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

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It is in this manner that pastoral conferences may well do their work along the lines of institutes, in studying the Word of God in its many practical applications in life situations, the many professional relationships as well as the doctrinal implications. The number of topics which could be treated in this fashion is practically inexhaustible, and corporate study conducted in this fashion will certainly lead to a deeper appreciation of the Bible as the source of all doctrine and the one norm of life.

—♦— P. E. KRETZMANN

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

(Continued)

We are asked to come in under the charter of liberty proclaimed by the moderns which calls for freedom from "the tyranny of words." We cannot do so, for three reasons.

First, we do not feel that Verbal Inspiration imposes a legalistic yoke on us. It does indeed require of us unquestioning acceptance of all the statements of Scripture. On that we and the moderns are agreed. We are bound by every word of Scripture. But we do not resent, nor rebel against, this bondage. It is a holy bondage. We rejoice in it. Why? Verbal Inspiration has taught us that these words of Scripture are God's words. In every word of Scripture our glorious Lord, our gracious God, is speaking.

We can understand the attitude of the moderns. They conceive of the Bible as a more or less human product. "Die heilige Schrift," R. F. Grau and the rest say, "ist uns nicht mehr ein grosser vom Himmel herabgesandter Gesetzeskodex." But we know that it actually did come down from heaven. "Holy Scripture did not grow here on earth." (Luther, VII:2095.) Therefore we give it honor and reverence and gladly obey every word of it.

The moderns are laboring under the delusion that ever so many of its statements are erroneous, that ever so many of its teachings need restatement and development. Verbal Inspiration has freed us from this delusion and superstition. We have learned that God's Book is perfect. We fear to lay unholy hands upon it. We tremble at God's Word. "As for me, every verse makes the world too small for me." (Luther, XX:788.)

No, no; we do not feel that the command to "consent to the words of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Tim. 6:3) puts us under a degrading bondage. When God addresses His servants, they say: "Speak; for Thy servant heareth," 1 Sam. 3:10; "Thou hast the words of eternal life," John 6:68. When we read and preach holy



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Scripture, we know that we are dealing with "the oracles of God," 1 Pet. 4:11, and our hearts are filled with holy awe and humble obedience.<sup>309</sup>

That would make us slaves, blindly obeying their master. We like that word, bondservant, slave. Paul liked it: "Παῦλος δούλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ," Rom. 1:1. He bestows that title of honor on the Christians: "δουλωθέντες τῷ θεῷ," Rom. 6:22; "δουλεύουσιν, . . . ὑπακούη," Rom. 16:18, 19. Lenski: "Acting the part of slaves who obey as slaves, obey without question every word of 'our Lord Jesus Christ,' to whom as *our* Lord all of us (you Romans and I) are slaves." Nor is the word "law" an evil word. It is high praise when it is said of a man: "The *law* of truth was in his mouth," Mal. 2:6, and the child of God declares: "I will delight myself in Thy *statutes*," Ps. 119:16. It does not jar us when Jesus bids us to "observe all things whatsoever I have *commanded* you," Matt. 28:20. The moderns declare that to observe all the commands laid down in Scripture or any of them, to follow scrupulously every or any teaching, and to stick to every word of the Bible is "legalistic." We say: No! That is yielding holy obedience to our Lord, who gave us all of Scripture by verbal inspiration. But that would make the Bible the "textbook of doctrine," a "manual," "a code of laws of faith" ("Sammlung von Glaubensgesetzen" (Hofmann, *Schriftbeweis*, I, p. 9)! That is what we want, definite teachings, inviolable teachings, set down by God Himself. We do not hesitate to say: Holy Scripture is "das *Lehrbuch* der christlichen Religion" (Pieper, *Chr. Dog.*, I, p. 79). We are not horrified when J. G. Machen declares: "The Bible is the supreme textbook on the subject of faith." (*What Is Faith*, p. 45.) "Auch unsere Vaeter sagen: 'Die Heiligen Schriften sind die unveraenderlichen Statuten der Kirche. Und nach diesen Statuten hat die Kirche ihr Handeln, ihr Tun und Lassen zu richten und alles in der Gemeinde zu beurteilen. In jedem Stueck soll sich die Gemeinde erkundigen nach dem Willen ihres Herren in der Schrift.'" (*Theol. Quartalschrift*, 1942, p. 31.) "When Tertullian speaks of the Scriptures as an 'Instrument,' a legal document, his terminology has an express warrant in the Scriptures' own usage of *tōrāh*, 'law,' to designate their entire content." (B. B. Warfield, *Revelation and*

309) James Bannerman: "The modern theologian comes to the Bible and sits over its contents in the attitude of a judge who is to decide for himself what in it is true and worthy to be believed and what is false and deserving to be rejected, not in the attitude of the disciple who, within the limits of the inspired record, feels himself at Jesus' feet to receive every word that cometh out of His mouth. The assurance that the Bible is the Word of God, and not simply containing it in more or less of its human language, is one fitted to solemnize the soul with a holy fear and a devout submission to its declarations as the very utterances of God." (See B. Manly, *The Bible Doctrine of Inspiration*, p. 16.)



*Inspiration*, p. 33.) We do not at all feel degraded when we declare: "Ich bin gefangen; I am bound; I cannot escape it. The text stands there too mightily." (Luther, XV:2050.) Slaves of God, captives of His Word, bound by a text of Scripture—we are proud of this situation and condition.

But *blind* obedience and *enforced* obedience and the like! The moderns are very emphatic on this point. "It is analogous to the Roman Church doctrine which requires from the individual believer the same axiomatic obedience to the teachings of the Church, a confidence in advance, an antecedent *sacrificium intellectus*, before one can come into contact with the contents of these teachings. This in both cases is what may be called blind authority and blind obedience." (E. Brunner, *The Word and the World*, p. 92.) *Blind* obedience—yes; we accept any *dictum* of Scripture unquestioningly, even when the matter is beyond our understanding. But not blind obedience if that means that the verbal inspirationists have no knowledge of the matter presented in Scripture and give it little thought.<sup>310</sup> And *enforced* obedience? Absolutely no. The Christian gives willing obedience to the Word of God. The moderns seem to be entirely ignorant of the true state of affairs. As soon as Scripture (by what it says on Verbal Inspiration) has convinced a man that it is God's Word, the Christian no longer asks: Must I accept these statements? When he hears that God is assuring him that John 3:16 and all other Bible statements are His words, the sinner's heart leaps for joy and loves every single Scripture declaration. Have the moderns so little knowledge of the power of God's Word and particularly of the power of the Gospel? "The advocates of Verbal Inspiration do not set up Scripture as a 'paper Pope,' demanding external subjection without inner conviction, but Scripture is to them a book which—just because it is God's own Word—itself works faith and *eo ipso* willing and joyous acceptance through the operation of the Holy Spirit inherent in it." (Pieper, *op. cit.*, p. 365.) "Do these men not know that there is an obedience which is produced by the Gospel, an obedience which finds itself bound to the whole Word of its God?" (Dr. M. Reu, *Kirchl. Zeitschrift*, 1939, p. 190.)

