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

Th. Engelder
Concordia Seminary, St. Louis

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marriage ceremony without giving the couple some Christian, pastoral advice in the shape of a well-prepared address. In many places the address has been dropped because "The people will not listen anyhow," or "because it takes too long." In many cases the form has been cut, the section concerning the troubles of the married estate has been deleted in order not to shock the sensibilities of the blushing bride, the "obey" often is omitted, and so it happens that the parade of the bridal party to and from the altar frequently takes longer than the ceremony itself. This is a mistake and constitutes a lack of pastoral guidance.

It may be well to mention that one of our pastors tries to solve the problem by offering courses of instruction on marital matters to the parents of his church, so that they may be better qualified to deal with their young people at home. Another pastor makes it a practice to write to all young couples on the occasion of their first wedding anniversary reminding them of their marriage vows, marriage obligations, and marital blessings. One of our Sunday schools gives the book *Why Was I Not Told* by Marquardt to all high school graduates in that Sunday school. Other pastors have sought to solve the problem of postwedding adjustment by clubs for the newly married where marriage problems could be rather freely discussed.

In conclusion it may be said that it does not make much difference whether the pastor uses one form of guidance or another, whether he deals with the young people in groups or whether he would rather deal with them as individuals, but all evidence points to the fact that all Christian parents, pastors, and teachers should give more regular, more systematic, more planned guidance to our youth in this important matter which so definitely affects their whole life, both physical and spiritual, and at times, because of abuse or sinful misuse, even jeopardizes their soul's salvation.

St. Louis, Mo.

ELFRED L. ROSCHKE

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

(Continued)

VI

The indignation of the moderns reaches white heat when they are asked to receive every word of Scripture as inerrant and authoritative. If Verbal Inspiration means that every word of Scripture must be received as God's word, with unquestioning faith and obedience—and it means just that—they will have

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none of it. That is their strongest objection to Verbal Inspiration, and they express their abhorrence of it with the frightful word *legalistic*.

Let H. E. Fosdick tell us why he can no longer believe in Verbal Inspiration: "We used to think of Inspiration as a procedure which produced a book guaranteed in all its parts against error and containing from beginning to end a unanimous system of truth. . . . When Josiah swore the people to a solemn league and covenant, or when Ezra pledged the nation's loyalty to the keeping of the Levitical Law, the Bible which thus was coming into being, was primarily a book of divine requirements. It told the people what they ought to do. . . . One might have expected the Christians to break with this legalistic employment of Scripture," but "when the New Testament was added to the Old and the whole Book was bound up into unity by a theory of inerrant inspiration, Christians used the whole Book as the Jews had used part of it; it was a divine oracle to tell men how to live." (*The Modern Use of the Bible*, pp. 30, 236 ff.) R. Seeberg thanks God for the "fall of Verbal Inspiration." "The wall to which I refer was the *Verbal Inspiration of the Bible*, the conviction that every word of Holy Scripture was given by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to the authors of the Old and New Testaments. . . . Every single word was regarded as of legal validity, and precisely on that account every single word was said to be given to man by the inspiration of God. It was not interests specifically Christian, but the theories and ideas of later Judaism which produced this 'old' theory of inspiration." (*Revelation and Inspiration*, pp. 1, 32.) *The Lutheran Church Quarterly* thus voices its protest: "It is of course no secret that Verbal Inspiration is not taught in some of the seminaries of the United Lutheran Church. . . . What results 'when the Word of God is identified with the words of the Scriptures' is 'a legalistic and an atomistic conception of the Scriptures, far more congenial to Calvinism than to Lutheranism.'" (1937, p. 195.) "Scriptural theology will not set up a deified Book in the place of the deified Church of Roman Catholicism nor hold to legalistic, unhistorical, and unpsychological theories of its inspiration. . . . It will not quibble over such questions as whether the Bible is the Word of God or contains the Word of God." (1934, p. 114. By Prof. T. A. Kantonen.) "Ockham regarded the Bible as an object of faith. In the Bible he found the positive expression of the will of God. Only Scripture could authoritatively establish what the content of faith was to be. The Bible was inspired, word for word! Ockham, it is true, surrendered his belief in canon law and in the legal authority of the Pope. But there was nothing particularly evangelical in this surrender; for he substituted an

authority which was just as legalistic — the Bible." (Our italics.) "The Bible became a legal (not evangelical) authority." (1940, p. 149.) "There is a spirit of legalism that pervades many of the ranks of Midwestern Lutherans, a kind of approach to the truth of God which insists on 'book, chapter, and verse' for all the 'eye-blinks' of life and must be undergirded by the authority of print on paper for every conscious breath in order to be assured of full salvation. In its last analysis this resolves itself into a conception of the Holy Scriptures as a mechanical work of the Holy Spirit, inerrant in every word and detail in their original form." (1939, p. 26.) "An atomistic or legalistic attitude results in trying to make specific New Testament words and sayings binding as external forms on the Church." (1940, p. 16.) J. P. Smyth is of the same mind: "Thus we find, in the first step of our investigation as to how God inspired the Bible, that He did not inspire it in the rigid, literal manner known as verbal inspiration. . . . Verbal inspiration is now fast being thrown to the moles and bats with the rest of the world's old, discarded mind-lumber." (*How God Inspired the Bible*, p. 118.) One more pronouncement to show how strongly the moderns feel on this matter. G. Wehrung: "Die Aufrichtung der Schrift als einer formal gueltigen Autoritaet genuegt also nicht. . . . Die gesetzliche Buchreligion. . . . Die Vorstellung einer mechanischen Inspiration ist auch schon auf juedischem Boden heimisch. Diesen intellektualistisch-gesetzlichen Schriftgebrauch duerfen wir heute als grundsaeztlich ueberwunden ansehen." (*Geschichte und Glaube*, pp. 301, 305.) The moderns feel that Verbal Inspiration implies "a legalistic authority of Scripture" and that "that is unworthy of [Christian] theology." (That is Dr. Pieper's diagnosis of the case. *Chr. Dog.*, I, p. 230.)

"Legalistic authority of Scripture" — could that mean that the moderns refuse to receive some of the Scripture statements or all of them as binding, authoritative? Hear G. Aulén: "Es ist nicht moeglich, alle einzelnen biblischen Aussagen als gleichwertige Gottesworte zu betrachten. . . . Es ist selbstverstaendlich, dass eine Theorie, die jeder einzelnen Bibelaussage absolute goettliche Autoritaet zuerkennt, mit innerer Notwendigkeit den Blick fuer die verschiedenen Richtungen in der Bibel truebt und zu einer Verdunklung des eigentlich Christlichen fuehren muss. . . . Der Gedankengang des Legalismus draengt sich ueberall ein und praegt die Theologie." (*Das Christliche Gottesbild*, pp. 251, 254.) The conservative wing of the moderns denies that every statement of the Bible is authoritative;²⁹² the larger group, the liberals, denies

292) *Augsburg Sunday School Teacher*: "Too often the Bible is reduced to the level of a well-stocked arsenal from which authoritative proof texts may be drawn almost at random. . . . This practice makes

that any statement is authoritative; "there are those," says *The Living Church*, May 8, 1937, "who will say that they cannot see how any New Testament passage can be taken in a doctrinaire sense." Strahan is one of them. He declares that he and the "Protestant scholars of the present day . . . do not open any book of the Old or New Testament with the feeling that they are bound to regard its teaching as sacred and authoritative. They yield to nothing but what they regard as the irresistible logic of facts." (Hastings' *Encyclopedia*, VII, p. 346.) Sherwood Eddy is another one. "The Bible is not intended as a storehouse of authoritative proof texts." G. L. Raymond "has found few, if at all intelligent, who did not practically accept the text of Scripture as suggestive rather than dictatorial." (*The Psychology of Inspiration*, p. 126.) J. Aberly: "Let us in the first place notice that authority in religion cannot be made to rest on a record in and by itself." (*The Luth. Church Quart.*, 1932, p. 231.) E. E. Flack: "When we speak of the authority of the Scriptures, we do not mean that they are independently authoritative. They have no authority either apart from Christ, who is the primary authority, or apart from the Church, in which Christ's power is operative." (*The Lutheran*, Oct. 1, 1936.) On this point the conservatives among the moderns agree with the liberals. Nitzsch-Stephan, as quoted by Pieper, *op. cit.*, p. 32, feels justified in stating: "Nobody bases his dogmatics, in the Old Protestant fashion, on the *norma normans*, the Bible." Everybody feels like Th. Kaftan: "The modern theology, for which I stand, refuses to submit to any purely external authority," this external authority being Holy Scripture, the *written* word of the apostles and prophets. (See Pieper, *op. cit.*, p. 273.) The moderns go so far as to denounce Verbal Inspiration with its corollary that every Bible statement calls for unquestioning faith and obedience as unchristian. W. Herrmann declares: "The Reformation opposed to the Roman Church the fundamental principle that Christian doctrine is to be derived from the Scriptures alone. Everything depends, therefore, on a correct definition of this principle of the authority of Scripture adopted by the Evangelical Christianity that appeared in the Reformation. It would be unchristian if it meant the acknowledgment of any chance sentence of the Scriptures as God's word, by which a Christian ought to be guided in his life, and the community in its doctrine. Such a principle of the author-

it appear that *every portion of the Book*" (our italics) "is authoritative doctrine — perhaps an extremist exegesis of 2 Tim. 3:16, 17 contributed to this error. The Bible is no collection of doctrinal statements but a book of life. . . . If the same unfailing authority is ascribed to all the 'human' elements in the Bible, etc." (July, 1938, p. 388 f.)

