thesis that, because the purpose of Scripture is to make us wise unto salvation, not to give us a course in astronomy, etc., the Holy Ghost was careful about matters of doctrine but on scientific matters left the prophets to their own devices and permitted all sorts of inaccuracies and errors to mess up His Holy Scriptures? You must prove — not merely assert — that such a mode of procedure was naturally to be expected of the Holy Ghost. We say it is unreasonable to expect that. Dr. Pieper: "It is a foolish objection against the inspiration of Holy Scripture when modern theologians state that the Bible is no text-book of history or geography or natural science and that for this reason it is self-evident that inspiration could not pertain to the historical, geographical, and natural-history statements. . . . It is indeed 'no text-book of the natural sciences.' Its true purpose is rather to teach the way to heaven by faith in Christ, 2 Tim. 3:15; John 17:20; 20:31; Eph. 2:20-22. But where it does, even though only in passing, teach matters of natural history, its statements are incontrovertibly true according to John 10:35." (*Op. cit.*, pp. 265, 384, 577.)¹⁴²⁾ And there is no reason in the world why John 10:35 should not apply to *all* of Scripture. There is no known law of reason that compels us to say that, because the Bible is not an astronomical treatise, its astronomical statements are subject to doubt. Dr. Stoeckhardt's judgment on Grau's argument is: "Was ist das fuer ein Wirrwarr! Und was ist das fuer eine Logik!"

Notice the sinister sophistry. Through an ambiguous use of terms the statement "The Bible is not a scientific treatise" is made

142) Dr. L. S. Keyser: "Sometimes you hear men say that the Bible was not written to teach science. That is true when properly qualified, but it is not sweepingly true. The Bible was not meant to teach science as a scientific text-book, but even the lay mind can see that, wherever the Bible makes statements that belong to the scientific realm, its statements ought to be correct, to agree with what is known to be true in scientific research." (In the *Luth. Church Review*, quoted in *Lehre und Wehre*, 1905, p. 140.) Dr. M. Reu: "Scripture is no text-book on history or archeology or astronomy or psychology. But does from this follow that it must be subject to error when it occasionally speaks of matters pertaining to that field of knowledge?" (In *the Interest of Lutheran Unity*, p. 70.) We call special attention to the following paragraph from D. J. Burrell's *Why I Believe the Bible* (p. 52) because it points out the fatal consequences of the contention under discussion. "It is a common thing to hear it said: 'The Bible was not intended to be a scientific book,' giving the impression that it makes little difference, therefore, whether its scientific affirmations are correct or not. This, however, is not a matter of small moment. If the book is not veracious in this particular, what ground have we for committing ourselves to its spiritual guidances? . . . The question is not whether the Bible was intended to be a scientific book or not, but whether the Bible is true. It is not true unless it is true and reliable every way."

to mean, "Its statements are not scientifically correct," and the mind of the simple is confused. The thought is suggested: A text-book of science uses exact language; does it not? The Bible is not such a text-book, is it? Therefore you need not look for exactness in the Bible on some subjects—and plenary inspiration must be given up.

Examine, too, the argument that "in this field of human knowledge, men can discover truth by searching after it," or, as N. R. Best puts it: "When, pray tell us, did God ever make to man a gratuitous present of information which man could by any pains search out for himself?" (*Op. cit.*, p. 82.) That is beside the question. What is there, pray tell us, to hinder God from putting, through inspiration, His divine authority between the scientific statements in question? The holy writers may have known some of these things (not all of them, by any means) through observation. But it pleased God to guarantee the truth of it to us.

Again, the employment of caricature always betrays a sophisticated intent. When Gibson speaks of the "theory that Scripture was to acquaint people with astronomy, geology, history, and *everything else under the sun, and above it, too*," and Best asks: "Can three pages of duodecimo print (this Genesis prolog) be a compendium of universal origins?" (*Loc. cit.*), and Prof. W. H. Dunphy states that "the worshiper of the letter insists on treating them as an *encyclopedia of universal information*" (*The Living Church*, Feb. 18, 1933), they misrepresent our position. The Bible does make some scientific statements but does not claim — nor do we claim for it — that it gives universal information. These men are befogging the issue.

They argue, furthermore, from unproved premises. They *assume* that the Bible is concerned only with religious truths, not with scientific truths. While they are trying to prove this assumption (against the explicit declaration of Scripture that *all* Scripture is inspired and true), we shall go a step further and tell them that what Scripture says on historical, scientific matters, and the like, subserves its religious teaching.¹⁴³⁾

143) Dr. Stoeckhardt: "These seemingly extraneous matters are throughout put by Scripture into relation with faith, are matters that belong to God and faith. . . . Does not the account of Gen. 1 touch the specific Christian faith? Do the Gentiles and the Turks confess together with us Christians the first article of the Christian faith?" (*Loc. cit.*, pp. 327, 332.) J. A. Cottam: "In the first chapter of Genesis the Bible speaks with authority, clearly, and finally on a matter of biology . . . as a matter of the greatest religious importance" (*Know the Truth*, p. 69). J. G. Machen: "People say that the Bible is a book of religion and not a book of science, and that, where it deals with scientific matters, it is not to be trusted. . . . I should like to ask you one question. What do you think of the Bible when it tells you that the body of the Lord Jesus

And finally, back of it all is the *assumption* of scientific errors in the Bible. The entire discussion runs around a mistaken notion. All the energy expended in trying to show why the Bible is little concerned about the exactness of its scientific teaching is wasted effort. As long as the premise is not proved, they are engaged in idle discussions.