And here is Christian liberty! Spiritual liberty springs from

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310) M'Intosh on "the misrepresentation that the upholders of the Bible claim adopt a slavish literalism, maintain a 'cast-iron theory'": "No intelligent defender of the truth of Scripture has ever advocated such a slavish literalism. There is a literalism which is not slavish but reverent, not forced but scientific: even that which leads to a scrupulous carefulness to ascertain, by correct exegesis, the precise meaning of the words of God," etc. This talk of "slavish literalism is nothing else than reckless and culpable misrepresentation, and a discreditable caricature of that position." (*Is Christ Infallible?* p. 315.)



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obedience to God. The knowledge and acceptance of the truth makes us free (John 8:31 f.). Liberated from the bondage of error and sin and endowed with the Spirit of God, we are free to follow His leading and enjoy something of God's liberty. For once we agree with *The Christian Century* (Feb. 11, 1942): "We are not morally free until we have surrendered our human will to the will of God. . . . 'Make me a captive, Lord,' sang George Matheson, 'and then I shall be free.'" Slaves we are of God, and God's freedmen. Let us change Haas's statement "What the theologian calls the Word of God, namely, the spiritual content of the Bible, is an authority of freedom" into: "The Word of God, Holy Scripture, is an authority of freedom. . . . It does no injury to our moral freedom." It gives us spiritual freedom.—Spiritual freedom is not license. Dr. Haas rejects "the claims of a mechanically infallible Bible, verbally perfect" and appeals to the "authority of freedom." The Christian is not free to subject Scripture to his criticism. It is not true that "Christian liberty knows how to distinguish between Scripture and Scripture, between the shell and the content," etc. (Sherer.) That is wicked license, abuse of freedom, anarchy, lawlessness. (The moderns have a horror of "legalism," "legalistic treatment of Scripture." Had they not better ask themselves whether their treatment of Scripture is "legal," right, and permissible? Let them talk less about "legalistic" and be more concerned about their illegal practices, their lawless treatment of Scripture.) But he enjoys true spiritual liberty who is able to give free assent to every word of Scripture.

What about the charge that Verbal Inspiration hampers the spirit and induces spiritual sluggishness, yea, the death of all theological aspirations? ("The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life"!) The fact is that this doctrine—as every other Scripture doctrine—carries divine power. We need mention only one thing. It gives the believer the wonderful spiritual strength to suppress the strong carnal impulse to belittle God's Word and exercise mastery over it. It causes him to honor and magnify every word of Scripture.

And now for the charge of "bibliolatry" and related crimes. The moderns do not mean to say that we fall down before this Book and pray to it as though it were God. What they mean is that we receive every word of it as though it were God's own word and yield absolute obedience to it. We plead guilty to the charge. The verbal-inspirationist Luther thus dealt with Scripture. "Halte von dieser Schrift als von dem allerhoechsten, edelsten Heiligtum." For it is God's own word: "You are so to deal with it that you think that God Himself is saying this" (XIV:4; III:21). For the same reason the verbal-inspirationists Paul and Peter regarded Scripture as a holy thing, a sacrosanct volume, ended



with all the majesty and authority of the eternal God. See 1 Cor. 2:13; 1 Thess. 2:13; 2 Pet. 1:21. If you "identify Scripture and God's Word" as Pieper does (*op. cit.*, I, p. 256), as M. Loy does: "The Holy Scriptures are the very Word of God in matter and in form. 'All Scripture is given by inspiration of God.' In the Scriptures the Sovereign Lord of all has revealed His righteousness and His gracious will in *His own words*" (*Dist. Doctrines*, 1893, p. 6), as Luther and Paul and all the others do, how can you refrain from fearing, loving, and honoring these words as you fear, love, and honor God above all things? And we shall say something in addition. In a certain respect Scripture and God are identified. Scripture itself so identifies it. "Christus ehrte in allen Dingen seinen Vater. Darum kehrte er so angelegentlich die Schrift hervor. Denn er sah in der Schrift nichts anderes als das Wort und den Willen seines Vaters. . . . So tritt statt des Subjekts 'die Schrift' ohne weiteres das andere Subjekt 'Gott' in die Rede ein. 'Die Schrift sagt zu Pharao: Eben darum habe ich [das ist Gott], dich erwecket, dass ich an dir meine Macht erzeuge.'" (G. Stoeckhardt; *Lehre und Wehre*, 1886, p. 212.)<sup>311</sup> Study also this statement of Dr. Pieper: "There is another series of Bible passages which must not be overlooked in connection with the question whether Scripture and the Word of God are identified or not. These are the passages which state that Scripture directs the course of all events in the world. All that has happened and will happen, from the beginning to the end of the world, must and will take place according to what is *written*. Thus Matt. 7:22; John 17:12; Matt. 26:54; Luke 24:44 ff.: 'that the Scriptures might be fulfilled.'" (*Op. cit.*, p. 258.) Scripture is clothed with all the majesty of God! — No, we do not worship the paper and the printer's ink, but we do give the words of Scripture, which are God's own words, the holy reverence which is due God. If bibliolatry be that, let there be more of it.

And what is this puerile talk about a "book-religion"? G. Wehrung talks about it: "Cornill has shown that with the solemn reception of Deuteronomy the book-religion was born.

311) M'Intosh: "Yea, so absolute is Paul on this—the trustworthiness, irrefragableness, and divine authority of Holy Writ—that, like Christ, the Scripture is by him personalized and identified with God. 'The Scripture saith unto Pharaoh' (Rom. 9:17), while in Genesis it is the Lord that actually utters the words. . . . And in Gal. 3:8 he says: 'The Scripture, foreseeing.' Thus personal powers and actions are ascribed to Scripture, because God and His Word are identified. Human language could not surpass this in expressing the fact that the Bible is the Word of God, true, trustworthy, and of divine authority." (*Op. cit.*, p. 403.) *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 1938, p. 16: "When contemplating the Bible's own claims to inspiration, of great significance indeed are those passages wherein God and His Word are treated as one and the same. Gal. 3:8; Rom. 9:17; Ex. 9:16. . . . God's Word, whether spoken or written, is the identification of Himself."



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We add: the legalistic book-religion." (*Geschichte und Glaube*, p. 302.) Many others have taken up the cry.<sup>312</sup> The cry does not disconcert us. Our Christian religion is founded upon a Book. A. W. Pink declares in the opening sentence of his book *The Divine Inspiration of the Bible*: "Christianity is the religion of a Book. Christianity is based upon the impregnable rock of Holy Scripture." We are not ashamed to have our religion called a Book religion. Christianity derives its teachings from the Bible; and from the Bible it gets the power to translate these teachings into practice, into a living service. The Bible produces saving faith and a holy life. To be sure, the Christian religion does not consist in memorizing certain doctrines. And the Christian religion is not a mechanical affair. We know all that. But we also know that the only source of true spirituality is the Bible. A spirituality which flows from "the living Christ" apart from the Bible is false. "The words that I speak unto you," the words of My Book, "they are spirit and they are life," John 6:63.<sup>313</sup>

312) Harnack: "We do not believe in a book, but in Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior." (See *Lehre und Wehre*, 1886, p. 345.) F. Buechsel deplores "dieses Buchwerden der Offenbarung" and speaks of the dangers that must follow "diesem Vorgang der Schriftwerdung" (*Die Offenbarung Gottes*, pp. 62, 67). *The Lutheran*, Nov. 22, 1928: "We are not founded upon any book nor even on the Scriptures. Christianity is founded upon the living Christ."