ity of Scripture would set a book above God's revelation." (*Systematic Theology*, p. 58.)²⁹³

To express their abhorrence of the idea that every teaching of Scripture is binding upon us, the moderns make use of the opprobrious terms "manual of doctrine," "code of laws," etc. R. F. Grau: "Die Heilige Schrift ist uns nicht mehr ein grosser vom Himmel herabgesandter Gesetzeskodex mit seinen einzelnen Paragraphen, Beweisstellen genannt." (See Baier-Walther, I, p. 102.) Hofmann is the great authority for this. Obtaining doctrine out of Scripture, he says, "would imprint a legalistic feature on doctrine"; it would make of Scripture "a code of laws of faith [Sammlung von Glaubensgesetzen]." (*Schriftbeweis*, I, p. 9. See Pieper, *op. cit.*, III, p. 510.) The liberals are in perfect agreement with this. H. E. Fosdick: The Christians, sad to say, refused "to break with this legalistic employment of Scripture. . . . Ecclesiastical bodies have employed the Bible as though it were a book of canon law to define the procedure and organization of Christian churches forever." (*Op. cit.*, p. 237.) H. L. Willett: "The Book does not claim to be a carefully prepared manual of conduct. It refuses to accept responsibility for the claim that all of its utterances are rules to be followed." (*The Bible through the Centuries*, p. 294.) J. Oman: "On the one hand, critical results are ignored, and doctrines are drawn from Holy Writ like legal

293) Some more pronouncements. — Do these repetitions serve a good purpose? We want the moderns to bare their inmost thoughts to us. The more they say on this subject the less we will have to say in refutation. Their bare statements carry, for the Bible Christian, their own refutation. — *The Christian Century*, March 2, 1938: "No issue between the churches can now be settled by the quotation of a Biblical text, as our fathers used to assume. No issue will be settled by reference to an authoritarian standard, whether doctrinal or ecclesiastical." John Oman: "The teacher of divine truth . . . will not care to stop with authorities either of the Church or of the Scriptures." (*Vision and Authority*, p. 188.) C. Stange: "The attempt to derive the individual dogmatical statements from Scripture, stems from the Romish view. Scripture is viewed as the dogmatical authority." (*Dogmatik*, p. 193.) Bishop Charles Gore: "It ought to be said frankly that Luther often clings to the older notion of a verbally inspired Bible. He actually speaks of the Holy Spirit as the *Author*" (italics in original) "of the books of Moses; he submitted his judgment undoubtingly to Scriptural statements on points of natural science; and in a famous controversy he appealed to a New Testament verse as an infallible oracle, to be accepted with the purest literalism. In some respects he fastened the letter of the Bible on those who followed him more bindingly than had been done before." (*The Doctrine of the Infallible Book*, p. 58.) F. Buechsel: "Die Offenbarung Gottes auf sein Wort zu beschaercken, ist falsch und ergibt leicht eine dogmatische Verknoecherung des Offenbarungsgedankens, die das Wort Gottes schliesslich in eine Lehre verwandelt und die Autoritaet des Wortes Gottes nicht ausreichend begruenden kann." (*Die Offenbarung Gottes*, p. 3.) E. Brunner: "The doctrine of verbal inspiration materialized the authority of the Scriptures and ruled out the decision of faith." (*The Mediator*, p. 343.)

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decisions from the Statute Book." (*Op. cit.*, p. 182.) — H. C. Alleman: "Dr. Reu compares the Bible to a deed of sale. 'That the sale is reported in the newspapers does not add a single thing to the sale. . . . The sale is not closed until the deed is made out and handed to the new owner.' Thus Scripture is, as it were, the legal document of salvation. It sustains the same relation to our salvation that the deed of sale holds to the possessions of property. . . . 'Is it,' says Dr. H. Offermann, 'because they do not yet—or no longer— understand the position of their own Church, but have been slipping, without knowing it, into an attitude toward the Bible which is essentially un-Lutheran because it is unevangelical, and are thinking of the Bible as a legal code, a law book with many paragraphs?'" (*Luth. Church Quart.*, 1940, pp. 353, 357.) H. Offermann's statement in *Luth. Church Quart.* of 1937, p. 407, is repeated in *What Is Lutheranism?* p. 67: "Lutherans do not regard the Scriptures as a legal code with many paragraphs. They accept the Scriptures, and they believe in them primarily because they believe in Christ." A. R. Wentz: "The spirit of essential Lutheranism does not rhyme with the literalism of the Fundamentalist, which makes the Bible a book of oracles, a textbook with explicit marching orders for the 'warfare between science and religion.'" (*What Is Lutheranism?* p. 91.) — It is clear that these men do not like Verbal Inspiration. As Dr. Pieper puts it: "In order to discredit Verbal Inspiration, it is further asserted that the verbal-inspirationists regard Holy Scripture as 'a law-codex which fell down from heaven,' as 'a paper pope,' etc." (*Op. cit.*, I, p. 365.)²⁹¹

294) Do you care to hear additional statements? They will show how boldly and baldly the moderns express their aversion to Verbal Inspiration. E. Schaefer deplors that "people cultured in other respects are under the spell of monstrous ideas regarding the Bible and look upon it as a sacred codex which claims to be the product of the supernatural Spirit of God, who supplied to the Biblical authors all the words, not only the contents but also the required verbal form." (*Glaubenslehre fuer Gebildete*, p. 18 f.) Dr. Walther submits this specimen from Luthardt's *Theol. Literaturblatt*: "Es ist purer Missverstand; als ob der Verfasser die Zeit repristinieren wollte, welche die Bibel als ein unmittelbar vom Himmel herniedergekommenes Buch ansah und die Wahrheit ihres goettlichen Ursprungs so einseitig auffasste, dass sie vergass, dass die Propheten und Apostel den Schatz goettlicher Weisheit in irdischen Gefaessen trugen." (*Lehre und Wehre*, 1886, p. 4.) R. Seeberg believes that the holy writers "did not think and write with the intention of producing formulae for all times and circumstances," criticizes "the reformers of the Middle Ages, who questioned the legal authority of the Pope, but only in order that this legal authority might be the more definitely transferred to the Bible, which contained 'laws,' just as the findings of councils or the decrees of the Popes were laws legally binding for Christendom," and praises Luther, who brought it about that "Scripture ceases to be a code of laws." (*Op. cit.*, pp. 15, 20, 91.) — But Luther was not consistent. On page 21 we read: "Yet Luther would at another time, without due previous reflection, make

By now the indignation of the moderns has reached the boiling point. They give vent to their indignation in epithets such as "spiritual despotism," "slave mentality," etc. They denounce Verbal Inspiration as having built "a suffocating prison house" and stigmatize those who believe in the inviolability of every part of Scripture as "slaves of the letter," submitting to "the tyranny of words," the "tyranny of an infallible book." When we protest against giving the words of Scripture a new meaning in order to bring Scripture into harmony with "science" and "modern thought," they pity us and upbraid us for upholding "the enslaving legalism of the letter," "tyrannous literalism." And they have found a still more loathsome term of reproach. The verbal-inspirationists do homage to a "paper pope." The Pope exacts blind obedience of his slaves; and within Protestantism, where Verbal Inspiration rules, Holy Scripture exercises the same tyranny!²⁹⁵ — Away

use of Scripture in all its parts, practically or polemically, as a divine law.") G. T. Ladd deplors that the pupils of Luther did not follow Luther — that Luther whom Seeberg praises. "The post-Reformation theory of the Bible considered the principal office of the Bible to be that of imparting a ready-made system of religious dogmas. . . . The theory proved itself a vicious one." (*What Is the Bible?* p. 413.) Those poor dogmaticians! Marcus Dods writes: "This was due to the pedantic and elaborate dogmatism of the seventeenth century. The Bible had so persistently been used as a textbook to prove dogma that this came to be considered its main use. . . . Each of its utterances, no matter in what department of truth, was supposed to be final and authoritative." "To think of the Bible as a convenient collection or summary of doctrine, a textbook of theological knowledge, is entirely to misconceive it. . . . The Bible must not be thought of as 'a collection of truths formulated in propositions which God from time to time whispered in the ear to be communicated to the world as the unchanging formulas of thought and life for all time.'" (*The Bible: Its Origin and Nature*, pp. 66, 96 f.) — Verbal Inspiration is a horrible thing in the eyes of the moderns. It asks us to regard the Bible as a lawbook and thus compels us, says W. Herrmann, to accept even the false teachings of the Bible! W. Herrmann actually states that the doctrine of predestination set forth Rom. 9—11 "has no basis in faith." That "brings us to face the question whether we are prepared to follow Scripture even in that which we cannot understand to be a notion rooted in our faith," which "faith" cannot accept. And "if we decide to do this," if we accept a teaching which we know to be false, but accept it because it is found in Scripture, "we are treating the Bible as a lawbook which requires from us external obedience" (*op. cit.*, p. 134). That ought to be sufficient to discredit Verbal Inspiration!

