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## The Sola Scriptura and Its Modern Antithesis

John Theodore Mueller  
*Concordia Seminary, St. Louis*

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It is a truism that in drawing up conditions of fellowship the "too little" and the "too much" have to be avoided. On account of the spirit of the times it is evident that we have to guard especially against the "too little." We are living in days of doctrinal and moral laxity; the philosophy of pragmatism has captivated the minds: "Take the course that works!" But it cannot be denied that in opposing the popular latitudinarianism the danger of our insisting on "too much" gets to be very real, too. Extremes beget extremes.

There is before the Lutheran Church in America in general and before the American Lutheran Church and the Missouri Synod in particular a document which, it is hoped, will form the doctrinal basis for church fellowship between the two bodies mentioned — the *Doctrinal Affirmation of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States*, and the American Lutheran Church. Both bodies have requested their members to give this document careful study in order to determine whether it is Scripturally adequate. God granting His grace, the circle may become enlarged, and other Lutherans may become interested in the document, too. As it is studied and examined, we beg the brethren to bear in mind the general principles set down above. It is not a panacea we are seeking; that will be provided for God's children when Christ on Judgment Day takes them home into the mansions of His Father's house. But adoption of the *Affirmation*, if it is found acceptable, may prove of some help in the efforts we together with all other conservative Lutherans are putting forth to bring the message of Christ's redemption to a perishing world.

W. ARNDT

## The Sola Scriptura and Its Modern Antithesis

### I

It is indeed correct to say that the outstanding achievement of Luther's Reformation was the recovery, clarification, and vindication of the *sola gratia* (*sola fide*). That truly was a pre-eminent accomplishment, an almost miraculous attainment, as it appears to everyone who considers how thoroughly Rome had succeeded in burying this *articulus omnium fundamentalissimus* under the rubbish of its extreme work-righteousness program.<sup>1)</sup> Luther in a most lucid manner, in learned treatises (*De Servo Arbitrio*), in sermons, intelligible to the simplest layman, and in songs made known far and wide the Gospel message of God's free and full grace

1) Cf. *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte* (Die Lehre Luthers). Von Reinhold Seeberg. Vierter Band, erste Abteilung, pp. 124 ff. Also *Lehrbuch der Symbolik*. Von Wilh. Walther, pp. 363 ff.



in Christ Jesus as it had never been proclaimed since the time of the Apostles, not even by St. Augustine.<sup>2)</sup>

Nevertheless, the *sola gratia* was not the only accomplishment of the Reformation. There was another that is equally necessary for the salvation of sinners. The *sola gratia* is a divine doctrine set forth in Holy Scripture, and only there, never in any man-made book of religion.<sup>3)</sup> That God-given Holy Scripture of the Prophets and Apostles, on which the Church of Christ is built,<sup>4)</sup> not even Rome with all its trickery and power could destroy.<sup>5)</sup> But Rome could so deeply inter it beneath *Summae* and *Sententiae* and could so securely hedge it in by Apocrypha and decretals, decisions of Popes and councils, and traditions in general that Scripture no longer meant anything in Christendom as the source and norm of the Christian faith and life. Rome wanted to do away with the *principium materiale* (*sola gratia*) of the Christian Church; to accomplish this, it had to get out of the way its *principium formale*, Scripture as the sole *principium cognoscendi*. Luther restored to Christendom the *sola Scriptura*, the Bible as the only source and rule of faith.

What did the *sola Scriptura* mean to Luther and his co-workers? It is, we believe, the last and crowning work of Dr. Michael Reu that he sacrificed, so to speak, the last ounce of his strength to witness, not only to international Lutheranism but also to the entire world, that to Luther and all Gnesio-Lutherans the *sola Scriptura* meant verbal inspiration, plenary inspiration, the sole authority of Christian doctrine and conduct, and that not merely for a short time, while Luther was "*der junge Luther*," but "until the end of his life," the infallible Book of God, inerrant "even in those parts that do not concern our salvation," although this absolute inerrancy belonged "only to the original drafts of the Biblical books." All this Luther and his followers believed and taught without, however, acknowledging a "mechanical or dictated inspiration," for "not Luther but other Lutheran theologians of his time were on the road to the mechanical theory of inspiration."

These statements, largely taken from the chapter titles of Dr. Reu's great confessional book, point out with sufficient clearness what the theologians of the Reformation meant by *sola Scriptura*. The writer does not agree with everything that is stated in Dr. Reu's book. To him, for example, it does not appear as proved that "the later dogmatists either entirely or to a great extent excluded

2) For quick orientation consult Chr. Ernst Luthardts *Kompendium der Dogmatik*, 13. Auflage, voellig umgearbeitet und ergaenzt von Robert Jelke, pp. 219 ff.

3) Cf. 1 Cor. 2:7 ff.

4) Eph. 2:20.

5) Matt. 24:35.



such co-operation," i. e., between the holy writers and the Holy Spirit, regarding inspiration as purely mechanical or dictational.<sup>6)</sup> Dr. Reu himself suggests this when in Note 187 he writes among other things: "It is true, it was wrong when Luthardt wrote concerning the teaching of the dogmatists of the seventeenth century: 'Das Verhaeltnis des Heiligen Geistes zur Schrift ist [by these dogmatists] nicht durch die eigene geistige Aktivitaet der biblischen Schriftsteller, sondern nur aeusserlich durch die Hand der Schreibenden vermittelt gedacht.' . . . They really advocated more and emphasized the fact that the holy writers, instead of being dead, unknowing and unwilling tools in the hands of the Holy Spirit, were knowing and willing instruments. . . . If Church Fathers, or some dogmatists of our own Church, called the human authors *notarii, calami, amanuenses, instrumenta*, this is by no means to be considered wrong in every respect. It is wrong only if one, by the use of these terms, degrades them to merely mechanical instruments or machines who wrote without participation of their soul life. It is correct and an expression of a Biblical truth if these terms are used merely to designate human instrumentality without any definition of the latter."<sup>7)</sup>

