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SCRIPTURE PROOF IN THE VIEW OF MODERNISTS.

That the views which modern critical theologians hold of the origin of the Scriptures practically destroy both the causative and the normative authority of the Bible, and render it useless—except in a secondary manner—for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, has been pointed out long ago by the opponents of modernism. It was reasonably claimed that men could not consistently collect proof-texts for divine things from the only Book in which those things are propounded, if they do not believe that Book to be divinely originated and divinely effectual. With the passing of the old Bible, plenary inspired and inerrant, the old *Schriftbeweis* must go; the support is knocked from under systematic theology; the study of Bible-history becomes a study of Hebrew folklore, and preaching from Bible-texts an act of pious reverence for the past.

What Bible Christians have anticipated and feared is declared with appalling candor by a representative of the critical school of modern Protestant theology. At the "January Conference", at Dorpat Prof. Dr. Karl Girgensohn, of the local university, spoke to the pastors present on "Scripture Proof, Formerly and Now, in Evangelical Dogmatics."¹) He beholds "a grave inner crisis" in Protestantism, "so powerful and thorough that disinterested bystanders—Catholic critics and

1) *Der Schriftbeweis in der evangelischen Dogmatik einst und jetzt.* Leipzig, 1914.

MATERIALS FOR THE CATECHIST.

FOURTH OUTLINE.

THE FIRST COMMANDMENT. Qu. 13—16.

I. *The Form of This and the Other Commandments and of Luther's Explanation.*

A. "The first question that arises here is, Why does He not issue the commandments in the affirmative (declarative) form, thus: 'Thou shalt have the one true God,' or: 'Worship me, the only God'? The second question that arises is, Why does He not speak in the imperative, but in the indicative mood?¹⁾ I answer both questions at once: Every commandment of God has been issued to indicate sins that have been committed or are being committed rather than such as may be committed at some future time. Accordingly, Paul says, Rom. 3, 20: 'By the Law is the knowledge of sin'; again, Rom. 11, 32: 'God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that He might have mercy upon all.' Hence, when the commandment of God approaches man, it finds him already a sinner, and increases his sinfulness, 'that the offense might abound,' Rom. 5, 20. The laws of men, however, are issued against future sins. For this reason the Holy Spirit, who is an exceedingly kind teacher, prefers to speak in the indicative mood, as if He wished to say: Poor man, see, I am showing you your corruption. This is how you should be, *viz.*, you should have no idols, you should not misuse God's name, you should keep holy the Sabbath-day, you should not kill, covet, etc. But your present condition is altogether perverse. Lastly, this is the reason, too, why He issues His commandments in negative form; for a negation is stronger than an affirmation. Even the Samaritans in

1) Luther preached from the Latin text of the Vulgate: *Non habebis deos alienos*, and treated "habebis" as the indicative future.

olden times worshiped the one true God, but they worshiped their idols at the same time, just as the Jews and heathen, the heretics and wicked people do in our time. Yea, throughout the world every person worships the one true God, who is 'manifest in them' all, Rom. 1, 19. But they sin in combining His worship with that of their idols. Nor is there a man living who does not, in a manner, keep every commandment; for there is no one who does not at times omit misusing God's name, or slaying, or adultery, or theft. Still, they also do the contrary of all these things." (Luther, III, 1134 ff.)

B. The form of the commandments is not a mere formality. A commandment in negative form determines for us what is sin; a commandment in the affirmative, or declarative, form, what is a good work. There is no other way for determining either. Of course, from a sin forbidden we naturally infer the opposite as enjoined, and *vice versa*. But this is not because we choose to draw such an inference, but because the Law written in our hearts, of which the decalog is merely the codification, compels us to draw that inference, and the numerous passages of Scripture, which are expansions or illustrations of the Law, often reinforce a commandment expressed in negative form by declaring the opposite a duty, and inversely. In the matter of the divine code of morals there is no room for a neutral, or indifferent, position. No person can claim to have fulfilled a commandment that is stated negatively, if he has refrained from the sinful action forbidden without engaging in the corresponding good action. No commandment is transgressed by commissions only, nor by omissions only, but each commandment is transgressed in both these ways. The same rule applies to the fulfilment of the commandment. Luther's explanation seeks to create the proper balance: he does not only specialize the general statement of the commandment, but where the commandment names the 'sin only, Luther names the corresponding good work, and *vice versa*.