295) R. F. Horton: "As a matter of fact, the Bible stood before that crude dogma of infallible inspiration was invented, and the Bible will stand when that dogma has passed away. . . . And if even one soul is led out of the comfortable but suffocating prison house of the received dogma into the open air of the true revelation, the author will not have toiled in vain." (*Revelation and the Bible*, pp. 25, 407.) J. S. Whale: "Loyalty to truth in the shape of literary and historical criticism . . . has set the modern man free from the bondage of the letter, the prison house of verbal infallibility." (*The Christian Answer to the Problem of Evil*, p. 77.) R. H. Strachan: "Very many today have rightly discarded the notion of accepting their religious beliefs on an external authority,

with Verbal Inspiration, this dogmatic fetter (Lenski on 2 Thess. 2:4, 5, page 422: "Some of the newer commentators have found

such as they have been encouraged to believe are the Church or the Bible. . . . Such slave mentality is at the source of religious infallibilities: the infallible Book or the infallible Church." (*The Authority of Christian Experience*, pp. 16, 26.) G. A. Buttrick: "Craving external support, men raised an infallible book to the vacant throne. From that false move and its tyranny we now break free." (See *CONC. THEOL. MONTHLY*, XII, p. 223.) G. L. Raymond: Men who are "at all intelligent accept the text of Scripture as suggestive rather than dictatorial. . . . The apparent theory of Jesus was that if men came to take into their natures the inspiration derived from the suggestions that He gave them—from such a suggestion, for instance, as that they were sons of God—they could safely be left, in applying the suggestion, to exercise the 'liberty' with which He had made them 'free.'" (*Op. cit.*, pp. 126, 140.) E. H. Delk: "Higher criticism has set theology free from that tyrannous literalism and false idea of inspiration which made all attempts at the adjustment of theology with modern thought in history, science, and philosophy either impious or revolutionary. . . . No theory of verbal inspiration is any longer tenable." (*Luth. Church Quart.*, 1912, p. 568.) W. H. Greever in *The Lutheran World Almanac*, 1934—1937, p. 94: "This approach and view . . . guarantee the liberty of the evangelical spirit against the enslaving legalism of the letter," and in the *Luth. Church Quart.*, 1937, p. 221: "In Fundamentalism there is such rigid subservience to the legalistic authority of the letter in recorded revelation that the spirit, purpose, and content of revelation are subordinated and obscured, if not actually lost." G. Aulén, on Luther's attitude towards the Bible: "It is well known that at times he took an independent attitude, but often he slavishly depended on Bible texts. A classical example: his line of argumentation on the Lord's Supper." (*Op. cit.*, p. 251.) W. C. Berkemeyer: "There is a sense in which the very words of Scripture must be the standard, not in any legal way but because they provide the classic original expression of the ideas and experiences and facts which go to make up the Christian faith. . . . Such a theology will escape, as far as it is humanly possible, the 'tyranny of words.'" (*Luth. Church Quart.*, 1939, p. 345 f.) J. M. Gibson: "Our Lord said, 'Ye seek to kill Me, because My Word hath not free course in you.' 'Free course' observe, and that was said to those who believed in the most thorough way in the verbal and literal inspiration of the Scriptures. They were slaves of the letter and knew nothing of the freedom of the spirit. And so it often is in our own times." (*The Inspiration and Authority of Holy Scripture*, p. 108.) — "Alexander Schweizer sagt von der Heiligen Schrift: 'Sie ist kein papierner Papst, kein Stellvertreter Gottes und Christi, sondern sein Zeuge; nicht das schon fertige Gold, sondern das reiches Gold in sich schliessende Erz; und dem christlichen Geiste in der Kirche kommt es zu, das Gold auszuscheiden.'" (See W. Rohnert, *Die Inspiration der Heiligen Schrift*, p. 233.) F. Gogarten: "Es ist in der Tat nicht so, dass fuer den protestantischen Glauben an Stelle des lebendigen roemischen Papstes der tote papierne Papst des Bibelbuchstabens getreten waere. Sondern der protestantische Glaube ist auf das lebendige Wort der Bibel gerichtet," etc. (See *Schrift und Bekenntnis*, 1928, p. 100.) G. P. Mains: "The Church arrogated to itself the claim of sole authority and infallible wisdom for the spiritual direction of mankind. . . . It is still true that large sections of Christendom are under the nightmare spell of this spiritual despotism. Inheritances of this despotism are such gratuitous attributions as verbal and plenary inspiration, of inerrancy, assumption of the entire historic and scientific accuracy of Biblical statement. . . . The Reformers made the mistake, and most easily so, of assigning to the Bible alone the place of infallible and inerrant authority which the Church had so stoutly but falsely claimed for itself." (*Divine Inspiration*, pp. 79, 81.)

a new way to interpret this whole section — they have discarded the doctrine of inspiration, 'this dogmatic fetter'), this cast-iron theory (M'Intosh, in *Is Christ Infallible and the Bible True?* p. 313: "Akin to this is the misrepresentation that the upholders of the Bible claim adopt a slavish literalism; and rash writers like Dr. Horton, more apt at inept epithet than cogent argument, up-braid them as maintainers of a 'cast-iron theory'")! The moderns refuse to play such a humiliating role as to bow to every single statement made by the old prophets and apostles. Verbal Inspiration, the instrument of galling tyranny and dark superstition, must be thrown to the moles and bats.

The bitter invective against Verbal Inspiration reaches its climax in the use of the ugly word "bibliolatry." It is bad enough that the moderns use "biblicism" as a term of reproach. They make copious use of it. For instance — we need not multiply examples — G. Aulén has no use for "the old biblicism, which restricts the divine revelation to the Bible." "Biblicism, the application of the theory of verbal inspiration, laid its heavy hand on the theology of orthodoxy." "Everywhere the principle of legalism intrudes and molds the theology. That is the disastrous consequence of biblicism." (*Op. cit.*, pp. 251, 255, 386.)²⁹⁶ But "biblicism" as a term of reproach is not strong enough for them. "Bibliolatry" suits them better. H. E. Fosdick: "From naive acceptance of the Bible as of equal credibility in all its parts because mechanically inerrant, I passed years ago to the shocking conviction that such traditional bibliolatry is false in fact and perilous in result." (*Op. cit.*, p. 273.) E. Brunner repeats Fosdick's statement: "Orthodoxy has made the Bible an independent divine thing, which just as such, as a *corpus*

296) Let us get clear on the meaning of biblicism as the term is used by the moderns. It means, as Aulén tells us, the practice of sticking to the words of the Bible, treating them, all of them, as inspired and inviolable. They are biblicists, says P. Althaus, "who identify the Word of God and Scripture" and look upon the Bible as "the supernatural infallible manual of doctrine." "Biblicism has a legalistic conception of the Word of God, out of harmony with the Reformation." (*Die letzten Dinge*, pp. 67, 74.) In addition, biblicism restricts authority in religion to the Bible. *The Living Church*, Nov. 11, 1933: "It ought to be said at once that the New Testament is one of the sources of our faith, not the sole and exclusive source. . . . That is presupposed in the tradition of the Great Church everywhere outside the circle of sixteenth to twentieth century Protestant biblicism." The statement of the *Lutheran* of Oct. 7, 1936, quoted above: "The Scriptures are not independently authoritative. They have no authority either apart from Christ or apart from the Church," was made in connection with the discussion and repudiation of the "biblicism of the later dogmaticians." If that be biblicism, we want to be known as good, thoroughgoing biblicists. But you cannot insult a modernist more than by intimating that he has not freed himself from all traces of biblicism. When the moderns want to praise a book, they will say of it: "The volume is not marked (as so many are) by theological prejudice and Biblical bias." Thus the *Lutheran*, March 25, 1942.

mortuum, is stamped with divine authority. . . . This materialistic, or, to be more exact, this idolatrous acceptance of Bible authority has done great damage to Christian faith." (*The Word and the World*, p. 92.) J. A. W. Haas uses the same term: "We have been too much misled, even in the Lutheran Church, by the non-Lutheran conceptions of the Bible, which often tend to bibliolatry. . . . Let us return to the Biblical and Lutheran idea of the living Word." (*The Lutheran*, Dec. 8, 1932.) Again: "The Bible must never be thought of apart from the living, unitary Word and become a codex. Otherwise we have bibliolatry and substitute a book for the creative Word." (*Luth. Church Quart.*, 1937, p. 279.) And again: "There must be a clear distinction kept in mind between the Word of God and the Bible. . . . Luther and true Lutheranism do not worship the record. . . . Luther and true Lutheranism have never made a fetish of the Bible as a book." (*What Is Lutheranism?* p. 176.) M. G. G. Sherer: "Christian liberty knows how to distinguish between Scripture and Scripture, between the shell and the content, between the chaff and the wheat, between the letter and the spirit. . . . Christian liberty does not fall into the sin of bibliolatry." (*Chr. Liberty and Chr. Unity*, p. 81.) T. A. Kantonen: "A living theology . . . will not set up a deified book in the place of the deified Church of Roman Catholicism nor hold to legalistic, unhistorical, and unpsychological theories of its inspiration." (*Luth. Church Quart.*, 1934, p. 114.)