If anything more should be said on this subject, we'll say this: No, the Bible is no text-book of science; it is something infinitely better than any text-book of science. All of its scientific statements are reliable. Scientific text-books have to be rewritten every few years. But not a single paragraph of the Bible needs to be revised. If any statement in the text-books is confirmed by the Bible, then you can absolutely rely on it. Again: the Bible supplements these text-books most helpfully. *Science for the Elementary-School Teacher* brought up the question about the origin of human intelligence and speech, but was unable to give the teacher the needed information. The Bible gives it. J. Stump is wrong when he says that the holy writers did not know more on scientific matters than other men of their day. On some things they knew, by revelation, much more. On the origin of this world Moses knew more than the men of his day and many men of our day.—And here they are filling the world with the cry: The Bible is not a text-book of science!¹⁴⁴

No. 17. The variant-readings sophistry. The contention is that we have no reliable Bible text and that, consequently, Verbal Inspiration must go by the board. Theodore Kaftan: "The number of the variant readings is legion; there is no fixed text; it must give the verbal-inspirationist quite a jolt when he realizes that no one, not even he himself, is able to say which text is the one that is verbally inspired." (See Pieper, *op. cit.*, p. 287.) N. R. Best: "On the hypothesis here outlined the revelation of God perished from the earth ages ago—being destroyed by the incompetence of those who transcribed it from one manuscript to another and rendered it out of its original languages into the tongues of the nations. The logic

Christ came out of the tomb on the first Easter morning nineteen hundred years ago? . . . Account would have to be taken of it in any ideally complete scientific description of the physical universe. . . . Is that one of those scientific matters to which the inspiration of the Bible does not extend? . . ." (*The Christian Faith in the Modern World*, p. 54 f.)

144) Luther: The only book in which no historical [or scientific] errors can occur is the Bible. See XIV:491.—Dr. A. Graebner: "The Bible is not a text-book of zoology or biology or astronomy, claiming for itself the authority secured by the most careful and extended human investigation, observation, and speculation. Its claims are infinitely higher. The authority of human scientists is never more than human; that of the Scriptures is everywhere divine. The omniscient Creator knows more about His handiwork than any created mind. Etc." (*Theological Quarterly*, VI, p. 41.)

of this is that we today have no Bible at all to which any divine authority can be attributed." (*Op. cit.*, p. 78.) J. Aberly: "If it was necessary to eliminate all such errors from the original records, would it not seem to be just as necessary to guard against their creeping in through their transmission? . . . 'God in His wisdom may have given to His people in early ages an absolutely inerrant book, but that His providence has failed to preserve.'" (*The Luth. Church Quarterly*, 1935, p. 125.) Lyman Abbott presents the case thus, and it could not be better presented: "An infallible book is a book which without any error whatever conveys truth from one mind to another mind. In order that the Bible should be infallible, the original writers must have been infallibly informed as to the truth; they must have been able to express it infallibly; they must have had a language which was an infallible vehicle for the communication of their thoughts; after their death their manuscripts must have been infallibly preserved and infallibly copied; when translation became necessary, the translators must have been able to give an infallible translation; and, finally, the men who receive the book must be able infallibly to apprehend what was thus infallibly understood by the writers, infallibly communicated by them, infallibly preserved, infallibly copied, and infallibly translated. Nothing less than this combination would give us today an infallible Bible; and no one believes that this infallible combination exists. Whether the original writers infallibly understood the truth or not, they had no infallible vehicle of communicating it; their manuscripts were not infallibly preserved or copied or translated; and the sectarian differences which exist today afford an absolute demonstration that we are not infallibly able to understand their meaning." (*Evolution of Christianity*, p. 36 f. Quoted in Foster, *Modern Movements in American Theology*, p. 99 f.)

Now, the appearance of a legion or legions of variant readings does not jar our belief in Verbal Inspiration in the least. According to the first form of the present argument the condition of the copies renders the alleged inspiration of the originals doubtful or even illusory. It certainly does not. The fact that our copies offer a multitude of variant readings has no bearing on the Scriptural thesis that everything written by the holy writers was verbally inspired and remains verbally inspired. We insist that these two matters be kept separate. Let it be that the copyists did not do their transcribing by inspiration; nobody claims that. But the question before us just now is: Were the originals written by inspiration? And the fallibility of the copyists certainly does not affect the infallibility of the prophets and the apostles.

