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

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

(Continued)

### III

The moderns have a third grievance against the Bible as God gave it to us. They are scandalized at the many "trivialities" incorporated in it. Those portions of the Bible, they say, which treat of purely secular matters, common household affairs, petty concerns of men, and the like, do not belong to the Word of God. God's Word is too high and holy a thing to have these *levicula* mixed up with it. It is inconceivable that, when the Holy Ghost inspired the saving Word, He should have bothered about the marital affairs of Isaac and Rebecca. The moderns are complaining that their sense of the fitness of things is outraged when they are asked to believe that it was by divine inspiration that Paul wrote to Timothy about his cloak. And Verbal, Plenary Inspiration, which requires them to believe just that, is an intolerable thing.

Thomas Paine thus voices his indignation: "When I see throughout the greater part of this book scarcely anything but a history of the grossest vices and a collection of the *most paltry and contemptible tales*, I cannot dishonor my Creator by calling it by His name." (*The Age of Reason*, I, p. 28.) Paine is right, says R. F. Horton: "To suppose that there is any divine revelation in the command of Paul to bring the cloak and the books and especially the parchments which he left at Troas is a *reductio ad absurdum* of the unreflecting view which dogmatism has taken. Or the fatherly counsel to Timothy to take a little wine for his stomach's sake: it is a kind of *travesty of inspiration* to maintain that St. Paul was the mouthpiece of God in giving such advice." (*Revelation and the Bible*, p. 304.) Similarly Prof. W. F. Gess: "It would be irreverent to burden the Holy Ghost with such trifles

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and insignificant *minutiae* as Paul's forgotten cloak, barren statistics (Neh. 7:6, 7 ff.), dry genealogies, and the like." (See *Neue Luth. Kztg.*, 1901, No. 6.) And Professor Kahn: "The home-spun philosophy of Solomon's Proverbs dictated by the Holy Ghost? There can be no such thing!" (See *Baier*, I, p. 103.) And Dr. H. C. Alleman has the same idea when he asks us to "look upon the divine truths in one light and the trifles of men in another." (*The Lutheran*, Jan. 14, 1937.)<sup>210</sup>

The moderns find fault with our Bible on account of these trivialities. The Bible-Christians take a different attitude. We thank God for the trivialities in the Bible. — There are no trivialities in the Bible! For (a) is this a triviality: "God loves men in all their smallness"? That truth is worth more to us than all the wealth of the world. Blessed is the man who has learned it. And we learn it from this, that the Holy Ghost has filled His Bible with these "trivial" records. He moved the holy writers to describe in detail the common every-day activities of the patriarchs, their labors in the field and house, their little worries and cares. Paul was solicitous about the state of health of his friends; he missed the parchment he needed for study: would the Holy Ghost, the High and Holy One, care to provide Paul with the words in which to clothe his directions about these matters? The Holy Ghost did that very thing. And that proves absolutely that our petty affairs are not beneath the notice of the Lord of heaven. Our gracious Lord shares our troubles. Whether we are engaged in some great work for the Church or are concerned about some small family matter, we are the objects of God's solicitude. If you want to know how much God thinks of you, study the trivialities recorded in the Bible. The fact that the Holy Ghost recorded these mundane matters invests them with supermundane importance. There are no trifles in the Bible.

Let us repeat this in the words of Luther: "Are you wondering and asking how it could please the Holy Ghost to describe such common and contemptible things? Listen to what the holy Paul

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210) "Meanwhile another evasion is made in order to except a part of the Scriptures from the *Theopneustia*. If this is not the most serious objection, it is, at least, one of those that are most frequently advanced: 'Was it suited to the dignity of inspiration to accompany the thoughts of the Apostle Paul even in those vulgar details to which we see him descend in many of his letters? Could the Holy Ghost have gone so far as to dictate to him those ordinary salutations with which they close? or those medicinal counsels which he gives to Timothy with respect to his stomach and his frequent infirmities? or those commissions with which he charges him with respect to his parchments and a certain cloak?'" (L. Gaussen, *Theopneustia*, p. 305 f.)

writes Rom. 15:4: 'Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.' If we firmly believed, as I believe, albeit weakly, that the Holy Ghost Himself and God, the Creator of all things, is the *true author of this Book*, and of such mean, despicable things,—mean and small to our carnal eyes,—we should, as St. Paul says, derive the greatest comfort therefrom. . . . This is what the Holy Ghost would teach us when He condescends to write about the saints and their petty affairs: the lowliest works of the saints please God. *Behold the glory and worth of a Christian man: there is nothing so small about him but that it pleases God.*" (II: 469, 471.)

We are well aware that the moderns will not admit the force of the argument that, since the Holy Ghost directed the holy writers to write about these trifles of men, these trifles are important in His sight. The moderns say that this argument is based on a *petitio principii* and reject it as an apriorism. They prefer to apply their own *a priori* method and to deal with the Bible on the principle that what they consider trivialities cannot be the subject of inspiration. As long as they uphold this principle, there is no use of arguing with them. We shall have to let them go their own way. Let H. E. Fosdick ridicule us, to whom, because we believe in "verbal dictation, the Scriptures become so exalted that nothing in them can be trivial, and so holy that to doubt them becomes blasphemy" (*The Modern Use of the Bible*, pp. 30, 68); we shall go our way, reverently study the "trifles" in the Bible and rejoice in the truth of the statement in which Dr. Pieper's discussion of this subject culminates: "God loves men in all their smallness." (*Chr. Dog.*, I, p. 307.)

We thank God for the trivialities in the Bible. These are precious portions of the Bible. Unfolding the precious truth that God loves men in all their smallness and has a tender regard for their petty cares and troubles, we gain (b) the profitable knowledge that our prayers to God are acceptable and pleasing to Him. Is it worth anything to you to know that when you bring your financial difficulties and your family troubles to the notice of the Lord of heaven He will not turn away from you in disdain? to know, in other words, that the gracious providence of the Ruler of the world watches over the affairs of such an insignificant creature as you are? Then study the "trivialities" recorded in the Bible. If we would learn the Christian art of confident prayer, we must learn that God really does take an interest in such insignificant creatures as we are. "Prayer does involve confidence that God takes interest in the individual who prays." H. E. Fosdick says that,

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and here he is right.<sup>211)</sup> And now God not only assures us that He is solicitous about our affairs but also confirms our assurance by making the recording of these petty concerns of His saints a matter of inspiration. If you believe that it was by divine inspiration that Paul wrote about Timothy's stomach ailment and Moses about the golden earring and two bracelets given to Rebecca, you will gain the assurance that the great God is interested in our trifles. And if He is concerned about our trifling ailments, we shall certainly dare to bring our heavy troubles before Him. Study these trivialities in the Bible with reverence, and you will say with Robert Haldane: "If we regard these passages not as the word of men but as God's Word, we shall discover their beauty and importance. God Himself is here speaking. The High and Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity comes down to the weakness and the needs of His servants. Nothing that concerns them escapes His attention." (*The Verbal Inspiration of the Old and New Testament Maintained and Established*. German edition, p.182.) Do you want to learn to pray with confidence? Then let Fosdick tell you that God is concerned about man in all his pettiness. And do not listen to him when he ridicules the idea that an inspired record would deal with the trifles of men.

Does it comport with the dignity of God to speak and write about a cow's hoof? God will do just that if the mean hoof plays into the affairs of His people. And if God is willing so to "demean" Himself, He must certainly think highly of His Christians. Let us hear Luther on this point: "How now? Has God nothing else to do than to count the tears and wanderings of David (Ps. 56:8)?"