313) The thoughts of this and the preceding paragraph are well expressed by B. B. Warfield: "What this church doctrine is, it is scarcely necessary minutely to describe. It will suffice to remind ourselves that it looks upon the Bible as an oracular book—as the Word of God in such a sense that whatever it says God says—not a book, then, in which one may by searching find some word of God but a book which may be frankly appealed to at any point with the assurance that whatever it may be found to say, that is the Word of God. . . . We know how, as Christian men, we approach this Holy Book—how unquestioningly we receive its statements of fact, bow before its enunciations of duty, tremble before its threatenings, and rest upon its promises. . . . As we sit in the midst of our pupils in the Sabbath school or in the center of our circle at home or perchance at some bedside of sickness or of death, or as we meet our fellow men amid the busy work of the world, hemmed in by temptation or weighed down with care, and would fain put beneath him some firm support and stay: in what spirit do we turn to the Bible then? With what confidence do we commend its every word to those whom we would make partakers of its comfort or of its strength? In such scenes as these is revealed the vital faith of the people of God in the surety and trustworthiness of the Word of God." (*Op. cit.*, p. 52 f.) And J. A. Cottam: "These advocates of such looseness charge us that we are worshipping a book. They charge us with being guilty of 'bibliolatry,' a nasty slur which is altogether beside the point. We worship no book, but we do worship the God who sent the Book, and be it ever remembered, that is no true worship of God that slights the Book He has given. If we honor God, we shall honor His Word, and we shall be jealous for that Word." . . . It produces "a holier life, a more pronounced separation from the world, a Christian integrity in business, political honesty, domestic fidelity, and a Christian devotion to the interests of others." (*Know the Truth*, p. 229 f.) That is our Book religion.



We are going to remain God's bondsmen, bound to His Word, bound to every letter of it. To that Verbal Inspiration binds us. Is that legalism? Legalism is an evil thing. If we should ever become guilty of it; if we should, for instance, demand acceptance of this doctrine merely as a matter of legal requirement and not preach it as good news, as a saving doctrine, revealing the grace of God and winning the joyous assent of men, we want the moderns to call us to order for that. But when they call us legalists and literalists and bibliolaters because we are bound by every letter of Scripture, they are out of order. Rather, we shall let them do that and consider these nasty slurs high praise. Bishop C. Gore meant it as dispraise when he wrote: "Luther 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.) May we ever receive this dispraise, this high praise, from the moderns! When they ask us to subscribe to their new charter of liberty, we shall tell them that we have a better one. In the words of Machen: "The Christian man finds in the Bible the very Word of God. Let it not be said that dependence upon a book is a dead or an artificial thing. The Reformation of the sixteenth century was founded upon the authority of the Bible; yet it set the world aflame. Dependence upon a word of man would be slavish, but dependence upon God's Word is life. Dark and gloomy would be the world if we were left to our own devices and had no blessed Word of God. The Bible to the Christian is not a burdensome law, but the very Magna Charta of Christian liberty." (*Christianity and Liberalism*, p. 78.)<sup>314)</sup>

314) In the preceding paragraphs the phrases "puerile talk," "nasty slurs," have been used. Rightly so. It seems that the moderns cannot write one chapter on Verbal Inspiration without "becoming utterly unreasonable and illogical" (Pieper's phrase). The present chapter—"legalistic"—is no exception. First and foremost, he is a poor theologian who is ignorant of, or ignores, the truth that there is an obedience to God's Word which proceeds from the Gospel, that it is the Gospel which wins men for Verbal Inspiration.—Then, there is sophistry back of the statements: The Bible is not a defining dictionary (Best), no collection of doctrinal statements, not a legal code. Half truths are untruths.—There is sophistry, the employment of false opposition, in the statements that Christianity is not founded on a book, but on the living Christ, that "the Christian's allegiance is not to a creed or a code or an organization; it is personal loyalty to the Lord" (T. A. Kantonen, *The Message of the Church to the World of Today*, pp. 70, 111). Both are true: Loyalty to Scripture is loyalty to Christ and vice versa. The same applies, in a measure, to the statement of the Pittsburgh Agreement: "The Bible is primarily not a code of doctrines, still less



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a code of morals, but the history of God's revelation for the salvation of mankind." And Prof. Grau's argumentation "Let us be on our guard lest we follow the footsteps of our orthodox fathers of the seventeenth century, who, after Luther had freed us from the law of works that ruled in the Middle Ages, established a law of doctrine (*Lehrgesetz*), made of Scripture a large manual of doctrine and in support of that invented their inspiration doctrine. . . . For faith has to do not with doctrine or dogma but with our God Himself and the Son of the Father, Jesus Christ" deserved Professor Stoeckhardt's reply: "Das ist wahrlich ein heilloses Raisonnement ueber Lehre, Dogma, Dogmatik." (*Lehre und Wehre*, 1893, p. 328.) — It is pettifoggery when E. Brunner says: "The doctrine of verbal inspiration . . . ruled out the decision of faith." (*The Mediator*, p. 343.) That misrepresents our teaching. H. F. Rall misrepresents our teaching when he describes our "theory as not asking for understanding or conviction but simply submission." (*A Faith for Today*, p. 232.) Dr. Haas writes: "The general attitude of Fundamentalists is to exalt the Bible in a legal way. It is often presented as a code to be followed mechanically." (*What Is Lutheranism?* p. 192.) When the Fundamentalists present the Bible as a code which must be followed, do they really say: to be followed *mechanically*? The "often" does not save the statement from being a misrepresentation. — In all fairness the moderns should not compel us to waste our time in dealing with the insinuation that we view the Bible "als einen vom Himmel gefallenen Gesetzkodex." We dealt with that insinuation by declaring that for a fact the Bible did not grow upon earth. Dr. Pieper takes it up from a different angle and has to waste six lines by pointing out: "Den Vertretern der Verbalinspiration ist so etwas nie eingefallen. Vielmehr lehren sie sehr klar, dass die Heilige Schrift nicht vom Himmel gefallen, sondern hier auf Erden durch Menschen und in menschlicher Sprache aus Eingebung des Heiligen Geistes geschrieben sei." (*Op. cit.*, p. 365.) And McIntosh is right in calling this talk of "slavish literalism" "culpable misrepresentation," "a discreditable caricature." — Analyze the statement of Dr. Fosdick: "At times this endeavor to make the letter of the Bible a binding law has produced the deepest shames and tragedies that Christianity has known, . . . 'Compel them to come in' (Luke 14:23) used as a commandment requiring religious persecution — such are a few samples of the cruel consequences of legalism." (*The Modern Use of the Bible*, p. 239.) It is true that Luke 14:23 has been misunderstood and misapplied in the way indicated. But if we remember that in the parlance of Dr. Fosdick "legalism," "making the letter of the Bible a binding law," is a description of Verbal Inspiration, we shall have to say that Dr. Fosdick is saying something which is not in accord with the facts. Verbal Inspiration does "make the letter of the Bible" a binding law. But Verbal Inspiration cannot be made responsible for the fact that men occasionally misinterpret the letter, the real meaning, of the Bible. — Analyze Dr. Ferm's statement. "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.) Surely, the "spiritual content" is what counts. But how can we get the "spiritual content" without the letter? Is the "spiritual content" floating in the air and not contained in the letter? — Analyze the concept "Word of God." It cannot be analyzed. It is too hazy and vague, void of definite meaning, indefinite. "Word of God," like the *Schriftganze*, is one of those *sine mente soni* with which modern theology likes to operate. The exact sciences refuse to deal with meaningless terms. Modern theology is not an exact science. — Finally, when the moderns have established what the *Schriftganze* or the "Word of God" teaches, do they tell their people that it does not matter whether these divine truths are accepted or rejected? We have never heard them say so. They demand acceptance of these teachings. But would that not be "legalistic"? In their own interest they ought to put a stop to this talk about "legalism."