No modern will deny this self-evident truth, put in this bald form. When pressed, the moderns produce the second form of the

902 Verbal Inspiration — a Stumbling-Block to Jews, Etc.

argument. We notice, however, that their discussion of the variant readings has a tendency to get back to the question of *the inspiration of Scripture*. By implication and insinuation doubt is being cast on the verbal inspiration of the original documents. Charles Hodge makes the statement "Many of them [the discrepancies] may fairly be ascribed to *errors of transcribers*" (*Systematic Theology*, I, p. 169), and the former owner of my copy of the book at once wrote on the margin: "What in these cases becomes of *verbal inspiration*?" And when Hodge states on the next page that "the writers were under the guidance of the Spirit of God . . . and the Sacred Scriptures are so miraculously free from the soiling touch of human fingers," our annotator points to the "errors of transcribers" and asks: What, then, becomes of verbal inspiration? The same idea is put into print by Dr. H. C. Alleman: "At best the theory of a mechanical verbal inspiration can apply only to the original manuscripts of the authors themselves and not to copies, and surely not to translations. Now, we do not have the original manuscripts; the Holy Spirit did not preserve them. What we do have in the original languages are copies, manifestly faulty. Critical scholars have found ten thousand diversities in the preserved manuscripts of the Old Testament and 150,000 in the New Testament, a total of 160,000 in the Bible. So the theory of a mechanical verbal inspiration simply falls to pieces." (*The Luth. Church Quarterly*, 1936, p. 247.) Note the "*at best*," italicized by us, and note that "the theory of a mechanical verbal inspiration" which has "fallen to pieces" is the teaching that the originals were written by verbal inspiration. Note also the "if" in Dr. Aberly's statement: "If it was necessary to eliminate such errors from the original records. . . ." Dr. J. A. Singmaster writes: "Another startling fact contradicts the dictation theory, and that is the numerous various readings in the several manuscripts. While these do not vitiate the Scriptures in the least, they do show that God did not seem to require that every word must be miraculously preserved as originally written." (*Handbook of Christian Theology*, p. 67.) What is the "dictation theory"? The teaching that the words written by *the apostles and the prophets* were verbally inspired; and, says Dr. Singmaster, the various readings in the copies prove that this teaching cannot stand. Dr. J. A. W. Haas uses pretty plain language. "The early position of Protestant doctrine put an infallible Bible over against an infallible organization. *It is supposed*" (our italics) "that the original manuscripts of the books of the Bible were without error in every detail. No one ever saw or can prove such an infallible set of books, but their existence is made an article of faith. Actually Christians have always had a Bible that contains many variant readings." (*What Ought I to Believe*,

p. 28 f.)¹⁴⁵⁾ The subtle suggestion is that somehow or other the legions of variant readings must cause doubts as to the verbal inspiration of the originals. So let us settle this point once for all. The fact that a copyist misspelled a certain word or substituted a different word does not make the original word uninspired. The fact — and this is an apt analogy — that human nature is now corrupt does not alter the fact that man was created perfectly holy. You know this; you concede it when pressed for a definite statement. And we shall hold you to your concession. You have lost the right to mix up with your discussion of the faulty copies any discussion of the originals. All “ifs” and “buts” based on the copies are ruled out by mutual agreement.

Furthermore, we are not ready to discuss the faulty copies with any one who does not admit the infallibility of the originals. When Dr. Abbott presents his list of “infallibilities” to us, we stop him after the first item: “In order that the Bible should be infallible, the original writers must have been infallibly informed as to the truth; they must have been able to express it infallibly.” Surely; but do you, Dr. Abbott, believe that they did write by inspiration? When he says No, and when others say: “God *may have given* to His people in early ages an absolutely inerrant book,” we refuse to continue the discussion. First the question of the verbal inspiration and infallibility of the Bible must be settled between us. Unless that is settled, our conversation on the errors of the copyists and translators and printers can reach no satisfactory conclusion. It is evident that, when one party accepts the inspiration of the Bible as an established truth and insists that the errors in the copies cannot overthrow that fact, while the other party insists on constructing the doctrine of inspiration from the condition of the copies, the two parties are talking along different lines, and the talk will go on interminably. And there are practical considerations behind our insistence on settling, first and before anything else, the question of the infallibility of the holy writers. Much is gained, everything is gained, when a man has been convinced, by

145) The same idea was expressed and applied not only to Verbal Inspiration but also to faith in Christ, by Prof. E. W. E. Reuss, of Strasbourg, who, when a student had handed in an essay in which he maintained his faith in the plenary and literal inspiration of Scripture, told him: “My dear friend, the arguments of science do not affect you because the subject in question is in your eyes a matter of faith. Well, allow me to say to you in the name of the faith you propose to defend that the ground on which you have taken your stand is an extremely dangerous one. To identify faith in Christ with the historical belief that is bound up with Biblical documents is to enter on a path which may lead you very far. The least weakening of your theory of the Canon will shake the whole superstructure of your Christianity, and the reaction may be as subtle as it will be radical.” (Quoted, with approval, in R. F. Horton, *Revelation and the Bible*, p. VI.)

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Scripture, that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God. Such a man will stand firm when the shock-troops—the legions of various readings—are unloosed upon him. And only such a man is in a position to take up the study of these variants (textual criticism) profitably. A man who takes a negative attitude towards the inspiration of Scripture will hail these legions as helpful allies; he who takes a doubting attitude will quickly surrender to them.