II. The Prohibition. Qu. 13. 15.

A. The subject-matter prohibited: other gods besides God.

1. The omission of Ex. 19, 2 from Luther's text of the First Commandment need not be regretted. These words will appear very appropriate in the Conclusion. Meanwhile the contrast contained in the commandment proper ("*other gods before Me*") and in the proof-texts (Is. 42, 8: "the Lord—graven images"; Ps. 115, 3. 4: "our God—their idols"; Matt. 10, 28: "they which kill the body—He which is able to destroy," etc.; Matt. 10, 37: "father and mother—Me"; Prov. 3, 5: "the Lord—thine own understanding"; Jer. 17, 5:

“man, flesh—the Lord”) is sufficient to cause the catechist to speak of God before he describes idols.

2. There would be no reason for this commandment if those people who say, “There is no God” (Ps. 14, 1), were right. But because there is a God, and He is the only one of His kind, this commandment is very necessary.

a. God is a person. He speaks of Himself as “I,” Is. 42, 8; Gen. 17, 1, and refers to Himself as a person in this commandment: “before Me.” He is spoken to in prayer, Ps. 73, 25. 26, and spoken of as a personal Being in every one of the proof-texts for this commandment.

b. He has a name: “The Lord, that is My name,” Is. 42, 8; 2) “I am the almighty God,” Gen. 17, 1.3)

c. He is one Being, yet several persons: Father and Son, for instance, are alike God, John 5, 23 (comp.: “the kingdom of Christ and of God,” Eph. 5, 5). Jesus demands for Himself, Matt. 10, 37, what Jehovah claims for Himself, Is. 42, 8.4)

d. He is elevated above all else as the omnipotent Creator, able to do anything He pleases, Ps. 115, 3; Matt. 10, 28.

3. Anything outside of God can never be what God is. All other things are creatures of God and in themselves good. If they are put in the place of God, they become “idols,” Ps. 115, 4. An idol is a fictitious, false God, practically a lie. In this commandment God turns against every creature that is set up as a god.

2) Gesenius, pointing to Ex. 3, 14, says: “The name Jehovah is derived from the verb הָיָה , *to be*, and regarded as designating God as *eternal, immutable*, who will never be other than the same.” Rawlinson paraphrases Is. 42, 8 thus: “I am all that the name Jehovah signifies—self-existent, eternal, self-sufficing, independent, omnipotent, and therefore unique.” The force of the term Jehovah has, in the New Testament, passed over to κύριος , Matt. 4, 10.

3) “ אֱלֹהִים , participle of the verb אָזַן , *strong, mighty, a mighty one, hero, champion*”; next, *strength, power*. “To God is said, in Scripture, to belong whatever is excellent, distinguished, superior in its kind.” (Gesenius.) As to the other name in this text, שָׁרֵי , Gesenius treated it as a *pluralis majesticus* from שָׁרַף , *powerful*. His translator, Robinson, differs from him, saying: “More probable is it that שָׁרֵי , which never takes the article, is to be regarded as a plural (of שָׁרַף) with the suffix of the first person, after the analogy of the form אֲדֹנָי , and used at first in direct invocation of God; hence, *pr. mei potentes, my God*; but afterwards a name of God, as Almighty.”

4) The plural אֱלֹהִים , indicating the Trinity, occurs in Ps. 14, 1.