The writer regards this as a remarkable proof of Dr. Reu's honesty and sincerity. Dr. Reu evidently held that there were later dogmatists who believed in a mechanical inspiration by mere dictation; yet he is fair to them and so frankly publishes what later theologians said in opposition to a "mechanical inspiration." To this end also he quotes Quenstedt's remark in explanation of *ᾠδοῦμενοι* in 2 Pet. 1:21, which affirms, among other things, that the holy writers "did not write beyond and against their will, or unconsciously and reluctantly, but of their own accord, with willingness and knowing what they wrote."<sup>8)</sup> Dr. Reu's timely testimony will prove a blessing to many who are ill informed on the subject or who, moved by the untruths or half-truths of the opponents of the *sola Scriptura*, are inclined to view the formal principle of the Reformation with doubt and suspicion, yes, perhaps with downright repugnance and opposition. As Dr. Reu rightly shows, the *sola Scriptura* meant to the theologians of the Reformation just exactly what the Formula of Concord declares: "First [then we receive and embrace with our whole heart] the Prophetic and Apostolic Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the pure,

6) Reu, *Luther and the Scriptures*, p. 114 f.

7) Reu, *Luther and the Scriptures*, p. 166 f.

8) Note 187. Cf. also *Christian Dogmatics*, p. 103 ff. Note likewise the caution there given that such terms as "penmen," "amanuenses," "scribes," and "notaries" are "used correctly as long as the *tertium comparationis* in these figures of speech is strictly kept in view." *Op. cit.*, p. 107.

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clear fountain of Israel, which is the only true standard by which all teachers and doctrines are to be judged." <sup>9)</sup>

It may be well here to stress that to Luther and his co-workers the Bible was a *book, a written record*, divinely inspired and infallibly dependable in all its statements. What the Bible says, from Genesis to Revelation, was to them God's true Word. In Scripture, God Himself spoke to them, and He spoke by the very words and declarations of Scripture, because those words and declarations were to them divine words and declarations. Luther thus writes: "Scripture should be understood as the words declare" (St. L. ed., III:21); again: "Whatever Scripture says I will not permit my reason to criticize, but I believe it with simple faith" (St. L. ed., XIII:1909); again: "Carnal reason creates heresies and errors. Faith teaches and holds to the truth, for it cleaves to Scripture, which never lies or deceives" (St. L. ed., XI:162). In the chapter "Scriptures Become the Sole Authority to Luther" Dr. Reu, quoting Luther, writes: "Nothing should be presented which is not affirmed by the authority of both Testaments and agrees with them. It cannot be otherwise, for the Scriptures are divine; in them God speaks, and they are His Word." Again: "In his lectures on the Psalms, Luther regards the expressions 'God speaks' and 'the Scriptures speak,' as convertible. To hear or to read the Scriptures is nothing else than to hear God. They are His sanctuary in which He is present. Therefore we dare not despise one single word of the Scripture for 'all its words are weighed, counted, and measured.'" <sup>10)</sup>

Dr. Seeberg writes in connection with what the *sola Scriptura* meant to Luther: "Der Gedanke der absoluten Autoritaet der Schrift findet bei Luther . . . seinen Abschluss in der *Inspiration* der Heiligen Schrift. Die Worte der Schrift sind wirkliche Gottesworte, denn der Heilige Geist hat seine Weisheit und Geheimnis 'in das Wort gefasst und in der Schrift offenbart,' daher entscheide das *offenbarliche eusserliche wort* (W., 36, 501). Der wahrhaftige Gott redet in der Schrift; daher soll man das schlicht annehmen, was in ihr steht (40. 2, 593). Was etwa Paulus sagt, sagt der Heilige Geist; also geht wider den Geist, was wider Pauli Wort geht (W., 10. 2, 139 f.). . . . Daher ist die Schrift Gottes- und nicht Menschenwort (W., 5, 184; 8, 597). Und mehr: Gott ist der *auctor evangelii* (W., 8, 584), und der Heilige Geist selbst ist der Verfasser der Genesis (W., 44, 532). Die Bibel ist *eygen schrift des Geistes* (W., 7, 638; 46, 545; 47, 133; E., 52, 321. 333)." <sup>11)</sup>

9) *Concordia Triglotta*, p. 851.

10) *Op. cit.*, p. 19 ff.

11) *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte* (Die Lehre Luthers); IV/1, p. 414.



## II

To this doctrine of the *sola Scriptura* modern unbelief stands in sharp antithesis. By unbelief we here understand corrupt reason's refusal to accept Holy Scripture as God's inspired, inerrant Word, the only source and norm of the Christian faith and life. In the opposition of human reason to accept the *sola Scriptura* we of course must reckon with degrees. Dyed-in-the-wool, back-leaning, reactionary Modernism still takes the lead among those who reject Scripture. Then there is Neo-Thomism, which goes back to the basic philosophical principles of Thomas Aquinas and seeks in his principle of *revelatio et ratio* the essence of truth.<sup>12)</sup> The last, Barthianism, or, as it is also called, the Dialectical Theology, is the most popular and at present perhaps most subtle theological error, with both a left and a right wing, the latter right now making itself very strongly felt in Lutheran circles in America. All these streams of rationalistic thought oppose the doctrine that Holy Scripture is God's inspired and infallible Word and therefore the only source and norm of the Christian faith and life, though they differ in the manner and measure of their opposition. Very rightly Dr. Theodore Engelder in his well-known book *Reason or Revelation?* writes: "The majority of the Lutheran theologians of today, inclusive of the Conservatives, denies Verbal, Plenary Inspiration, and denies it on the ground that it is an undesirable doctrine."<sup>13)</sup> In the same vein Dr. Engelder writes in his more recent and comprehensive volume *Scripture Cannot be Broken*, no doubt, the keenest analysis of the subject and the most exhaustive reply to the objectors to Verbal Inspiration: "The moderns abhor and detest Verbal Inspiration, and they are not at all backward about telling us why they cannot accept it with a good conscience. They offer a great variety of reasons why the Church should get rid of it as soon as possible." To this he adds the note, "When the moderns denounce 'the theory of inspiration by dictation,' 'the mechanical theory,' they have in mind, as will be shown later on, the doctrine of Verbal Inspiration."<sup>14)</sup>

12) Cf. *Present Theological Tendencies*, by E. E. Aubrey, for brief but satisfactory characterizations of the three major trends in theological thought: Neo-Thomism, Barthianism, and Modernism.