Our first concern is to get men to listen to what Scripture says on Verbal Inspiration. To that we devote most of our time. We do not, of course, absolutely refuse to discuss anything else. If men insist on constructing the doctrine of inspiration from the condition of the copies, we shall devote some little time to that angle. We'll do that presently. But all along we shall keep on stressing the main points, first, that Scripture teaches Verbal Inspiration and, second: the fact that the copies are somewhat faulty does not prove and does not indicate that the originals were faulty.¹⁴⁶⁾

The moderns, in general, admit that. As a rule, they put their variant-reading-argument in this form: there are legions of variant readings; it follows that we have no fixed, no authentic, no reliable text; and from that it follows that Verbal Inspiration is a dead issue. Dr. A. E. Deitz puts it this way: "Manifestly, we cannot be guided by a book which is no longer available, however perfect and inerrant and infallible it may have been." (*The Luth. Ch. Quarterly*, 1935, p. 130.) Another modern puts it still more bluntly: "We have been dwelling in the traditional text as in an ancient, comfortable house; the spirit of our fathers ruled there and made it comfortable and cozy. Now comes the building inspector, condemns the building, and demands that we move out." The old house is "rotten, rickety, in a tumble-down condition." (See Pieper, *op. cit.*, I, p. 414.)

146) Dr. A. Hoenecke: "A further objection: Since we certainly do not possess the original text throughout, verbal inspiration cannot be predicated of the Bible throughout. Ein wirklich toerichter Einwand! They must have a poor case if they have to resort to such subterfuges. They fail to distinguish between the inspiration and the preservation of the inspired Scriptures. . . . Even though we admit that in several passages we do not have the inspired text, that disestablishes the inspiration of the original Scriptures as little as the present corrupt condition of man does away with the creation of the first man in the image of God." (*Ev.-Luth. Dog.*, I, p. 386.) Dr. W. Dau: "If in a copy of the Bible that should fall into the hands of Pastor Montelius one leaf were missing, the Bible would not on that account be defective. If in the translation which we have something should have been rendered incorrectly, the Bible would not on that account be faulty. If the manuscripts that have been preserved till our time should in some cases be undecipherable, or some mistake of a copyist should be found in it, the Bible would not on that account be erroneous." (*Theol. Mthly.*, 1923, p. 75.)

Let us examine this second form of the argument. We shall find that it is an unwarranted generalization to say that on account of the legions of variant readings our present Bible text is doubtful and unreliable. Note, in the first place, the tendentious overstatement, the sophistical exaggeration in the argument. These legions of variant readings consist, as the textual critics tell us, for the greater part, by far the greater part, in variations in the spelling and the like, which do not in any way affect the sense, things about which no serious man would make a fuss. Such for instance, are "the variations in the spelling of proper names: Ναζαρέτ — Ναζαρέθ. . . . Among other insignificant variations may be mentioned the presence or absence of *v* final in verbs: ἔλεγε — ἔλεγεν," and so *ad infinitum*. (A. B. Bruce, *Exp. Gr. Test.*, I, p. 52 f.)¹⁴⁷ This class of variant readings does not jolt us. These legions make a great din, but as they come closer, we find them to consist of tin soldiers. What the moderns say of the havoc wrought by these armies is of the same value as some of the war-bulletins being issued by the high commands.

Next, some of these variants do indeed affect the sense. Some — a few. Do not keep up your sophistical practice of exaggerating! There are only a few that affect the sense, as the textual critics tell us. "It is reckoned that of the seven thousand nine hundred and fifty-nine verses of the New Testament there hardly exist ten or twelve in which the corrections that have been introduced by the new readings of Griesbach and Scholz, as the result of their immense researches, have any weight at all. Further, in most instances they consist but in the difference of a single word, and sometimes even of a single letter." (L. Gaussen, *op. cit.*, p. 190. — Examine the exhaustive lists given in that chapter.) Ten or twelve verses — and our war-bulletin writers speak of "legions"! And now mark well: these few variants which do effect the sense in no case affect any Scriptural doctrine. For instance, the variant $\theta\varsigma$ or θ for $\theta\epsilon\acute{o}\varsigma$ in 1 Tim. 3:16 are certainly not equivalents. But reading "who" for "God" in no wise affects the doctrine of the deity of Christ. This doctrine is abundantly established by the host of the other *dicta probantia*. Let 1 John 5:7 be an interpolation; does that fact give the doctrine of the Trinity the least jolt? Some im-

147) "The miracle of inspiration is not perpetuated in those who have copied and translated the Scriptures, though the accepted translation is so entirely free from fundamental error that fairness must conclude that God has wonderfully preserved the purity of the original text in the transmission. Prof. Moses Stuart, one of the ablest scholars of modern times, says: 'Out of some 800,000 various readings of the Bible that have been collected, about 795,000 are of about as much importance as the question in English orthography is whether the word *honor* or *Savior* should be spelled with a *u* or without it.'" (*Proc., Southeastern Dist.*, 1939, p. 27.)