The second reason why we refuse to come in under the charter of liberty proclaimed by the moderns is that it establishes spiritual slavery. The moderns have freed themselves from the authority of Scripture but have put on instead the shackles of human authority. They are not willing to submit to the absolute authority of God and His Word but are very willing to make poor man their authority. For one thing, they make "science" their authority in the question of the inerrancy of Scripture. Where Scripture is in conflict with "science," they unquestioningly accept the *dictum* of the scientist, the philosopher, and the higher critic. If you ask them why they charge Scripture with making these innumerable historical and scientific blunders, they tell us: Why, this scientist, that higher critic, says so. They seem to be unable to think that the scientist may be wrong. They hold "science" in such high reverence that they consider it a *crimen laesae maiestatis* when the verbal-inspirationist declares: Scripture is right even though it goes against all "the established results of science" and "the best thought of the day." They are ever ready to uphold the claims of science over against the claim of Scripture. When we urge this claim of Scripture, they begin to rail about "slavish literalism," "legalistic subservience" to Scripture, while they themselves pay abject homage to the scientist and higher critic. What did Dr. Stoeckhardt tell them? "Will you say that secular history gives the lie to Scripture? . . . Are we to correct the Bible history on the authority of occasional scraps in the ancient tradition or the obscure language of the monuments, which are partly contradictory? . . . Das waere Wahnwitz." (*Lehre und Wehre*, 1886, p. 315.)

They are slaves, slaves of men, and they are proud of their slavery. In the expressive phrase of W. Moeller, modern theology is happy to act as the flunky and trainbearer of science. "Die heutige Theologie verbeugt sich vor jeder Wissenschaft oder auch oft Pseudowissenschaft und Naturphilosophie, die den Mund etwas voll nimmt, und erklaert sich bereit, Schleppentraegerdienste zu tun." (*Um die Inspiration der Bibel*, p. 36.)

The moderns like to raise the charge of biblicism, bibliolatry, against us. They charge us with having too much respect for the Bible. Recall G. Aulén's invective against "Luther's slavish dependence on Bible texts," against "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." (*Das Chr. Gottesbild*, pp. 251, 255, 386.) These men need to be told what sort of latria they are committing. Erik



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Floreen tells them. In his critique of "The 'New Theology' in Sweden" he writes: "Dr. Aulén doesn't seem to regard the Bible as being inspired in any special sense at all. To him Scripture is the Word of God no more nor less than other Christian testimonies in the form of preaching, writing, and song, rendered throughout the history of the Church. Furthermore, it would be legalistic to ground our faith on an outward authority as on that of the Bible, he says. . . . What the liberal theologians fondly point out as a recent progress of revelation is, mainly, a renewed pursuit of that elusive phantom, a theological 'vetenskap,' or science, that would find favor with arrogant human reason. . . . Now and then one of our own writers uses the ridiculous expression, 'Bibliolatry.' Would not someone kindly coin two additional 'latries' to denote the worship of human reason and of 'vedenskapen'?" (See the *Luth. Companion*, Feb. 9, 1939.)

"Dependence upon God's Word is life, but dependence upon a word of man would be slavish." (Machen.) We would rather be bondmen of God and His Word than slaves of men.

Another point. The moderns, who condemn our acceptance of any statement of Scripture as final, stigmatizing that as "legalism" and "slavish literalism," ask us to bow before the authority of the Church and of the theologian. The Church, they say, is the final authority. Recall the statement of Dr. E. E. Flack (hundreds of others could be submitted): "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 Scriptures 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*, Sept. 24, Oct. 1, 1936.) It is, then, the Church which gives Scripture its final, real authority. The real authority is the Church. But the Church is made up of men. The moderns are actually asking us to rely for the truth and certainty of our doctrine on the findings and pronouncements of—mere men!

They will even put it this way: the men to tell you what God really revealed in Scripture are the theologians; the common Christian is incapable of finding that out for himself; he must ask the guild of the theologians.—We can understand why the moderns take that position. According to them, what counts is not the words of Scripture but the "Word of God," "Scripture as a whole." And it takes uncommon skill to locate this elusive "Schriftganze," to unravel this enigmatic "Word of God." F. Buechsel tells us, with a sober face, that it "calls for a great measure of



theological ability to find this Word of God, this whole of Scripture." (*Die Offenbarung Gottes*, p.112.) These men advertise themselves as "specialists." As Dr. Pieper puts it: "It has become the fashion among the experience theologians to talk as though it took specialists, men who are able to interpret 'the historical realities,' to discover the meaning of the individual Scripture statements. In reality, the situation is entirely different. The fact is that every bit of the 'historical reality' which is needed for the understanding of Scripture is provided by Scripture itself, in the context, and any reader or hearer of average intelligence can easily discern it. . . . The Pope declares that Scripture, lacking the interpretation of the 'Church,' is obscure. And modern Protestant theology, having discarded the Scripture principle, talks as though the meaning of the individual Scripture statements can be derived only from 'the full picture of the historical reality,' and that only specialists can give us this picture." (*Op. cit.*, II, p. 131 f.)<sup>315</sup> This situation is the natural product of the denial of Verbal Inspiration. If the bare statement of Scripture does not suffice to prove the statement, you will have to seek the proof elsewhere; you will have to appeal to other authorities. Dr. Bente puts it this way: "Reason tells these men: 'If the Bible blundered in astronomy, geology, physics, chronology, etc., you can believe the Bible also in *theologicis* only so far as you have established the correctness of its statements from other sources.' The only course of action left, then, to the General Council men is to follow blindly their authorities, Jacobs and Stump (provided that these authorities are

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315) It seems incredible that men should be found within the Christian Church who could make the claim that they can tell better than Scripture itself what God really revealed and who tell the common Christian that he must consult them before he can be sure of the matter. But such men actually exist, even in the Protestant churches. Rudolf Hermann had dealings with that kind of theologians. He writes: "Wer wuerde bei einer Botschaft nicht grade im Wortlaut ihren Geist suchen? . . . Wenn nun ihr naecheres Verstaendnis die Theologie vermitteln muss — es genuegt ja schon, an das fremde Sprachgut zu erinnern, in das das Wort gefasst ist —, so tut sie das nicht als *Zwischeninstanz* zwischen dem Wort Gottes und uns Menschen. Vielmehr solche *Zwischeninstanzen* *wegraeumen* zu helfen, die Alleinguelteigkeit von Gottes Selbstoffenbarung auch fuer die Kirche herausstellen zu helfen, ist sie da." (*Theol. Mil.*, XII, p. 10.) W. Vollrath had dealings with such men and writes: "Als ob der Allmaechtige nur durch Maenner, die Universitaeten besucht haben, seine Sache fuehren und in die Wahrheit zu leiten vermoechte! Als ob der Schoepfer eine besondere Vorliebe haette fuer Leute, die Grade erwarben und Lehrstuehle zieren! . . . Statt zu dienen, will er (der Standesduenkel) herrschen; statt zu verbinden, erneuert und befestigt er jene alte Kluft zwischen Laien, denen das Verstaendnis der Schrift unmoeglich sei, und *Sachkundigen*, die vorgeben, hier allein Bescheid zu wissen. . . . Diese Vorwaende fuehren unfehlbar in Schwaermerei. . . . Jenes Gebahren ueberlaesst unsere Kirche getrost den Papisten und Schwaermern alter und neuer Richtung." (*Vom Rittertum der Theologie*, p. 4.)