B. The action prohibited: having other gods before God.

1. Luther's "neben mir" and the English "before Me" both show, not that God will not suffer anything beside Him to exist, but to be regarded and treated as only He can be regarded and treated.⁵⁾

2. "Having" other gods means:

a. "Giving the glory" of the true God to, and bestowing "the praise" due Him upon, another that is not God, Is. 42, 8; or "worshiping" something as God, Matt. 4, 10; or, on the other hand, refusing "honor" to God, John 5, 23. Any religious act, such as prayer, offering of sacrifice, etc., performed to any being or thing outside of the true God, whether the act is private or public, is denounced as sin in this commandment.⁶⁾

5) *עַל־פָּנָי*, Ex. 20, 3, literally means "before My face," that is, "before Me," "before" being understood in the local, not in the modal (comparative), sense. There is a sphere into which nothing can be admitted that is not God. There is none "beside" Him, Is. 44, 6, 8; 45, 18. The true religion is monotheism, not polytheism, nor pantheism, nor atheism.

6) *נָתַן כְּבוֹד לְ*, to give honor to, Is. 42, 8, is a common Hebrew phrase signifying adoration of the Deity; and *תְּהַלֵּל* is a religious hymn, such as David composed for the worship of Jehovah. In Matt. 4, 10 *προσκυνέω* refers to prostrations and other acts of adoration before the Deity, while *λατρεύω* signifies every act of obedience rendered to God, whether at a religious service, festival, sacrifice, etc., ordained by Him, or in that service to our fellow-men which the true God has made a part of that practical worship which He demands of His followers. In John 5, 23 *τιμάω* expresses the awe and reverence with which the devout worshiper approaches God.—The English "worship" is derived from an Anglo-Saxon root that means to deem worthy. Not so long ago it was the exact equivalent of the Greek *τιμάω* = "honor," and was used also of the reverence and honor shown men, as in the marriage ritual of the Church of England, when the groom vows to the bride: "With my body I thee worship." In lodge idolatry we find a "worshipful" master.—Is. 42, 8, by the way, is a Messianic text, and represents Jehovah as the fulfiller of His gracious promises. Rev. Tuck has called attention to this, and linked the uniqueness of the only true God with the unique Savior: "Jehovah stands alone. All others must say, 'I was made'; He says: 'I am.' The distinction comes out very forcibly in relation to the idols which men worship. We know their origin in men's mental conceptions, or in men's handiwork. Of Jehovah we know nothing save that *He is*. But the prophet is far less concerned with the abstract nature of God than with His special and gracious relations with His people. He is here dealing with Jehovah's faithfulness to His predictions and promises. He is unique in this,—He keeps His word. The glory of fulfilling His promises belongs to Him alone. It was characteristic of idolatry that large promises were made to men by oracle and priest for which there was no guarantee; and there

b. To "fear," Matt. 10, 28, "love," Matt. 10, 37, "trust," Prov. 3, 5; Jer. 17, 5; cherish, Eph. 5, 5; Phil. 3, 19, anything in such a way that God becomes dislodged from man's chief affections.⁷⁾

c. A person engaging in an action of this kind is called an idolater, Eph. 5, 5, and his act, idolatry.⁸⁾

C. The principal forms of idolatry.

1. "All the children of Adam are idolatrous, and guilty of having transgressed this commandment. But we must know that there are two kinds of idolatry, one external, the other internal. External

is no more miserable chapter in the history of idols than the chapter of *excuses* for disappointed promise-holders. If the predictions of Jehovah ever failed, He would sink to lower levels than the idols. "The voice that moves the stars along speaks all the promises." The point on which to dwell is that, however tolerant idolatry may be of other conceptions and other rituals developed in other lands, and however attractive to men such latitude in religion and worship may be, not one jot of the absolutely supreme claims of Jehovah can be removed. In this no concession can be made. Here there can be no rivalry, no sharing of honors. God is God alone. He is above all. It is absolutely essential to the worship of Jehovah that it should be wholly exclusive of the idea of another god. No reproach of men can be more severe and searching than this, "They feared the Lord, and served other gods." (*Pulpit Comm.*)

