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THE  
BIBLIOTHECA SACRA.

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ARTICLE I.

ROTHE ON DOGMATICS, REVELATION, AND SCRIPTURE.<sup>1</sup>

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THE following is a condensed presentation of the chief points in Rothe's work, *Zur Dogmatik*. This work was first published as three essays in the *Studien und Kritiken*. It was then thoroughly revised and annotated by the author, and issued in a volume, in 1862. In the preparation of this summary of the work I have aimed at strict fidelity to the author. But I have also aimed at the greatest practicable clearness to English readers. Hence my paper is not a translation, but rather a reproduction. I do not make the author responsible for a single sentence of the paper, nor even for its imagery. He is responsible simply for its sentiments, its positions.

The work *Zur Dogmatik* is among Rothe's latest and most serious utterances; and yet it is the very work which, in some points, will most antagonize the prepossessions of the average English theologian. The only apology the author makes for his positions is his thorough conviction of being on the road to the truth. His book undertakes a difficult task—it undertakes to hold fast to the essential truth in Christianity, and yet to tear off from it the swaddling bands

<sup>1</sup> *Zur Dogmatik*, von Dr. R. Rothe, p. 356. Gotha: F. A. Perthes.

of certain traditional associations which, as the author thinks, can no longer stand the test of modern thought. The unrivalled eminence of Dr. Rothe, both as a theologian and as a devout and spotless disciple of Christ, certainly entitle his views to the most candid consideration. In this thought I give the following synopsis to the English-reading public.

### I. DOGMATICS.

Dogmatists are of two classes — those who obtain their theological principles from dogmatics itself, and those who, obtaining their principles elsewhere, construct the science of dogmatics by these principles. I am of this second class.

But what is dogmatics? Evidently it is the science of dogmas. Before there were dogmas there was no thought of dogmatics. And the reason that dogmatics ever was thought of was the actual existence of dogmas, and the consequent felt need of constructing them into a science.

What, now, is a *dogma*? All admit that it is a something that has its roots in religion, and, consequently, that it can be understood only in the light of religion?

What, then, is *religion*? Religion is primarily of subjective quality; it is piety. Objective religion is secondary and derived. Of course, a revelation is presupposed by subjective religion. For it is only through a divine impingement upon the soul from without that our human consciousness becomes a God-consciousness. This impingement may be direct or mediate, supernatural or natural. The true order, then, is, revelation, subjective religion, objective religion. Before there can be objective religion there must be a religious quality to be objectified. This is piety; and piety is that state of the individual in which his entire personality is harmoniously affected by God. Piety, as a state of personalities, manifests itself outwardly — gives to itself shape and form. It affects and shapes the action of the will and the course of thought. Thought, as guided by piety, arrives at religious conceptions. These, when reduced to formal expression, are dogmas.

In this process there are distinct and successive stages. The first stage is that of *feeling*. We *forebode* God before we *know* him. Our first knowledge of God is in the form of a presentiment. How, now, does this forebodement, this presentiment, objectify itself? Of course, only by assuming a form. But as it is itself only an individually colored presentiment, the form given to it will be shaped by the individual fancy. That is, the form it assumes will be an *image*, a symbol. Consequently, objective religion in this its earliest stage, is *mythology*. This word I use, of course, in a good sense. And I add that it is an essential perfection of any religion, even the Christian, that it has a mythology—a religious fantasy-world.

The next stage of our religious knowledge is, that it rises from its individual to a general or universal form. It rises from the sphere of feeling to that of the understanding. Here it can objectify itself only in a rational manner, i.e. by *words*. In rising to this form it passes through various phases of increasing distinctness. At first it is nothing more than an impression, and its objective form is mere *opinion*. Next it rises from the crudeness of opinion to the form of a distinct *thought*; its objective form is now that of a religious *maxim*. But this process whereby our religious impressions, opinions, rise to the generic form of clear thoughts can take place only in respect to the several separate elements of our consciousness; so that at best our religious knowledge exists only in the form of a plurality of as yet isolated thoughts. But inasmuch as to think is, strictly, to *comprehend*, to construct the units of consciousness into an organic totality, hence the next stage is, that the fragments of our religious knowledge be constructed into organically articulated religious systems.

Now, if this is the goal which religious thought naturally *must* set before itself, it is evident that this goal is attainable; otherwise, there would be a contradiction in the very constitution of things. And, in fact, the objective conditions of such systematic construction are here right at hand. For, evidently, each several religious thought is closely *related* to

every other, by virtue of the common ground out of which they have sprung, — namely, the specifically attuned religious consciousness, — as also because they are the product of one self-consistently acting apparatus of thought.

Now, the process which we have thus described takes place concretely in the religious community. This community is the *church*. It is only through the church that religious thought receives that precision of form whereby it becomes *dogma*. To the church, therefore, we now turn.

That piety necessarily leads to society — communion — we take for granted. This society or church is, in fact, simply piety as having become concrete or objective. For, as the piety of the individual comes to objective expression, it becomes manifest to the consciousness of other individuals; hence the origin, and, in fact, the inevitability, of religious communion. This communion is communion of will, and also of thought. It is with the latter only that we have here to do.

Primarily this phase of religious communion is simply a communion of presentiments. Hence it is crude and superficial. It can become deep and thorough only by rising from the individual to the generic form — only by passing from instinctive presentiment to rational thought. This takes place when the church gives to the knowledge common to her members an adequate *form*, and *sanctions* it with her *authority*. This sanction comes about primarily only very indefinitely, usually by the force of mere usage. It is only when differences of opinion arise that it becomes sharp and definite. For when strife arises, then the law of self-preservation induces the church to examine closely, to decide positively, and to stamp with authority. When this takes place, — when the church authoritatively moulds her religious thought into such form as constitutes an adequate expression, in any particular respect, of the specific form of piety which she represents, — then she creates a *dogma*. And it is only when she has done this in respect to all the elements of her collective religious knowledge that the communion of thought

among her members can be complete. A digest of all the dogmas thus originating constitutes the *symbolum* or articles of faith.

Dogmas necessarily presuppose a church; for only a church can make them. Ever since the dissolution of the church into a plurality of relatively opposed fragmentary churches, Christian doctrine can appear only as the doctrine of some specific branch of the church. Hence dogmas can now appear only as *confessional*. This holds true not of particular dogmas, but of all dogmas. There are no dogmas common to several churches; but in proportion as any church is the *completed* objectification of any specific form of piety, in the same proportion *all* her dogmas belong to her, and to no other. Since the schism of the church there are really no general Christian dogmas. For let the principle of any church be fully carried out, and it will affect every one of its dogmas, without exception.

But with this digested scheme of dogmas we have as yet attained simply to dogmas, but not to *dogmatics*. The dogmas stand as yet simply alongside of each other. They are not yet organized into a unitary system. To so organize them is to construct the science of dogmatics. Occasions for this work occur early in the history of the church. The single dogmas need to be reconciled with each other. The rule, the criterion, the principle for this reconciliation, is the specific form of the religious consciousness of which the church in question is the outward expression. The process of constructing dogmas into dogmatics takes place through the same dialectical procedure whereby the single dogmas are evolved. It is, in fact, but the completion of the already begun logical process. So soon as the church has formed her round of single dogmas she enters upon an age of dogmatizing; that is, she begins to modify, temper, and clarify her dogmas.

A comprehensive definition of dogmatics, then, is this: It is the systematic, that is, scientific, presentation of the official doctrine of a particular church-communion. A mere

concatenation of dogmas into *locos communes* is but a preparation for dogmatics. Dogmatics itself arises only through the discovery of the common ground-principle out of which the single dogmas sprang, and by the reduction of the dogmas into more complete organic harmony with such principle. The reducing process is both free and bound — free, in that it is wholly intent on effecting a complete harmony of all the dogmas, even at the risk of sacrificing something of what had appeared as true doctrine; but bound, in that it has no other rule of judgment than the one underlying principle or spirit of the church which generated the dogmas.