Is there not a stronger term than bibliolatry? Well, Haas used the term "fetish"; H. L. Willett uses it: "The higher criticism has forever disposed of the fetish of a level Bible; it has destroyed the doctrine of a verbal inspiration." (*Op. cit.*, p. 264.) And the Princeton professor Homrighausen warns all against listening to the verbal-inspirationists: "Be fearful of those who make the Bible a fetish." (See *CONC. THEOL. MONTHLY*, IX, p. 452.) "Relic-worship" also serves the purpose. Bishop H. Martensen (Denmark): "Here [in the orthodoxy of the seventeenth century] the Scriptures are regarded as a book of laws; and the individual Christian, not maintaining a relative independence over against the Scriptures, is unable to distinguish in the Scriptures between the essential and the incidental, and practices a genuine relic-worship towards the letter of the Bible." (*Christian Dogmatics*, p. 45.) The conservative moderns do not agree in many points with the liberal moderns, but do agree with them in denouncing the unquestioning acceptance of every Scripture teaching on the bare word of Scripture as a form of wicked idolatry. The liberal K. Thieme of Leipzig asks: "An welchen Universitaeten, so muss man neugierig fragen, gilt die Schrift als Wort goettlicher Offenbarung im Sinne von Laibles massiver *Bibelvergoetterung*?" And the conservative Freimund

[Neuendettelsau] uses the stronger term *Vergoetzung*. "The Bible does not set itself up as an authority in questions of science, astronomy, history, ethnology; but it is the authority in questions concerning salvation. He that knows this will escape the danger *der Vergoetzung des einzelnen Worts* and of mistaking the hull for the kernel." (See *Ev.-Luth. Freikirche*, Aug. 2, 1931.) And some of the moderns think they have divine authority for this use of the term bibliolatry. G. T. Ladd thinks so. "Christ does not find fault with the Jews for diligent study of their Sacred Scriptures; He does accuse them of folly and sin in *idolizing the written word* while neglecting its ideal contents of truth." (*The Doctrine of Sacred Scripture*, I, p. 51.) C. A. Wendell thus sums up the case for the moderns: "Bibliolatry is perhaps the finest and most exalted form of *idolatry*" (our italics), "but idolatry it is nevertheless. It is not the Bible but God Himself who says, 'Thou shalt have no other gods before Me.' A stilted veneration for the Word betrays an inward weakness rather than a virile faith and out of it proceeds a nervous anxiety to prove the 'complete inerrancy' of the Bible 'from cover to cover.'" (*What Is Lutheranism?* p. 235.)²⁹⁷ —

297) We submit a few more statements to show that the use of this term is not exceptional but very common with the moderns. Dr. Pieper quotes from *What do Unitarians Believe?*: "We do not regard the Bible as a fetish, a verbally inspired and infallible oracle of God." (*Op. cit.*, p. 329.) And many Trinitarians agree with the Unitarians on this point. E. Lewis: "Without a doubt our fathers came very close to bibliolatry, they could make no distinction between the Word of God and the words of men by which that Word was given." (*The Faith We Declare*, p. 49.) R. F. Horton: "It is from this dangerous, and in the last resort, idolatrous, perversion of Christianity that the line of argument pursued in the foregoing pages is intended to deliver us." (*Op. cit.*, p. 407.) J. P. Smyth (he who wants Verbal Inspiration thrown to the bats and moles): "This collection of living utterances given for our use we have almost treated as a fetish for our worship. . . . The intelligent veneration for a nobly inspired Book has degenerated into a foolish reverence for an idol; the faith that should have assimilated the *spirit* of the Bible has become a superstitious worship of letters and words." (*Op. cit.*, p. 54.) J. S. Whale (he who wants to be "free from the bondage of the letter, the prison house of verbal infallibility") is "convinced that blind bibliolatry can be as pathetically wrong as what is called blind unbelief and that the way of obscurantism is the way of disaster" (*op. cit.*, p. 78). But why go on? Men who honestly believe that the Bible is not in all its parts God's very Word and then find other men who bow before these words and absolutely trust in them, cannot but say with S. Bulgakoff: "An exaggerated and one-sided bibliolatry treats the Word of God as a transcendent oracle. Such interpretation reminds us of the origin of bibliolatry, when a legalism of the letter of the Bible replaced, to a certain extent at least, that of the Church of Rome" (in *Revelation*, by J. Baillie and H. Martin, p. 155) and with Hans Rust (Koenigsberg): "We should like to have God's infallible Word placed in our hands directly, by means of Holy Scripture, in order to have all questions decided at once. But God willed otherwise. . . . God has kept His Church from making the Bible a revelation-idol, *sich aus der Schrift einen Offenbarungsgoetzen zu machen*" (*Vom Aergernis des Menschenworts in d. H. Schrift*, pp. 25, 30).

The moderns, it is clear, hate Verbal Inspiration. We have established that out of their own mouths. They abominate a teaching which, as they feel, makes men worship a book, makes them slaves of the letter.

They want to be free men. We heard the Eisenach Declaration of Independence: "Bound yet free! Bound to the revelation within the Scriptures taken as a whole. . . . But free with respect to particulars, free to form our opinion of the human garments in which the divine glory of the Scriptures is masked." (See *THEOL. MONTHLY*, V, p. 6.) We heard Bishop Martensen exhorting the Christians to "maintain a relative independence over against the Scriptures." And all of the moderns, the more or less conservatives, the liberals, and the ultraliberals, have taken up the cry. J. A. W. Haas: "What the theologians call the Word of God, namely, the spiritual content of the Bible, is an authority of freedom. It is not dependent upon a prior acceptance of an infallible record or any doctrine of inspiration. . . . With this approach to infallibility" ("the claims of a mechanically infallible Bible, verbally perfect, do not hold in the light of the facts") "in the authority of divine truth we do no injury to our moral freedom." (*What Ought I to Believe*, pp. 29, 30.) H. F. Rall: "Revelation meant to them [our fathers] so many doctrines or commandments handed down. . . . Free men know only one kind of authority — that of truth and right." (*A Faith for Today*, pp. 228, 232.) R. H. Strachan (he who speaks of "slave mentality"): "The authority of which we are in quest clearly must be an authority which does not destroy our personal freedom. It must compel a humble acceptance of the will of God and also clearly recognize the autonomy of the individual personality and our responsibility for our own beliefs." (*Op. cit.*, p. 19.) H. E. Fosdick: The Gospel must be "released from literal bondage to old categories and set free to do its work in modern terms of thought. . . . The new methods of study have given us His imperishable Gospel freed from its entanglements, to be preached with a liberty, a reasonableness, an immediate application to our own age, such as no generation of preachers in the Church's history ever had the privilege of knowing before." (*Op. cit.*, pp. 261, 273.) Col. R. G. Ingersoll, discussing the "mistakes of Moses" and related matters: "It is a question, first, of intellectual liberty, and after that, a question to be settled at the bar of human reason." (*Lectures*, p. 382.) Yes, and Luther, too, belongs in this class. G. Wehrung declares: "Wir muessen mit Luther und seinem Freiheitsgeist eing bleiben, indem wir alles Schriftwort danach schaeetzen, ob es das Evangelium als Evangelium rein und ungetruebt zum Ausdruck bringt." (*Op. cit.*, p. 308.)

What kind of liberty are these men (excluding Luther) fight-

ing for? They claim the right to criticize and correct Scripture. They claim the right to correct Scripture by stamping certain scientific and historical statements as false—that is the coarser method; or—and that is the finer, politer method—by investing certain stories, which are of course not literally true, with a deeper significance, as being poetic descriptions of some higher truth and as bearing some profound prophetic philosophy of history. The Biblical teachings, too, were good enough for those days, but must be translated into modern categories of thought.²⁹⁸ The moderns are thoroughly convinced that the Bible is full of mistakes and that many of its statements are unreliable and misleading. The mistaken views of the early Church, says Edwin Lewis, “have colored the Gospel records themselves” (*A New Heaven and a New Earth*, p. 175 f.). Why, Jesus Himself was not inerrant. That was either

298) E. H. Delk: “Higher criticism has set theology free from that tyrannous literalism and false idea of inspiration which made all attempts at the adjustment of theology with modern thought in history, science, and philosophy either impious or revolutionary. . . . No theory of verbal inspiration is any longer tenable.” (*Luth. Church Quart.*, 1912, p. 568.) O. L. Joseph: “If we are to escape the pitfalls of barren intellectualism, we must recognize that reason and faith are the twin guides to truth. When we imprison the reason within a Chinese wall of traditionalism, we imperil the prospects of liberty.” The Bible is a book “containing errors.” “Are we not doing injustice to the Book when we fail to discriminate between prose and poetry, between history and fiction, between biography and allegory, between folklore and faith?” (*Ringling Realities*, pp. 93, 217.) — T. A. Kantonen: “Relying upon the theory of the verbal inspiration of the Bible, the adherents of this approach have regarded the stories of the Temptation and the Fall as mere historical narratives rather than profound prophetic philosophy of history.” (*Luth. Church Quart.*, 1935, p. 211.) Did Creation actually take place as the Bible tells it? O. F. Nolde: “Pupils ought forever to accept the story itself because of literary and religious merit. . . . They may later discard the scientific import of the story.” (*Luth. Church Quart.*, 1939, p. 299.) Similarly, did the great fish swallow Jonah? The Bible does not really say so, says H. L. Willett. The romance is “perhaps intended as a symbol of Israel’s engulfment and restoration” (*op. cit.*, p. 110). H. E. Fosdick: “When one has said all that needs to be said about the new views of the Bible, . . . in particular about the obvious changes in mental categories between Biblical times and our own, how empty is the issue of it all if it does not liberate our mind from handicaps and summon our souls the more clearly to the spiritual adventures for which the Scriptures stand! . . . To be a Bible Christian, must we think, as some seem to suppose, that a fish swallowed a man, or that the sun and moon stood still at Joshua’s command, or that God sent she-bears to eat up children who were rude to a prophet? . . . To be a Bible Christian is a more significant affair than such bald literalism suggests.” (*Op. cit.*, p. 181.) You must translate what the Bible literally teaches into modern categories of thought! “Decode the abiding meanings of Scripture from outgrown phraseology!” The Bible teaching on “the resurrection of the flesh” means nothing more than “the immortality of the soul” (*op. cit.*, pp. 123, 129). Yes, indeed, says Edwin Lewis, we may well regard the resurrection narratives “not as literal statements of fact but as a more or less pictorial effort on the part of the earlier Christian community to account for their experience of Christ.” (See *CONC. THEOL. MTHLY.*, IV, p. 758.)