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not appealing to European authorities)" (*Lehre und Wehre*, 1904, p. 87).

But operating with human authorities in spiritual matters imposes spiritual slavery on the Christians. It is a popish abomination. The moderns like to characterize Verbal Inspiration as akin to Roman Catholicism. (E. Brunner, above: "This idolatrous acceptance of Bible authority . . . is analogous to the Roman Church doctrine which requires from the individual believer the same axiomatic obedience to the teachings of the Church," etc.) But it is the moderns who are putting the papistical yoke on the Church. In his essay on Inspiration Rudelbach calls attention to a passage in Luther describing the theological method of the papists and points out that that is a pretty fair description of the doings of the moderns. The passage, using the incident of casting lots for the coat of Jesus as a parable, reads in part (IV:1307 ff.): "All admit what Jesus says, John 10:35: 'The Scripture cannot be broken,' and that its authority is absolutely inviolable, so that no man may contradict or deny it. This premise, or *maior*, that the perfect knowledge of God, theology, must be derived from Scripture all and everyone always admits. But where the *minor* is concerned the soldiers at once make a farce out of Scripture through their arbitrary glosses and distinctions, so that the power and authority of all of Scripture goes by the board. For today, too, you cannot prove anything to the Pope or any Thomist by Scripture, even though they acknowledge the authority of Scripture. 'Let us not rend the coat,' they say, 'but cast lots for it, whose it shall be,' John 19:24. For is that not playing a game of chance with Scripture if one deals with it arbitrarily and twists it according to his whim? Do not the *magistri nostri* of the universities take unto themselves the right to interpret Scripture? And it has reached such a pass that they laugh at him who simply quotes Scripture, while they (as they say) operate with irrefutable arguments of reason. This is the game they play: They do not teach what Scripture demands, but each one tries his luck how he may square Scripture with his own ideas, how much of Scripture he can win. And in this game the Pope is (for that is his due) the chief of the soldiers, for he has passed a law, binding upon all, that it is his privilege, his alone, to interpret Scripture *definitive*. Others, too, may interpret Scripture, but only *magistraliter*, by way of disputation and investigation, not in such a way that their interpretation is final, *determinative*. For he plays with his partners in such a way that the die must fall in his favor, that he alone has the power to interpret Scripture." That fits the moderns fairly well. True, there is this difference that the moderns have gone beyond the Pope in



that they do not acknowledge the supreme authority of Scripture even in theory. There is also this difference that they have not set up one among themselves as the chief. But this description fits absolutely: *nostri magistri* in the seats of learning have taken unto themselves the right to interpret Scripture, and they laugh at him who simply quotes Scripture.<sup>316</sup> Dealing with one of this ilk, Praelat Dr. Theodor Traub exclaims: "Das fehlte gerade noch, dass wir anstatt des *einen* unfehlbaren Papstes die vielen religions-geschichtlichen Professoren mit ihren vielen sich widersprechenden Behauptungen als Autoritaeten in Glaubenssachen annehmen muessten!" (*Handreichung fuer Glauben und Leben*, p. 72.) Luther: "Sie suchen ihre eigene Tyrannei, dass sie uns moegen aus der Schrift fuehren, den Glauben verdunkeln, sich selbst ueber die Eier setzen, und *unser Abgott* werden." (V:336.) "They speak such things only in order to lead us away from Scripture and to make themselves *masters over us* that we should believe their dream-sermons" (Traumpredigten). (P. 335.)

We will have none of this! We will not make the Church or any theologian our Pope. "Dependence upon God's Word is life, but dependence upon a word of man would be slavish." We do not feel degraded when we give unquestioning assent to the Bible, to God and His Word; but we would feel debased if we had to give one single point of our Christian faith into the keeping of fallible men.

Once more: the moderns may say at this point that they would not dream of dictating to the faith of the Christian—that they are rather urging the Christian to fight for his rights and be his own authority.—Yes, they are doing that. Recall R. H. Strachan's statement: "Such slave mentality is at the source of religious infallibilities: the infallible Book or the infallible Church. . . . The authority of which we are in quest clearly must be an authority which does not destroy our personal freedom. It must . . . clearly recognize the *autonomy* of the individual personality," etc. (*The Authority of Chr. Experience*, pp. 16, 19.) John Oman's charter of liberty proclaims: "The teacher of divine truth will not care to stop with authorities either of the Church or of the Scriptures." We must no longer "draw doctrines from Holy Writ like legal decisions from the statute book." "Christ encourages His disciples to rise above the rule of authorities and to investigate

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316) We must quote one more sentence from our passage. "If you do not yet know who these four soldiers are, I will tell you: they are our honorable *magistri nostri*, who cheat with their *fourfold* sense of Scripture and, foisting their ridiculous interpretations on Scripture, make Scripture ridiculous." The papists played with the hidden sense back of the words. The moderns cheat by operating with the "Word of God" or the "*Schriftganze*" and making Scripture say what they please.



till each is *his own authority*." (*Vision and Authority*, p. 188.) The moderns are actually calling upon the Christians to exercise authority over Scripture, to decide for themselves how much of Scripture may be accepted, how much must be rejected, to become their own authorities. The gross rationalists ask the Christians to set up their reason as the supreme authority. The subtle rationalists ask them to set up their "Christian" judgment as the supreme authority. (Ladd: "The Christian consciousness . . . discerns the Word of God" in the Bible. [*What Is the Bible?* p. 453.] *The Living Church*, Oct. 28, 1931, on "Authority in the Kingdom of God": "Our *ultimate* appeal must be to religious experience and the religious consciousness." A. Schweizer: "It is the business of the Christian spirit to smelt the ore of the Bible and obtain the pure gold." E. Schaeder: "The Spirit-wrought faith applies a sifting process to the Bible word. Through this sifting process it gets the Word of God." Zwingli: "Das Glaubenswort haftet im Geiste der Glaebigen, es selbst wird von niemand gerichtet, sondern von ihm wird das aeussere Wort gerichtet." [See Rudelbach, *Ref. Luth. u. Union*, p. 118.]) There can be no doubt about it, the moderns are asking the individual Christian to occupy the seat of supreme authority. It is a fact—a sorry fact indeed—that "modern theology has the same interest as Rome. According to its own declaration it wants to be freed from Scripture as the only source and standard of theology and instead of Scripture would make the decisive factor in the Church indeed not the ego of the Pope, but the 'experience' or—what is the same thing—'the pious self-consciousness,' the ego of the theologizing subject" (Pieper, *op. cit.*, I, p. 273). This is the situation—the infamous situation: denouncing our reliance on the bare word of Scripture as slavish, the moderns are asking us to assert our own authority.

We cannot do it. It is the height of wickedness.<sup>317</sup> And it would lead us into slavery. Let no man think that he has achieved freedom when he asserts his autonomy over against Scripture and follows the dictates of his own will. He is a slave to his flesh.