Dogmatics is, accordingly, a positive, a historico-critical, but not a speculative, science. Its subject-matter is the positive, historically given church-teaching. But it is of the greatest importance that its positive and its critical elements be kept distinct. Though not speculative itself, it necessarily presupposes a speculative system. He who has no such system cannot construct dogmatics; for every dogmatist needs clearly-determined conceptions as his instruments; and where else he can get them, than in a speculative system, is not apparent. And the need is not merely a system of metaphysics, but rather of speculative theology proper. I know that theologians are very prone to make dogmatics a substitute for the speculative theology which they lack; but this is simply an abuse. A commingling of the two works disastrously for both, and is a chief source of the confusion of ideas with which we theologians have been so justly reproached. He who would work at dogmatics is in a bad case so long as he has not wrought out for himself a rounded system of speculative theology. A *mixtum compositum* of dogmatic and speculative elements under the name of dogmatics is the weakest of weak and useless things.

Also the relation of dogmatics to exegetical theology is often misconceived of. Though I freely admit the dependence of dogmatics on the Scriptures, and hence on exegetical theology, still I cannot admit that there is such a thing as

“biblical dogmatics.” In my view the *matter* of dogmatics is simply and purely the *given* dogmas. The dogmatist cannot *make* dogmas; they are ready made for him. Hence the question, Can there be a biblical dogmatics? depends on this other question: Does the Bible contain dogmas? And this I deny. I hold that the *religious teaching* contained in the Bible lacks that developed form to which the word “dogma” is properly applied. The Bible contains the *germs* of dogmas, but not dogmas themselves. It is only with the latter that dogmatics has to do.

Having settled our conception of dogmatics in general, we turn now to Protestant dogmatics in particular. What, then, is the characteristic, the ground-principle, of Protestant dogmatics? This is the same as to ask, What is the principle of the church of the Reformation? This principle can be determined only by determining the specific character of Protestant piety, whereof Protestant dogmatics is simply the objectification. This piety, now, is a species of the genus “Christian piety.” The essence of Christian piety in general is, that it is a *real communion of man with God by the mediation of Christ as Saviour from sin*. The specific modification of this piety whereby it becomes Protestant piety has usually been expressed under the dualism of two principles—a *material* and a *formal*. The material principle is the free justification of man by faith in Christ, without the least personal desert. The formal principle is the exclusive and unconditional normative authority of the Bible. Both of these principles are primarily the norms not of Protestant dogmatics, but of Protestant piety. It is only mediately that they are the principles of Protestant dogmatics.

At first glance it seems strange that the Protestant church rests upon *two* principles. It has the appearance that she is devoid of inner unity. Closer examination, however, will show that the inner unity is not lacking—that the two principles are but two phases of the same thing. The fact upon which the Reformed church was founded was the personal experience of salvation through faith alone. The experience

was the material principle. But in organic union with this experience was the formal principle of Bible-teaching, whereof this experience was the application. The two stages are but stages of one process. If the soul is justified by faith in Christ,—if the church effects man's salvation only mediately, by directing his attention to Christ,—then she must possess Christ—his spirit, his image, his teachings—in such an authentic objective *form* as will enable the sinner, unhelped by any third medium, to exert that faith which saves. This objective representation of Christ is, now, simply the Scriptures. And the seeming dualistic basis and nature of Protestant piety may be expressed in its really unitary character thus: It is that specific form of Christian piety which springs from justification through faith in Christ as objectively presented in the Scriptures. Such being the principle of Protestant piety, and the Protestant church being the objectification of this piety, and dogmatics being the systematized presentation of the thinking of the church, hence the above-stated principle of Protestant piety is also the principle of Protestant dogmatics.

What, now, are the sources of dogmatics? They are twofold—historical and critical—the given dogmas and the divinely guided thinking of the subject. The historical source is, however, more than the naked dogmas proper; it embraces, also, a stream of dogmatic tradition. The using of the historical sources consists, first, in accurately determining what the dogmas are, and then in organically developing them. The genuine dogmatic tradition (for the Lutheran and Reformed churches) lies in such works as preceded the eighteenth century. For at this point the first great stage of dogmatic development ceased, and gave place to a period of relative dissolution.

The fact that the Lutheran and Reformed churches have different symbols and traditions forms an apparent obstacle to the development of a unitary dogmatic system truly representing both of them. But I regard it as only apparent. As both churches sprang out of the same principle (of justifica-

tion through faith in Christ as presented in the Scriptures), I can but regard them as simply representing two phases of a religious development which, in its full form, will unite them both in a higher unity. The churches are, indeed, different, but not *heterogeneous*. A true consensus of the dogmas of the two churches will furnish the basis of the perfect dogmatics of the Protestant church. The production of such system is a task of the future. The dogmatic development in neither church is as yet anything near completed. Upon very few points is there a settled unanimity in either church; much more, then, is the higher unification of the two a work yet to be awaited.

But what is the process whereby the single Protestant dogmas are to be constructed into a system? This process is simply the logical evolution of the contents of the specifically Protestant God-consciousness. The prime fact of this consciousness is *redemption*. This redemption presupposes a lack of communion with God, from which it redeems. This lack is *sin*. As effected through Christ, redemption proceeds from God; that is, it is of *grace*. The two facts underlying redemption are, therefore, sin and grace. Sin and grace form, therefore, the two chief parts of dogmatics. As sin presupposes God and man, hence the first part of dogmatics falls into: (1) the doctrine of God, or *theology* (proper); (2) the doctrine of man, or *anthropology*; (3) the doctrine of sin, or *hamartiology*. The second part treats of grace, as its fruits spring objectively from the reconciliation effected by Christ, and subjectively from faith in Christ on the part of the subject. Its two subdivisions are, therefore: (1) the doctrine of the Saviour — *soteriology*; and (2) the doctrine of salvation — *soteriology*.

At first glance this classification seems to fail in doing justice to the formal principle (the Bible) of the Protestant church. And, in fact, the older dogmatists uniformly began their classification with a chief part entitled *bibliology*. The true position of a discussion of the Bible, however, is under the subdivision, doctrine of salvation; the Bible really being,

in its present form, one of the means of grace. But if still, in obedience to settled usage, dogmatics treat first of bibliography, it were better that it do so not in the body of the work, but in an introduction.

What, now, is the precise method of treating each dogma in detail. Here we notice three features :

(1) The dogmas are to be presented in their ecclesiastically fixed form, with the greatest possible fidelity. They are then to be measured by the accepted Protestant criterion, the Scriptures. Agreement with Scripture is here the indispensable condition of sound doctrine. No dogma can here be valid except as it is seen to be an organic member of the general system which lies in germ in the sacred text. So, also, no Christian sect can be Christian, except on condition that it can, despite its particularistic character, show itself to be a logical development of one of the phases of essential Christian piety. And a complete ideal dogmatics would be this — one that contained and developed to its maturity all and every of the germinally given doctrines of the Scriptures, and no others. And by the Scriptures we mean the Old as well as the New Testament, but the Old only in the light of and as supplemented by the New.

(2) But the work of the dogmatist extends further than to the mere applying to the dogmas the test of the Scripture text. The Protestant church presents her dogmas as products of scientific thought. And they are such. They are doctrinal definitions, wrought out by the apparatus of theological science. As such they are a proper subject of theological criticism. They are to stand or fall, according as they can or cannot logically make good their right to existence. The church cannot refuse to submit all of her dogmas to this test in all its rigor, without, *eo ipso*, abandoning them as dogmas ; for she would thereby confess that they are not dogmas, i.e. products of theological science. This position is also confirmed by the history of dogmas. Dogmas, in fact, are uniformly the products of repeated attempts at the scientific construction of the substance

of Scripture. Each renewed attempt implied the relative imperfection of the preceding attempt. What, now, will guarantee that any particular last attempt has absolutely reached the ideal? There is no such guarantee. But an unquestionable reason for subjecting dogmas to occasional scientific re-examination is the fact that they are simply the products of such scientific apparatus as was available in the age in which they were elaborated. But this apparatus evidently grows more discriminating, more perfect, from age to age; so that it is successively able to correct, reject, or perfect that to which it previously had given its full sanction.