portant manuscripts omit the clause $\acute{\alpha}\nu\ \epsilon\nu\ \tau\eta\ \upsilon\theta\epsilon\rho\alpha\tau\eta$ in John 3:13. Delete it, and Scripture still teaches that the Son of Man is and was in heaven. "There are instances where, if a certain variant is accepted, the passage no longer proves a certain doctrine. But the remarkable thing is that these instances occur only in cases where this doctrine is firmly established by many other passages." (*Proceedings, Synodical Conf.*, 1886, p. 66.) The fact is that "the wonderful divine providence so held its protecting hand over the Bible text that in spite of the *variae lectiones* not a single Christian doctrine has become doubtful." (Pieper, *op. cit.*, p. 290.)¹⁴⁸ The text of the Bible is in such a condition that in every instance where we need a plain, direct, clear statement of doctrine or important fact, the text is there — clear and uncorrupted. The bombs which the legions of the variant readings discharged against the certainty of the text are duds. This talk about the dilapidated condition of our Bible home is justly characterized by Dr. Pieper as "frivolous talk, flowing from ignorance."

Note, in the second place, the fallacy in the generalization: The Bible text, as we have it, is not reliable because of the variant readings. There is doubt, to be sure, about the reading of some passages. But we shall never grant that that fact casts doubt on the reliability of the ten thousand passages about which there is no doubt. The textual critics — and they need not be verbal-inspirationists — will not stand for such insinuations of the moderns. They do not speak of the Bible text as unreliable. They speak of an established, authentic, accepted text. And so shall we. The moderns are unreasonable. Take a reasonable view: God certainly wanted the churches of today to have the same advantage as the first churches, which had the original manuscripts, written by the apostles. God wants all churches of all times to have a certain, sure Word, expressed in a certain, sure text. Now, if the fact that there are variant readings would deprive us of a reliable Bible

148) Prof. Moses Stuart: "Of the remainder some change the sense of particular passages or expressions or omit particular words or phrases; but not one doctrine of religion is changed, not one precept is taken away, not one important fact is altered, by the whole of the various readings collectively taken." (*Loc. cit.*) "Richard Bentley, the ablest and boldest of the earlier classical critics of England, affirmed that even the worst of manuscripts does not pervert or set aside 'one article of faith or moral precept.' . . . And Dr. Ezra Abbot of Harvard, who ranked among the first textual critics and was not hampered by orthodox bias (being a Unitarian), asserted that 'no Christian doctrine or duty rests on those portions of the text which are affected by the differences in the manuscripts; still less is anything essential in Christianity touched by the various readings. They do, to be sure, affect the bearing of a few passages on the doctrine of the Trinity; but the truth or falsity of the doctrine by no means depends upon the reading of these passages.'" (B. Manly, *The Bible Doctrine of Inspiration*, p. 224.)

text, would God have permitted these variants to occur? Is this rationalizing? Well, then listen to Christ's own guarantee that the Church of later days shall have a good text, perfectly good and reliable. John 17:20 guarantees that the word of the apostles will remain in the possession of the Church, the word of the apostles as transmitted to the Church in a reliable text. And when Christ asks His disciples of the later days to continue in His Word (John 8: 31, 32) and to teach all things He commanded (Matt. 28:20), He promises them a good, reliable, absolutely reliable text; else they could not know His Word. And He has kept His promise.¹⁴⁹⁾

The broad statement that the Church of today must get along with a corrupted, unreliable Bible text does not express the truth. It does not agree with the facts.¹⁵⁰⁾ And it does not proceed from the Christian way of thinking, from Christ's way of thinking. In spite of the variants found in the Old Testament Christ said: "They have Moses and the Prophets" (Luke 16:29); they have a reliable text. And when He appealed to the text as written, "we do not read," says Dr. Pieper, "that the devil brought up the matter of 'various readings'" (p. 288). *Summa summarum*, "what the

149) The Lord took special care of this matter. No, He did not endow the copyists with miraculous infallibility, but we are going to say that it is a miracle before our eyes that the text has been so faithfully preserved. We speak of "the wonderful, miraculous divine providence guarding the text." "We truly stand before a miracle of divine providence." (F. A. Philippi. See Pieper, *op. cit.*, p. 409.) "God has wonderfully preserved the purity of the original text in the transmission." (See above.) "Very wonderfully and very graciously," says J. G. Machen, "has God provided for the preservation, from generation to generation, of His holy Word. . . . You do not have to depend for the assurance of your salvation and the ordering of your Christian lives upon passages where either the original wording or the meaning is doubtful. God has provided very wonderfully for the transmission of the text and for the translation into English." (*The Christian Faith in the Modern World*, p. 43 f.) "The Lord has watched miraculously over His Word," says Gaussen (*op. cit.*, p. 167), who asks us to compare the Bible in this respect with any other book of antiquity ("the comedies of Terence alone have presented thirty thousand variant readings; and yet these are only six in number, and they have been copied a thousand times less often than the New Testament") and to meditate on the saying of Bengel: "Thou mayest, then, dismiss all those doubts which at one time so horribly tormented myself. If the Holy Scriptures — which have been so often copied and which have passed so often through the faulty hands of ever fallible men — were absolutely without variations, the miracle would be so great that faith in them would no longer be faith. I am astonished, on the contrary, that the result of all those transcriptions has not been a much greater number of different readings." (*Op. cit.*, p. 196.)