13) Cf. p. 122. Note also Dr. Engelder's remark: "Indeed, it is a life-and-death struggle. Reason must die or faith dies. . . . *Ratio inimica fidei*. . . . *Nos occidimus rationem*, p. 175 f.

14) *Scripture Cannot be Broken*, p. 6. — Both books of Dr. Engelder should be read by every pastor, teacher, and intelligent layman, for the doctrine of Scripture is at present the battleground of theological dispute, and it may very easily prove the Waterloo of Christian orthodoxy in our country. Let congregations or societies see to it that both books be acquired forthwith for school, parish, and Sunday-school libraries.



### A. Modernism and the Sola Scriptura

So far as Modernism is concerned, nothing but the fiercest onslaughts on the authority of Holy Scripture can be expected; it is almost nauseous in its blasphemous irreligiousness.<sup>15)</sup> Extreme Modernism at present is a trifle out of date, for the pendulum of religious thought has swung back toward the right, and people in general yawn rather than that they are horrified at modernistic eruptions. But still we must figure with its opposition to the *sola Scriptura*.

We scrutinize a few works of Modernists at random. There is, for example, the much-read work *The Eternal Gospel* by Rufus M. Jones. The book bears a beautiful, intriguing, yet misleading title; what Rufus Jones means by the "eternal Gospel" is not the Gospel of the New Testament but "the endless revelation to men of a spiritual Reality, who is over all and in all" (p. 7). What Dr. Jones advocates is hardly more than pagan naturalism disguised, of course, after the fashion of Schleiermacher, in Christian terminology. Or take W. M. Horton's *Theology in Transition*. In the "realistic theology" which he presents, he perceives the "eternal Gospel" in the simple Quaker statement of James Naylor that it is man's supreme duty to do good and refrain from evil.<sup>16)</sup> Neither Jones nor Horton ultimately has any need of the Bible at all; the simple ethical creed of the Buddhist is to them enough "eternal Gospel"; for to them the term Gospel does not denote what God in Christ Jesus has done for the salvation of the world, but rather what man does in the service of God for his neighbor. Charles Clayton Morrison in his work *What Is Christianity?* says: "Not the Bible, but the living Church, the body of Christ, is the true Word of God. . . . The Word of God is the actual creative working of God in a specific order of human community in which He has revealed Himself in history" (p. 208), which means that in the end there is no need of Scripture at all, and which only represents a new form of Protestant Romanism.<sup>17)</sup>

15) Cf. John Horsch, *Modern Religious Liberalism*, which is still worth reading, though it does not take into consideration the latest excrescences of modernistic atheism.

16) Cf. the whole quotation in its context, p. 170 ff.

17) The reader will find all these works well worth studying, and as he does so, he will become the more convinced that Modernism is ultimately nothing else than an endeavor to supplant God's Word and put in its place man's own speculation. Consider, for example, such statements of Morrison: "The Bible is not the revelation; it is ancillary to the revelation" (p. 168); or: "If the Bible judges the Church, the Church also judges the Bible" (*ibid.*); or: "The divine revelation is not in the book, but in history" (*ibid.*); or: "God's revelation does not consist of any absolute deposit of truth" (p. 60). Here indeed is total rejection of Scripture as the divine authority in religion. To Morrison the Christian doctrine is no more than a human construct.



In *Liberal Theology: An Appraisal* (essays in honor of E. W. Lyman) Henry Sloane Coffin, in his contribution on "The Scriptures," declares that "no man can pronounce a book without error unless he claims omniscience for himself, and verbal inspiration cannot be asserted of a collection of writings which frequently contain divergent accounts of the same incident or utterance" (by the way a very ancient, outmoded, and unfair accusation).<sup>18</sup> In the same book D. C. Macintosh, in his essay on "Eternal Life," declares that "conservative Christianity will be better served in the long run by the methods characteristic of the scholarship and theology of Liberalism than by those habitually employed in the older tradition of literalistic biblicism" (p. 240). In this connection he bitterly attacks the inerrancy, verbal inspiration, and authority of Holy Scripture. Much in line with Coffin and Macintosh is H. F. Rall, whose *Christianity: an Inquiry into Its Nature and Truth*, won him the \$15,000 Bross Award. But the theology which Rall offers in his book is not worth the award, for the theology which he represents is not that of St. Paul or St. John, but that of a liberal who deposes the Bible and does away with genuine Christianity. He cautions his readers against the danger "that within the Church, men shall claim for Scripture or creed or the empirical Church herself that finality and absolute authority which belong only to God Himself" (p. VIII). It fills him with alarm that "to the right are others who realize the crucial matter in religion is faith in God, but in their defense of that faith tend to fall back upon traditional supernaturalism and authoritarianism" (p. VII). Rall thus repudiates the whole Christian doctrine and says: "Today we must be scientific and strictly empirical, and that means beginning at scratch, without any assumption whatever" (p. IX) — a thing, however, which Rall does not do, for his theology is a combination of "empirical" elements taken from Schleiermacher, Ritschl, Troeltsch, Barth, Fosdick, etc., with very little originality, constructive thought, and helpful suggestion, but with total rejection of the *differentia specifica* of the Christian religion.