But what are the special points towards which the work of dogmatic criticism should be directed? First, as to whether each dogma is free from contradiction with itself or with the others; and then, whether or not it is free from ambiguity. Furthermore, whether the conceptions used in constructing the dogma are true and clear, or only partially so. For the alphabet of conceptions (ideas, logical terms) is in constant process of growth and clarification. Note, e.g. the great modifications which the ideas *spirit* and *matter*, *nature* and *personality*, *body* and *soul* have undergone.

(8) Another point to be considered in dogmatic criticism is the fact that all our religious doctrines are ultimately rooted in *feeling*. When the divine revelation which enkindles the religious consciousness impinges upon the consciousness for the first time, it impinges upon it as already *individually* determined, that is, in a word, as *feeling*. The specific modification of this feeling effected by the revelation constitutes the primitive form of the piety of the subject; and this piety, when logically evolved in thought, constitutes the contents of dogmatics for that subject. And each church is also a composite subject, falling under the same conditions. Every particular dogma must therefore, in order to its legitimacy, be seen to be rooted in some phase of the form of religious feeling of which it claims to be the scientific expression. So long as the religious roots of the dogma are undiscovered, so long is that dogma unappreciated. The

possibility of the purification of the body of dogmas from the sphere of feeling is given in the fact that the essence of the dogmas exists as feeling in the consciousness of each subject before it exists as developed dogmas.

Thus it appears that each dogma is to be tested by a threefold criterion; to wit, as it is related to Scripture, to the apparatus of science, and to the religious consciousness. It is to be criticised *scripturally*, *scientifically*, and *religiously*. The more usual order, however, would be, scripturally, religiously, and scientifically.

The work of this threefold criticism is very especially needed in regard to all dogmas which have been transplanted bodily into Protestantism out of the Catholic church. Such dogmas are *per se* suspected; for they are not the logical product of the Protestant consciousness. Especially in religious and scientific respects are they to be carefully scrutinized. How readily may they be rooted in an unevangelical religious feeling! How probable that the scientific means by which, so many ages ago, they were elaborated is now scientifically antiquated! And it is precisely these dogmas which the evangelical church imported, unexamined, out of the old church, which render modern Protestantism so objectionable to the present age. So that precisely with these dogmas lies the Herculean task of modern dogmatics. It is with the great decisions which the Councils of Nice and Chalcedon prematurely fossilized that the critical efforts of the Protestant dogmatist are most imperatively needed. To spend our pains on the minute differences between Protestant sects, and to leave these momentous ancient decisions utterly untouched, is to strain at gnats, and yet swallow camels, if not to render theology positively contemptible to an impartial outsider.

But when, now, dogmatic criticism shall find defects and hiatuses in the existing dogmas, from what source are these defects to be remedied? By the help of what are the germinal dogmas to be developed out into perfect correctness and self-consistency? Not by the help of dogmatics itself, but

by the help of that which alone renders dogmatic construction possible, viz. a rounded speculative system in the mind of the dogmatist. Here dogmatics finds itself in organic dependence upon speculative theology. And here we discover the real unity between the contents of revelation and the contents of human reason in general. Revelation comes to incipient reason, and starts it at work. Reason, speculation, philosophic thought constructs the contents it receives from revelation and from all other sources into a logically organized system. One of the parts of this system is necessarily a perfectly correct dogmatics. It is, then, by the help of scientific or speculative reason that dogmas are to be perfected. And reason, in this sense, signifies reason as having taken into itself the contents of all attainable instruction, revelation, of course, included. This furnishes the transition-point of our discussion from dogmatics to

## II. REVELATION.

Our scheme of dogmatics admits of the treatment of bibliography in the general introduction. But as the Bible rests upon revelation, hence any treatment of bibliography must begin with a discussion of revelation.

What, now, is revelation? Our earlier dogmatics largely identified it with the Bible. It is a merit of recent dogmatics to have distinguished between the two. True, an early and good distinction was made between a *revelatio naturalis* and a *revelatio supernaturalis*. And much of our modern confusion in regard to the function of human reason was avoided by our Protestant fathers by their regarding reason as not already complete, but as in constant process of *becoming*. This thought they included in their idea of regeneration. They held this idea, however, too much as simple purification, and not enough as also development. True, these elder dogmatists railed out against reason. And properly so; for what all did they not include under the term? Reason is indeed a precious power. But who has it? Rationality is, in fact, a *goal standing out before man*. It has never been *completely*

a *fact* in any man — one only excepted. So also is it with freedom. That a man *has* reason means simply that he *can think*; hence he has reason only in the measure that he really *can* think. But who can do this otherwise than merely relatively? Theology has, then, meant to object only to the misuse of reason — to the exaltation of crude reason to the throne which belongs to it only when fully purified and developed.

But our older dogmatists, though right in principle, erred in application. This is apparent in their admission that unaided reason, though blind and worthless as to divine things, is yet capable enough as to worldly and earthly things — an admission which will be made by no one who properly understands the relation between the religious and the so-called worldly and moral. The ground of this false position lay in the incorrect notion of revelation which then prevailed. According to this notion, the process of revelation consisted almost exclusively in imparting to the understanding ready-made religious dogmas, and, in fact, in imparting them directly by a mechanical inpouring. Such a notion conflicts with the nature of reason, and robs the idea of revelation of all vital naturalness. Besides, it is inconsistent with the idea of human history. But with such a notion of revelation the Bible itself is in direct conflict. The Bible represents revelation as a series — a closely connected series — of miraculous historical facts and historical institutions, in connection with which take place manifold supernatural illuminations of prophets, in vision and speech, by the Spirit of God, in the interest not so much of new religious dogmas as in view of preparing for future historical events.

An urgent demand upon modern theology is, accordingly, a rectification of the conception of revelation. To this I here attempt to contribute my mite. I hold that God's revealing work is simply a special phase of his redeeming work, and, in fact, that phase which is the necessary basis of redemption proper. Its end is to prepare for redemption — to render it historically possible. I further contend that

the essence of redemption consists in a purification and an invigoration of man's God-consciousness — to which God-consciousness man cannot now, because of the effects of sin, attain clearly and fully without higher help than the natural means that lie about him. I do not mean that revelation is the sole manner in which God educates and prepares the race for redemption; for God is constantly educating both heathens and Christians. I simply mean that it is exclusively in the field of biblical religion that God's general educating of the race is specifically directed to the clarification of man's God-consciousness, and is consequently revelative. And history here completely sustains us. For, rich as have been the fruits of the mythical religions in moral culture, yet in religious knowledge they have produced almost nothing.

Revelation, then, is an intensifying of man's consciousness of *God*. God in revelation reveals *himself*. God, and God solely, is the object revealed by revelation. Any other object is revealed only indirectly and incidentally. This is most strikingly seen in the highest point of revelation — *Christ*. Christ reveals but one thing — God, and God only.

But *how* does God purify and intensify man's God-consciousness? The old dogmatic position here is, that man sustains to God in revelation a *mechanical* relation, without co-operating on his own part. The soul is purely passive; God does not begin *in* it and *with* it, but works upon it by a pure act of omnipotence. He pours, in a *magical* manner, a complex of notions into the soul which are not only new, but foreign to it. But if this were the case, then the supposed revelation would not come into the soul at all; for by the very law of our being nothing comes into our personality otherwise than by the co-operation of our freedom, i.e. otherwise than by *moral mediation*. Moreover, such a manner of revelation would preclude all religious development in man. If, then, a real revelation of God is made to man, it must be regarded as partly conditioned by the co-operation of the soul, and as finding a receptive-point for itself already in

the soul. In a word, all revelation must be *morally* mediated. Herein is the broad distinction between the religion of the Bible and all heathen religions. The latter are based on *magic*. For in spiritual things the magical is simply that which is not personally or morally mediated.

By holding that revelation is co-operated in by the recipient, I do not preclude in the least its immediate directness. It is direct, and yet mediated — directly given, without the intervention of a third factor, but mediated by the responsive action of the recipient soul. Accordingly, when God would purify and intensify the sin-darkened God-consciousness of man through revelation, he necessarily does it in strict harmony with the psychological laws upon which human life is based; that is, he effects the designed impression upon the soul by setting at work the psychical powers of the soul in a normal manner. The conditions of the possibility of such revelation are simply the *impressibility* of the consciousness through outward impressions made in harmony with natural psychological law.

