

§ 58. Another important series of consonant changes in PG was discovered in the late 19th c. by a Danish scholar, Carl Verner. They are known as Verner's Law. Verner's Law explains some correspondences of consonants which seemed to contradict Grimm's Law and were for a long time regarded as exceptions. According to Verner's Law all the early PG voiceless fricatives [f, θ, x] which arose under Grimm's Law, and also [s] inherited from PIE, became voiced between vowels if the preceding vowel was unstressed; in the absence of these conditions they remained voiceless. The voicing occurred in early PG at the time when the stress was not yet fixed on the root-morpheme. The process of voicing can be shown as a step in a succession of consonant changes in prehistorical reconstructed forms; consider, e.g. the changes of the second consonant in the word *father*:

PIE                                      Early PG                                      Late PG  
 \*pa'ter                                      > \*fa'θar > \*fa'ðar > > \*faðar

Verner's Law accounts for the appearance of voiced fricative or its later modifications [d] in place of the voiceless [θ] which ought to be expected under Grimm's Law. In late PG, the phonetic conditions that caused the voicing had disappeared: the stress had shifted to the first syllable.

Table 4

### Voicing of Fricatives in Proto-Germanic (Verner's Law)

Change illustrated		Examples		
PIE	PG	Non-Germanic	Germanic	
	Early    Late		old	modern
p	f > v	L caput	Gt haubiþ, O Icel haufōð, OE hēafod [v]	Sw huvud, G Haupt, NE head
		L septem	Gt sibun, OE seofon [v]	G sieben, NE seven
t	θ > ð, d	O Ind satam, R cto	Gt hund, O Icel hundrað, OE hund	G Hundert, Sw hundrade, NE hundred
		L pater, O Ind pitā	Gt fadar [ð], O Icel faðir, OE fæder	G Vater, Sw fader, NE father

§ 59. As a result of voicing by Verner's Law there arose an interchange of consonants in the grammatical forms of the word, termed *grammatical interchange*. Part of the forms retained a voiceless fricative, while other forms — with a different position of stress in Early PG — acquired a voiced fricative. Both consonants could undergo later changes in the OG languages, but the original difference between them goes back to the time of movable word stress and PG voicing. The interchanges can be seen in the principal forms of some OG verbs, though even at that time most of the interchanges were levelled out by analogy.

Table 5

**Grammatical Interchanges of Consonants caused by Verner's Law**

Interchange		Principal forms of the verbs				
PG	OG languages	Infinitive	Past Tense		Participle II	NE
			sg	pl		
f ~ v	OHG f ~ b	heffen	huob	huobun	gi-haban	<i>heave</i>
θ ~ ð	OE θ/ð ~ d	sēoðan	sēað	sudon	soden	<i>seethe</i>
x ~ γ	O Icel,	slá	sló	slógum	sleginn	
	OE x ~ γ	slēan	slōz	slōzon	slæzen	<i>slay</i>
s ~ z	OE s/z ~ r	cēosan	cēas	curon	coren	<i>choose</i>

Note that some Mod E words have retained traces of Verner's Law, e. g. *seethe* — *sodden*; *death* — *dead*; *raise* — *rear*; *was* — *were*.