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211) Let us have the entire passage. "When a man, making earnest with prayer, sets himself to practice communion with God, he is likely to awaken with a start some day to a disturbing reflection. 'This thing that I am doing,' he well may say, 'presupposes that the almighty God takes a personal interest in me. I am taking for granted, when I pray, that the Eternal is specially solicitous on my behalf. Prayer may seem a simple matter, but on what an enormous assumption does it rest!' Now, this reflection accords entirely with the facts. Prayer does involve confidence that God takes interest in the individual who prays. . . . He knows all the stars by name, Ps. 147:4; He numbers the hairs of our heads, Matt. 10:30; of all the sparrows 'not one of them is forgotten in the sight of God,' Luke 12:6. . . . How can we make it real to ourselves that He who sustains the milky way, who holds Orion and the Pleiades in his leash, knows us by name? . . . For one thing, we seem too small and insignificant for Him to know. If God cares for each of us, that presupposes in us a degree of value and importance surpassing imagination; and as one considers the vastness of the physical universe, it seems almost unbelievable that individual men can be worth so much. . . . God gives to our lives the dignity of His individual care. The eternal God calls us every one by name. All great pray-ers have lived in the power of this individual relationship with God. . . . Indeed, prayer is the personal appropriation of this faith that God cares for each of us." (*The Meaning of Prayer*, p. 46 ff.)

Hasn't He enough to do in ruling the world and listening to the choirs of the angels praising and lauding Him without ceasing? Can there be anything more wondrous than that? And still it remains true that God is occupied with counting the tears and wanderings of David. . . . Yes, and Moses says to Pharaoh, Ex. 10:26: 'Our cattle also shall go with us; there shall not an hoof be left behind.' Not only are the men, women, and children, and the cattle to leave Egypt, but we shall leave nothing behind, not even one mean hoof. Therefore, say I, not only the mighty, knightly virtues are highly prized by God; . . . but also the meanest hoofs have value in His sight. Yes, and hear what Christ says, who uses stronger language: 'The very hairs of your head are all numbered,' Matt. 10:30, telling us that we shall not lose one hair. Friend, what can be meaner and of less account on the body of man than a hair or nail? But they all are counted, and the Father in heaven is concerned about them. . . . Therefore this is of great, immense comfort to the believer. . . . This is what the Holy Ghost would teach us when He condescends to write about the saints and their petty affairs. . . . It shows that God loves these small affairs." (II:469 ff.) And now apply this to prayer. Luther does so when, continuing the story of Jacob and Rachel, he says: "The Holy Ghost so guides and rules the pious wives that He shows that they are His creatures, whom He would govern not alone according to the spirit but also according to the flesh, that they should call on Him, pray, thank Him for the children, be obedient to their husbands, etc." (II:540.)

We thank God for the trivialities in the Bible. We have learned two important lessons from them. There is still more spiritual wealth contained in them, as we shall see when we (c) study some of the individual passages in question. The moderns spurn them as useless trash. They cannot or will not see the wealth, but "in these trivialities in the Bible there are important lessons for eyes that are able to see. Whoever imagines that these *levicula* are unworthy of the Holy Ghost, knows little about the Holy Ghost or about the Christian life and conduct" (F. Pieper, *op. cit.*, p. 306).

Let us begin with 2 Tim. 4:13. The moderns usually begin with this passage. The Anomoeans of old, the extreme group among the Arians, started it, within the Christian Church.<sup>212</sup> And

212) From the earliest time, when the Church has had to engage in controversies with heretics, both parties recognized the divine authority of the Bible. The Anomoeans were the first to take a different attitude. "Of this party S. Epiphanius tells us, and he mentions it as an offense unheard of in any previous controversy, that, when pressed by arguments from Scripture, its defenders replied, either: 'The apostle made that statement merely as a man,' or: 'Why do you quote the Old Testament against me?' It is generally believed, too, that the objection noticed

R. Seeberg is sure that the Anomoeans were right, on this point. He has Paul's cloak among the first items on the black list. "The theory that the words are inspired is disproved by a cursory glance at the peculiarities of the Biblical writers. Each of them writes in his own style and has his own favorite thoughts and favorite phrases. *Trivial events are mentioned*, for instance, that Paul left his cloak and his books at Troas. Timothy is advised to drink wine instead of water for his stomach's sake. . . ." (*Revelation and Inspiration*, p. 26.)<sup>213</sup> The Anomoeans and Seeberg and the rest insist that the Holy Ghost could not have written these words, seeing that they contain nothing of spiritual value. But it does not require much spiritual insight to discover great wealth in them. Grotius was not a hide-bound dogmatist, but he would not pass by our verse as unworthy of notice. He calls attention to "the poverty of the apostle, who could not afford to lose this cheap thing which he had left in a distant town" as teaching us a valuable lesson. Erasmus was not a hide-bound dogmatist, but he, too, prized this verse highly: "Whatever kind of parchment this was, Timothy knew for what purpose Paul wanted it, and that will serve as a further example of the tireless zeal of the apostle in the work of the Lord. We learn this lesson, too, that even those who were endowed with such great gifts were not relieved of the necessity of using common means for acquiring further knowledge and proficiency; how much more must it be our duty to use all means to retain and increase our knowledge of divine things!" (Quoted by Walther in *Lutherstunde*; see *Proc., Iowa Dist.*, 1892, p. 66.) Is there any spiritual value here? Ask those who, when they suffered hardships and deprivations in the service of the Lord, found

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by St. Jerome in his Preface to the Epistle to Philemon proceeded in like manner from the Anomoeans. This seems to me the earliest allusion to the vulgar objection against Inspiration, founded upon the apostle's words "The cloak which I left at Troas," etc. On such passages the heretics founded the conclusion, as stated in Jerome's Preface: '*Non semper apostolum, nec omnia, Christo in se loquente dixisse.*'" (W. Lee, *The Inspiration of Holy Scripture*, p. 79 f.)

213) R. Seeberg goes on to overhaul the other familiar objections to Verbal Inspiration, the alleged errors and contradictions in the Bible, etc., and pronounces the coroner's verdict: Verbal Inspiration is dead. "The last few decades have witnessed the overthrow of a time-old wall, which for centuries had surrounded and protected the city of Protestant Christendom. Crumbling stones were removed, one after another. . . . It was resolved to remove the wall; some set to work with sighs, others with joy. The wall to which I refer was the *Verbal Inspiration of the Bible*, the conviction that every word of Holy Scripture was given by inspiration of the Holy Spirit. It has disappeared as if in one night. No theologian of any repute now upholds it; it is no longer taught in the schools. . . . The theory of verbal inspiration has fallen. . . . Not only theology but also the Church has abandoned the old theory of verbal inspiration." (*Op. cit.*, pp. 1, 3, 35.)

comfort in the thought that they had for their companion the great apostle. Ask those who, when they found their zeal lagging, drew inspiration from the example of the apostle who, imprisoned and facing trial and death, was concerned with his studies and the needs of the Church. Useless rubbish? A triviality when the Holy Ghost presents to us this picture of a man about to leave this life and still devoting his thoughts and time to the performance of his duties here on earth; subjected by his Lord to great hardship and still using all his energies to serve his dear Lord? L. Gaussen "quotes the noble words of the venerable Haldane on this verse of Paul: 'Here, in this solemn farewell address, of which the verse before us forms a part, the apostle of the Gentiles is exhibited in a situation deeply calculated to affect us. We behold him standing upon the confines of the two worlds—in this world about to be beheaded, as guilty, by the emperor of Rome; in the other world to be crowned, as righteous, by the King of kings; here deserted by men, there to be welcomed by angels; here in want of a cloak to cover him, there to be clothed upon with his house from heaven,'" and adds: "ah, rather than bring forward these passages in order to rob the Scriptures of their infallibility, one should have owned in them that wisdom of God which so often by a single stroke has contrived to give us instructions for which without that long pages would have been necessary." (*Op. cit.*, p. 311.) No, no; "we cannot notice any interruption in this verse of inspiration" (Erasmus), we cannot see and cannot say that the sublime words of verse 1 and the glorious statement of verse 8 were written by inspiration, but that at verse 13 the Holy Ghost withdrew into heaven and left Paul to deal with trifles. Says Gaussen: "Ah, unhappy he who feels not the sublime humanity, the tender grandeur, the provident and divine sympathy, the depth, and the charm of such a mode of instruction! But more to be pitied still, perhaps, is he who declares it to be human because he does not comprehend it!" (*Loc. cit.*)<sup>214</sup>