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317) It is a form of self-deification. Will not someone, as Erik Floren would say, coin after the pattern of "Bibliolatry" an additional latria to denote the worship of human reason and of the "Christian consciousness"?—We shall set down again the statement of M'Intosh: "Thus through all the permutations and combinations and through all the multifarious phases of indefinite erroneousness, we are inevitably driven to the old and fatal issues of the common rationalistic principle, namely, that every varying man must become a judge and an authoritative standard himself. Having got rid of an infallible Bible and an infallible Christ, he must reach that supreme absurdity—an infallible self, 'Lord of himself, that heritage of woe,' as Byron says." (*Op. cit.*, pp. 32, 483.) Prof. J. J. Reeve: "When one makes his philosophy his authority, it is not a long step until he makes himself his own God."



He is a willing slave indeed, but a slave he is nevertheless. He hears the call and invitation to put his spiritual affairs into the hands of the gracious Lord and follow His safe guidance, but his proud heart forbids him to do so. And he is unable to disobey his evil flesh. He cannot but submit to the tyrant. And he is proud of his servitude. He does not feel the shame of it.—Dependence upon God's Word is life and liberty; dependence upon a word of man—another's or your own—would be slavish.

There is a third reason why we abhor and abominate the liberty proclaimed by the moderns. The emancipation from the "legalistic yoke" of Verbal Inspiration is fraught with frightful disaster. In the first place, it involves the loss of the Christian doctrine. How many of the Christian doctrines survive under the new order? The first doctrine marked for slaughter by the moderns is, of course, that of Verbal Inspiration itself. They have been filling the world with the cry that Verbal Inspiration is due to "a legalistic conception of Scripture" (*Luth. Church Quart.*); that "there is a spirit of legalism that pervades many of the ranks of Midwestern Lutherans, . . . which insist on 'book, chapter, and verse'" (*Luth. Church Quart.*); that "the older doctrine of inspiration led to the misconception of the Bible as a law code," which older doctrine of inspiration is not based on Scripture but on "an extremist exegesis of 2 Tim. 3:16, 17" (*The Augsburg Sunday School Teacher*); that "God did not inspire the Bible in the rigid, literal manner, known as verbal inspiration"; that, therefore, this doctrine must be "thrown to the moles and the bats with the rest of the world's old, discarded mind-lumber" (J. P. Smith, *How God Inspired the Bible*, p. 118), and that this "verbal literalism" called for by Verbal Inspiration "is hardly congenial in the atmosphere of our conservative Lutheran institutions" (*The Lutheran*). The moderns abhor Verbal Inspiration because their free spirit will not submit to be bound by the words of Scripture—that would be legalistic literalism; and there is great rejoicing in their camp that "it is fast being thrown to the moles and the bats."

The next doctrine to be thrown to the moles and bats is the teaching that Holy Scripture is the sole authority in religion, that the revelation of the divine truth given in Scripture is perfect and final. Bind men to what the fallible apostles wrote? That would be legalistic and bibliolatrous. Accept the teaching of Paul, Peter, and John as the final form of theology? That would make the men of the twentieth century mere catechumens of men of the first century and put the fetters of slavery on the free working of our Christian spirit. No, no, declares Aulén; the heavy hand of biblicism must be removed from theology; and: "A God, whose revelation is represented as having been given only in the past,



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is not a living God. . . . This thought militates against the old biblicism which holds that God's revelation is 'closed' in and with the Bible, and thus remains standing in the past." (*Op. cit.*, p. 386.) "Indeed, many would say that what we have in the New Testament is evidence that the faith may never be expected to assume a final form." Thus Edwin Lewis, in *The Faith We Declare*, p. 150. And: "A man may not want to say it in just the way in which Paul said it." (P. 104.) Naturally, for "the early Church" occasionally indulged in erroneous thinking, and "the New Testament naturally reflects this thinking" (*A New Heaven and a New Earth*, p. 175). Why, even Christ is not absolutely reliable, and we may have a better understanding of things than He had. Thus R. Sockman (and a host of others): "In recovering His authority, we can hardly believe that the Christ would wish His followers to go barking at the heels of men, begging their attention. . . . Yet authoritative as the centuries have found Him to be, what are nineteen hundred years in the life of the race? Can we say that the Christ of Nazareth has given us the final wisdom? May not the future outgrow Him?" (*Recoveries in Religion*, p. 70.) The theology of the Bible is thus not final; the Christian experience and the Christian consciousness must supplement it. What did *A Creed for Free Men* (W. A. Brown) tell us? "The Bible is a compendium of simple principles capable of indefinite application and therefore needing continual reinterpretation in the light of expanding experience." H. C. Sheldon has a chapter in his *System of Christian Doctrine* on the "Question of the Sufficiency of the Biblical Revelation, or of the Possibility of Authoritative Supplements" (p. 149) and says: "A few words will be appropriate on the question whether revelation needs, or admits of, any authoritative supplements." The answer is that "it is the vocation of the Christian consciousness" to serve as such a supplement.<sup>318</sup> The doctrine of the final and sole authority of Holy Scripture has gone by the board.

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318) It is about time that somebody give us a definition of this Christian consciousness which tells us which parts of the Bible we may accept and which truths we are to accept in place of those teachings of the Bible which we must reject or which we find inadequate. This is Sheldon's definition: "What is 'Christian consciousness' but a name for the cardinal judgments and feelings of Christians, their religious modes both in the line of thought and emotion? It may be defined in brief as the educated reason and feeling of Christian believers." — We don't think much of this "Christian consciousness" in its role of testing and supplementing Scripture. Aside from the fact that the Christian commits a crime when he permits it to dictate to Scripture, he will never know how to pin it down to a definite statement. As everybody knows, our emotions and feelings are constantly changing. Besides, only the cardinal feelings are authorized to speak. But the Christian will never know whether his present feeling is a cardinal or a second-rate feeling.



In fact, according to the consistent moderns, we really do not need the Bible at all. We might be able to get along without it—just as at one time people did get along without it. It would be another form of this wicked Bibliolatry to say the contrary. Let R. F. Horton speak on this point: "Strange to say, the Christians of whom we speak do not even notice that the New Testament is itself a record of the Christian faith being propagated at a wonderfully rapid rate without a New Testament at all. Peter had no writings to appeal to except the Old Testament Scriptures; Paul preached 'his Gospel' without any reference to a written Gospel, and never hinted that the further preaching of the faith should depend even on his own epistles. It may as well be frankly stated that the frantic and superstitious faith in the apostolic writings, a faith going far beyond what they claim or suggest themselves, may be simply the outcome of unbelief. People who are sunk in this kind of Bibliolatry, etc. . . . They really worship the Scriptures instead of the living God and make a slavish and unreasoning acceptance of all that is written take the place of an inward subjection to God, and a realized experience of His personal manifestation to the believing heart." (*Revelation and the Bible*, p. 218.) There is no *absolute* need of the Bible.

Oh, yes, the Bible has its use. It should be studied; but bear in mind, what it says is "*suggestive* rather than dictatorial" (G. L. Raymond); it gives merely "*the initial data*" (R. W. Nelson); it contains good "*principles*, which, however, need continual re-interpretation" (W. A. Brown). It was never intended, say the moderns, as the sole source of doctrine.