7) *Φοβέομαι* in Matt. 10, 28 expresses the dread which seizes a person in the presence of a superior power, and sways his deliberations so as to make him submissive. *Φιλέω* in Matt. 10, 37 refers to the natural affections which grow out of consanguinity. Even these must be kept under strict control in the interest of sincere religiousness. *Πιστῆ* in Prov. 3, 5 and Jer. 17, 5 is the common term to express the act of placing hope and confidence in one. It is said to be derived from a root that signifies unloading a burden on another, in the belief that he is able and willing to bear it for you; hence, seeking actual relief in distress from a source that is greater than yourself. *Ἰψῆ* in its niph'al form, in Prov. 3, 5, literally means to obtain rest by leaning upon a support. In Eph. 5, 5 *πλεονέκτης* is compounded out of *πλέον* + *ἔχειν*, to have more. This indicates an engrossing passion, and a similar passion is indicated in Phil. 3, 19.

8) In *εἰδωλολάτρης* we have a compound noun, the latter half of which is derived from *λατρεύω*. (See Note 6.) The service due God is rendered by the idolater to an *εἰδωλον*, an apparition. The word is derived from *εἶδεν*, to be seen. Cremer: "*Εἰδωλον*, connecting with *εἶδος*, signifies a picture in so far as it exhibits a figure, and emphasizes only the idea of its appearing, and that so strongly that the ultimate conception is that of semblance; it denotes a form that looks like something, seems to impersonate something." An idol is a phantom, a shadow without substance. There is nothing really divine in it; only the corrupt fancy of man imagines that it has discerned something divine in an idol. See 1 Cor. 8, 4.

idolatry is the worshipping of wooden or stone images, animals, stars, and is known to us from the Old Testament and from pagan writings. External idolatry, however, has grown out of internal idolatry, which latter consists in this that a person, moved either by the fear of punishment or the desire to secure some profit, while omitting the outward act of adoring a creature, nevertheless inwardly cherishes, and puts his confidence in, the creature. For must we not regard it as an act of worship when a person, indeed, does not bow the knee to wealth and honors, but still sacrifices his very best to obtain them, *viz.*, his heart and mind? Such an act would mean, worshipping God with the body and our physical limbs, while inwardly adoring the creature with one's spirit." (Luther, III, 1136.)

2. "External idolatry" is in our Catechism called "gross," that is, coarse, shocking, revolting, and repulsive, idolatry, and is defined thus: "actually to regard and adore a creature as God."

a. The oldest and most hideous form of idolatry is devil-worship. The proposition which Satan made to our Lord in the desert was made to Him as the representative of our race. This consideration carries us back to Eden. While we have no record that Adam and Eve performed the act of worshipping the devil, which was suggested to Christ, their compliance with the devil's schemes made the devil their god in the place of the true God. That the devil is the ulterior object in all pagan idol-worship is stated 1 Cor. 10, 20. *Luther*: "Here belong those also whose idolatry is most gross, and who make a covenant with the devil, in order that he may give them plenty of money, or help them in love-affairs, preserve their cattle, restore to them lost possessions, etc., as sorcerers and necromancers." (*Large Cat.*, p. 392. Jacobs' Ed.)⁹⁾

b. The worship of idols practised by the heathen is gross idolatry. "Their idols are silver and gold,' at the best, — often mere wood and stone, Deut. 4, 28; but the idols of the Babylonians were mostly of the more precious materials (Herod. 1, 183; Dan. 3, 1; Ep. Jer. 1, 4, 11, etc.)" Isaiah has portrayed the manufacture of idols ch. 44, 12—17 (comp. Ps. 135, 15). "To avoid this reproach (*viz.*, that idols are the work of men's hands) some images were said to have fallen down from heaven." (*Rawlinson.*)¹⁰⁾ — At the promulgation of the

9) Goethe's *Faust* is a panegyric on devil-worship.