As, in consequence of sin, the soul cannot by the mere help of the natural data about it rise to the requisite intensity of God-consciousness, it follows that the normal manner of effecting the needed intensity is to so *intensify* the influences of those data as that they shall be adequate to reflect into the soul the correct idea of God with the requisite convincing force. There can be concerned here only *outward* religious data; for the supposition of inner ones would imply sorcery on the part of God. These data can only be natural events or historical facts, or both. When God reveals himself to the sinner, therefore, it is by placing in the horizon of his perception such new facts — natural or historical occurrences — as will enable his soul to generate by its normal activity an adequate conception of God, and consequently of his own alienation from God. These outer occurrences must be of such a character as to be explainable only by a correct conception of God. They must be supernatural in such a manner as to imply the full idea of God. And as the idea

of God is full only by embracing that which constitutes his character, — i.e. his moral attributes, — and as these can be manifested only in the setting and realizing of ends, hence it is chiefly by historical occurrences that God can reveal himself in the fullest degree. But history can rest only upon a background of nature; so that nature and history go hand in hand, the former being subordinate to the latter. Also this twofold means of revelation answers to the twofold contents of the idea of God — the *natural* and the *moral*. God's natural attributes — omnipotence, etc. — are revealable through nature; his moral attributes, — holiness, justice, etc., — through history. And the former set of attributes is so revealable only as subordinate to the latter, i.e. as means of realizing their ends; just as the natural in general is subordinate to the spiritual or moral.

This, then, is the essence of revelation: God enters by a current of supernatural history as an acting person into the current of natural human history, and thus brings himself into such nearness to man that man, despite his sin-darkened vision, cannot fail to recognize him. This is the first great and objective feature in revelation. We shall call it the *manifestation* of the divine.

But this objective phase needs to be supplemented by a corresponding inner, subjective one. In order to the success of revelation it must not only be perceived, but also *understood*, and *correctly* understood. God's end in revelation is to make man conscious not only *that* he is, but also *who* he is. Can, now, the unaided sinful soul of man adequately appreciate the objective manifestation of God, however intensely it be made? Christian experience must answer, No. For the *organ* of cognition is radically damaged. That the outer manifestation, then, come to true appreciation, it must be answered to by an inner influence of God upon man's consciousness — man's cognitive power must be so supernaturally shined upon as to be put into condition fully to comprehend that which comes to it from without. This subjective phase of revelation we call *inspiration*. This

inspiration is utterly free from magical traits. A distinct receptive point for it in the soul is ready prepared in the intensified religious consciousness generated by the supernatural manifestation. And when, now, the inner divine light falls upon the soul, the natural endeavor of the soul is immediately directed to an inquiry into the full meaning of the manifestation. In this deciphering of the manifestation the inspiration finds its object, and also its limits. They are the two poles which call for each other, and give measure to each other. Manifestation without inspiration would be but a dumb *portentum*; inspiration without manifestation, a mere *ignis fatuus*.

Inspiration assumes different forms according as the knowledge to which it leads is of individual or of general character—instinctive foreboding or clear thought. In the first case the inspired person is a *seer*; in the second, a *prophet*. In the first case the person sees visions; in the second case God so combines the existing thought-store of the soul as that essentially new thoughts are the result—thoughts of such a character that the receiver is distinctly conscious of not having come upon them by personal effort. For a personal experience of at least analogous things we may safely appeal to any person of rich experience in divine things. Also artistic production affords more than mere analogies. This does not imply that it is impossible generically to distinguish between esthetic and divine inspiration. Esthetic inspiration is but subjective, and stands alone; divine inspiration is organically connected with an objective manifestation. Hence the difference is radical.

As both manifestation and inspiration are historically conditioned, hence they can take place only gradually and progressively. The manifestation can be even partially understood only in the degree in which the receiver possesses already such elements of thought as, when combined by inspiration, will furnish a partial understanding of the manifestation. We say partially; for only this is required at first. For when the object manifested is once partially taken

hold of by humanity, it thenceforth remains displayed on the horizon of human observation, and hence may remain centuries upon centuries engaged in guiding man's thoughts toward a fuller realization of its significance.

It is only in perfected revelation — that is, in Christ — that revelation and the comprehension of revelation go absolutely hand in hand. As the perfected revelation of God, Christ is the God-man, and knows himself as absolutely and incessantly inspired. But this very character of absoluteness in the inspiration of Christ exalts it into a higher genus, and constitutes him the One in whom dwells all the fulness of God, that is, the One who is identical with God. Christ, then, is the sole completely inspired one in the whole scope of Scripture. And as God is the sole object of revelation, and Christ the complete revelation of God, hence the whole of Scripture, in the degree of its inspiration, is essentially simply a revelation of Christ. As any other than Christ is but partially inspired, hence any other than Christ is capable only partially, not absolutely, of reproducing and transmitting to posterity a complete reflex of the spirit of Christ.

The idea of revelation which we have thus presented implies that revelation is strictly *supernatural* — that it is only by the inner help of the divine causality that the outer manifestation is comprehensible. But it no less clearly implies that it is also strictly *natural* — that it is an organic current in the general course of human history. But revelation is not only itself a historical current, it also aims at rendering its contents the normal contents of the human consciousness in general; so that ultimately, from having been strictly supernatural, it will have become purely natural. That is, it will have so elevated humanity that the permanent normal state of man will be that of unclouded vision of God and communion with God. And this inner union with God will then objectify itself in a perfect outer organization of man's worldly relations, social, moral, and political. This transformation of humanity is the main end of revelation. The prime step in its attaining this end is, that it pass over into

the very life-blood of the consciousness of the race ; and it is of only incidental importance that it be framed into words and written into Scripture. Revelation, we say, is history ; and history is an organic series of facts. The significance of revelation is not chiefly in the subjective impressions the seer may receive from the objective manifestation, but in the manifestation itself, and in the impressions which this manifestation, as a link in history, will henceforth make with increasing correctness upon collective humanity.

What, now, are the criteria, the characteristic traits, the evidences of revelation ? Dogmatists have here written much that is totally superfluous. My answer is, that the evidences of revelation are simply the constituent elements of the idea of revelation itself. My notion is, that the three commonly given *proofs* of revelation — to wit, *miracles, prophecy, and the testimony* of inspired men — are not proofs of revelation, but, in fact, the essential revelation itself. Revelation is *per se* supernatural, that is, miraculous. It *per se* lifts man into new light, and casts light into the future, that is, is prophetic. It *per se* comes to the race through inspired men, that is, it is witnessed of. Without all three of these features no revelation is possible ; and these things are not possible without revelation. They are thus the very elements of revelation itself. They do not witness of revelation, but *are* revelation. The very idea of revelation is inclusive of miracles. Let us first look at miracles.

But what stages are there here ? These : The darker humanity is, the more abrupt will be the miracle. Earthquakes, deluges, rains of fire, raisings of the dead are sometimes needed. But the nearer the race rises to God, the less occasion there remains for such abrupt physical miracles. And finally all so-called revelation will utterly cease. But when ? When God is already totally revealed and enthroned in the consciousness of all. Here, then, it will cease. But why ? Because its end is fully reached, and hence its necessity superseded. Then all will be supernatural, or, rather, simply natural ; or, still better expressed, then the antithesis of the natural and the supernatural will have ceased.

But how about the philosophical difficulties involved in the idea of miracles? I here frankly and with all the innocence of infancy confess that I have never been able to see the least particle of force in any of these so-called difficulties. Perhaps this comes of the fact that I am in my very nature so very thoroughly theistic, and so utterly removed from the least shadow of deism or pantheism. At any rate, the fact is as I state. Doubtless much of the trouble of others at this point springs from the fact that they too generally confound and identify the two questions: Is a miracle possible? and: Are all of the strange incidents recorded in the Bible real miracles? These questions ought to be kept absolutely separate. The one is philosophical; the other is purely historical. The philosophical question ought to be settled utterly irrespective of the historical. The affirming of the first does not pledge us to accept a single so-called historical miracle whatever. But whether, in fact, any such be accepted depends solely on whether it or they can stand the ordeal of strict historical criticism.