214) Some readers may have time to read B. Manly on this verse. "Consider the case about this much-complained-of cloak. Here is a man who some thirty years ago renounced ease, fortune, popularity, brilliant prospects—all for Christ, in order to do good to the souls of men. He has had his reward all along from the world and from his nation in stripes, in rod-beatings, in stonings, in imprisonment, in treachery and deadly conspiracy, in unblushing falsehoods, in unassuaged malice. And now his end is near. He is advanced in years, in his last prison, his usefulness accomplished, his course finished. He is just awaiting the sentence of death. Bravely, cheerfully, triumphantly, he writes his last letter to his dearest friend, his son in the Gospel. Not a note quivers, not a word hints at gloom or threat.—But he is shivering with cold. Winter is commencing. He is in want of clothes. And in that prison he is lonely. . . . Only Luke is with him. . . . He has come to stand by Paul to the last. But the good man wants his books, especially certain beloved precious parchments. They would cheer his lonely hours. He needs his cloak; he wants his manuscripts. Is there nothing touching, nothing affecting in this?" (*The Bible Doctrine of Inspiration*, p. 253 f.)



Is 1 Tim. 5:23 a barren waste? And would the Holy Ghost concern Himself with dietetics? R. Haldane (*op. cit.*, p. 172 f.) cultivated this "waste" and harvested eight golden sheaves. For instance: it is the Christian duty of the pastor—and all others—to take care of his health lest he impair his usefulness in the Church.—Use the ordinary means to preserve your health. Substituting prayer for these God-given means is sinful, a form of enthusiasm. Why did Paul not try the faith-cure on Timothy? Because he was not a fanatic. And why did he not restore Timothy and Epaphroditus (Phil. 2:27) to health by means of a miracle? Because he was not a fanatic and because he used his miraculous gift only as the Spirit led him.—"Thine often infirmities," "thy frequent attacks of weakness"—it is well for the servant of God who is handicapped by some ailment to know that his is not an exceptional case.—By anticipation the apostle here condemns the teaching of various sects that the use of wine is sinful. (Pieper: "The apostle here warns us against imposing Prohibition, a law of men, upon the Church as a law of God." *Op. cit.*, p. 305.)—Finally, and mainly, says Haldane, notice the deep concern and tender solicitude of the apostle for his fellow-laborer. The Holy Ghost has set this down as an example for us. Will it be profitable for you to study it?—We are wondering whether this was one of the passages which J. M. Gibson had in mind when he wrote: "If the Bible was all equally the Word of God, why should I not be able to use even the least promising parts of it? It was only by sad experience that I was compelled practically to admit that it was not all on the same level. . . . On the principle of all parts of Scripture being equally inspired one might preach on the Bible for fifty years and never once bring the Gospel in. . . . In my early ministry I wasted many precious hours in trying to make sermons out of quite impossible texts." (*The Inspiration and Authority of Holy Scripture*, pp. 5, 101.)

Or was Dr. Gibson thinking of the salutations in Rom. 16? We love Paul for sending those greetings; we are glad to know that the Holy Ghost recorded these marks of Christian friendship. "But for these affectionate greetings to beloved friends, we should have lacked evidence of the genuine tenderness of the apostle's soul, and we might have been told that Christianity left no room for the virtue of friendship." (B. Manly, *loc. cit.*)<sup>215</sup>

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215) L. Gaussen: "People often object to those greetings which close the epistles of Paul and which, after all, we are told, are of no more importance than those ordinary compliments with which we all usually conclude our letters. Here, then, is nothing unworthy of an apostle, no doubt; but no more is there anything inspired. Here the Holy Ghost has allowed Paul's pen to run on, as we ourselves would allow a clerk to conclude by himself, in the usual form, a letter the first part of which

You do not know what to do with those dry genealogies? Ask the Israelites, who were much interested in knowing that Jesus is the son of David, the son of Abraham, and the Gentiles, who are vitally interested in knowing that Jesus is the son of Adam. Ask the good woman who was much comforted when she found the names of Rahab and of David, great sinners, listed among the ancestors of Christ. (See *Lutheraner*, 1889, p. 84.) Ask the man who was led to repentance when he studied the genealogy in Gen. 5: "And he died," "and he died." (See *Proc., West. Dist.*, 1868, p. 24.) "No part, not even a list of names, could be taken from the Book without doing violence to it or causing loss to us. Nothing must be taken from, or added to, its perfect unity." (J. Bloore, *Alternative Views of the Bible*, p. 152.)<sup>216</sup>

We thank the Holy Spirit for the letter Paul wrote to Philemon, for its contents and for its style, for the courtesy and consideration of Paul, which pleased Philemon and pleased God. "There is a

we had dictated to him. Is it not evident that here the apostle surrenders himself, in the course of sixteen verses, to the purely personal reminiscences of friendship? Was there any need of inspiration for the dry nomenclature of all those persons? These verses require no inspiration." Gausson replies: "We are not afraid to avow that we delight to recall those sixteen verses; for, far from furnishing any ground for objection, they belong to the number of passages in which the divine wisdom recommends itself by itself. . . . Listen first, with what affectionate interest the apostle recommends to the kind regard of the church of Rome that humble woman, who, it would appear, undertook the voyage from Corinth to Rome for the sake of his temporal affairs. . . . Have we not here (in verse 13) the very Christian politeness which he recommends to these same Romans in the 12th chapter of this epistle, verse 10?"—For yet another reason, Gausson points out, this list of names is valuable. "We find Paul taking care to salute by their names all the most eminent among the believers at Rome, even among the women, . . . without saying a single word about its Pope, or about Peter, or about a vicar of Jesus Christ." (*Op. cit.*, pp. 316—321.)

216) One more remark concerning the genealogies — those set down 1 Chron. 1—9. W. Lee points out that, compared with the genealogies of the tribe of Judah and of the house of David, the genealogical notices relative to Simeon, Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh are exceedingly brief, and that these again are followed by the particularly copious genealogies of the Levites, to which the writer comes back once more in chapter 9. Here "these two important features present themselves: (1) We know that on the return from the exile in Babylon all persons were excluded from the sacerdotal office who were unable to prove their Levitical descent (Ezra 2:61 f.; Neh. 7:64 f.). . . . Josephus also tells us that to this chosen family was committed the custody of the Sacred Books. . . . (2) We can at once perceive how the family annals of David's line are inseparably connected with the whole scheme of redemption. . . . 'In the period that followed the Exile the Messianic hopes, awakened by the subjection of the people, were again excited. . . . It must have been a matter of importance for the writer's contemporaries to find collected here the names of the still remaining descendants of the ancient reigning house; who, although little celebrated, were yet to be the ancestors of the longed-for Deliverer. . . .'" (*Op. cit.*, p. 394.) Matthew and Luke, too, knew the importance of this section of Chronicles.