Having gotten rid of Verbal Inspiration and the authority of Holy Scripture, the moderns are ready for the other Christian doctrines. Having set up the principle that it would be legalistic and slavish to bow to every word of Scripture, they feel free to change—discard—any Biblical teaching. Calling upon the Christians "to break with this legalistic employment of Scripture," H. E. Fosdick refuses to teach the deity, the real deity, of Jesus, the vicarious atonement, the resurrection of Jesus, and the resurrection of the flesh, eternal damnation, etc., etc. E. Brunner ful-

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"It is the *educated* reason and feeling of believers." How shall the Christian know whether he is dealing with his educated or his old carnal feeling? He may believe that his reason and feeling of the moment is educated; how will he convince his brother, who reasons and feels quite differently, that the latter needs more education? Again, where shall we find an authoritative summary of the feeling of the Christian believers? This "*Christian consciousness*" is just about as hazy, indefinite, and cryptic as those two other favorite concepts of the moderns: the *Schriftganze* and the "*Word of God*."



minates against "this idolatrous acceptance of Bible authority" and is thus in a position to rejoice over "the victory of biological evolutionism," etc., etc. (*Op. cit.*, p. 92, 98). Bishop Aulén says it would be legalistic to ground our faith on an outward authority, as on that of the Bible, and so, as E. Floreen points out, "he finds himself justified in offering us a picture of Jesus quite different from that presented by the evangelists. The deity of the Savior is denied. . . . Dr. Aulén's teaching of the last things also departs considerably from Scripture. . . . It is supposed that an opportunity of conversion will be given after death." Must the real presence in the Lord's Supper be maintained? When Aulén declaims against "Luther's slavish dependence on Bible texts," he particularizes: "The classical example of this is Luther's argumentation in the controversy on the Lord's Supper." (*Op. cit.*, p. 251.) Bishop Gore (and countless others) take the same position. Let us hear his statement again: "In a famous controversy Luther appealed to a New Testament verse as an infallible oracle." Applying the principle that it is the business of the theologian "to teach the old truth in a new way, and, following the promptings of the Spirit of God, to augment and increase it," Hofmann gave the Church a doctrine of the Atonement which denies the *satisfactio vicaria*, etc. (See Pieper, *op. cit.*, p. 74.) And P. Althaus, working under Hofmann's charter of liberty, has told us that eschatology and the doctrine of justification must assume new forms.—How many Christian doctrines remain intact under the new charter of liberty? *Christendom*, as quoted in our first article, says: "The account of the creation in Genesis, the Christmas story of the Incarnation, the resurrection of the body of Christ, . . . the doctrine of the resurrection of the body, the doctrine of the virgin birth and the divinity of Christ—all these conceptions, intended at first quite literally, have for many devout Christians today only a symbolic function. . . . Hence they are still scrupulously retained, lovingly cherished, but considered as poetic expressions of some profounder or larger truth than that which their formulators realized." Dr. Muenkel, as quoted in Pieper (*op. cit.*, p. 157), reports thus: "There is hardly one doctrine left which has not, in a marked degree, been subjected to recastings, additions, and eliminations. Starting with the Trinity, proceeding to the doctrine of the person and the office of Christ, to the doctrines of faith and justification, of the Sacraments, and of the Church, down to eschatology, you will scarcely find anything in its old form and with its former value. Often it is changed to such a degree that only the old frame still reminds one of the old picture, and at times even the frame has been smashed as being too narrow and out of date. A small sample to illustrate this: While Christ



according to the Church doctrine is true God also in His state of humiliation, they now have emptied Him of the divine attributes,"<sup>319</sup>) "without which no one can conceive of the deity, or they let Him gradually grow into His deity and achieve it in His resurrection. The death of Christ is no longer permitted to be taught as satisfying for our sins and reconciling us to God. The righteousness of faith, consisting in God's declaring us righteous, is said to be too wooden and external; in a covert manner the works are again brought in. Law and Gospel are again being churned together. . . . Would anyone dare to speak of development of the Lutheran doctrine when the most important parts of the Lutheran doctrine are swept out of doors like old rubbish? . . ." How much is left of the Christian doctrine where men operate with this new charter of liberty?

The liberals among the moderns have made a clean sweep of it. The conservative groups have retained some or many of the Christian doctrines. And still we maintain that the application of the principle of freedom from the letter of Scripture, of the right to develop the doctrine, involves the loss of the Christian doctrine. The only reason why the conservative moderns have not cast overboard all Biblical teachings is that, by the grace of God, they do not consistently apply their principle. "We ask," says L. Gaussen, "where do they mean to stop in the course they have begun? And by what reason would they stop those, in their turn, who would fain advance farther than they are willing to go? They make bold to correct one saying of God's Word; what right, then, have they to censure those who would rectify all the rest? . . . Where will you find the difference? It is in the species, not in the genus. It is in the quantity, and no longer in the quality, of imputations of error and tokens of irreverence. There is a difference in point of hardihood, none at all in point of profanation." (*Theopneustia*, p. 201.) Some of the moderns have not the hardihood to apply the principle under which they reconstruct—abolish—the doctrine of the vicarious atonement to the doctrine of the deity of Christ and of the Trinity. God has graciously kept them from going so far. But left to themselves they would all land in the

319) To illustrate, V. Ferm says: "We might well question whether or not the Christological doctrines of the ubiquity of Christ's body (a quasi-materialistic and pan-Christic doctrine borrowed from Duns Scotus), and *communicatio idiomatum* are satisfactory even from a Biblical point of view. Even the position which Luther himself took on the interpretation of the Eucharist may fairly be challenged as a necessarily true Biblical exegesis. The literalism applied to certain Biblical passages, etc. . . . 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 to its spiritual content." (*What Is Lutheranism?* p. 279 f.)



camp of modernism, liberalism. Hofmann's principle which permits him to teach the old truth in a new way, in such a way as to augment the old truth, is identical with Fosdick's principle: The Gospel must be "released from literal bondage to old categories and set free to do its work in modern terms of thought and speech" (*op. cit.*, p. 261), and nothing but the grace of God will keep the followers of Hofmann from becoming followers of Fosdick. Professor Bente solemnly warns the Church: "Men hate and assault the doctrine of verbal inspiration because it clamps the modern spirit which would be free of all authority. But when the dam of verbal inspiration is once broken, there is nothing to prevent the flood of modern rationalism from sweeping over the old orthodoxy." (*Lehre und Wehre*, 1910, p. 89.)

And we know what the chief concern, the fundamental doctrine, of rationalism is. It is salvation through works. The one important concern of rationalism is ethics. M. H. Krumbine tells us: "The one thing we know definitely about Jesus is His ethical teaching." (*Ways of Believing*, p. 71.) Shailer Mathews: "If Christians are to be interested in helping to make a better world, the Churches must make theology secondary to morality embodying the spirit of Jesus." (*The Church and the Christian*, p. 105.) And W. Herrmann, who insists that "such a principle of the authority of Scripture would set a book above God's revelation," proclaims his rationalism when he says: "The fundamental thought of Jesus' Gospel is that it is in God's rule in our hearts that our salvation consists." (*Syst. Theol.*, pp. 58, 115.) And the conservative moderns are headed towards this heathen heresy. Dr. Muenkel sees the development: "In a covert manner the works are drawn in again. Law and Gospel are again being churned together."<sup>320</sup> There can be no other development. Man is a born legalist, and if we permit our thoughts—call it reason outright or call it "Christian consciousness"—to correct or supplement the Scripture teaching, we shall inevitably gravitate toward the heathen doctrine of salvation through the Law.—What a tragic development! Here are men constantly mouthing the word "legalistic" and refusing to submit to "law"—and they end up by becoming slaves of the Law.