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because He was a mere man or because of His self-limitation. (See third installment of this series.)²⁰⁰ So the moderns claim it as their God-given right to subject the Bible to a careful scrutiny, to separate truth from error, to discriminate between the outworn forms of thought and the things of abiding value. Do not fail "to discriminate between prose and poetry," etc., says O. L. Joseph. "Christian liberty," says M. G. G. Sherer, "knows how to distinguish between Scripture and Scripture, between the chaff and the wheat." Did not A. Schweizer tell us long ago that the Bible is not a paper pope, that the gold it contains is mixed with dross, and that it is the business of the Christian spirit to smelt the ore and obtain the pure gold?

And when we protest that the statements, stories, and teachings of the Bible must be taken at their face value, they indignantly reply: Away with these old exegetical and dogmatical fetters! Our minds have been liberated from these handicaps. (Fosdick.) "Do not foreclose by an appeal to authority the whole line of detailed investigation!" (W. Sanday, *The Oracles of God*, p. 102.) "Let it be said in all seriousness that Lutheran exegesis will be seriously handicapped unless it abandons once and for all the unpsychological and mechanical theories of inspiration and unhistorical views of verbal inerrancy," etc. (T. A. Kantonen, "The Canned Goods of Past Theology," in the *Lutheran*, Dec. 12, 1935, to Jan. 2, 1936.) Reviewing Dr. Lenski's "Interpretation of St. John's Gospel," the *Luth. Church Quart.*, Oct., 1932, says: "While the author would count his verbal-inspiration theory the bulwark of his treatment, as a matter of fact it is its strait jacket." (See the *Pastor's Monthly*, 1935, p. 262.) — It is no caricature when the mind of the moderns is thus described in *Christian Dogmatics* (Dr. J. T. Mueller), p. 114: "Chafing under the divine restraint, 1 Pet. 4:11, the exponents of modern theology allege that belief in the divine inspiration of Holy Scripture results in 'intellectualism,' 'biblicism,' 'letter service,' 'the constraint of the free spirit of investigation,' 'the failure to find new religious truths,' 'the inability of the theologian to accommodate himself to present-day religious thought,' and the like." J. M. Haldeman: "The truth is (according to Modernism) man of today has altogether outgrown the Bible. It may have done for the infant state of the human mind, but to put the rising generation

200) Fosdick's view, as presented in the *Christian Century*, Dec. 6, 1936: "There were theologians who justified the crusade, but tried not to lean too heavily upon Jesus for Scriptural support. Dr. Fosdick, for instance, frankly said: 'The Master never faced in His own experience . . . a national problem such as Belgium met when the Prussians crossed the border. . . . The fact is that Jesus did not directly face our modern question about war; they were not His problems, and to press a legalistic interpretation of special texts as though they were, is a misuse of the Gospel.'"

under its *clamps and chains* would be to restrict the mental growth of the human race." (*A King's Penknife*, p. 108.)

The Bible has lost its rights. One of these is the right to have its statements understood and accepted *literally*, unless otherwise indicated. The moderns recognize this right in the case of a reputable human writing, but in the case of the Bible they have *assumed the right to depart from the literal sense whenever it suits them*. And they heap scorn and obloquy on those who insist on abiding by the literal sense in spite of the protest of "science" and modern thought. They call these men "dogmatists and literalists" (*Luth. Church Quart.*, 1939, p. 153). N. R. Best thinks he has dealt them a deathblow when he declares: "Their theory obliges them to hold that every Bible verse in its simple literal sense is an explicitly exact statement of fact." (*Inspiration*, p. 118.) The reader will understand the import of this statement when he reads the preceding paragraph which unfolds the thesis: "Utterly vain is it to talk of not employing human reason on the Bible." Georgia Harkness speaks on the subject of literalism thus: "The revolt against Fundamentalism has centered upon the other great pitfall of reliance on the authority of the Bible, namely, the disregard of historical and scientific fact that ensues from belief in its literal inspiration. The battle is not yet won. Like the poor, literalism is always with us." (*The Faith by Which the Church Lives*, p. 57.) The moderns claim the right to nullify any statement or doctrine of Scripture by simply pronouncing the magic word "literalism." Do you believe that the bears ate the children? Fosdick tells you: "That is bald literalism" and he glories in the fact of our "release from literalism." (*Op. cit.*, p. 182.) Do you accept the Bible teaching on the Fall and original sin? R. Niebuhr will tell you: "Christian theology has found it difficult to refute the rationalistic rejection of the myth of the Fall without falling into the literalistic error of insisting upon the Fall as an historical event. One of the consequences of this literalism," etc. "The confusion revealed in the debate between Pelagians and Augustinians has been further aggravated by the literalism of the Augustinians." (*The Nature and Destiny of Man*, I, pp. 260, 267.) Do you believe in the Real Presence? Bishop Gore has told you: That is "purest literalism"; you have permitted Luther to put this bridle on you. Is Jesus Christ true God? O. J. Baab refuses to "ascribe deity to Jesus" and then looks with derision on us: "No wonder the literalistic interpreters of the Bible are stirred to indignant and vehement protest." (*Jesus Christ Our Lord*, pp. 11, 41.) Do you believe in Verbal Inspiration? Scripture plainly says that all the words of Scripture were inspired, 2 Tim. 3:16; 1 Cor. 2:13. Go to, say the moderns, that is a literalistic interpretation and cannot stand. *The Lutheran*, Feb. 30, 1936,

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reviewing Lenski's *Interpretation of First and Second Corinthians*, passes the verdict: "The verbal literalism of the author's view of inspiration is hardly congenial in the atmosphere of most present-day theological schools, even of our conservative Lutheran institutions." Lenski had written on 1 Cor. 2:13: "The very words which the apostles speak are taught them by the Spirit. He is their teacher even as to the 'words.' This is proof positive for Verbal Inspiration," etc. Yes, say the moderns, taken literally, this verse proves Verbal Inspiration; but we are not literalists. We refuse to be bound by the letter with respect to this teaching or any other teaching and statement of Scripture. Do not expect us to submit to any kind of legalistic constraint. — Note that the moderns use "legalistic" and "literalistic" as synonyms. *Luth. Church Quart.*, 1937, p. 279: "The Bible must never become a codex. Otherwise we have bibliolatry. . . . The Fundamentalists make it *literalistic and legalistic* in a Calvinistic manner and forget that the letter killeth but the Spirit maketh alive." The hue and cry is: "The enslaving legalism of the letter!" We will not have this "fetter," this "handicap," these "clamps and chains," this "strait jacket" of literalism put on us.

The moderns certainly do not like this thing "literalism." They make it responsible for all sorts of woes and evils. It destroys, for instance, belief in the Scriptures and keeps in spiritual death. G. L. Raymond: "This statement — 2 Cor. 3:6: 'The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life' — the history of the world has proved to be true. As a fact, the letter has killed. It has done this both because the theory of literalism, so conscientiously advocated, has been the death of any form of belief in the Scriptures on the part of large numbers who could not fully ignore what to them have seemed to be discrepancies, and also because the truth, when considered only in itself, so far as it has been supposed to be identical with a form or a formula, has failed to stimulate to activity, and so to spiritual life." (*Op. cit.*, p. 193 f.)

The moderns do not want to be tied down to the letter. They want the freedom of the Spirit. "Like the poor, literalism is always with us. . . . Literalize the Bible and you get weird nonsense. From Genesis to Revelation the Bible has been cheapened, perverted, flattened out to a dull dead level, by those who find their authority in the letter and not the spirit." (Harkness.) "The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life!" And what is this "spirit" which gives the right understanding of Scripture or what is the "spiritual content" of Scripture which supersedes the literal form? The Unitarians identify this "spirit" with reason. Let the Unitarian W. E. Channing repeat his statement: "The Bible expects us to restrain and modify its language by the known truths which

observation and experience furnish on these topics. . . . We feel it our bounden duty to exercise our reason upon it perpetually, to look beyond the letter to the spirit" (our italics), "to make use of what is known for explaining what is difficult and for discovering new truths." (*Works of W. E. Channing*, p. 368 ff.)³⁰⁰) The more conservative moderns will not directly identify the "spirit" with reason. But they are rather hazy in defining this term of theirs. The best they can do is to tell us that it is "something in us," "the best in us," our "moral sense," our "spiritual understanding," etc. J. M. Gibson: "The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. . . . There must be some soul in the person reading it to put the color in from suggestions of it which it is possible to give." (*Op. cit.*, p. 235.) Hazy? C. H. Dodd: "The criterion lies within ourselves, in the response of our own spirit to the spirit that utters itself in the Scriptures." (*The Authority of the Bible*, p. 296.) Call it "spirit complex" and let it go at that. That is the term to which attention is called by Erik Floreen in his critique of Aulén's theology. "It would be legalistic [according to Aulén] to ground our faith on an outward authority, as on that of the Bible. . . . It is no vital matter to Dr. Aulén whether his teachings always agree with the Bible. He holds that faith owes its existence and growth to a 'spirit complex' controlled by the glorified Christ. This spirit complex he identifies with the Church." (See *The Luth. Companion*, Feb. 9, 1939.) And what is the "spiritual content" of the Bible which appeals to the "spirit complex" of the Church, the spiritual sense of the theologians?³⁰¹) Nobody has ever told us. We know that all the content of the Bible is spiritual. If that is not true, if only certain portions have spiritual value, we ought to know how to identify these portions. The moderns have never told us how to do that. They have never drawn up a precise list of the spiritual sections. Or rather, they have told us how to identify these portions: your "spirit" will pick them out. If your spirit

300) Similar statements. N. R. Best: "The contributions made to the Bible's contents by its prophets, its evangelists, its apostles, and above all by its immortal Messiah are literature of a quality shiningly beyond all categories of 'the letter,' which Paul complained of as 'killing' the spirituality of believers. They all are instead instinct with the spirit which 'giveth life.' Utterly vain then is it to talk of not employing human reason on the Bible." (*Op. cit.*, p. 117.) H. L. Willett: "It is inevitable that one who studies the Scriptures should bring every statement and precept to the bar of his own sense of right and judge it by that standard. . . . The Bible's overwhelming vindication, its right to the world's reverence, are found in its appeal to the intelligent and sensitive spirit." (*Op. cit.*, pp. 291, 299.)