universal admiration for Paul's letter to Philemon. Even the critics have found no fault with it. Luther sees in it 'a masterfully lovely example of love,' like the love of Christ for us. . . . The whole letter is of pure gold." (Lenski's *Interpretation of Philemon*, Introduction.) But Kahnis has a grievance against it. "Would you have us believe that, when the apostle Paul wrote that tender urbane letter to Philemon, tinged, as it is, with some humor [!], he set down what the Holy Ghost dictated to him?" We can easily believe it. We are glad to know that Paul practiced what he preached: "Let your speech be always with grace" (Col. 4:6); and when we ask the Holy Spirit to give us the graces of a Christian gentleman, He will tell us to study this little epistle and mold our speech and behavior on Paul's. And even indulge in pleasantries? What are these pleasantries to which Kahnis objects as beneath the notice of the Holy Ghost? Is it the business language in which Paul clothed his request? "Charge this to me. . . . I myself will duly pay." What is wrong with that? "It is," says Dr. Pieper, "a concrete way of expressing the universal Christian obligation of love: 'Bear ye one another's burden and so fulfil the law of Christ,' Gal. 6:2." (*Op. cit.*, p. 316.) And Paul's fine way of thus reminding Philemon of his duty went to Philemon's heart. Or is it the phrase "Receive him (the runaway slave) as myself"? Paul liked this phrase. See Rom. 16:13: "Salute Rufus and his mother and mine." God likes this phrase. It expresses the precious Christian fellowship, precious because of the blood of Christ. Do you want to call it a pleasantry? Do so, it is pleasant beyond expression, this God-given pleasure of Christian companionship. Or did Kahnis have reference to the play upon words, the paronomasia, of verse 20: "I would like to make a profit off thee in the Lord"? ("Ὀναίμην is a play on the name Onesimus." *Expositor's Greek Testament*.) The thought cannot be objectionable to Kahnis. Paul's profit is his happiness. "His happiness is what he desires, happiness in seeing these two converts and spiritual children of his joined in truest Christian fellowship. A nobler sentence has seldom been written." (Lenski.) But Kahnis objects to the form in which this divine thought is expressed. It smacks too much of wit and humor. Well, our little epistle teaches us that wit is not displeasing to God. God endowed Paul with the happy faculty of stating important truths in a striking, taking way, and Paul here puts it to a spiritual use. "Es ist 'ein feiner, geistlicher' Scherz." And as concerning common, every-day humor, God does not frown upon the laughter of His children. Their innocent merriment and good-natured humor springs from a spiritual source. They are at peace with God; all is well with them; they are in good spirits, in high good humor. They, and they alone, are in a position to enjoy

all earthly gifts of God, not the least of which is humor. And in this innocent mirth they praise God. — To sum up, the Holy Ghost here teaches us how to treat *res civiles ex principiis altioribus* (Bengel). But Kahnis insists that such a way of teaching would be discreditable to the Holy Ghost. Anything to discredit Verbal Inspiration!

Kahnis once more: "The home-spun philosophy of Solomon's Proverbs dictated by the Holy Ghost? There can be no such thing! Will you make of these rather dubious rules of conduct — they must be taken with quite a grain of salt — laws of the Holy Spirit?" G. T. Ladd, R. F. Horton, and others agree with Kahnis.<sup>217</sup> We are not now concerned with the assertion that some of Solomon's maxims are objectionable (the preceding article dealt with such matters) but with the assertion that many of them are so commonplace and platitudinous that the Holy Ghost would not stoop to find a place for them in His Book. We are glad that He did that, glad to hear again that God holds little things, for instance, the homely virtues of the common man, common honesty and common prudence, in high regard. And while it is true that these maxims are taught by human philosophy, — the moral philosopher Marcus Aurelius or Confucius might have written most of them, — we are happy to know that God has put His stamp upon them. If they came to us as the wisdom of a mere Solomon or a mere Confucius, we could not be absolutely sure of their moral worth. Our ethico-religious consciousness, by which Ladd and the others would test Scripture, is not a safe guide. But now we know that they are God's truth. And we shall keep on using them. Everyone of them. This one, too: "Though thou shouldst bray a fool in a mortar, yet will not his foolishness depart from him."

The moderns have little use for the minute portrayal of the domestic affairs of the patriarchs. We have much use for it. We have learned from it that great and comforting truth that God cares

217) G. T. Ladd: Only some of "these wise sayings may be regarded as inspired writing. . . . Others of these proverbs are commonplace and fall even below the average of an Oriental wise saying: such, to our judgment, appear instances like 14:20, 23; 18:23; 19:6, 7; 11:26: 'He that withholdeth corn, the people shall curse him; but blessings shall be upon the head of him that selleth it.'" (*The Doctrine of Sacred Scripture*, I, p. 465 f.) R. F. Horton: "Great indeed is the responsibility of teachers who have led ignorant people to suppose that all the prudential maxims of the Proverbs . . . are to be considered, as a matter of faith, the specific words of God. . . . If these Wisdom Books are merely human philosophy, what place have they in a book of divine revelation? . . . We are able to hear the voice of God speaking to us in such places as 10:29 . . . without perplexing tender consciences by telling them that 27:22 ('Though thou shouldst bray a fool in a mortar among wheat with a pestle, yet will not his foolishness depart from him') is a word of God, that 30:15, 16 is an inspired utterance, or that 31:6, 7 is a precept emanating from the lips that spake the Sermon on the Mount." (*Op. cit.*, pp. 193, 195.)

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for His children and is concerned with their worries, small and great. Now let us learn two ethical lessons. First, when we are performing the common tasks of the household, we are doing truly good works and serving God in holiness. If you are looking for God's saints, you will find them not only in church but also in the kitchen and the stable. Luther on Gen. 29 (Jacob and Rachel): "Thus the holy fathers, I say, are depicted in a rude and carnal way, in the low estate of this life, than which in the mind of the Papists there can be nothing more unclean and worthless. They say that here nothing better is presented to us than that they took wives, begat children, milked the cows and goats, etc., which are altogether worldly and pagan works. . . . God would glorify not only their knightly virtues but also the filthy and mean works, and this description adorns them as with gold and gems." (II:459, 469.) Again, on Gen. 30: "The Holy Ghost, who is the Author of this book, delights to describe, *dass er also spielen und scherzen moege*, these trivial, puerile things, these worthless things. And He sets them down here because He wants them preached about in the Church, for instruction in righteousness. . . . We should glory and rejoice in these common works of the household, since the Holy Ghost condescends to expatiate on them." (II:566, 569.) Secondly, we need to learn the lesson of faithfulness in small things. He is not a faithful servant who is willing to do great things for his master but slights the smaller things. And no man can do great things if he neglects the details. And when the Holy Ghost pays such close attention to insignificant details in the lives of the saints of the Old Testament and of the New Testament, He is teaching us the lesson that minor matters must not be slighted. Pieper: "The Holy Ghost is of the opinion that faithfulness in small matters is decidedly proper and necessary. We read Luke 16:10: 'He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much; and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.'" (*Op. cit.*, p. 304.— "He who is dishonest with a trifle is also dishonest with a large trust.") And so, when the moderns disdainfully turn away from the "trifles and filth" in the Bible, we turn away from the moderns in disgust and listen to Luther, who, with a reverent spirit and a full sense of the spirituality of the Bible, speaks thus concerning the ornaments Rebecca received from Isaac's father: "What is here related is adjudged by reason to be a most carnal and worldly affair; and I myself often wonder why Moses expends so many words on such trifling things, since he was so brief on much more important things. But I do not doubt that the Holy Ghost wanted these things written down for our instruction. For nothing is presented to us in Scripture that is trifling and useless; for all that is written was written for our learning, Rom. 15:4." (I:1712.)