In *Present Tendencies in Religious Thought*, A. C. Knudson inveighs against those who look upon the Bible as a "body of absolute truth, as a kind of 'paper pope,' to which human reason must submit" (p. 112); and he suggests that "the Bible to win the modern mind must itself become modern" (p. 113). This was rendered difficult "by the Reformers' insistence on Verbal Inspiration," which as Dean Inge says, is "the great weakness of Protestantism." Fortunately this weakness, Knudson believes, can be remedied; and

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18) P. 334 f. One must read the entire essay to realize fully how very little Scripture means to a Modernist of the type of Coffin.



to remedy this, he wrote his book, in which every Christian doctrine is ultimately denied.<sup>19)</sup>

In Sweden, Nathan Soederblom, some years ago, published *The Nature of Revelation*, which in 1933 appeared in America in an English translation and has enjoyed considerable popularity among Liberals in our country. He expounds and stresses in this book God's continued revelation. "God's continuing revelation is in men, in history" (p. 178). Soederblom, of course, does not desire to see the Bible abolished entirely, but he writes: "It must not be forgotten that the chief lesson of the Bible itself [how these Modernists counterfeit!] is that God is a living God and has not grown aged or less active now than in his younger days" (p. 179). So God speaks through Cyrus, the pagan ruler, Moses, Zoroaster, Troeltsch, Soederblom, and all the Modernists who have published books ever since Soederblom's death. Only what these men believe and confess is not the *satisfactio vicaria* or the *sola gratia*, but mere ethical speculation, salvation by good works, social improvement, and the like.<sup>20)</sup>

To the modernistic works on religion belongs, too, A. Campbell Garnett's *A Realistic Philosophy of Religion*. Garnett does not even bother with the Bible; he ignores it; but he says some very interesting modernistic things,—among these that "there are limits of God to control human behavior and the physical world" (p. 295), which means a finite God, who in reality is not God at all; that "sin is spiritual inertia, the lack of attention to moral values" (p. 311); and that God has revealed Himself with "peculiar force and clarity" "in the life and teaching of a succession of religious leaders who gradually developed more and more fully the ideal of a universal good" (p. 320). Garnett admits that God's self-revelation has culminated in the person of Jesus Christ, who "thus becomes the cen-

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19) Cf. p. 302 f. Knudson's book is somewhat obsolete (1925), as modernistic books go, but it is still worth studying, since the author enunciates principles that are bound to endure for all times because they please the Old Adam.

20) Modernists, of course, are not all alike; each endeavors to present the old unbelief from a different viewpoint, and that is why their books are published and read. Some of them have been influenced by the Barthian movement and, by a sort of religious eclecticism, weave Barthian and other theological principles into new patterns. We recommend to the reader for orientation such books as *Types of Modern Theology*, by H. R. Mackintosh; *Present Theological Tendencies*, by E. E. Aubrey; and similar helpful characterizations of modern liberal trends. But by this time he may be so utterly confused that it might be well for him to reorient himself to the Christian faith by the study of such works as *Revelation and Inspiration*, by B. B. Warfield; *Scripture Cannot be Broken*, by Theodore Engelder, and similar orthodox works.



tral figure of society" (p. 320); but the Christ of Garnett is not the Christ of St. Paul, not the divine-human Savior, who by His vicarious atonement became the world's Redeemer, Garnett's Christ is Harnack's Christ, a purely human Christ.

This year there was published a symposium under the title *Protestantism*, whose editor was W. K. Anderson and whose publisher is the Commission on Courses of Study of the Methodist Church (Nashville, Tenn.). The book (among other things) contains twelve essays on subjects related to Protestantism: one by J. T. McNeil ("Was the Reformation Needed?"), another by A. R. Wentz ("Luther and His Tradition"), a third by Georgia Harkness ("Calvin and His Tradition"), and so forth. The writer was chiefly interested in two contributions, entitled "Interpretations," one by A. C. Knudson ("Cardinal Principles of the Reformation") and another by W. G. Chanter ("Protestantism and the Bible"). In "Cardinal Principles of Protestantism" Knudson writes (among other things): "The cardinal principle of Protestantism which I place third in the list is the supreme authority of Scripture. This doctrine was for a time regarded as the basic principle of Protestantism, as the foundation on which the whole structure of its teaching rests. The Bible was held to be the one infallible source and ground of religious belief. But this point of view now belongs largely to the past. It has succumbed to the modern theory of knowledge and to modern Biblical criticism. . . . Since then it has become increasingly clear to thoughtful people that religious faith does not need either an infallible Book or an infallible Church to establish its validity. It validates itself" (p. 132 f.). In "Protestantism and the Bible" Dr. Chanter writes: "The essence of Protestantism cannot be contained within the covers of any book, even though that book is the Bible. After all, it was not in the rediscovery of the Bible that Protestantism was born, but in the recapture of a great experience." (P. 138.) Again: "To the Reformers the Bible was primarily a book of power and not a compendium of ideas about God, a source book for a complex theology. This conception was certainly not new with them. St. Paul, who knew that the letter kills, knew of a word that was power, that came with the demonstration of the Spirit." (P. 142.) How blind these Modernists are! How ungratefully and perversely they reject the Word of God! Today the Bible is being spread in millions of copies and millions of persons are reading it as the divine Word of Truth, as God's own inspired, inerrant Book, and here come learned men—professors of theology, editors, ministers—and heap more disgrace on the Bible than scoffing Voltaire did in his day, for they are dynamiting the foundation on which the Christian faith rests.