The philosophical possibility of miracles is conceded by all intelligent opponents of pantheism and determinism, that is, by all true theists. The speculative presupposition of miracles is a correct idea of the relative self-existence of creation, — the relative self-subsistence of nature, — apart from God. In virtue of this idea, nature is to be regarded as a self-supporting organism of acting forces, having the laws of its development lodged within itself. All this, however, is given to it by God; and it itself constantly remains in God's power, and subject to his intervention, according as occasion may arise. But why can such occasions arise? Because the universe is the theatre not only of mechanism, but also of freedom; not only of dynamics, but also of ethics. Because real freedom in the creature (man) precludes the possibility of providing beforehand in the laws of nature for all future exigencies of human history. It is, therefore, strictly involved in the very idea of God as a free, rational Being that in the religious education of a race of imperfect

free natures he will intervene, modifying, into the chain of events, and that he will make use of the dynamic (physical) realm as the means of such supernatural intervention; that is to say, it is implied in the very fact that a personal God creates personal creatures that he both can and probably will work miracles. God subordinates nature to natural laws; he so balances the forces of nature in the organic totality of nature that nature has within itself the power of self-evolution. But he does not subordinate himself to natural law. Here, then, is the plain possibility of miracles. The miracle is not, therefore, something arbitrary, unphilosophical, irrational; on the contrary, its possibility is philosophically called for by the theistic conception of God; as also its actuality is likewise rationally called for by the occurrence of contingencies (such as the fall of man), the possibility of which is necessarily involved in the creation of free moral agents.

Our older theology forfeited the possibility of miracles by its erroneous notion of creation. If the whole fabric of nature has no relative self-dependence, if it persists in existing only by virtue of a *creatio continua*, then there is no essential difference between the natural and the supernatural, and hence no foothold for the miraculous — either everything is miracle, or nothing.

A word as to the various degrees of the miraculous:

(1) The intensest form of the miracle is that which is directly wrought by absolute power, without the help of second causes or other media whatsoever. For example, the generation of Jesus, or the turning of water into wine. Such effects are analogous to the first act of creation, whereby the absolute beginning of the universe was made, but not to the subsequent modifications of it which were prepared for by the development which preceded them. Such miracles have a resemblance to magic; hence they can take place only in the field of physical nature, but not in the field of spirit, morality, religion. For the very idea of the spiritual or the moral requires that all effects here wrought must be

co-operated in by the subject. Hence regeneration is not an effect or miracle of this first class. Miracles of this class do not suspend the operation of natural laws, or in any way conflict with them; for they lie entirely outside of the sphere of natural law. They are effects wrought directly and suddenly by God's causality; as such, they are neither helped nor hindered by nature. Immediately, however, upon their being wrought, their effects, as facts, fall under the sway of natural law, just as other physical facts.

(2) A less intense form of the miracle is such as is wrought by God through natural causes. The miraculousness here consists in the fact that the effects are such as the natural causes *per se* are strictly inadequate to produce. To the working of such miracles it is only needful that God combine the existing forces of nature in extraordinary and to us (as yet) incomprehensible ways. In doing this he simply acts analogously to human action in the field of invention. Man combines the powers of nature so as to work the wonders of photography, telegraphy, etc; God does likewise. Photography is as miraculous to the savage as the parting of Jordan's waves will be to the philosopher in the remote future. God's knowledge of nature's potencies is absolute; hence he will be competent to the production of miracles of this class so long as man's knowledge of nature is not also absolute. The essence, then, of this sort of miracles is, that they are such effects on the field of nature as man can account for only by the supposition of supernatural intervention. Apart from their moral surroundings they are analogous to what we vulgarly call chance. This class of miracles may also be wrought by God through the employment of natural agents higher than man — the angels. And wrought in the same manner, that is, by new combinations of natural forces.

To the above classes of real miracles we may subjoin a third class of merely *relative* miracles. These are such as are wrought by human agency through the strictly normal application of natural forces, but with such wisdom as to produce effects which to the beholder *seem* strictly super-

natural. Some of the New Testament *healings* may be of this class. And it may be that science will yet be able to trace the precise steps whereby they were effected.

After this brief glance at the classes of miracles, we cannot but recur to the question: Wherein do miracles conflict with nature? And our answer is constantly more intense: Nowhere! Miracles simply lie *beyond* nature. God has not enchained his hands in the net-work of nature. He sits transcendentally above it, and modifies and uses it *when* and *as* his wisdom calls for.

It thus appears that I lay great stress upon miracles. But I hasten to add that I do this not at all in the sense of earlier dogmatists, as seeing in them a help to the faith of after generations. The very contrary is the case. The biblical miracles are more a hinderance than a help to faith in this modern age. The significance of miracles is, for us, not apologetical, but historical. We need them not as constituting *chasms* in the course of history, but rather as *links* in it. The essential point is not that we stare at the miraculous facts in the sacred narrative, but that we take into our soul, as a life-force, the divine truths they helped to manifest. And many a one has, I think, so taken in these truths who yet hesitates intellectually to accept miracles. These truths, in fact, after being once revealed and absorbed into a society, may thenceforth remain a common element of the general consciousness, apart from and independently of the miracle which at first manifested them.

So much for miracles as the first criterion of revelation. If revelation were simply manifestation, then miracles would be the sole criterion, that is, the sole element, of revelation. But revelation is both manifestation and inspiration; hence as miracles correspond to manifestation, so *prophecy* corresponds to inspiration. As miracles are the form of manifestation, so prophecy is the objectification of inspiration.

A wide difference must here be made between prophecy (*προφητεία*) and prediction (*μαντεία*). Prophecy is God's verbal elucidation of his manifestations. Prediction is only

an incidental phase of prophecy. The manifestation is of course intended to act as a historical influence in shaping and regenerating humanity. Prophecy is teleological; it discloses the purpose of the manifestation, and thereby also helps the race to the realization of that spiritual state to which the manifestation was an index — a beacon-light. Prophecy is not an aggregate of isolated words; it is an organically articulated whole. It is a stream running hand-in-hand with God's miraculous manifestations; and they, both of them, lead to and terminate in one point — in the perfect manifestation of God = *Christ*. Thus Christ "fulfils" both. And the stream of prophecy becomes richer and more definite in contents the nearer it reaches its fulfilment. Hence it constantly loses in the element of prediction. For the more its contents enrich the consciousness of the race, the more fully can the race comprehend divine things by the normal use of enlightened reason.

As to the apologetical use of the recorded prophecies, our position is the same as in regard to the use of miracles. The use of both is chiefly for those who first received them. Their purpose was to prepare and educate the race up to a receptivity for Christ, but not to induce future generations to look back with faith upon a now historical Christ. The only possible way (and this is impracticable) for modern Christians to feel the use of miracles and prophecy, would be for us to divest ourselves of the whole weight of our Christian knowledge and culture, and to go back and begin with the very first feeble link in the chain, and thence grope our way up through the devious path of Old Testament history — up to Christ. They were the scaffolding to usher in Christ. What need we of the scaffolding, now that we possess the full building, and even dwell in it? Prophecy and miracles, then, have their rich meaning for the present age; but this meaning is not as a help to our believing in a light that already blazes into our eyes with the glory of noonday, but rather as necessary elements in the series of historical manifestations which culminated in Christ.

As a third proof of revelation has been adduced the personal *witness* of those to whom the revelation was made. This also, as the other two—miracles and prophecy—is simply one of the elements of revelation itself. For how is the divine manifestation to serve the race, if it be not explained by inspiration? And of what use to the race at large the inspiration, if he who is inspired witness not to others of the things revealed? This also, as the other two criteria, is to us chiefly of historical value. The test and guarantee of the correctness of the testimony is its true correspondence to the objective manifestation of which it is itself the inspired elucidation.

So much for the tests, proofs, criteria of revelation. Another question: Is our body of revelation perfectible, or is it already perfect? It is *not* perfectible. It is already the perfect revelation; for it reveals him who is "God manifest." In one respect, however, there is room for progress, to wit, in our *comprehension* of the revelation, and in our *realization* of it in the holiness of our lives.