301) V. Ferm: "The authority of the Sacred writings is no longer found in 'the letter' and sustained by some artificial theory of divine inspiration but in the appeal of its spiritual content." (*What Is Lutheranism?* p. 279.)

responds to a certain section of the Bible, you can be sure that in that section the Spirit utters itself. (Dodd.) And that means that so much of the Bible is spiritual as the individual or the "Church" chooses to call spiritual.³⁰²) And that means that the moderns are fighting for the freedom from Scripture. Their "spiritual liberty," the "liberty of the evangelical spirit against the enslaving legalism of the letter," is a revolt against the authority of Scripture in favor of the authority of man. They tell us very plainly that in fighting against this legalistic Verbal Inspiration, this legalism of the letter, their interest is to establish the authority of man over Scripture. What did C. H. Dodd say? "The criterion lies *within ourselves*, in the response of our spirit to the Spirit that utters itself in the Scriptures." Listen to what H. F. Rall says on this point: "Paul had not the faintest idea that centuries later theologians would be building up their theories on this phrase or that sentence of his letters. . . . There are two kinds of authority. One is external, compulsive. It does not ask for understanding or conviction, but simply submission. The other is inner, moral, spiritual; it asks obedience, but the obedience must root in conviction and come as free choice. The former belongs to subjects, the latter to sons. Free men know only one kind of authority—that of truth and right." (*A Faith for Today*, pp. 229, 232.) And H. L. Willett uses very plain language: "The authority present in the Biblical record does not inhere in the Book as such nor in any particular portion of it. But rather it is found in the appeal which the Scripture as a whole makes to the moral sense within humanity, and in particular the urgency of the appeal made by certain parts of the record, notably the Gospels and the Pauline epistles. . . . The Book asks nothing for itself in the way of sovereignty over the minds of men. But it exercises that power by the sheer force of its appeal to all that is best within them. Its authority is not formal or arbitrary. It consists rather in the outreaching of the

302) That is Rudelbach's diagnosis of the case. "Wie spaeter die Vernuenftler, so hatten zu jener Zeit die Paepstler vor allem den Spruch Pauli aufgegriffen, 'Der Buchstabe toetet, aber der Geist macht lebendig,' und mit der offenen Missdeutung, als ob der Apostel hier von zweierlei Schriftsinn, dem *buchstaebischen* und dem *geistlichen*, rede, verbanden sie die kecke Zumutung, dass die Schrift sich eben nach ihrem Geiste sollte wenden und drehen lassen. Trefflich fuehrt unser Luther wider Emser aus . . . die Schrift leide ueberhaupt ein solches Spalten des Buchstabens und Geistes nicht" (*Zeitsch. f. d. ges. luth. Theologie*, 1840, zweites Quartalheft, p. 4). Nach ihrem Geist soll die Schrift sich wenden und drehen lassen! That in Scripture is spiritual which finds a response in your spirit, and when your spirit complex changes, that part of Scripture loses its spiritual content!—Here you have, by the way, the pedigree of the slogan "The letter kills, but the spirit gives life." The moderns got it from the Unitarians; the Unitarians got it from the rationalists (Vernuenftler); and the rationalists got it from the papists.

spirit of God in the men who wrote its various parts to the souls of those who study it." (*Op. cit.*, p. 292.) — Luther addressed the following to the spirituals of his day, but it describes the mind of the moderns exactly: "Their conceit sets up the rule that you must forget about these words 'This is My body' and study the matter spiritually. . . . Here you have a fine rule, which will guide you into all truth far better than the Holy Spirit can do it; viz., wherever Holy Scripture stands in the way of your own opinion and conceit, forget about Scripture and follow your own conceit, and you will get along wonderfully. . . . Gott muss und soll sich gefangen geben, dass er seine Worte nicht setze, wann und wo er will, sondern wo und wie es ihm dieser Geist stimmt. . . . Der Geist hat abermal frei und schoen gewonnen." (XX:1022 f.)

Another word on the conceit of these spirituals. They look with infinite contempt on us poor Bible-Christians, who stick to the words as written and simply repeat them. They despise our theological method as "mechanical," tell us that we have "a metallic, inert, or mechanical mind"; that our "viewpoint is wooden, rigid, and narrow"; that our dependence upon a book is "a dead and artificial thing." When we refuse to depart from the literal sense of the words "This is My body," E. S. Jones sneers: "How wooden and blocked off we've made Him!" Sticking to Verbal Inspiration, sticking to the text, involves "a loss of intellectual vitality." "Schlendrianmaessige Reproduktion!" "Mechanische und hoelzerne Vorstellung." "Die orthodoxe, versteinerte Verbalinspirationslehre." "Dogmatische Verknoecherung des Offenbarungsgedankens." "Es war der Fehler der Verbalinspiration, dass sie keine Aufgaben stellte, sondern die Hinnahme einer fertiggestellten Aufgabe verlangte." (B. Steffen.) Verbal Inspiration makes theology too easy. Hofmann told the verbal-inspirationist Philippi: "Mag immerhin fortschlafen, wer es gern bequem hat." (See Pieper, *op. cit.*, p. 147.) We need men, say the moderns, who are able to enrich the Bible with the results of their spiritual labors and experiences, who will soar on the pinions of the spirit through the regions of heaven and discover new and better truths, who "liberate their minds from handicaps and summon their souls the more clearly to the spiritual adventures for which the Scriptures stand" (Fosdick).—The moderns will not have the holy writers degraded to mere machines and therefore denounce the mechanical (verbal) theory of inspiration. And they will not have themselves degraded to mere machines and therefore denounce the legalistic (verbal) theory of inspiration.

In the bill of rights set up by the moderns great stress is laid upon the freedom of doctrine. It would be legalistic to bind men to the doctrinal statements of the Bible, not to permit the

Church to develop the doctrine according to the new light and understanding which the passing centuries gave her. You must not suppress the spirit, but let it go adventuring in the realm of doctrine. (Fosdick.) The doctrines set down in the Bible need revision and re-statement, for have not the apostles occasionally fallen into doctrinal error? Christ Himself is not altogether reliable. He did not know, said Fosdick, present conditions. And, more generally: "The demand even for an infallible Christ, in the sense that He reveals to us a special body of truth, beyond the reach of inquiry or intellectual reconstruction, . . . is simply to deny that the idea of evolution is applicable to the Christian faith." (R. H. Strachan, *op. cit.*, p. 199.) That means that Christ did not set down the doctrine in its final form. The Bible statements are merely "suggestive" (Raymond), or, as R. W. Nelson puts it: "The Bible is an inspired and inspiring source book, a gold mine of *initial data*, concerning God's plan of life for men" (*Christendom*, IV, p. 410). Develop these initial data; there are truths hidden there of which the apostles never dreamed. W. A. Brown: "Generation after generation has found the best of itself reflected in its pages and has discovered meanings in its teachings of which its authors never dreamed. . . . The Bible is a compendium of simple principles capable of indefinite application and therefore needing continual reinterpretation in the light of expanding experience." (*A Creed for Free Men*, pp. 227, 230.) In the light of expanding experience! "Much water has passed under the bridge since the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries," says V. Ferm (*op. cit.*, p. 279), and much more, say others, since the first century. Therefore we must "make readjustments with the findings of the best Biblical scholarship and interpretation, with the best recent scholarship" (Ferm). The doctrines cannot stand as they were "once delivered to the saints." They sorely need reinterpretation, rephrasing (and that is a polite way of saying that they need to be changed, abolished, turned into something else). Fosdick: "What is permanent in Christianity is not mental frameworks but abiding experiences that phrase and rephrase themselves in successive generations' ways of thinking." (*Op. cit.*, p. 103.) And, best of all, Scripture itself demands this progress, this freedom of doctrine. "The idea of a revelation confined to the writings cannot be said to be the idea of those Sacred Writings themselves." (Horton, *op. cit.*, p. 16.) Paul never intended to set down a final system of truth.³⁰³⁾

303) Fosdick says so. We read in the *Lutheran*, Jan. 15, 1931: "He Kept the Faith." On Jan. 4 we 'listened in' to hear Dr. Fosdick's radio sermon. And when the text, 'He kept the faith,' issued from the transmitter, we were curious to know what the famous 'modernist' would make of it. What he did was to expound the theory that the

There is no finality in doctrine—that is the Declaration of Independence proclaimed by the moderns. The truth is not “final and fixed.” It would be a crime against intellectual and spiritual freedom to keep men from developing the saving doctrine. It would result in intellectual stagnation. Said Col. Ingersoll: “Whoever has quit growing, he is orthodox, whether in art, politics, *religion*, philosophy—no matter what. Whoever thinks he has found it all out, he is orthodox. Orthodoxy is that which rots, and heresy is that which grows forever. Orthodoxy is the night of the past, full of the darkness of superstition, and heresy is the eternal coming day, the light of which strikes the grand foreheads of the intellectual pioneers of the world.” (Op. cit., p. 314.)³⁰⁴

And so the moderns have assumed the right to produce new doctrines, necessary for salvation. The conservatives insist upon this right as strenuously as the liberals. Hofmann contended that

great apostle's proudly cherished fidelity consisted in an ability to look forward and not chain himself to what was past. We were told that the faith he kept was not that of his youth nor of the part of his life when he was a Pharisee nor of the period when he wrote to the Thessalonians.”