10) Ps. 115, 3, 4, quoted in the Catechism, might be extended so as to embrace vv. 5—8, which depict the idols as "possessing a semblance of every organ of human sense, and yet wholly unable to perform any of the functions. That men should worship them, or believe in their power to help, is an utter absurdity." The Psalmist in this text calls idols עֲצָבִים.

Decalog on Sinai there was a distinct reference to this gross form of idolatry connected with the First Commandment, Ex. 20, 4. 5.¹¹⁾ The Israelites were not to make for purposes of worship any image¹²⁾ or any likeness "of anything that is in heaven above," that is, any winged creature of the air, or a stellar body, "nor in the earth beneath," like the calf that Aaron made for them, "nor that is in the water under the earth," like the fish-god Dagon of the Philistines or the crocodile of Egyptian worship. In the remark, "Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them," lies a hint of what the pagans actually do.¹³⁾ Ex. 32, 1—6 affords good collateral reading at this

The word is derived from a root which means to cut, or carve. In Is. 42, 8 they are called פְּסִלִים, from a root that means to cut, or hew, out of stone.

11) The commandment against image-worship is the second in the numeration of the Reformed Churches. Rawlinson gives the reason as follows: "As the First Commandment asserts the unity of God, and is a protest against polytheism, so the Second asserts His spirituality, and is a protest against idolatry and materialism." But Rev. Young remarks: "These two commandments seem to be bound together naturally by the reason given in v. 5. There Jehovah says, 'I am a jealous God'; obviously such a feeling of jealousy applies with as much force to the worship of other gods as to the making of graven images." (*Pulpit Comm.*) Luther calls the prohibition of images "the other part of the First Law, wherein God refrains us from having other gods. Who these other [strange] gods are He informs us in this text (vv. 3. 4), viz., by telling them that they were not to have any images, neither of objects in heaven nor on earth, etc. That is: you shall not paint the sun, moon, stars, or make any image of man, beast, or fish." (III, 1043.) The Lutheran Church, while following the time-honored numeration of the commandments, has always regarded the numeration as a "res media et indifferens; non est canonice autoritatis." The Lutherans at Strassburg, c. g., in the days of Quenstedt, had the Reformed numeration. What the Lutherans oppose in the Reformed teaching on this point is that the Reformed "hanc suam distributionem decalogi tanquam necessariam ecclesie obtrudunt." (*Quenstedt*, who also catalogs the fanatical views of Reformed writers on this subject. See *Baier*, ed. Walther, III, p. 345 f.)

12) פְּסֵל.

13) "Every outward sign of honor was shown to images in the ancient world. They were not regarded as emblems, but as actual embodiments of deity. There was a special rite in Greece (theopoea) by means of which the gods were inducted into their statues, and made to take up their abodes in them. Seneca says of the Romans of his own day: 'They pray to these images of the gods, implore them on bended knee, sit or stand long days before them, throw them money, and sacrifice beasts to them, so treating them with deep respect, though they despise the man who made them.'" (*Rawlinson*.)

point. *Luther*: "The heathen who aimed at power and dominion elevated Jupiter as the supreme god; the others, who were bent upon riches, happiness, or pleasure and a life of ease, venerated Hercules, Mercury, Venus, or others. Women with child worshiped Diana or Lucina. Thus every one makes that to which his heart is inclined his god, so that even in the mind of the heathen to have a god is nothing but to trust and believe. But their error is this that their trust is false and wrong; for it is not placed in the only God, beside whom there is truly no other in heaven or upon earth. Wherefore the heathen really form their self-invented notions and dreams of God into an idol, and put their trust in that which is altogether nothing." (*Large Cat.*, p. 393.)

D.

(To be concluded.)