**B. Neo-Thomism and the Sola Scriptura**

No wonder Romanism is aggressive today, as it never was before since the days of the Counter Reformation. In the atheism of renegade Protestantism, Rome sees its opportunity to reconquer Christendom for the Papacy. One of its weapons of offense is Neo-Thomism, by which it pits the authority of St. Thomas Aquinas against individual "authorities" who, having rejected Scripture and destroyed its influence, assert that their own subjective views are authoritative in religion. Against these blustering Modernists, who rage against orthodox Christianity, Rome has a strong case. Of course, Rome itself fights these rationalists with rationalism, not with Scripture. Neo-Thomism is essentially a philosophy, not a theology. Substantially, too, it is rationalistic in its whole epistemological approach. But Rome is old, while Modernism is relatively new. Rome is organized, while present-day Modernists are fighting one another. Again, Rome has a church dogma, which its adherents dare not ignore; they may philosophize only within the scope of the established church dogma, by which they feel themselves held together as the *una sancta ecclesia*.

Nevertheless modernistic rationalism has much in common with Romanistic rationalism. In *Revelation*, edited by John Baillie and Hugh Martin (containing essays by Aulén, Barth, Bulgakoff, D'Arcy, Eliot, Horton, and Wm. Temple), much is written that even the Neo-Thomist might accept as true. When Barth, for example, writes that "Holy Scripture as such is not the revelation" (p. 67); or when Bulgakoff says: "'Inspiration' in general is only one particular form of revelation" (p. 154); or when Horton affirms: "We are not likely again to identify God's eternal Word with the Book which contains the record of its revealing, or to insist that everything in that Book is infallibly correct and verbally inspired" (p. 264), Thomists, though perhaps taking the words in a different sense, might support them. Thomists may even nod assent when G. P. Mains in his *Divine Inspiration* says: "The Bible stands, and will forever hold its place, as the supreme literary record of the highest experiences of elect souls in their direct realization of God. . . . But it may not be forgotten that at best, of these supreme experiences, the Bible is only a literary record. It is an accommodative attempt to portray through letters to the human understanding, to fuse into the human moral feeling, mountain-height experiences had in hours when in great and seeing souls there have arisen the most luminous revelations of God" (p. 97 f.); for, after all, the Thomist recognizes Scripture only as a *norma secundaria* or a *norma remissiva*. So, when in his *Meaning of Revelation* H. Richard Niebuhr criticizes the orthodox theologians for "identifying revelation with Scriptures" (p. 75) or for "equating Scriptures with



revelation" (p. 49), that, too, might receive a passing mark with the Thomist professor. So also much of what is said in K. E. Kirk's *The Study of Theology*, especially that which regards the Reformation (pp. 16, 85, 195 f., 305 ff., 324 ff.), would perhaps more than delight the Thomist of today; for both the Modernist and the Thomist think along rationalistic lines. And yet the Thomists are bound to fight the Modernists, not merely because they are *extra ecclesiam* but because in their speculations they go beyond all measure of what is sane in rationalization and lose themselves in utter antitheism and atheism. There is no doubt that Modernism is paving the way to Rome for many among the world's intelligentsia, who are thoroughly disgusted with the vanities of present-day modernistic systems of religious thought.

Thomism substantially holds that "grace builds on what is best in human nature, and faith is reasonable," as R. G. Bandas puts it in his *Contemporary Philosophy and Thomistic Principles* (p. 12). Summarizing the essence of Thomism, this writer declares: "In this lies the whole secret of Thomism, in this immense effort of intellectual honesty to reconstruct philosophy on a plan which exhibits the *de facto* accord with theology as the necessary consequence of the demands of Reason itself, and not as the accidental result of a mere wish for conciliation." (*Op. cit.*, p. 13.) Thomism, thus representing the blending of *revelatio et ratio*, needs must be rationalistic, but in that very fact also is centered its opposition to the *sola Scriptura*.<sup>21</sup> We are here less interested in Thomism than in Modernism, because the former is not so widely spread as is the latter. But the aggressive activism of Romanism, which essentially is Thomism, will make it ever more necessary for Protestant scholars to acquaint themselves with both the essence and the objective of Thomism. Suffice it to say that also Thomism because of its ingrained rationalistic tendency cannot tolerate the *sola Scriptura*. In Protestant countries Rome urges the spread of the Bible, but this does not mean that Rome today regards the Bible in the same way as does orthodox Protestantism. In the Roman Catholic Church the Bible will forever remain a secondary norm.

### C. Barthianism and the Sola Scriptura

Barthianism in a way has made Bible study very popular, since it sees in the Bible one of the "means of divine-human communication." But Barthianism, too, rejects the *sola Scriptura*, and that with no less emphasis than does Modernism and Thomism, just

21) Besides the book just mentioned the reader may study the chapter on Neo-Thomism in Aubrey's *Present Theological Tendencies* and the more recent book *The Philosophy of Thomas Aquinas*, by Hans Meyer, tr. by Frederic Eckhoff.



because also Barthianism is essentially rationalistic. In other words, the Neo-Orthodoxy, as which Barthianism is sometimes known, is not Christian orthodoxy at all but a radical departure from the traditional Christianity in its fundamental problem concerning the source and norm of faith and life.<sup>22)</sup>

Barthianism today is divided into two wings, one moving toward Modernism and the other to a quasi orthodoxy; both wings oppose the Lutheran principle of the *sola Scriptura* and reject it not only as worthless but also as harmful to the cause of Christian doctrine.

One of the most popular Barthians is Emil Brunner, whose stay at Princeton as guest professor and whose work in English have given him a wider circle of friends than other Continental Barthians have enjoyed. Liberal Barthianism may therefore well be judged by what Brunner has written regarding the *sola Scriptura*. In his well-received book *The Word and the World* he has this to say regarding the *Schriftprinzip*: "As a matter of fact, the book [the Bible] does not necessarily belong to Christian faith" (p. 88); or: "Orthodoxy has made the Bible an independent divine thing, which just as such, as a *corpus mortuum*, is stamped with divine authority" (p. 92); or: "So far as the orthodox theory of Scripture is concerned, there is no distinction between this and the Indian or Mohammedan belief in their sacred books; the Bible has become a divine oracle" (p. 94); or: "How shall we be able to speak of Bible authority, of the Bible as God's Word, after our critical reason has torn it to pieces in such a fashion and made it like the rest of history?" (p. 99). Brunner, then, does not accept the *sola Scriptura*, but repudiates it as unworthy of modern religious belief.