Nor is it unbecfitting the Holy Ghost and out of keeping with the majesty of the Bible that it contains regulations concerning the treatment of the domestic animals ("Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn," Deut. 25:4) and touching the robbing of a bird's nest (Deut. 22:6 f.), and the like. Such regulations have ethical value. See the literature sent out by the humane societies. And they are big with comfort for the worrying Christian. The truth that the Lord preserves "man and beast" (Ps. 36:6) may help us in our deepest spiritual afflictions. (See *Proc., Northern Ill. Dist.*, 1909, p. 43. D. J. Burrell, *Why I Believe the Bible*, p. 29.)<sup>218)</sup> "He giveth to the beast his food and to the young ravens which cry," Ps. 147:9; and shall He forget me? "Behold the fowls of the air; . . . your heavenly Father feedeth them." Learn this comforting lesson: "Are ye not much better than they?" Matt. 6:26. We thank God that regulations concerning such small matters as muzzling the ox and robbing the bird's nest are incorporated in our Bible.

Trivialities in the Bible? There are none. Pastor E. L. Arndt: "Der Liebe ist keine Kleinigkeit zu klein. Eben weil sie so gross ist, kuummert sie sich um alles." (*Proc., Mich. Dist.*, 1895, p. 32.)

Every single word of Scripture is important, every single statement profitable, 2 Tim. 3:16. Yes, and everything bears on Christ, the central, the one theme of Scripture. Luther: "So, then, the entire Scripture is throughout nothing but Christ, God's and Mary's Son; all has to do with this Son that we might know Him." (III: 1959.) To be sure, not everything set down in Scripture is of the same importance.<sup>219)</sup> Nor do we in the present state of our knowl-

218) H. E. Fosdick on God's care for the whole and for every part of His creation, for beast and for man: "When one believes in God at all, he must believe that God has a purpose, for the universe as a whole. . . . 'Nothing walks with aimless feet,' says Tennyson. 'There are no accidents with God,' says Longfellow. . . . Can God have a purpose for the whole and not for the parts? . . . God calls us everyone by name. As an Indian poet sings: 'The subtle anklets that ring on the feet of an insect when it moves are heard of Him.' . . . Of course, it is not God's will that 'one of these little ones should perish,' Matt. 18:14." (*The Meaning of Prayer*, p. 51 f.) Why this same man should ridicule those who believe that "nothing in the Scriptures can be trivial" is beyond our comprehension.

219) Must we bring evidence to show that the Bible-theologians do not say that? This is what they say: "Whilst everything in the Scriptures is for man, it does not follow that every part is equally valuable to every man. The Bible is framed with reference to the average want of a whole race. Everything in it is there for somebody, although it may not be specially meant for you. And yet the parts which seem to the individual least adapted to his wants, may have even for him a priceless value; they may inspire him with a sense of new necessities, may enlarge his mind and heart and lead him out of himself in a wider sphere." (Krauth, *The Bible a Perfect Book.*) It is not our fault that J. M. Gibson "wasted many precious hours in trying to make sermons

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edge see the importance of every statement the Bible makes. Nor do we always see the full importance of every statement. The Jews saw the importance of Deut. 25:4. It taught them humane-ness. But there is more to it. See 1 Cor. 9:9, 10 and 14. The apparently trivial command concerning the ox is "written for our sakes." God is taking care not only for oxen. In Deut. 25:4 the Holy Ghost is impressing upon the Church its duty to provide for its ministers.<sup>220</sup> Go slow! This and that passage which you are about to cast on the rubbish-pile may contain great wealth.

out of quite impossible texts." There are many verses in the Bible which are there for a very good purpose but not for the purpose of making sermons out of them. (We are, of course, not referring to texts like 2 Tim. 4:13.)

220) Why, this insignificant little passage even bears on the weighty matter of Inspiration. Is the Old Testament the inspired Word of God? No doubt of that. 2 Tim. 3:16 says it plainly. But is the New Testament, too, the inspired Word of God? The cavilers say you cannot prove it from 2 Tim. 3:16. But "St. Paul puts the New Testament on a level as God's Word with the Old Testament: 'For the Scripture saith: "Thou shalt not muzzle," etc., and: "The laborer is worthy of his hire," 1 Tim. 5:18' — putting a text from Luke, 10:7 on a level as Scripture with one from Deut., 25:4." . . . (H. M'Intosh, *Is Christ Infallible and the Bible True*, p. 402.) "It may be observed that the apostle here (1 Tim. 5:18) combines the Old and the New Testament under the title γραφή when addressing the same person to whom he subsequently writes: πάσα γραφή θεόπνευστος, 2 Tim. 3:16." (W. Lee, *op. cit.*, pp. 111, 240.) — A second question answered by other triviality-passages is: Was Inspiration a mechanical process? "The very passages just mentioned [1 Tim. 5:23 and 2 Tim. 4:13], which seem so trivial in themselves, are of prime importance for the doctrine of inspiration. They prove that the apostles were not dead machines under inspiration, that the Holy Ghost did not, in the process of inspiration, ignore the personal and brotherly relationship of the holy writers but operated with it in the inspirational act." (A. Hoenecke, *Ev. Luth. Dog.*, I, p. 350.) — R. Haldane calls attention to still another point. If the holy writers had not written by inspiration but out of their own wisdom, various sections of their writings would certainly have taken on a different form. "Would the combined genius of all the sages of the world have led them to tell the story of the Creation in one chapter and of the building of the Tabernacle in thirteen, as Moses actually did? . . . The world was created for the Church. By the Church the glory of God is made known, Eph. 3:10. . . . The Church (of which the Tabernacle was a type), where God is truly worshiped, is more precious and of more importance in the sight of God than all the rest of the world." (*Op. cit.*, p. 203 f.) — One more point, contributed by Dr. Th. Graebner: Similarly the topographical notes in the Pentateuch and in Joshua have been characterized as having only paltry worth and of being entirely insignificant so far as spiritual values might be concerned. Bible students of better discernment have found in these long lists of place names much to instruct and confirm their faith. It was Major Conder who in his *Tent Work in Palestine* announced that "of all the long catalog in Joshua, there is scarce a village, however insignificant, which does not retain its desolate heap or modern hovels with the Arab equivalent to the old names." Any modern Bible atlas, as that of G. A. Smith, confirms this tribute to the minute exactness of the Old Testament. A closer study of the original confirms this impression of an exact contemporary record. Sometimes, as in Josh. 16,

Not a single statement made by any of the holy writers is useless, worthless. We believe in Verbal Inspiration, and we are not going to say that the Holy Ghost, the real Author of Holy Scripture, is a hack writer, merely concerned with filling the prescribed space. (Luther's phrase: "Der Heilige Geist ist kein Narr noch Trunkenbold, der ein Tuettel, geschweige ein Wort sollte vergeblich reden." III:1895.) Be sure that every phrase and every clause is there for a purpose. The Author knows why He wants to tell the story in just that way.<sup>221)</sup>

And what is the ultimate purpose of that particular story and of every narrative set down in Scripture? Luther tells us, as St. Paul told us before Luther: "Christ is the center of the circle, and all stories in Holy Scripture, viewed aright, have to do with Christ." (VII:1924.) See Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 2:2. Everything in the Bible is of great importance. We have said all that needs to be said about the distinction between lesser and greater and greatest importance. We are now interested in stressing the fact that the all-important story of Christ lends its weight to all the rest. "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox"—God cares for us because of Christ! "Use a little wine"—Paul's concern for Timothy sprang from the love of Christ!—There are no trivialities in the Bible.<sup>222)</sup>

The moderns do not like to hear that, will not say it. But Paul liked to say it. Rom. 15:4! Luther liked to say it. What Paul said of the prophets, Luther said of Paul: "It is impossible that there is a single letter in Paul" (not even in 1 Tim. 5:23 and

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both the old name and the newer name are listed. There are many technical words, used by ancient surveyors and by none else. Hence we have so many references to points of the compass, to drawing lines, to sides, shoulders, corners, edges, ravines, cliffs, ascents, ends, fountains, valleys, and stones. Many of these technical points are more clear in the Revised Version than in the Authorized, all testifying to the truth that the story of God's people is firmly anchored in the soil of authentic history.