304) Christian theologians say: “Die orthodoxe, versteinerte Verbalinspirationslehre.” H. Kraemer speaks of “the clumsy form of the literal inerrancy of the document in which God's revelation is told” and of “the justified revolt of the human spirit against the intellectual bondage caused by the petrification of Christian truth” (*The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World*, pp. 10, 218). M. Maryosip: “The idea . . . that revelation is to be conceived in terms of words, texts, and even books, . . . the dogma of a verbal inspiration, . . . has paralyzed the intellect of those who have adopted it, as every mechanical conception of the truth must do.” (*Why I Believe the Bible*, p. 112 f.) The *Luth. Church Quart.*, 1939, p. 348 ff., speaking of “the tyranny of words,” declares that, “when we deal with these great New Testament terms and ideas, we deal not with pieces of a system of thought which can be put together to form some original divinely given theology. . . . In the past, theologians have been far too sensitive to orthodoxy and heresy.” In a book review the *Lutheran*, May 26, 1927, complains that “to him [the author] every sentence of the Bible is absolutely true in every detail. The truth, historical, scientific, as well as religious, is final and fixed.” And that is “so wooden and rigid and narrow.” Fosdick: No unanimous system of truth in the Bible! (Op. cit., p. 30.) C. S. Macfarland: “Christian revelation is not confined to a closed canon, to a stereotyped letter, or a strictly defined confession.” (*Chr. Unity in Practice and Prophecy*, p. 27.) *The Living Church*, March 9, 1938, complains that “the Roman Church is doctrinally immobilized by its dogma of the inerrancy of Scripture.” *The Christian Century*, Feb. 10, 1937, declares “that in the New Testament there is no unalterable doctrine which embraces the whole scheme of Christian thought. . . . The epistles are not contributions to a doctrinal system which shall be valid to all eternity. . . . The Lutherans should be paged and told about it.” The moderns do not want to be kept in a prison house, and they do not want God to be kept a prisoner. Says G. A. Buttrick: “How could God, so radiant and vital in His own life, be imprisoned in the past? And what is this doctrine of an inerrant Book but the assertion that God spoke then and cannot speak now, the avowal that the Everliving is the captive of antiquity?” (See CONC. THEOL. MONTHLY, XII, p. 223.)

it is the business of the theologian "die alte Wahrheit auf neue Weise zu lehren und sie, gehorsam der Fuehrung des Geistes Gottes, zu mehren." P. Althaus, who quotes and approves this principle (see *Schrift und Bekenntnis*, July, 1930, p. 123), is busy applying it with all the rest of the moderns. He says: "Scripture is not an absolutely infallible manual of doctrine. . . . Our doctrine of justification is not simply a repetition of the New Testament doctrine and our eschatology is not simply a repetition of the Biblical doctrine but has its own form." (*Op. cit.*, pp. 61, 74.) And the liberals are certainly not going to be outdone by the conservatives. The Unitarian Channing told us that he is for "looking beyond the letter to the spirit and for discovering new truths." E. H. Delk gets violent on this subject: "To deny that modern thought has any new truths to offer is to deny the presence and leadership of God. It is a kind of atheism." (*Op. cit.*, p. 554.) — That is freedom with a vengeance! The real freedom of the spirit!³⁰⁵ Dr. Pieper says on our present subject: "Today we have to call particular attention to the fact that Paul insists on the perfection and completeness of the apostolic doctrine also over against such teachers as find it necessary to supplement and augment the doctrine of Christ on the pretense of a higher philosophical knowledge and a higher spirituality." (*Op. cit.*, p. 148.)

Finally, the moderns claim the right, in the interest of freedom to operate with the "Word of God." The Word of God, not the word of Scripture, is what counts. What is this "Word" of the moderns? Nobody knows exactly. The moderns know for sure what it is not. It is not Scripture. Dr. C. M. Jacobs: "With all the emphasis which we lay upon the Scriptures we do not identify them with the Word of God. . . . For this view of the Word of God and this view of the Scriptures the Philadelphia Seminary has stood, and for them it will continue, by God's help, to stand." "In Lutheran theology, the two are not equated." (*The Lutheran*, Jan. 12, 1933.) *Luth Church Quart.*, 1937, p. 195: "What results is a legalistic and an atomistic conception of the Scriptures as the Word of God, far more congenial to Calvinism than to Lutheranism. Calvinism identified the Word of God with the words of Scripture." E. Lewis agrees with that. We heard his statement: "Without a doubt our fathers came very close to Bibliolatry; they could make no distinc-

305) Hofmann: "Following the promptings of the spirit," G. Aulén: "Ein Gott, von dessen Offenbarung nur als in der Vergangenheit geschehen gesprochen werden kann, ist kein lebendiger Gott. Man will Ernst machen mit dem Charakter des christlichen Gottesglaubens, dass er *Geistglaube* ist, und laesst den 'Geist' den immer gegenwaertigen Charakter der Gottesoffenbarung sein. Dieser Gedanke tritt . . . in Gegensatz zu dem alten Biblizismus und seiner Tendenz, die Gottesoffenbarung in und mit der Bibel 'abgeschlossen' sein zu lassen." (*Op. cit.*, p. 386.)

tion between the Word of God and the words of men by which that Word was given." H. L. Willett finds "portions in the Bible which are worthy to be called the Word of God to man." But "it is unfortunate that the Bible has been called the Word of God" (*op. cit.*, p. 289). Yes, and "it would be unchristian," says W. Herrmann, "if it meant the acknowledgment of any chance sentence of the Scriptures as God's Word" (*op. cit.*, p. 58). To be sure, "Scripture contains the Word of God," Willett goes on to say; and the *Luth. Church Quart.* and all the rest, the Unitarians, too, subscribe to that. But that is as far as they will go. They refuse to operate with the words of Scripture as such. They want to operate with the "Word of God."

Then tell us what this Word of God is. We get various answers. Some say it is God's revelation in history, what God did for man's salvation, "the succession of events in which and through which God made Himself known to men."—When God tells men what His actions mean, you can use the term "Word of God." But you cannot call the actions God's Word.³⁰⁶—Very well, others say, but God did explain these actions in Scripture: However—they add at once—you cannot find this meaning, the Word of God, in all the words of Scripture. Only certain portions of Scripture are the Word of God. Which are these portions? Dr. Haas told us: "What the theologians call the Word of God, namely, the *spiritual content* of the Bible, is an authority of freedom." (In *What is Lutheranism?*, p. 176, he says: "There must be a clear distinction kept in mind between the Word of God and the Bible. . . . The Bible is the Word of God because it contains the Word of God," because of its "spiritual content.") Others, somewhat more specific, say the Word of God contained in the Bible is the Gospel; others, more indefinitely, the "Living Christ" (*Luth. Church Quart.*), the "Living Word" (E. Lewis). Now, we are willing, very willing to call the Gospel the Word of God. But we also call the Law God's Word. And the moderns have never given us a reason why only the Gospel should be God's Word, not the Law. The Law was certainly spoken by God. The distinction the moderns make here is utterly arbitrary, not based in Scripture nor in common sense. Nor have the moderns ever

306) *The Christian Century* is not liberal enough to identify actions with words. "The concept 'Word of God' was one of the most difficult upon which the conference (World Conference, Edinburgh) expended its effort. Happily there appeared to be no literalists in the conference. . . . The Word itself—what is it? 'It is ever living and dynamic and inseparable from God's activity. God reveals Himself to us by what He does.' I like this immensely; only I wish it had not been made obscure by the far-fetched necessity of connecting it up with the concept 'Word.' . . . It overstrains the meaning of 'Word' to make it bear the meaning of action." (Sept. 8, 1937, p. 1096.)

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told us just how much of the Bible is Gospel. Nor will they tell us which portions of the Bible have a spiritual content. We believe that everything in the Bible has a spiritual purpose. And we are waiting for the moderns to publish a list enumerating the spiritual portions.

And if we agree with the moderns that this and that section has a spiritual content, may we call these sections the Word of God? Oh, no, they tell us; these bare words, these words written by John or Paul, are not in themselves God's Word. You must separate the wheat from the chaff, distinguish between the form (the words) and the content of John 3:16 and Rom. 3:28 and find out, with the help of your Christian consciousness, etc., what the spiritual content is: that part of John 3:16 you have a right to call the "Word of God." "To us the 'Word of God' is the validly spiritual content which rises unmistakably in Scriptural utterances and in the pronouncements of Christlike Seers." (V. Ferm, in *What is Lutheranism?* p. 294.) But be sure you do not make a mistake. You would be mistaken if you relied on the bare words.