Very clearly he proves this in his more recent book *The Divine-Human Encounter*. The central thought of this work is, as the translator, A. W. Loos, states in his Preface, that "when God meets man, Christian truth comes into being" (p. 5). We owe it largely to Brunner that many of the obscure Barthian expressions have been somewhat clarified; but by doing so, Brunner has also clarified the moot point that, after all, Barthianism is only a new form of rationalism, i. e., the revolt of human reason against the Word of God as it is set forth in Holy Scripture. Of course, as all other Barthians, so also Brunner uses plenty of sheep's clothing, and often his language so closely approaches Christian orthodoxy that many Christian readers have been deceived by his statements.

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22) We shall here not describe Barthianism in detail but refer the reader for particulars to our article on Karl Barth, in Vol. XV, No. 6 (June, 1944), of the CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY, to which because of the importance of the matter we appended also a rather large bibliography.



But Brunner does not proclaim the Christian doctrine, Law and Gospel, in the traditional sense; he offers a substitute which intermingles Law and Gospel and leaves the anxious sinner without a clear and substantially anchored message of salvation. How bitterly Brunner hates the *sola Scriptura* in the old Lutheran sense is proved by the following statements: "The Scriptures became a gathering of divine oracles, the essence of divinely revealed doctrine. . . . The temptation could not be withstood to create a system of assurances including the confessional dogma, the notion of verbal inspiration, and the Bible understood as a book of revealed doctrine. The 'paper Pope' stands over against the Pope in Rome; quite unnoticed, the position of dependence on the Word of God is usurped by the appeal of pure doctrine, which in turn is made tantamount to the Word of God" (p. 31 f.); or: "The Bible is as little concerned with objective as with subjective truth" (p. 41); or: "The 'formal principle,' the Word of God, and the 'material principle,' redemption through Jesus Christ or justification by faith alone, are not two but one and the same principle seen in two aspects" (p. 46). This almost senseless statement will become clear to the reader when he considers just what the "Word of God" means to the Barthian. This point, however, we must defer for a later discussion. What we mean to show here is that Barthianism by the very essence of its philosophy cannot tolerate the *sola Scriptura*. It is a new religious Liberalism, which sooner or later is bound to land where atheistic Modernism landed—in the bog of total doctrinal indifference to, and rejection of, the *sola fide*.

Barthianism because of its two-facedness, i. e., its toleration of Liberalism and relative orthodoxy (though not orthodoxy in the sense of Worms and Augsburg), has affected many who up to their Barthian conversion were Modernists, among these H. Wheeler Robinson, who in his book *Redemption and Revelation in the Actuality of History* expounds the *Barthian Gottbegegnung in der Geschichte*, as the title of his book shows. Lack of space does not permit us to quote much of his philosophy, but let the reader contemplate the following: "He [the educated evangelical] cannot take refuge in an impossible theory of verbal inspiration" (p. 180); or: "The doctrine of the supremacy of Scripture, as the only rule of faith and life, has been profoundly affected by literary and historical criticism, and by the comparative study of religions. It is still maintained, but virtually on the ground that the Bible is the source book rather than the textbook of Christian doctrine, the sufficiently accurate record of a religious experience which is normative and authoritative" (p. 179). This means that the Lutheran *sola Scriptura* must go overboard, for it is not itself authoritative, though the human experiences recorded therein are authori-



tative. In other words, not God's Word but human experiences become the authority in religion; what men say counts, not what God says. In *The Hibbert Journal* (Vol. XLI, 1942—1943) a writer clarifies this thought thus: "Christian 'revelation' can be no more than the apprehension in each individual soul of the true law of its being as realized in the light of those verities, as to the nature of God and man himself, that Jesus unveiled, as it were."<sup>23</sup> In *Zwischen den Zeiten* (6. Jahrgang, 1928), Barthian oracle and stand-by, George Merz, in his essay "Zur Frage nach dem rechten Lutherverständnis," condemns (as do other writers in that periodical) the *sola Scriptura* as unthinkable and raises the question: "Versteht dann also in diesem Punkt doch die Orthodoxie mit ihrem hanebuechenen Buchstabenglauben Luther recht?" (P. 432.) This question he of course denies and he defends Luther against the narrow belief of orthodox Lutheranism. "Ueberall versteht man hier den Luther als den Verkuendiger der grossen Unmittelbarkeit" (p. 434). This means: Luther did not proclaim the Bible as the *de facto* Word of God, but as the medium by which God, who is the only Word ("Gott ist das Wort"), immediately communicates Himself to man ("Gott aber ist frei." P. 434).

Even so conservative a Barthian as Otto Piper rejects the Lutheran *sola Scriptura*, though in his writings (mostly in the practical field) he avoids everything that is controversial. But in his *Grundlagen der Evangelischen Ethik* (1. Band) he clearly shows his Barthian *Einstellung*. His method, he writes, is neither historical nor biblicistic nor confessional. (Cf. p. XVI.) He conceives as the objective of theology pure doctrine, orthodoxy. But this he does not try to establish by quotations from Scripture, from the Fathers, and from Luther. Theology is the attempt to gain pure doctrine by way of science ("Theologie ist der Versuch, die reine Lehre auf dem Wege der Wissenschaft zu gewinnen"). (Cf. p. XVIII.) But this attempt will land him in the end (unless he should change his theological methodology) in the camp of the Modernists; for *Wissenschaft* (science), as understood in modern theology, is nothing else than the conceited, unbelieving human reason, which refuses to accept the Gospel. It is not by his theological method, but only by the grace of God and so through a fortunate inconsistency that O. Piper still adheres to the Christian faith in a general way. His method certainly is not orthodox. (Cf. *The Sunday School Times*, Sept. 18, 1943, for Piper's attack on the inerrancy and authority of Scripture.) In the *Union Review*, published by the students of Union Theological Seminary (Vol. IV, No. 1; December, 1942), Emil

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23) *Religious Autonomy and Revelation*, p. 303. The writer, R. F. Rynd, is not a Barthian, but there is no great difference between his brand of empiricism and that of the Barthians.