The loss of the Christian doctrine—that is the fatal consequence of the contention that Verbal Inspiration has a legalistic cast.

It has another evil consequence. It inflicts unspeakable harm on the Christian. (1) The Christian needs the Christian doctrine.

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<sup>320</sup> To illustrate, R. Jelke teaches that faith justifies because "that which Christ performed is reproduced in him (the believer) potentially, ethically," "dass sich in ihm das von Christo Geleistete potentiell, ethisch wiederholt." (*Die Grunddogmen des Christentums*, p. 64.)



His salvation is bound up with the *saving* doctrine, and we have just seen what happens to the Christian doctrine where the new charter operates, where men denounce adherence to the letter as legalistic and assume the right to manipulate and develop the Biblical teaching. Then what happens to the Christian who is under the spiritual care of the ultraliberal modern? Can faith survive where all the doctrines of the Church, the deity of Christ, the vicarious atonement, justification by faith alone, are denied? It cannot survive under the ministration of the liberal. And what happens to the Christian under the ministration of the conservative modern, who operates with a half or a fourth or a tenth of the Christian doctrine? The Christian needs the whole of the Christian doctrine. Oh, yes, God can save him, God is saving many who are being deprived by their teachers of much of the Christian doctrine. Their faith clings to, and is nourished by, the remnants of the saving truth left them. But they are in a sad state. Their faith is undernourished. God wants His Christians to live not by a fraction of the truth but by the whole truth. God wants a vigorous faith, and He has well provided for that. The moderns, however, withhold from God's children the wholesome food God has provided. The food which they provide is—if we may use a homely simile—lacking in necessary vitamins. The general situation obtaining in the Church today is well described by Dr. E. J. M. Nutter, dean of Nashotah House, in these words: "A horrid suspicion has been gaining ground here for some time, that in our threshing of the Word of God we have been throwing away the wheat, and dreadingly chewing on the chaff."<sup>321</sup> The moderns are committing

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321) Let us submit a few more statements by Dr. Nutter. They bear on the *general* subject of our writing. "We are sure that in pounding theology into our students we are not being stubbornly antiquated in a liberal and undogmatic world, but are heading the procession home. . . . Should the clergy and laity of this Church once realize that the Nicene Faith is in peril, the reaction is likely to be astonishing. It is for the preservation and promulgation of the Nicene Faith that Nashotah labors; and in our defense of such orthodox dogmas as the Virgin Birth, the Incarnation, and a Resurrection, neither metaphorical nor hallucinatory, we shall not budge. Our attitude to the Holy Scriptures is equally firm. Of course, we know all about J, E, D, P and Q. We are acquainted with the Johannine problems. We even devote time to discussing such erudite subjects as form-criticism. This is what is called scholarship. But a horrid suspicion is gaining ground here for some years, that in our threshing of the Word of God we have been throwing away the wheat and dreadingly chewing on the chaff. . . . Untold harm has been done to Christianity in all its several sections by the uninspired ministry of men who only know what the Bible is not; and the saddest side of it is that the anticipated stampede of the intelligentsia into the Church, which was to follow the abandonment of miracle, has not taken place. A return to a Scripture that is



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a crime against God's children when they take away from their table much of the wheat of the saving doctrine and make them chew on chaff. They are raising an anemic, stunted generation. Oh, yes, there may be enough nourishment left to keep them alive, but this, too, may occur: some poor soul may not have strength enough to throw off the noxious effect of the false teaching set before him. And this may occur: in the hour of trial the poor soul may forget the saving truth, put its trust on a false teaching, and lose its salvation. The loss is on the head of him who tells people not to rely absolutely on the letter of Scripture.

(2) Under the new charter of liberty the Christian can have no assurance of faith. We shall treat this more fully in the concluding article.

(3) The new-liberty men exert an evil influence on the Christian in this way, too, that they systematically train him in developing his pride of reason, the self-conceit of his flesh. They are instructing him to set his own judgment, his "Christian consciousness," or whatever you want to call it, over Scripture. The Christian faith is humble. That belongs to its very nature—believing is accepting and trusting the Word of God. The Christian faith submits to every word of Scripture and is outraged when Satan suggests that the Christian may know more about these things than the holy writers or may be able to express God's eternal thoughts better than they, than the Holy Ghost did. The Christian layman and the Christian theologian are content to sit at the feet of the prophets and take their wisdom from them. As Luther puts it: "Our pride is that we are catechumens and pupils of the prophets, that we repeat after them and preach what we heard from the prophets and apostles." (III:1890.) "Und nichts Eigenes oder Neues setzen" (*loc. cit.*)—not attempt to "teach the old truth in a new way, add to it for the purpose of improving on it." But the moderns will not have the Christians take this attitude. When the moderns declaim that "they have attained *higher forms* than the prophets" (J. De Witt); when they virtually declare: "The truth is, 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 under its clamps and chains would be to restrict the mental growth of the human race" (see J. M. Haldeman, *A King's Penknife*, p. 108): they are causing the seed of wicked pride which is implanted in the heart of man

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really holy is imperative if our religion is to survive. . . ." (*The Living Church*, May 17, 1942.)—We have taken the liberty to generalize the statement concerning the chewing on the chaff and to apply it to what Hofmann and the rest offer the Church under the trademark "Die alte Wahrheit auf neue Weise zu lehren."



to germinate and flourish. What thoughts must arise in the heart of the Christian when his teacher tells him: "Faith refuses 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" (G. Wehrung, *Geschichte und Glaube*, pp. 306, 308)? The Old Adam in the Christian's heart will pride himself on being given the right to subject Scripture to his judgment. The Christian faith cannot do what Wehrung and the others are asking it to do. The rationalist, indeed, "comes to the Bible and sits over its contents in the attitude of a judge who is to decide for himself what in it is true and worthy to be believed, . . . not in the attitude of the disciple, who within the limits of the inspired record feels himself at Jesus' feet to receive every word that cometh out of His mouth" (J. Bannerman). And the moderns are training their pupils in rationalistic pride and arrogance. This pride is an evil thing. "When we begin to be so proud and overweening as to judge according to our reason" on any doctrine of Scripture, . . . "then we are rude fellows, thinking more of our blind and poor reason than of the statements of Scripture. For Scripture is God's own witness concerning Himself, and our reason cannot know the divine nature; yet it wants to judge concerning that about which it knows nothing" (Luther, X:1018). Christian faith and pride, self-conceit, self-deification, do not go together. If this pride is not checked, it will destroy faith. And the moderns, asking the Christians to correct, improve on, reject Scripture, are cultivating this malignant thing.

This is St. Paul's judgment of the new charter of liberty: "If any man teach otherwise and consent not to wholesome words, even to the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing," 1 Tim. 6:3 f.<sup>322</sup>) We shall remain under the charter given by our Lord: "If ye continue in My Word," in the word of Holy Scripture, "ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free," John 8:31 f.

(To be concluded)

TH. ENGELDER

322) Moffatt's translation hits off some points very well: "Anyone who teaches novelties and refuses to fall in with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the doctrine that tallies with godliness, is a conceited, ignorant creature."