150) These are the facts: "The best of the present-day Hebrew and Greek scholars assert that in probably nine hundred and ninety-nine cases out of a thousand we have either positive knowledge or reasonable assurance as to what the original words were; so accurately have the copyists reproduced them, and so faithfully have the translators done their work." (L. Boettner, *The Inspiration of the Scriptures*, p. 19.)

Church lacks in our day is not a reliable text of the Bible, but the faith in the sufficiently reliable text" (p. 410. — Be sure to read the two sections in Pieper on this subject, I, pp. 286 ff. and 408 ff.).

No, the few variants — by now we are agreed that the various readings which amount to anything are but few in number — jolt us as little as the obscure passages in the Bible disturb our faith. The Bible contains some *cruces interpretum*, but we have never permitted the Romanists to adduce this fact as a proof for their dogma of the obscurity of Scripture. We cannot be absolutely sure whether the ἐπεὶ in John 5:39 is the indicative or the imperative. Does that justify any man to deny the clarity of Scripture? And the occurrence of a few variants is not a sane argument against the integrity of the text of the Bible. The Protestants among the moderns will not receive a jolt if the Romanist should argue: Since there are some obscure passages in the Bible, the whole Bible is obscure. Then they should not try to jolt us by employing the same line of argument: Since the text in some instances has been corrupted, the Bible text is unreliable.¹⁵¹⁾

Here is a variation of the second form of the argument: We no longer have the original manuscripts; they may have been — or were — inerrant by virtue of Verbal Inspiration; but since we possess only copies, made by fallible men, it is a waste of time to discuss Verbal Inspiration; it has no practical value. — The exam-

151) Prof. J. P. Koehler: "Es moegen in einzelnen Stellen Unklarheiten entstehen, so dass man die Stellen gerade nicht bestimmt auslegen kann. In den meisten Faellen bezieht sich das auf aeuessere sprachliche Dinge, oder es betrifft feine Schattierungen der Gedankenverbindung, auf deren Feststellung wenig ankommt, soweit es die Lehre betrifft. Man wird die Stellen dann zu den sogenannten dunklen Stellen rechnen, wenigstens in dieser Hinsicht. Aber der Klarheit der Schrift, soweit es sich um die Lehre handelt, tut das deshalb keinen Eintrag, weil die betreffende Lehre entweder schon in solcher Stelle oder sonstwo in der Schrift klar vorliegt. . . . Es kann der urspruengliche Text durch die Abschreiber verdorben sein, dadurch dass sie Woerter absichtlich oder unabsichtlich einschoben. Da entsteht wieder die Frage, ob diese Tatsache uns den vorliegenden Bibeltext nicht zweifelhaft mache. . . . Manche Leute meinen, es sei nicht noetig, auf dem Wortlaut zu bestehen, weil er ja doch nicht gewiss ist. Doch das folgt nicht. Das bleibt stehen, Gott hat sein Wort durch den Heiligen Geist eingegeben, so dass kein Tuettel davon hinfallen kann, und wir bestehen darum bei der Auslegung auf dem Wortlaut, wo er feststeht. In andern Faellen aber geben wir uns wiederum nicht mit Wortklauberei ab, sondern lassen solch aeuessere Dinge dahingestellt, um so mehr, als die Wahrheit der Lehre doch nicht davon abhaengt. Dass es mit der aeuesseren Gestalt der Schrift so steht, das gehoert mit zu ihrer menschlichen Niedrigkeit, die von Gott jedenfalls damit zugleich sozusagen in Kauf genommen wurde, dass er seine Offenbarung in menschliche Rede durch Menschen kleiden liess. Es ist daher eine unverstaendige Ueberschaetzung solcher rein menschlichen Dinge, wenn sich jemand dadurch in seinem Glauben an die Unfehlbarkeit der Schrift in jedem Wort, das geschrieben ist, wankend machen laesst." (*Der Brief Pauli an die Galater*, p. 37 f.)

ination of this argument will take us over the old ground, indeed, but it will do no harm to *emphasize* some of the old points.

We heard Dr. J. A. W. Haas say: "No one ever saw or can prove such an infallible set of books," and heard Dr. A. E. Deitz repeat it: "Manifestly we cannot be guided by a book which is no longer available, however perfect and inerrant and infallible it may have been." Let us hear Dr. E. H. Delk repeat it. Discussing the statement by Dr. W. A. Maier: "I challenge any one within the range of my voice to show that the Bible, as originally inspired by God, contains even a minute mistake," he says: "This is a retreat to an impossible citadel in order to defend an unnecessary point of view of what is essential to Christianity. If we had the Bible 'as originally inspired of God,' this challenge might be of some force." (*The Luth. Church Quarterly*, 1936, p. 426.) This slur about an "impossible citadel" is played up by W. M. Forrest in this wise: "No one can attack a non-existent fortification. The autographs [of the Bible] are nowhere; no man living can prove what was in them, and no man dead has left us any record of what they were like when he read them. . . . All we have is our existing Bible. If it needed to be inerrant, why did God allow it to become errant after having gone to the trouble of getting it all miraculously written out without error? . . ." (*Do Fundamentalists Play Fair?* P. 55 f.) The commissioners of the U. L. C. A. played it up in their report to the convention of 1938: "The disagreement [on the doctrine of verbal inspiration] relates, furthermore, to a matter of theological interpretation, which, in addition, applies only to a non-existent original text of the Scriptures." (See *The Lutheran*, Oct. 5, 1938.) And the presidential address at the same convention stated: "The crucial difference developed in recent discussions rests in the matter of the verbal inspiration of an original text of the Scriptures (which, of course, does not exist)."