Kraeling in an essay "The Church and the Bible" shows Barthian tendencies in rejecting the *sola Scriptura* as "legalism." According to Kraeling, the Protestant Christian "still believes that the principle of Scriptural authority is right, and that the right kind of Scripture study will set it forth in its true light. The great fallacy in the common view of the authority of Scripture is its legalism" (p. 19). The authority of the Bible, he suggests, must not be believed because of Scripture's own witness to this truth, but because "it is demonstrated through the service it performs" (*ibid.*). In O. Piper's *God in History* the writer contends that "the fact should no longer be denied that, in the first chapters of the Bible, human pre-history is narrated in mythical language" (p. 61). Of course, he at once explains that he does not take the term "myth" in a rationalistic connotation; nevertheless his entire discussion on the point proves his dissensus from Lutheran orthodoxy. (Cf. pp. 60 ff.)

Not so cautious as Piper is Edwin Lewis in his book *A Philosophy of the Christian Revelation*. Lewis has a way of speaking in very obscure terms, which renders it difficult for the reader to understand just what he means. As a neo-orthodox Barthian, he speaks in words that suggest that he is not so very "far from the kingdom of God." But his book as a whole is a repudiation of the *sola Scriptura*. The Christian man, he maintains, is a Biblicist (one who adheres to the Bible); but he is not an uncritical Biblicist. He distinguishes between what is the *form* of revelation and what is its *substance*. (Cf. p. 141 f.) Doctrine is determined not at "the point of some documentary infallibility" (p. 61), but by one's faith and experience. And how shall the reader judge the following? "The Bible came into being because of a movement that was taking place in the lives of men over a long period of time. The movement was essentially religious" (p. 32); or: "Christ can never be fully understood from the study of Scripture alone" (p. 31); or: "The Church is a voice for God. Like the Scriptures themselves, it is a witness" (p. 74); or: "They [the Barthians] are not seeking merely to regalanize dead dogma. . . . They have recovered or retained for themselves what they believe is the essential character and the inner meaning of the Christian revelation" (p. 285); or: "The Resurrection is the dramatizing of the finality and indestructibility of self-giving love. It is a way of saying, in one overwhelming and inescapable divine word, that victory belongs to the cause with which Jesus Christ is forever identified" (p. 303); or: "Always must the Word become flesh" (p. 306). Lewis speaks in riddles, but riddles which definitely show that the *sola Scriptura* is not his specialty.

Princeton Theological Seminary is today the American headquarters of Barthianism, and its mouthpiece is *Theology Today*. In



its first issue, of April, 1944 (Vol. 1, No. 1) P. S. Minear has an article which bears the title "Wanted: a Biblical Theology." (Cf. pp. 47 ff.) But it is clear that the Biblical theology which Barthian Minear wants is not that of Luther and of St. Augustine and of St. Paul. What kind of Biblical theology *Theology Today* offers Dr. J. A. Mackay shows in the October, 1944, issue (Vol. 1, No. 3), in which he clearly states the neo-orthodox conception of revelation. Dr. Mackay is himself a churchman whose ministerial and missionary experience have brought him close to the Bible as a source of personal strength and comfort and as a means of successfully carrying on his work in a Roman Catholic environment. Hence Mackay's orthodox Reformed background exerts itself even now when at Princeton he has turned Barthian. (Cf. *The Sunday School Times*, Sept. 18, 1943, on Mackay's attack on the inerrancy of Scripture. The same article considers also the doctrinal positions of Homrighausen, E. Lewis, and R. Niebuhr.)

In his editorial Mackay says that at its lowest the Bible is a monument of human literature. Again, the Bible is a book of supreme religious genius. In the third place, it is the record of divine revelation, as which it is a book about Jesus Christ, who is the center of it. As such it becomes, he says, "the chief source book of our knowledge about God and His purpose for mankind," for which reason all true theology must be Biblical theology" (p. 288 ff.). Here already the liberal Barthianism of Dr. Mackay manifests itself, for he does not interpret the Bible in terms of orthodox Reformed tradition, but in a way in which only a Barthian can speak. He writes: "In this book is contained the self-disclosure of God in great redemptive deeds, and in prophetic, interpretative words." That is not the language of traditional orthodoxy. Lastly, however, Dr. Mackay regards the Bible as "*the supreme medium of divine-human intercourse*" (italics his). "Here God speaks directly to men today in all the complexity of their need, in all the phases and aberrations of their human situation." He goes on: "In this book God meets men face to face. God spoke to Luther through the Bible in his penitential ascent of the Scala Santa in Rome. He spoke to Karl Barth through Paul's Letter to the Romans. . . . God is encountered in the Bible; that is the stupendous fact. Following that encounter, something happens of life-transforming character." Now all this sounds very orthodox, but what Dr. Mackay and other Barthians thus write has taken on a different meaning. Just before this Mackay had criticized the "exclusive use of the Bible as the inspired and authoritative source book for Christian doctrine." This, he says, has led to Scholasticism, both Protestant and Roman (which, of course, is not true). It has created a "tendency to make Christianity consist in a relationship



to a book instead of a relationship to God, to substitute Biblical knowledge about God for personal acquaintanceship with the God who becomes known in the Bible" (which also is not true, since all sincere Christians who regard the Bible as the inspired, inerrant Word of God have used it for the purpose it was given, namely, to make sinners wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus).