221) "And he, casting away his garment, rose and came to Jesus," Mark 10:50. Origen on this passage: "Shall we venture to say that these words have been inserted in the Gospel without a purpose? I do not believe that one jot or tittle of the divine instruction is in vain." (*Comm. in Matt. 16:12.* — See W. Lee, *op. cit.*, p. 88.)

222) R. Seeberg does not know Luther too well. In the chapter "Luther's Views of the Bible," written to prove Luther's so-called "liberal" attitude towards the Bible, we read: "When Luther refers to Scripture, he is thinking of the Gospel of Christ and His kingdom, of sin and grace, in short, of the religious content of Scripture, of 'Christ and the Christian faith.' . . . Everything else in the Scriptures is for Luther comparatively indifferent." (*Op. cit.*, p. 18.) What has Luther just been saying about all stories having to do with Christ? In the light of that statement we shall say that Luther did not read anything in the Bible without thinking of the Gospel of Christ, of sin and grace, of "Christ and the Christian faith"; for Luther the entire content of the Bible was religious, everything in Scripture was to him highly important.



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2 Tim. 4:13) "which the entire Church should not follow and observe." (XIX:20.) We shall keep on saying with H. E. Jacobs: "Would you say, then, that some things in Scripture are unimportant and may be readily surrendered? By no means. Even the accidents of Scripture, if we may so speak, are important in their own place. Chrysostom: *In sacris Scripturis nil est super-vacuum*" (*A Summary of the Christian Faith*, p. 282), and with Prof. J. P. Meyer: "All Scripture, even in the most casual remark, is given to make us wise unto salvation. As highly as we prize our salvation, so sacred must be to us every word of our God." (*Theol. Quartalschr.*, Jan., 1942, p. 62.) We heartily subscribe to Thesis XVII of Walther's *The Lutheran Church the True Visible Church*: "The Ev. Lutheran Church accepts the whole written Word of God [as God's Word], deems nothing in it superfluous or of little worth, but everything needful and important." (See the discussion of this thesis in *Proc., West. Dist.*, 1868, p. 18 ff.) We thank God for the "trivialities" in the Bible.

The moderns are unwilling and unable to do that. They take the position that God—or whoever the author of the Bible may be—would have produced a better book if he had omitted these trivialities. And they are proud of their position. They feel superior to the obscurantists who still treasure every bit of the Bible, every jot and tittle. We shall have to tell them that they have nothing to be proud of. There are two reasons for that.

First, it is not a mark of high intelligence to scoff at small things. It is only the fool who feels that bigness is the measure of importance. The philosopher knows that great events often—perhaps always—originate in small things. The scientist knows that grandeur is built up on specks; the painter employs slight touches to create beauty. Why do we use the microscope? The *Watchman-Examiner* (Jan. 16, 1941) says: "The microscope tells us that bigness is but the multiplication of littleness. . . . The gigantic suns and nebulae of outmost space have their laws, and so also do the microscopically visible crystals of the inorganic world and the microscopically invisible electrons of the atom. The mathematics of the telescopic world are the mathematics of the microscopic world. . . . As Browning says: 'We find that great things are made of little things. And little things go lessening till at last comes God behind them.' The great canvases of the sky, more beautifully colored than any Rembrandt and changing with each passing moment, gladden the eye only because of the possibilities of beauty that inhere in the tiniest of things. . . . Now, it is certainly characteristic of the saints not to regard bulk as a criterion of value." And that is not a specifically Christian

philosophy. The veriest tyro in science knows it.<sup>223</sup>) Not only the Bible but also common sense teaches what Booth Tarkington heard in his boyhood days from his uncle: "I don't know anything at all that wouldn't be important if we could get at the whole truth of it. We spend a great deal of our lives in excitements over what we think are the big things, whereas, if we carefully examined what we pass over as negligible trifles, we might improve our conceptions of the universe and consequently our conduct and contentment." To all of which the moderns say yea and amen; and then they display their black list of trivialities in the Bible and argue against Verbal Inspiration on the principle that God would not concern Himself with trifles. There is a lack of acumen here.

So much in general. Now a few particulars. Most men hold that faithfulness in small matters is a great virtue. No business man would entrust an important matter to a clerk who pays no attention to details. And the general who overlooks "trifles" is guilty not only of stupidity but also of a moral wrong. One does not have to be a Christian to know that. "Even the unbelieving world," says Pieper, "when it uses its reason, pays tribute to this virtue; it recognizes the great man by his trustworthiness in small matters." (*Op. cit.*, p. 304.) But when the moderns come across 2 Tim. 4:13, they forget to use their reason and insist that it would be unworthy of the Holy Ghost to concern Himself about such trifles and to record Paul's worry about those few books and parchments.<sup>224</sup>)

The moderns like to read *The Cotter's Saturday Night*. We do not blame them for that. In fact, one who is unable to see the beauty and grandeur of this portrayal of the simple, happy, godly life of the common folk—"the lowly train in life's sequestered scene—the toil-worn cotter frae his labor goes—And, 'Let us worship God,' he says, with solemn air—the cottage leaves the palace far behind"—would be considered an uncultured boor. Where, then, does he stand who turns up his nose at the Biblical

223) The scientists tell us: "Inside any common pin as marvelous an activity is going on as ever was present among the stars. Here are electrons so many and so small that the race in a million years could not count them, and yet not one electron touches another." (H. E. Fosdick, *op. cit.*, p. 48.) We cannot vouch for the exactness of this statement, but it proves that the scientists insist that infinitesimal things play an important part in the universe.

224) A short digression will not be out of place here: Philippi (quoted in Pieper, *loc. cit.*) in speaking of "the books, parchments, and cloak, and the wine mentioned 1 Tim. 5:23, which always raises the ire of the critics," remarks: "We should not be surprised if our modern naturalists, who set such great store . . . by books, especially their own, as being absolutely necessary for the welfare of the human race, would one of these days make a complete about face and rate *only these passages* as inspired."

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story of Abraham and Sarah, of Isaac and Rebecca, of Jacob and Rachel? — He may say that Burns's classic is all right but that it would be unseemly for the Holy Ghost to write about the domestic life of the patriarchs. We shall take care of that in a moment.

Again, the moderns do not display much intelligence when they are willing to accept the story of the human birth of the Son of God, but are offended at the idea of God dealing in His Book with human trifles. We are now speaking of the conservatives among the moderns. They believe with all their heart that God condescended to be born of a woman and to take upon Himself the weaknesses of the human race. But they cannot bring themselves to believe that God would condescend to *speak* of human weaknesses and trifles. God can do the greater, but must not do the lesser! These moderns are taking a self-contradictory position. They are unreasonable.<sup>225)</sup>

And so are the liberals among the moderns. Let us now reason with *them*. They do not believe in the Incarnation. But they do believe in Creation. Those among them who believe in a personal God will praise Him for creating not only the stars but also the grain of sand and the snowflake. They admire the wisdom which creates and preserves the life of the little birds and the lowliest insects and utilizes them for the preservation of the human race. They resent the idea that their God looks only at big things and would debase Himself by caring for the petty things on earth. H. E. Fosdick does not hesitate one moment to write these words: "So far as physical nature has any testimony to bear on the matter at all, she says: "There is nothing too great for the Creator to accomplish, and nothing too small for Him to attend to. The microscopic world is His as well as the stars." (*Op. cit.*, p. 48.) On this point they are in full accord with the Bible-theologian. They will say with Philippi: "Was ist vor Gott klein, vor dem nichts gross ist?" But as soon as the question of Verbal, Plenary Inspiration comes up, they completely reverse themselves and indignantly declare: God could not have recorded these trivialities found in the Bible; God would not debase Himself by writing