These flippancies call for a few remarks. (1) "No one ever saw such an infallible set of books." Neither did any one of us see Christ. Does it follow that our knowledge of Christ is faulty? We know as much of the power and love and beauty of Christ as those who saw Him with their physical eyes. If you admit *that*, you will no longer argue *that*, because you have not seen the original manuscripts, you cannot know whether they were without error in every detail.¹⁵²⁾

152) D. J. Burrell: "We have heard the higher critics saying: 'What is the use of affirming inerrancy of an "original autograph" which is not in existence? The theory that there were no errors in the original text is sheer assumption, upon which no mind can rest with certainty. We must take the Scriptures as we have them, without reference to a hypothetical original which no living man has seen.' It is a poor rule, however, which cannot be made to work both ways. No living

2) "What is the use of affirming inerrancy of an 'original autograph' which is not in existence?" The question has only academic interest. — No, it is a question of great importance, of the utmost importance. We want to know whether the words that Paul wrote down were (and are) the very words of God, by virtue of verbal inspiration. We want to know that today. For if the words of the apostles, in the original autographs, were not God's words, words of power, life, and salvation, then the copies, written or printed, could not transmit to us divine words. In the article "Have We the Original Text of the Holy Scriptures?" (CONC. THEOL. MONTHLY, X, p. 105 ff.) we read: "If the original manuscripts of the holy writers were inerrant, then it was at least possible for scribes to transmit an inerrant message to posterity. If the original writings were (and not merely contained) the Word of God, then the copies transmit to us the Word of God in the degree in which they are faithful to the original. If the original manuscripts were not, but merely contained, the Word of God, accuracy of transcription did not avail to render that divine which was not divine. Yes, a great deal depends on the nature of the original." (Be sure to read the entire article!)¹⁵³ The moderns think they can get along with an errant Bible. But to us the question of the verbal inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible, the Bible as originally written, is a matter of vital importance. — It is of some importance, too, to the textual critics. They are devoting much time to the labor of restoring the original text. For many of them it is a labor of love. And they have more than a literary interest in it. They would lose their real interest if they knew that, after they had improved the faulty copies, they got nothing but a faulty Bible.

3) "No man dead has left us any record of what they [the

man has ever seen the incarnate Word. There is no accurate portrait of Him in existence — certainly not if the Scriptures are unreliable. Nevertheless we do believe that the original Christ, who for a brief period of thirty years lived among men and then vanished from sight, was 'holy, harmless and undefiled'; precisely as it is claimed the Scriptures were in their original form." (Op. cit., p. 122.)

153) Dr. James M. Gray: "Some would argue speciously that to insist on the inerrancy of a parchment no living being has ever seen is an academic question merely and without value. But do they not fail to see that the character and perfection of the Godhead are involved in that inerrancy? Some years ago a 'liberal' theologian, deprecating the discussion as not worth while, remarked that it was a matter of small consequence whether a pair of trousers were originally perfect if they were now rent. To which the valiant and witty David James Burrell replied that it might be a matter of small consequence to the wearer of the trousers, but the tailor who made them would prefer to have it understood that they did not leave his shop that way. . . . The Most High might at least be regarded as One who drops no stitches and sends out no imperfect work." (*The Fundamentals*, III, p. 11.)

autographs] were like when he read them.”—That is a contemptible statement. The earlier copyists left a record.

4) Now for their real argument: the original manuscripts have disappeared, and since we have only copies of them, the value of the original is lost.—Do they really mean to say that? That would mean, of course, that, if God wanted us to have His real, authentic, authoritative Word, Paul would have had to write out a hundred million original manuscripts of his epistles, so that every Christian congregation could have them in Paul's handwriting or in the handwriting of his thousand amanuenses. Or, as the *CONC. THEOL. MTHLY.* article referred to above suggests, God would have had to engrave His sacred Word on gold plates, deposit them in a specified spot, entrust them, say, to the officials of the Congressional Library in Washington “to be inspected and copied by anybody that desired to do so.” Copied? No; that would not do either. For where is the guaranty that he copied correctly? We cannot believe that the moderns seriously mean that a document loses its value when it is copied. The Church at Rome did not say that the only worth-while epistle they had was the Epistle to the Romans. They did not say that they did not have the Epistle to the Galatians because they had only a copy of it. They did not demand that the autographs circulate in all congregations of that day down to all congregations of the last days. How many of our moderns have laid their eyes on the manuscripts which contain the proclamations of the President or of the Leader of Germany? All they see is the printed copy. And they know exactly what these men said. Do our lawyers ask to have the original engrossed documents embodying the legislative acts of Congress in their hands before they make use of them? Have done with this talk about copies not being as good as the originals. The Bible did not lose its force, its authority, the divine power of its words, through its transmission to us by way of written or printed copies.