### III. HOLY SCRIPTURE.

From our conception of revelation follows directly the necessity of sacred writings. For the end of revelation is to historically prepare for redemption, and ultimately to accomplish it; that is, revelation is to become historical fact. It is not to dart across the sky as a meteor; but to glow upon the horizon as the harbinger of noon-day. It is to cast its roots into the organic texture of human history, and work therein as a co-factor with other historical forces. But it can do this only as it enters into the current of tradition; and it can do the latter uncorruptedly only as fixed by writing. As the divine manifestation is primitively understood only by help of the attendant divine inspiration, so later generations can understand both manifestation and inspired interpretation of it only as both are preserved in essentially correct records. This does not require that the revelation be fully understood either by receivers or recorders, but only that, so

far as understood, that understanding be correct. Its full understanding is in fact to be a product of its own clarifying effect upon the soul of man throughout the course of the centuries.

The end of the sacred writings is not merely to preserve moral or dogmatic precepts, but chiefly to enable later generations to receive upon their hearts the very same impressions that the revelation made upon its first receivers. It is to enable us, by our plastic imagination, to be present at the original transaction and see it literally transpire before our own eyes. And it is mainly by this subtle, exalting, moral influence, and not as a text-book in ethics and dogmatics, that the Bible is such a potent regenerating factor in humanity.

But how are we to conceive of the origination of the Bible? According to the old Protestant dogmatists, inspiration is to be taken in the sense of pure, direct, absolute, *verbal dictation*. The sacred writers were not authors, but only amanuenses. They neither conceived the thought, gave to it form, nor selected words to express its form. They were purely and simply *passive*, — the instruments, the pens, of the dictating Spirit. The Bible, therefore, is an absolutely true transcript of the divine mind, utterly devoid of error, material or immaterial, essential or incidental, “dogmatical or moral, historical or chronological, topographical or onomastic.”

In our criticism of this old orthodox conception of the origin of the Bible, we shall take it as an organic self-consistent logical whole; for such it is. It is so constructed, so framed together, that the abating of one tittle from its rounded fullness would be to remove the keystone, and occasion the fall of the whole superstructure.

In one point we are heartily agreed with our elder dogmatists — that the best, the ultimate evidence of the divine character of the Scriptures, is the direct experience of their regenerative, their divine, influence upon the heart of him who honestly searches into them. Every such person finds

the Bible a means of grace, — finds that God himself speaks through it directly to the heart, and that, too, all the more clearly the longer he searches into and communes with it. And in fact how could it be otherwise? How could it be but that the deeper vision into this mirror of the divine heart should itself be the result of the clarification of our sin-obscured eye through the use of the mirror itself? Our firm conviction, then, of the divinity of the Scriptures is thus the product of these Scriptures themselves. At this point we go as far as the most hyper-orthodox could possibly go. To us the Bible is *specifically* different from any and all other books whatsoever. It is an authentic voice from God. It is the word of God.

If, now, at this point we must differ from some of the self-styled orthodox, we would have our reason for so doing clearly appreciated. And that is this, — our conviction that the old view is not truthful to the Bible itself, but is violently forced upon it from traditional dogmatic prejudices. And we hold it to be more important to be true to the Bible than to be in harmony with tradition. It is to three points in particular that we turn our attention — in what sense the Bible is *God's word*, in what sense *inspired*, and in what sense *infallible*?

We ask, then, in what sense does the Bible regard itself as the word of God? The answer will be, we think, not in the sense of the old dogmatists — as a book dictated word for word to a mere amanuensis.

The expression "word of God," so frequent in the Bible, was occasioned by the specific biblical conception of God. God is here rational and personal; hence his actions are expressions of thought and will, i.e. they are a *speaking*. Hence, to the Jews God's creating, his legislating, his promising and threatening, no less than his speaking proper, were his uttering of words; hence the decalogue was his ten words; hence the records of all his doings toward man were called his Word; hence, after the time of Nehemiah the written canon itself, as a book, came to be regarded as literally God's

words. And from the Jews this expression came over into apostolic use, and finally into the New Testament and into dogmatics. But in coming into theology it received a narrow specific sense which does not belong to its biblical use. In the Bible it means the knowledge revealed to us by God, and the publication of it to the world; in theology it is made to mean the successive Hebrew and Greek words of the Old and New Testaments as dictated one by one to the human recorders of the same.

That this dogmatic sense of the "word of God" is not the biblical one has been felt by many recent dogmatists; and various distinctions—e.g. that the Bible *is* not, but simply *contains*, the word of God, etc.—have been attempted, but without satisfactory result. The only remedy will be found, we think, in entirely disusing the dogmatic sense of the "word of God," as designating the Bible. But what shall we put in its place? We propose the word *revelation*. In fact, revelation, in our use of the word, expresses the full, clear conception for which the biblical phrase, "word of God," is but the preparatory germ. This substitution will give us light on more than one point. For while, e.g. the relation of the Bible to the "word of God" is very obscure, that of the Bible to revelation is very clear; the Bible is the original records *as to* revelation, but is not revelation itself. The Bible, then, we would designate as the *Holy* Scriptures. It is the word of God in this sense, that it contains the primitive records as to the self-revelations of God. We have spoken of this point simply from the fact that dogmatic tradition has stamped upon the biblical phrase, "word of God" a technical sense that is entirely misleading.

We next inquire, In what sense is the Bible inspired? Here, if anywhere, we may look for help towards an answer in a direct appeal to the Bible itself. What, then, is the voice of the Bible? As to the Old Testament we think no candid inquirer would ever get from it the thought of its being directly *dictated* to its authors by God. In general, we read only of divine illuminations, visions, conversations, etc.,

granted to God's chosen organs. But even the highest inspirations of these organs (prophets) is not represented as a purely passive impartation. True, the prophets give out their prophecies as the utterances of God; but of an inspiration which guided them while reducing their prophecies to writing, they say not a word. It is only the "law" and specific oracles that are attributed directly to God. The general frame-work of the books, however, — the historical, chronological, the didactic, the hortatory, — is *not* so attributed. In some cases even the documentary sources which the writers drew upon are directly given.

It was only in the later ages of the Jews that anything like our ecclesiastical notion of inspiration appeared among them. The genesis of the notion is readily accounted for. When the Jews were cured by their exile of their polytheistic tendencies, when they came back to Jerusalem and betook themselves with such unprecedented zeal to the study of their sacred books, what was more natural than that they should gradually extend their reverence from the sacred sense to the written parchment-roll, and to the other books that came to be included in it; and finally, to the very words, syllables, and punctuation itself? Traces of this change are distinctly observable in the Apocrypha. Soon the notion of inspiration assumed almost the rounded mechanical form which prevailed in early Protestant dogmatics. Proofs enough are to be seen in Philo and Josephus.

How, now, does the *New Testament* treat the Old in regard to its inspiration? We shall divide the question, and ask, first, How does Christ treat it? That he had for it the highest reverence, that he fed his heart upon it, and found in it God's full witness of himself, no one will question. But that he regarded it as written by divine dictation, is utterly without evidence. The two passages (Matt. v. 18; xxii. 43), usually cited as evidences, are irrelevant. The context shows clearly that the "one jot or one tittle" of the first passage refers not to the least part of the law as a book of words, but to it as an organism of truth. The second passage implies

indeed, that David wrote the hundred and tenth Psalm in a state of prophetic ecstasy, but says not a word as to the process whereby these divine communications were shaped into the recorded word.

But the matter is very different with the actual writers of the New Testament books. We find these entertaining the same view which prevailed in Judaism in general; and in their writings they reflect this view. They lose sight of the authors of the Old Testament, and treat all of its words as the direct words of God. Their general formula is: "God said," or, "The Holy Ghost said." The author of *Hebrews* even quotes as a "thus saith the Lord," passages in which God is spoken of in the third person. And this view of the apostles went over to the Fathers; so that the latter regarded the Old Testament as directly inspired at a time when they had not yet thought of so regarding the books which now constitute the New Testament.