What, then, does Barthianism mean by saying that the Bible is "the supreme medium of divine-human intercourse"? Barthianism is a religious philosophy built up on fundamental Reformed principles. One of these principles is that God needs no wagon or escort to come into the heart of man but that efficacious grace acts immediately; or, as others have put it, divine truth attends the regeneration of men, but is not its means. Reformedism does not recognize the Gospel as a means of grace, as orthodox Lutheranism does. When, therefore, Barthians speak of the Bible as "the supreme medium of divine-human intercourse," they merely regard it as an accompanying circumstance of the Spirit's operation. God uses the Bible to speak to men, however, not necessarily what the words say, but whatever He means to reveal to men, just as God uses a storm or a war or a beautiful mountain scenery to convey to him the verity of His presence and operation. Barthianism is enthusiasm (just as Calvinism is enthusiasm), for it separates the operation of the Spirit from the Word; only Barthianism is much more extreme in its attitude toward the Bible. In fact, Barthianism is so opposed to the orthodox proposition that "the Bible is the Word of God" that it now largely speaks of the Bible as being the Word of God only inasmuch and in so far as Christ, the living Word, is there revealed to us. ("Christ is the Word.") For this reason Barthians welcome destructive higher criticism as something not at all harmful but even beneficial to Scripture; for according to Barthianism the Spirit is not attached to words, and there must not be any Scholastic letter-service. This accounts also for the definite indifference of Barthians over against doctrine in general, and, above all, for their refusal to enter into doctrinal distinctions. Barthianism is essentially rationalism and syncretistic Liberalism; and while the movement just now is relatively orthodox in some theological circles, it is bound to swing over to extreme Modernism as soon as that trend to Modernism again becomes more popular. *The Westminster Theological Journal* (Vols. 1, 2, 3; November, 1938, to May, 1941) contains several articles which the writer cordially recommends to his readers as an antidote against Barthian Liberalism. One, "The Inspiration of the Scripture" (Vol. 2, p. 73 ff.), is by John Murray, professor of systematic theology; another by N. B. Stonehouse, professor of New Testament, which bears the title "Jesus in the Hands of a Barthian" (Vol. 1, p. 1 ff.).



The latter's subtitle is "Rudolf Bultmann's Jesus in the Perspective of a Century of Criticism." It is indeed a very helpful, illuminating article, which is to be recommended to all who see in Barthianism the golden mean between "orthodox Scholasticism" and agnostic Modernism. Barthianism is powerless over against modern religious liberalism just because it has surrendered and is directly opposing the *sola Scriptura*.<sup>24)</sup>

Unfortunately, Barthianism has crept also into Lutheran circles. *The Lutheran Church Quarterly* (Vol. XVII, No. 3, July, 1944) contains an article by H. C. Alleman, "The Bible as the Word of God," in which there is denied not only the verbal inspiration but also the inerrancy and authority of Scripture as such. Then the writer asserts that the Bible is God's Word only because it sets forth Christ, who is the Word. A few quotations may show what Dr. Alleman has to say on the point. "Textual criticism has shown that we do not have an infallible text" (p. 216); or: "In its simplest analysis the voice of prophecy was the extension of the voice of conscience" (p. 218); or: "They [the followers of Luther] have made the Old Testament a kind of gazeteer of the historical Jesus" (p. 221); or: "The Bible had authority for him [Luther] because of the message it contained and not because of any artificial attestation with which it was supposed to be invested" (*ibid.*); or: "The authority of the Bible therefore resides not in an infallible text or in ecclesiastical decrees" (p. 223). The article is *in toto* an absolute disavowal of the infallible Scriptures.

#### IV

But we must bring our discussion to a close. There are two thoughts which we would like to impress upon our readers for conscientious consideration. The one is that the *sola Scriptura* is today the outstanding doctrine in controversy. All the forces of evil are engaged in breaking down the foundation upon which our Christian hope is built, and theologians must again seriously consider the question: "Is the Bible the inspired, infallible Word of God, the only source and norm of faith?" The other thought is that if Christendom surrenders the *sola Scriptura*, it is hopelessly sold out to religious Liberalism, Modernism, and atheism. The *sola gratia* can be preserved only if the *sola Scriptura* is kept intact. Well has John Murray written in his article "The Inspiration of the

24) Since it has become fashionable to praise Reinhold Niebuhr's *The Nature and Destiny of Man*, let the reader be reminded that neither of the two Niebuhrs preaches the Gospel of the crucified Christ; their books do not at all point out the way of salvation by God's grace through faith in Christ's vicarious atonement. Nor do the two Niebuhrs preach the Law of God as it is taught in Scripture. What both proclaim is a *sophia logou*, a philosophy of religion, which is neither pure Law nor pure Gospel.



Scripture": "How precious it is that in this world of sin with its vagaries of unbelief, its fluctuating philosophies, its dim light which is darkness, and wisdom which is foolishness with God, its bewilderment and despair, we have a sure Word of prophecy, whereunto we do well in taking heed as unto a light that shineth in a dark place until the day dawn and the daystar arise in our hearts!"<sup>25</sup> Those who destroy a nation's faith in the Holy Bible are indeed its greatest enemies, and what everlasting harm they do to souls purchased with Christ's blood only eternity will show.

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JOHN THEODORE MUELLER

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## Catholic Tributes to Luther

### I. As Preacher

In the centuries immediately preceding the Reformation the preaching monks regaled their hearers with tales of Troy and silly stories of the saints in order to catch the penny collection, and "penny preachers" they were called by Brother Berthold of Regensburg in the thirteenth century.

Even Cardinal and Archbishop Stephen Langton of Canterbury preached on an old French dancing song, applying "the Fair Alice" to the Virgin. "Stale and absurd" such things were called by the Dominican Jacob Eckard.