5) If the moderns should now say that they were not referring to the copies *as such*, but only to faulty copies, we shall tell them that in that case they should not have used such general terms. And since they have used general terms (“a non-existent original text”), we shall not go on till they have definitely conceded that a good copy is as good as the original. If that is conceded, we shall have no further trouble with them. We, too, concede the variant readings. We have conceded right along that in some instances the original text has not yet been established. But we do not concede that the faulty transcription or faulty translation of a few passages vitiates the entire transcription. Some few passages have become doubtful. That gives no man the right to

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cast doubt on all the other passages whose reading is not in doubt. Reasonable men do not thus treat other, human documents. Have done with this vicious trifling! Since you have admitted that you are not arguing against the *copies as such*, accept the copies where there are no various readings as being just as good as the original, the words you read in the copies as having the same inerrancy and the same divine power as the words which were written by Paul's own pen. In the words of the *Watchman-Examiner*: "Certainly, it must always be remembered that, when we speak of the inspiration of the words of Scripture, we logically mean those words that were written by Paul, Moses, and others. To this it has been replied that the documents written by Paul and Moses have perished. Why contend for the inspiration of something we do not possess? Here it is well to remind the objector that the same question might also be asked of those who believe in any kind of Biblical inspiration. But there is an answer. Granted that the original documents are lost, the words of those documents are still with us through copies made before their loss. And in so far as we have these words, we have a verbally inspired Bible today. The whole science of textual criticism proceeds upon the assumption of an inspired original. And we cannot honor too highly that company of godly scholars who have labored to lead us back to this original." (See *Theol. Mthly.*, 1923, p. 363.)

Finally (6) the moderns ought to realize that in arguing against Verbal Inspiration on the basis of the alleged non-existence of the original they are cutting their own throats. They stand for, say, Partial Inspiration, the inspiration of the doctrinal contents of the Bible; they insist that these doctrines are true because the sections presenting them were written by inspiration. We ask them: What do you know of these doctrines? You do not have the original text! You cannot prove the *gratia universalis* with John 3:16 because the original which is supposed to have contained these words is no longer in existence. "Here it is well to remind the objector that the same question might also be asked of those who believe in any kind of Biblical inspiration."¹⁵⁴

Now let us take a last look at Abbott's "infallibilities" phalanx. It looks formidable. But the argument is based on a fallacy. The first statement: "In order that the Bible should be infallible, the

154) Dr. Pieper: "Theodore Kaftan is so set on doing away with Verbal Inspiration that he asserts two things which cancel each other. On the one hand he asserts that, as all theologians know, 'there is no fixed, firm text,' since the number of variant readings is legion.' On the other hand, he (Kaftan) is sure that he can determine on the basis of Scripture what in Scripture is and what is not the objective Word of God. That this would be impossible on the supposition that 'there is no fixed, firm text' did not dawn on him." (*Op. cit.*, p. 366.)

original writers must have been infallibly informed as to the truth; they must have been able to express it infallibly," is a true statement. But the next statement: "After their death their manuscripts must have been infallibly copied" is not true. It employs the sophisticated generalization discussed above. The mistakes which the copyists made render a few passages doubtful but do not make all the rest fallible. It is simply not true that a message, a teaching, a statement, of the Bible loses its infallibility, its power, its divine character, when a fallible human being copies it, transmits it, preaches it. Will the condemned criminal doubt the validity of the pardon because a lowly messenger, and not the governor himself, brings and reads to him the pardon? And if the messenger mispronounces a word or two, is the pardon invalidated? — Enough has been said on this matter above. We shall add only one more remark. It is conceivable that, when we offer our main proof to Abbott — Christ's promise that He would preserve His infallible Word to the Church — he might reply: How do you know that Christ spoke those words? The original writers may have set them down infallibly, but the faulty copies, etc., etc. Our final remark is this: We go our way rejoicing and thanking God for the precious boon of an infallible Bible; let the others, if they must, wallow in the bog of doubt and uncertainty, a bog of their own making.

The argument under consideration (No. 17) is born of desperation. The case of those who deny the verbal inspiration and reliability of the Bible must be desperate if they have to bring in the unrelated matter of faulty copies. And this desperate argument, if upheld, leads to despair. If there is no reliance on our Bible as we have it, we get religious nihilism. TH. ENGELDER

(To be continued)

Sermon Study on Heb. 1:1-6

Eisenach Epistle for Second Christmas Day

The Eisenach Epistle-lesson for the Second Christmas Day is taken from the first chapter of the Letter to the Hebrews. It comprises the prolog, vv. 1-4, and three of the Scripture-passages cited by the author in proof of his statement that Christ far excels the angels in glory and power. The prolog consists of one long complex sentence grouped around two statements, the first found in the principal complex clause, vv. 1, 2, "God hath spoken"; the second in the complex subordinate clause, v. 3, "Who sat down." Round about these two brief sentences the writer, in majestic language well suited to his sublime subject, brings out his theme, introducing