It is clear, then, that the orthodox theory of inspiration is countenanced by the authors of the New Testament. But is this of decisive dogmatic significance? This view of these authors is evidently organically connected with their exegesis of the Old Testament. If, now, the one cannot stand the test of criticism, how can the other? But how can we concede correctness to their exegesis? They assign meanings which the original does not contain. They quote from memory, sometimes changing the sense. They often quote from the LXX where this version differs from the original, and sometimes where the translators made mistakes. They sometimes give to the same citation different senses in different places, e.g. Isa. liii. 4 in Matt. viii. 17 and 1 Pet. ii. 24; also Gen. xiii. 15 in Rom. iv. 16-18 and Gal. iii. 16. They often find types where the original has no such sense. They put their own new thoughts back into the old text. They take indirect Messianic prophecies as direct ones.

How is all this to be accounted for? In large part by assuming that the New Testament writers used the method of exegesis then prevalent among the Jews. This method

was very defective. It lacked in historical sense. It knew nothing of development. It was arbitrary in the extreme. It allegorized, seeking for deep spiritual senses in the simplest historical narrative. But the apostles had this advantage over the unbelieving Jews, — that in Christ they had the fulfilment of the Old Testament plainly before their eyes. This was clear enough to them — that *in general* Christ had fulfilled the “law and the prophets.” But when they entered into the details of the ancient types and prophecies, they ran great risk of misinterpreting. And the result shows that they did not escape the shoal. They allegorized new senses into the old text. They applied the text with literal strictness where there was only a verbal resemblance.

How, now, does this state of facts harmonize with the notion of a verbal dictation by God of both Testaments to a mere human amanuensis? It does not harmonize at all. The method of the apostles is, therefore, not of a character to countenance the divine dictation of the Old Testament; on the contrary, their procedure practically refutes it.

We come now to inquire as to the inspiration of the New Testament. We ask not: Does the New Testament make upon us the impression that it is a work of the Holy Spirit? (which no real Christian will deny) but: Does it claim to be inspired in the sense of traditional orthodoxy? The grounds for an affirmative answer are notoriously very slender. A common procedure is to argue from the greater to the less, thus: the Old Testament is inspired, therefore, so is the New. To our mind, however, the major premise is without proof. Another course is, to say: The apostles were men filled with the Holy Ghost, and therefore, their writings were dictated to them by this Holy Ghost. We admit the affirmation, but deny that the conclusion justly follows. To be filled with the Holy Spirit is a state not specifically limited to the apostles, but common to all believers. Of course, it existed in various degrees of intensity in different believers; but of a *specific* difference we have no trace. We have no evidence that Paul, e.g. was more inspired when he wrote

*Romans* than when he preached at Rome. And, with the exception of a few isolated passages (the seeming force of which a more careful exegesis will remove), this is the case with all the writers of the New Testament. One book, indeed, — the Apocalypse — claims inspiration; but not in the sense of verbal dictation. It claims inspiration for its substance; and this for the plain reason that it is chiefly prophecy.

But the clearest evidence against the correctness of the old orthodox notion of inspiration is given in the *manner* in which the New Testament writers themselves represent their work of composing, as also in various implications. This holds also of the Old Testament. How is it consistent with verbal divine dictation, when the authors in many cases directly cite the literary sources from which they drew? How can we make God the verbal dictator of the imagery of Solomon's Song, of the Proverbs, and of Ecclesiastes? And is David, then, to be utterly robbed of his poetical crown? Was he but the dead reed through which God poured out even the very words of the Psalms? And how to account for the individualities of style, and the syntactical and other imperfections so patent in the different books of the Bible? To say that this is mere adaptation on the part of God, is simply to make a bare assertion; and, besides, to make God do that for which there is no good reason. How, therefore, the notion of a word-dictating inspiration can continue to assert itself in the face of such difficulties is one of the strangest enigmas of human psychology. Nothing but the stifling force of dogmatic tradition throws any light on the subject. We conclude from our whole discussion, therefore, that the New Testament is *not* the product of such an inspiration as orthodoxy asserts; nor even of such as the apostles themselves attributed to the Old Testament.

A single historical circumstance gives striking confirmation of the correctness of this conclusion, and ought to raise serious queries among our opponents; to wit, The age immediately after the apostles admitted of no other *sacred*

Scriptures than the Old Testament. And very naturally so. They had no thought that the biographies of Jesus and the letters of the apostles were the product of anything other than ordinary authorship. It took generations of time to raise these books into co-ordination with the Hebrew Scriptures. And it is not earlier than A.D. 180 that any express evidence of this co-ordination is discoverable.

But this is only one phase of our answer as to the inspiration of the Bible. Though not inspired in the sense of old orthodoxy, yet in another sense we yield to none in contending that it is thoroughly an inspired, a divine book, as none other ever was or ever will be. Every converted soul knows this from blessed experience — knows that it is pre-eminently just what the apostle calls it in 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17. He knows that it is such a book as can rationally be accounted for only on the assumption of the divine causality as operative in its origination. But does the old inspiration theory answer the requirement here? No; for while the Bible is experienced to be thoroughly divine, it is equally experienced to be thoroughly human. The old theory would reduce this intense humanness of the Bible to mere docetism, that is, would take the very life out of it. It cannot, therefore, be true. The reason why the Reformers held with such desperation to such a theory is readily explainable from their historical surroundings. In rejecting the infallible authority of the Romish church, they felt the need of finding a similar authority somewhere else. They placed it in the written word. And the sense in which they placed it there is readily accounted for. They found in personal experience, as nurtured by Scripture, the criterion of the true and false in religion. But not experience, but Scripture alone, could be formally appealed to in their war upon Romanism. But the Bible text could be logically thus appealed to only on the supposition that it was given by inspiration, without the least intermixture of mere human elements. In a word, it would have to be absolutely free from error. Now, evidently, the Bible could be free from error only in one of two cases — either as written by infallible

persons, or as written by God. But its writers could not be regarded as infallible; for then they would be no longer men, but Christs. Hence the other case was taken. God was regarded as having dictated the Bible to mere amanuenses. But how was its human naturalness damaged thereby! How difficult to account for many things in it on such a supposition! Besides, the actual Bible is, after all, not adapted to serve the end which this old theory contemplates. It could not serve as a standard of absolute appeal, for two very clear reasons: First, we do not possess the text in its absolute purity; secondly, there have ever been, and perhaps ever will be, great diversities of interpretation.

The untenableness of the old theory of verbal dictation soon began to be felt. Modifications were attempted. Calixtus distinguished between the divine *revelatio* and the mere *assistantia* or *directio*. Pfaff held that God permitted the writers to mix in matter of their own. Baumgarten and Töllner gave up entirely the notion of a passive state on the part of the writers. Since their time revelation has been held to relate chiefly to the essentials in the Bible, and to guarding the writers from material error. Verbal inspiration has gradually been given entirely up.

But all this has not helped the matter. The old theory gives no countenance to a distinguishing between inspired and non-inspired elements in the Bible. Moreover, such a distinction is impracticable. It could be but a work of subjective conjecture. Who shall draw the line? How to separate form from contents? In the Bible, more than in any other book, form and substance are one. There is absolutely no ground for holding to an inspiration of the substance, and yet rejecting that of the words. The wonderful effect of the Bible upon the heart is, in fact, inseparable from the words themselves.

In recent times, therefore, it has come to be generally conceded that the old theory is incapable of remedy; in a word, that it must be entirely rejected. The notion of a *direct* inspiration of the Bible has given place to that of an

*indirect.* The Bible is the work of men who were inspired. This inspiration (under which the Bible was written) was not specific, but general — the same as that which animated their entire official activity. This form of inspiration entirely suffices for the explanation of that to account for which the old mechanical theory was invented, viz. the peculiar power of the Bible over the religious consciousness. The apostles were the immediate beholders of "God manifest"; hence their minds, as helped by subjective inspiration, give in their writings the truest objective reflection of this revelation of God in Christ. This pure reflection is also all the more secured by the fact that they were men whose minds were as simple, as naïve as possible, as little as possible tinged with the secular and dogmatic prejudices of the times. This, with their long and intimate communion with the Son of God, rendered their minds true and correct mirrors of the absolute truth. Their religious consciousness was regenerated. Hence their writings are for us, and for all time, normative authority for the religious life. We see Christ *through* them. But as all inspiration falls short of an absolute elucidation of the whole significance of the divine manifestation, hence even the writings of the most Christ-filled of the apostles fall short of being the absolutely adequate expression of the significance of the Son of God.