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225) "He who talks as though it were beneath the dignity of the Holy Ghost to refer to such small matters as eating, drinking, clothing, etc., in the Scriptures must have completely forgotten that the eternal Son of God did not consider it beneath His dignity to assume a true human nature from the Virgin Mary into His divine person, to be wrapped in swaddling-clothes and laid in a manger. He who stands in adoration before the miracle in the manger at Bethlehem will not consider it strange, but altogether in order, that mention is made in the Scriptures, which are *God's Word*, of *human trivialities*." (Pieper, *op. cit.*, p. 307.)

about muzzling the ox and having Paul speak about the diet of Timothy. — These moderns are unreasonable men.<sup>226</sup>)

Indeed, our moderns are deficient in the knowledge of the ways of the divine wisdom. Let them study the great truth revealed 1 Cor. 1:23 ff. The wisdom of God — which is foolishness to the Greeks — chooses foolish and weak and base things to accomplish His great purposes. In the words of A. G. Rudelbach: "How many thousand times since the days of the Anomoeans has the cloak which Paul left at Troas been trotted out as yielding one of the strongest proofs against Verbal Inspiration; this cloak, think the modern unbelievers, can do greater things than the mantle of Elijah! . . . But as the unfathomable love of the Son took upon Himself the deepest humiliation, so the Holy Ghost also deeply humbled Himself: the place of His self-humiliation is Holy Scripture; He did not disdain to make what is the meanest and lowliest in the eyes of men the object of divine presentation and preservation. . . . It is of a piece with what the Apostle Paul describes as the *plan of God* in His entire revelation, that 'He hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise,' 1 Cor. 1:27. This standard the wise men of the world know not; so they naturally pounce upon these things which seem petty to them and do not see that their occurrence in Scripture militates against the wisdom of the divine plan as little as the circumstance that we do not know what useful purpose certain animals serve permits us to doubt the wise design in creation." And these moderns will not permit the Holy Ghost to demean Himself by having Paul mention his threadbare cloak in an inspired passage! (*Zeitschrift fuer die ges. Luth. Theol. u. Kirche*, 1840, Erstes Quartalheft, p. 8 f.)

A fatuity of another sort is committed by those who argue that, since Paul of himself knew all about the forgotten mantle and parchments and his need of them, and of the medicinal value of a little wine, 1 Tim. 5:23 and 2 Tim. 4:13 were not written by in-

226) G. Stoeckhardt on 2 Tim. 4:13: "May the Holy Ghost not speak to men of small things as well as of great things, of seemingly unimportant as well as important matter, just as He chooses? Shall we prescribe to Him what He may say and how to say it and teach Him what befits Him and what does not? In that case we ought to find it equally objectionable that the great God, infinite in majesty, created the worms and midges." (*Lehre und Wehre*, 1886, p. 287.) R. Haldane: "1 Tim. 5:23 and 2 Tim. 4:13, they think, are too unimportant for inspiration. Such a conclusion, even if we did not see the importance, is altogether unreasonable. On that basis we would have to discard many other sections of Scripture whose purpose and meaning we do not understand, but that would be as absurd and irreverent as the contention of a presumptuous infidel that the worm or fungus cannot be God's creature because they seem too insignificant to him, or that the entire earth could not have been created by God because it contains so much desert and unproductive land, for which he can see no use." (*Op. cit.*, p. 166.)

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piration of God. O. Bensow: "It would be preposterous to look upon these passages as having been dictated by the Holy Ghost. Paul did not need the help of the Holy Ghost in giving these counsels and commissions. If the Holy Ghost had dictated these passages, He would have done something entirely superfluous." (*Die Bibel—das Wort Gottes*, p. 27.) Kahnis has the same notion, when he says: "Since the Proverbs of Solomon are based not on revelation but on experience," what a foolish thing it is to present this homespun philosophy as being dictated by the Holy Ghost! Similarly G. T. Ladd, when he argues against Verbal Inspiration by pointing out that some of these Proverbs are "commonplace," known to everybody. Obsessed by the notion that only those sections of Scripture can be the inspired Word of God which contain revelations of unknown matters, Kahnis thinks he has clinched the argument against Verbal Inspiration when he asks: "If Luke the Evangelist wrote down only what the Holy Ghost dictated, why does he adduce tradition and his own research?" (*Op. cit.*) Similarly Seeberg: "If Luke knew that the Holy Spirit would direct him, why did he make the careful study of which he tells us chapter 1:3?" (*Op. cit.*, p. 30.) The entire argument of these men is, as Gausson puts it: "These verses require no inspiration." But therein they completely miss the point of the whole argument about Verbal Inspiration. The verbal-inspirationists do not say—as the Bible does not say—that everything that is written by inspiration had to be supernaturally revealed. All that the Bible says is that whatever a holy writer wrote he wrote by direction of the Holy Ghost and in the words chosen by Him. The moderns should learn the distinction between revelation and inspiration. But they are everlastingly confusing the two concepts.<sup>227)</sup> And, consequently, much of their fighting against Verbal Inspiration is aimed at a straw man. They need not tell us that Paul did not need a divine revelation in order to write about his cloak. What they should prove is that the statement of the Bible that *all* Scripture is given by inspiration refers only to the revelation of unknown matters.—When the moderns once learn the basic difference between revelation and inspiration, they will drop the argument under consideration.<sup>228)</sup>

227) Look up the statement by Horton quoted above: There is no divine revelation in the command to bring the cloak; it is a travesty of inspiration to maintain that Paul was the mouthpiece of God in giving the fatherly counsel to Timothy.

228) Dr. Joseph Stump (U. L. C.) is one of those who hold that revelation and inspiration cover the same ground. "Inspiration has to do with matters of religion and the communication of the divine revelation. . . . The holy writers produced (by inspiration) a correct and inerrant record of God's revelation of Himself to men. . . . The Bible is the inspired record of all that God has supernaturally revealed to men con-

Some moderns use more diplomatic language. Instead of declaring that the secular sections (including the triviality passages) are not inspired, they say that some parts of the Bible are more inspired and others less inspired. This is the famous degrees-in-inspiration theory. Some passages are the result of the application of the full power of inspiration; others — mainly the triviality passages — got only a slight touch of it. A classical statement to this effect is by A. D. C. Twisten (disciple of Schleiermacher), who called it an "excess of the mechanical theory" to extend the exercise of the divine influence in an *equal degree* "to all and everything in Scripture," to "history" as well as to "doctrine." (See W. Lee, *op. cit.*, p. 335.) C. Gore: "A new science of historical criticism has arisen, . . . which does not seek to diminish our reverence for the Scriptures, but it would have us recognize grades of inspiration." (*The Doctrine of the Infallible Book*, p. 61.) Dr. H. E. Jacobs: "There are few theorists who would assign the same degree of inspiration to the statistics and rolls in Ezra or Chronicles as to those parts of the New Testament for whose reading the dying ask when all other earthly words have lost their interest." (See F. Bente, *American Lutheranism*, II, p. 220.) Delitzsch calls it "abgestufte Geisteswirkung." We heard J. M. Gibson declare that the Bible "is not equally the Word of God — it is not all on the same level." And O. Bensow specifically mentions Paul's forgotten cloak when he says that the "breath of the Spirit" is not the same in all passages (*op. cit.*, p. 46 ff.). Three remarks on this: (1) There are degrees in the importance of the

cerning the way of salvation." (*The Christian Faith*, p. 318 f.) We are calling attention to Dr. Stump's view at the present time because of the peculiar treatment he gives to 2 Tim. 4:13 and 1 Tim. 5:23. "This inspiration permitted the Apostle Paul to include in his epistle matters of a purely personal nature, such as the request to Timothy to bring his cloak from Troas and his personal advice to Timothy regarding his health. His inspiration had to do with matters of religion and the communication of the divine revelation; and he was none the less an inspired man even though he was *forgetful enough* to leave his cloak at Troas and concerned enough about Timothy's health to give him dietetic advice, which *may or may not be regarded as good advice by modern medical authorities*. The inspired nature of what he wrote is not affected by such purely personal statements. These things belong to the human side of the Scriptures. . . . The purpose of Paul's inspiration was to give us an infallible knowledge of the revealed will of God." (*Loc. cit.*) The moderns usually treat these Timothy-passages as mere trivialities. Dr. Stump brings up something new. He speaks of Paul's occasional forgetfulness as though that affected the inspiration of the passage and of the possibility of Paul being wrong in his dietetics, which mistake of course could not be charged to the Holy Ghost. We are submitting this merely as a curiosity and shall not discuss it further. — The idea underlying Stump's theory — that occasional mistakes in the Bible do not affect its trustworthiness in religious matters — will be discussed in the next article.