Perhaps K. Barth and his followers can clear up the matter. Barth teaches first, with the others, that not everything in the Bible is God's Word. "The Word of God is within the Bible." There is "a margin where the Bible ceases to be Bible" (*The Word of God and the Word of Man*, pp. 43, 65). There are places in the Bible "wo die Bibel aufhoert, Bibel zu sein" (*Das Wort Gottes und die Theologie*, p. 77). Then what about those portions which really are Bible? Barth and his followers tell us, secondly, that not even these portions are absolutely God's Word. They become God's Word and they cease to be God's Word, depending on something else. Barth's classical phrase is: That is God's Word, "das mich findet." Again: "We said of church proclamation that from time to time it must become *God's Word*. And we said the same of the Bible, that it must from time to time become *God's Word* . . . in virtue of divine decision." (*The Doctrine of the Word of God*, p. 131 f. See H. Sasse, *Here We Stand*, p. 161.) Barth actually teaches that these Gospel passages are not the Word of God but only become the Word of God under certain circumstances. One of his followers, Adolf Keller, assures us that that is Barthianism's definition of the Word of God in the Bible. "When we call the Bible the Word of God, we are not referring to the human interpretation of God's Word, but only to that act of faith by which we believe in the God who speaks in the Bible wherever, whenever, and through whatever words He will." (*Religion and Revelation*. See further CONC. THEOL. MTHLY., VI, p. 715.) So, then, the Barthian "Word of God" is not something on which you can lay your finger. A lot of psychological operations are necessary in order to make

it assume some kind of form, and the form assumed ever remains a hazy, evanescent phantasm. In the words of Dr. D. S. Clark: "Briefly stated, the new cult teaches that the Word of God is the spiritual impression or influence made by the agency of the Holy Spirit on the mind of the man as he reads the Scripture. It is sort of an invisible, intangible, indefinite, psychological something which grips the mind while it uses the Scriptures as means or medium of instruction and inspiration. It is this that is put in the place of the written Word." (See CONC. THEOL. MTHLY., IX, p. 779.) And Barth has many mates and followers. The leading theologians of today are asking us to throw the idea that the written word of Scripture is the Word of God to the moles and bats and to operate with a "Word of God" which has no definite and no lasting form.³⁰⁷)

And making the "Word of God" still more indefinite, they tell us that it is found and heard also outside of Scripture. In some crisis these men will say: "Wir bekamen ein Wort Gottes." "Das

307) A few examples: W. Herrmann: "At any moment of our inner development, therefore, we can point to some parts of the Scriptures which do not have for us the significance of the Word of God. But this does not rule out the possibility that these very parts of the Scriptures may have possessed that significance for other people or may still possess it, or that they may one day possess it for us as well." (*Op. cit.*, p. 59.) G. Harkness: "Some parts of the Bible have more of the voice of God than others. . . . Read in faith, the Bible is the Word of God." (*Op. cit.*, p. 70 f.) *The Luth. Church Quart.*, 1935, p. 260 ff.: "Seekers for authority in Scripture cannot find it in isolated portions and texts of the Bible. . . . Finality is found in the final analysis, within the soul. . . . Here the teacher of religion finds his authority. He speaks with confidence not because he quotes a scripture, but because the Word of God has found him." C. Stange: "Der Buchstabe der Schrift ist erst dann Gottes Wort, wenn er in der Wirkung auf uns lebendig geworden ist." (*Op. cit.*, p. 193.) Cryptic phrases used by Professor Homrighausen: "Far from being a mere mechanical phonograph record, the Bible is rather a living interpretation" (italics in original). "We must remember that the Word of God is *God Himself*, disclosed, disclosed first in real historical events. . . . The Holy Spirit makes that Word real and contemporaneous to us through the Bible. We do not choose the Word of God. The Word of God chooses you and me. . . . The Word is its own criterion." (In the *Presbyterian*, March 24, 1938.) — And this is not a "new cult." Barth popularized it, but before him Coleridge and his school, which developed into the Broad Churchism of England, "held that to be the Word of God which finds a man or comes home to him with a feeling of light and warmth. Thus it exalted in a more or less capricious way what appealed to man as a detached unit by himself." (*The Presby. Guardian*, June, 1939.) And before that, Zwingli had the same idea. "Das Wort, das gehoert wird, ist keineswegs das Wort, durch welches wir glauben; denn wenn das gelesene oder gehoerte Wort glaeubig machen koennte, wuerden wir all' glaeubig sein. Das Glaubenswort haftet im Geiste der Glaebigen, es selbst wird von niemand gerichtet, sondern von ihm wird das aeussere Wort gerichtet." Oekolompad: "Was die aeusserlichen Gemuete ueber das Getoen haben, das haben sie von dem innerlichen Gemuete und vom innerlichen Worte." (See Rudelbach, *Ref. Luthert u. Union*, p. 118 f.)

jetzt geschehende Wort Gottes in der Barmer Synode." "The claim has already been advanced that the Barmen Confession was inspired by the Holy Spirit and is consequently a Word of God." (H. Sasse, *Here We Stand*, p. 169.) Dr. Moffatt believes that "the revelation is communicated afresh to successive generations." (See *CONC. THEOL. MTHLY.*, XII, p. 304.) And God gives His Word not only by means of Scripture but also through the *viva vox* of the Church. — Now, what is the "Word of God?" Is it the *Schriftganze*? That would not help us much, since nobody has yet told us exactly what the "whole of Scripture" comprises. And the confusion grows when we find that while some moderns somehow identify the two concepts,³⁰⁸ others tell us the "Word of God" also comprises the continuing revelation, and just what that is they will not tell us. If the *Schriftganze* is hazy, indefinite, and absolutely unreliable, the "Word of God" is doubly hazy, indefinite, and absolutely unreliable.

But the moderns claim the right to operate with, and ask men to base their faith on, this "Word of God." They will not operate with the literal word of Scripture. That would be legalistic. They want the right to pick and choose, to decide for themselves what in Scripture is really worth while. They demand that in the name of spiritual liberty. P. Althaus: "Wir sind in dem Hoeren auf das Wort Gottes in dem biblischen Wort von diesem letzteren als Menschenworte frei" — submitting to the Word of God in the Biblical word, we are not bound by the Biblical word as such, for that is the word of man. (*Op. cit.*, p. 61.) E. Schaeder: "The Spirit-wrought faith applies a sifting process to the Bible word. Through this sifting process it gets the Word of God." (*Theozentrische Theologie*, II, p. 69.) G. T. Ladd: "The Christian consciousness, the consciousness of the Church, discerns the Word of God" contained in the Bible. (*Op. cit.*, p. 453.) Recall Dr. Flack's statement: "The Word of God is greater than the Book. . . . The standard by which all dogmas and teachers are to be judged is not the Scriptures standing utterly alone, but the Word of God attested and authenticated in the Spirit-filled life of the early Church and projected through the centuries from faith to faith in the corporate mind of the true Church." (*The Lutheran*, Sept. 24 and Oct. 1, 1936.) "Faith refuses," says G. Weh-

308) E. Lewis: "The question is whether out of the New Testament in its entirety we can gather the Word of God. Precisely this is what the Church in its collective life has been able to do." (*Op. cit.*, p. 151.) C. H. Dodd tells us "something about the way in which the Bible as a whole may become the 'Word of God' to us" (*op. cit.*, p. 294). *Luth. Church Quart.*, 1936, p. 246: "The Bible is the Word of God not because of any theoretical explanation of the method of divine inspiration, but because as one connected harmonious, authentic recorded whole the sacred Scriptures testify of Christ."

rung, "to make a legalistic use of individual passages or of the entire Scripture. . . . We must be in accord with Luther and his spirit of freedom and apply this touchstone to every word of Scripture: does it give expression to the Gospel as Gospel, the pure and clear Gospel?" (*Op. cit.*, pp. 306, 308.)

This, then, is the charter of liberty proclaimed by the moderns: Having renounced the tyranny of the words of Scripture as such, we vow allegiance to the Word of God contained in them; and our Christian consciousness shall tell us how much of Scripture is the Word of God to which we can submit.

We are asked to come in under this charter of liberty. We cannot do so, for three reasons.

TH. ENGELDER

(To be continued)

Sermon Study on Rom. 14:1-9

Eisenach Epistle for the Twentieth Sunday after Trinity

In the first part of the Epistle to the Romans, chaps. 1-11, Paul sets forth the central doctrine of justification by faith in the vicarious atonement of Christ. In the second part, chaps. 12-16, from which our epistle lesson is taken, the Apostle indicates in the form of a lengthy exhortation the lessons for our Christian life and conduct implied in this glorious doctrine. In the paragraph preceding our epistle, he had urged all Christians, particularly in view of the close approach of the Last Day, to cast off the works of darkness, to put on the armor of light, and not to make provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof, Rom. 13:12, 14. This latter exhortation is well explained by Chrysostom, "As the Apostle forbade not drinking, but drunkenness, not marrying, but chambering, so he does not forbid providing for the flesh, but providing for it to the point of stirring up desires, as by going beyond one's actual needs." And Theophylact says, "Unto health, but not unto wantonness, unbridled lust, provide for the flesh."

Now, how far may one go in providing for one's flesh? Where does the God-pleasing provision end? Where does catering to the lusts of the flesh begin? Just what may we do, and what must we avoid to walk honestly? Since the Apostle warns so persistently against excesses in eating and drinking, just where are the limits to be drawn? These were the questions engaging the minds of the Christians at Rome, and the conflicting views threatened to cause disturbance and eventually disruption within the congregation. The Apostle enters at length upon this problem; teaches his readers the correct attitude toward matters of indif-