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individual passages of the Bible. We are agreed on that with the most liberal of the moderns. But we know of no law of human thought which requires that degrees of importance presuppose degrees of inspiration. (2) Do not ask us Bible-Christians to assign anything less to the triviality passages than full inspiration, full trustworthiness. We have found much comfort and much wholesome admonition in them. Don't tell us that the Holy Ghost had little, if anything, to do with that. (3) The moderns get into trouble with their intelligence when they try to reconcile this degree theory with 2 Tim. 3:16 and the other passages of the same import. We assume that they would count this passage as one written under the full influence of inspiration. But it declares that "all Scripture" is inspired. It adds no restriction to the effect that some Scripture is fully inspired, other Scripture less fully, hardly perceptibly. Have done with this nonsense. If the Holy Ghost spoke a word, He spoke it. He did not half speak it. Speaking John 3:16 in a distinct voice, did He mumble when He came to 2 Tim. 4:13? The moderns will, of course, say that they understand the word "inspiration" in 2 Tim. 3:16 to mean simply elevation of the mind, illumination or something like that. We tell them that then they are making the apostle speak nonsense. "The mind of all Scripture is enlightened"? Using our intelligence, we know that 2 Tim. 3:16 states that every word of Scripture was spoken, written by God. And common intelligence protests against the idea that some of these words were fully spoken, some only half spoken.

There is a second reason why the moderns cannot pride themselves on their treatment of the triviality passages. From the point of intelligence their boasting is vain. But there is something worse. When men say that God could not have written these passages, they are doing a wicked thing. Criticizing the Bible, they are judging God. They presume to judge God by their own standards of propriety. They are telling God that He permitted things to go into His Book which jar their refined sensibilities. They consider it their sacred duty to improve that Book which God declared perfect. They insist that the Bible will be a better book after they have chiseled off its imperfections and given it the finishing touch. It is a wicked thing, this damnable pride, which induces creatures to judge and condemn the ways of the Creator. It is a wicked thing when men, weak in intelligence, call in question the wisdom of God in giving His Church the Bible as He gave it. Are they indeed judging God? What else are they doing when they tell us that it was proper for Burns to write *The Cotter's Saturday Night* but that such a thing would not befit God? That it was all right for Confucius to set down his maxims but that these commonplaces have no place in God's Book? They are certainly laying down rules for the guidance of the Holy Ghost.

Are they really judging God? They will tell us that what they are criticizing are the words of men which somehow or other found their way into God's Book; if the Timothy passages and Proverbs, etc., were really God's Word, they would keep silence. — No, no, you are deceiving yourselves. In the first place, it is, all of it, God's Word and remains God's Word despite your refusal to acknowledge it as such. And, in the second place, on your own presentation of the matter, you are judging God. You are holding Him accountable for the "trivialities" in the Bible. You say that God directed Paul to give the Church the great Timothy epistles. You say — and you are right in saying it — that, when Paul wrote: "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners" (1 Tim. 1:15) and: "He called us with an holy calling," etc. (2 Tim. 1:9), he wrote by inspiration of God. But then you say, when Paul came to the matter of the cloak and the wine, the Holy Ghost lessened His inspiration or even suspended it. However, we point out to you that the Holy Ghost in no wise intimated that His operation was now ceasing and that it was only Paul who was now speaking, writing. You are the men who are saying that the Holy Ghost could not have continued speaking. You are indeed laying down rules for the Holy Ghost to observe.

Or will you say that there was no need for the Holy Ghost to mark off the objectionable passages, since God knew well enough that in time theologians would arise in the Church whose advanced knowledge and refined sensibilities would at once detect those flaws, re-edit the Bible, supply the inspiration mark for 1 Tim. 1:15 and 2 Tim. 1:9, but caution against 1 Tim. 5:23 and 2 Tim. 4:13 and thus give the Church a perfect Book? Do not say that. It would be the height of overweening self-conceit. — The truth of the matter is, of course, that long before the moderns came on the scene, pagans and infidels had already taken the Bible to task for these "improprieties." The moderns have not improved on the pagans.

And the conservative moderns are not much better than the liberal moderns. The liberals are saying that all of the Bible is merely man's word; it would not befit the great God to speak to us in lowly human words — and the conservatives chide the liberals for such a judgment. And now they are doing the very same thing. They say it would not have befitted God to write *some* of the things in the Bible.

Men who are offended at the triviality passages should realize that their attitude springs from wicked pride and constitutes a *crimen laesae maiestatis divinae*. We repeat here the solemn warning given by L. Gaussen: "You do not, it seems, comprehend the divinity, the propriety, the wisdom, the *utility* of such or such



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a passage of the Scriptures; and on that account you deny their inspiration. . . . Who are you? 'Be not rash with thy mouth. God is in heaven and thou upon earth,' Eccl. 5:2. Who art thou, then, who wouldst judge the oracles of God?" (*Op. cit.*, p. 204.)

Such an attitude outrages the Christian sensibilities. It goes against the grain of the Christian mind to conceive of Holy Scripture as a mixture of important and trifling matters. With that observation Hollaz closes his discussion of the *levicula*. In answer to the objection that "Scripture contains matters of such little importance that they are not worthy of divine inspiration, e. g., *baculus Jacobi*, Gen. 32:10, *penula Pauli*, 2 Tim. 4:13," he points out first that, since God considered such insignificant things worth creating, He certainly considered them worth mentioning in His inspired Book, and, secondly: "*Nemo interim Deum reverenter colens in Scripturis pro levi aut vili habebit, quod sapientissimo Dei consilio ipsis est insertum.*" (*Examen Theo. Acroa. Prol.*, p. 93 f.) Do you hold God in high reverence? Do you adore His wisdom? Then you will not treat that as trifling, vile, and worthless which was set down in Scripture by His all-wise counsel.

We, too, are apt to stumble when we read these Biblical "trivialities." Let us heed the warning of Luther: "I beg and faithfully warn every pious Christian not to take offense at the simple language and ordinary stories which he frequently finds here. Let him not doubt that, however mean it all appears, these are the very words, deeds, judgments, and history of the high majesty and wisdom of God; for this is the Scripture which makes fools of all the wise and prudent and is open only to babes and fools, as Christ says Matt. 11:25. Away with your overweening conceit! Think of Scripture as the loftiest and noblest of holy things, as the richest lode, which will never be mined out, so that you may find the divine wisdom which God places before you in such foolish and mean form. He does this in order to quench all pride. Here you will find the swaddling-clothes and the manger in which Christ lies, to which the angels directed the shepherds, Luke 2:11. Mean and poor are the swaddling-clothes, but precious is the treasure, Christ, lying in them." (XIV:3, 4.)

"Blessed Lord, who hast caused *all Holy Scripture* to be written for our learning, grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience and comfort of Thy holy Word we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which Thou hast given us in our Savior, Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost ever, one God, world without end." (*The Lutheran Hymnal*, p. 14.)

(To be continued)

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