How, now, are we to conceive of the *act* of writing the sacred books? Did it take place synchronously with the inspiration? No; for inspiration is not thinkable as a continuous state. Hence the reducing of the knowledge given in inspiration to the form of writing was an after-work. This is countenanced, besides, by the writings themselves. They have all the marks of being the product of leisurely meditation.

But are there degrees in inspiration? Yes; both the nature of the case and the form of the books indicate this. Writings of greater weight would naturally be written under the most immediate presence of the assisting Spirit. While John writes what he had directly seen in ecstatic vision, Luke sits down like a historian and collates documents.

This modern view (and which we heartily favor) is now generally accepted. But its relation to the old view is not clearly seen. Many are wont to regard it as a mere modification of the old one. This is a delusion. It is a radically different view. The old view asserts the *direct* inspiration of the writings. The new view rejects this; it holds simply that the sacred books are the works of persons who had received inspirations, and who consequently were divinely illuminated. The inspiration was a momentary state, but the illumination a habitual one. The modern view does not say that the Bible is inspired, but only that it is the product of divinely enlightened men. We cannot, therefore, longer consistently speak of the Bible as inspired in the old orthodox sense of the term.

Hence, also, we cannot approve of attempts such as those of Beck and Philippi, to adapt the old phraseology to senses different from its fixed historical force. These men give up inspiration as passive dictation, and yet insist on being true to old orthodoxy, and in having in the Bible an absolutely perfect reflex of God's thoughts. But how do they reach this? By holding that God, in inspiring the biblical authors, took their intellects into such organic union with the divine mind that these intellects were enabled by self-activity now to reflect in writing an absolute copy of the divine mind. And why do they feel the need of making such an assumption? Because, say they, the Bible, unless absolutely free of error, could not serve the needs of the church. But this last position we deny; and hence we cannot admit the necessity of such an assumption. Besides, such an assumption presents insuperable psychological difficulties. What is meant by an "organic union with the divine mind"? Is it not a phrase with very nebulous contents? And what is more arbitrary than the notion of a cognitional perfection among the apostles, while yet the moral or thelematic phase of their nature was imperfect?

We are, therefore, by these attempts, only more fully convinced of the correctness of the views we have urged.

We regard the efforts at modifying the old inspiration theory as simply putting new pieces upon old garments. And this old theory itself we consider as a scientific fiction, invented to give basis to the notion that the written Bible is absolutely faultless, and adapted (in the sense of the old orthodoxy) to be an absolute criterion in all the details of dogmatic controversy. And we frankly confess that we do not feel the force of the position of certain of our eminent compeers; viz. that our religious necessities postulate that the Bible *must* be such a criterion. For to what end would a perfect *codex* serve, while yet there should be accepted no uniform interpretation of the *codex*?

Nor can we approve of the artifice resorted to by certain dogmatists of the day in order to parry the shock they might otherwise give to old dogmatic prejudice. We refer to their calling the Bible a theanthropic, a divine-human work. There is nothing gained by this save a little mystification. To the superficial glance it seems quite plausible to place the apparent blemishes of the Bible to the score of the human element, and the perfections to that of the divine. The process is very convenient; but it is too superficial to mystify very long. The origin of the phrase is evidently the theanthropic nature of Christ; and its seeming forcibleness comes solely from this analogy. But this very analogy destroys all its real force; for the very idea of a human-divine something is not that of a mere accretion, but that of an absolute interpenetration of the two elements; so that the human, e.g. never appears or acts apart from the divine, but always in absolute synergism with it. Hence if the Bible is divine-human in any just sense of the expression, then the human element of it is so taken up into the divine as to be shorn of all possibility of human imperfection. Hence the use of this expression here is but an artifice; it gives no sort of basis whereon to place the seeming imperfections of the Bible.

Instead of treading such an ambiguous course, I much prefer to throw off all disguises, and frankly to give up the dogma that the Bible is inspired. I do this the more cheer-

fully as I am perfectly conscious that I do not thereby give up in the least that truly divine power which I, with all who are truly Christian, regard as inherent in it. Nor do I give up inspiration. But I place it anterior to Scripture in the revelation itself, whereof Scripture is the subsequent reflex. It is the subjective phase of revelation, even as manifestation is the objective.

The advantages of this view are that it places things in their right light; and it frees the Bible of burdens which do not properly belong to it; and it is in full harmony with the modern tendency of collective Christianity, viz. the finding of the central force of our whole religious life, not in a *book*, but in a *person*.

From the question of the inspiration of the Bible, we now pass to one very closely connected with it, viz. Is the Bible absolutely free of error? And this will furnish a test of our inspiration theory. For if God's Spirit is the sole author of the Bible, then our view is wrong, and the old one right; and there can be absolutely no shade of error or inaccuracy in the whole body of Scripture.

Now, in the first place, it is perfectly plain that the Bible itself makes no pretension to absolute freedom from error. In fact, passages such as Luke i. 1-3; Rom. xv. 14, 15; 1 Cor. ii. 3, and others, sound quite otherwise. Nor have we the least evidence that the Saviour proposed by the apostles to furnish the world with an absolutely faultless mirror of the absolute truth in their writings.

And with this correspond the ripest results of biblical learning. To-day it is confessed that our Bible contains errors. Nor will it help to say that these errors lie only in matters of minor import. For who is to draw the line, and to separate between the important and the unimportant?

We shall give here no list of what are claimed to be the ascertained errors of the Bible. We shall only mention the notorious fact of the many points which the straight orthodox cannot explain into tenableness save by such arbitrary processes as would utterly ruin the credit of any other piece

of writing. How difficult, e.g. to justify the apostles for using indirect prophecies as direct predictions! They confessedly use Old Testament texts as direct proofs of that to which these texts really do not allude at all. Another point: Do we possess in the Gospels an absolutely correct picture of Christ, and of his words and work? We do not ask, Can we from the Gospels obtain such a strictly correct picture? but, Do the Gospels severally, taken in the sense evidently meant by the several writers, give this picture? We must answer negatively. There exist, confessedly, chronological and other contradictions; also manifest slips of memory (comp. Matt. xxiii. 35; xxvii. 9; Mark ii. 26; 1 Cor. x. 8). The speeches of Jesus are reported inaccurately. And in one point, especially, have the evangelists clearly failed to report correctly the teachings of Jesus—his eschatology. The manner in which the synoptics have woven together these utterances cannot possibly give the strict sense in which Christ uttered them.

Again: Do the several evangelists and apostles give, each, an absolutely correct conception of Christ and his work? We mean: Is this the case with each of them, his words taken in their natural, common-sense sense? How can this be, since, confessedly, there is not one uniform conception of Christ in the several books of the New Testament, but several differing ones? The Christology of John is not the same as that of the synoptics; nor that of Paul the same as that of John; and that of Paul varies in his different epistles. How, then, avoid the inference that the majority of these conceptions fall short of the absolutely correct conception of Christ; that is, that they are only relatively correct? Nor is it astonishing that the individual apostles separately fell short of a perfect conception of the significance of the Redeemer. It was too great a task for isolated individualities. Nor do the apostles hesitate expressly to concede this (comp. John i. 14; 1 John i. 1, 2; 1 Cor. ii. 7-13; Eph. iii. 18, 19). That they received inspirations could, in the nature of the human mind, not wholly remedy the matter. And the very fact that these

inspirations were given not to one, but to several, suggests a true solution of the matter. If one or two persons had sufficed to give a perfectly adequate reflex of the divine manifestation, then the employment of many would be an excess, contrary to all analogy of God's manner of working. And besides, how to account for the different conceptions of the same divine manifestation as given by Peter, James, John, Paul, etc.? The reason is plainly this: One single mind, because of the one-sidedness involved in the very nature of its individuality, is incapable of a perfectly correct understanding of the divine manifestation. Its conception would be only proximately correct. It would have defects on the one side, and excesses on the other. The absolutely true conception would be given only when a plurality of such individual conceptions were placed side by side, so that the ones should serve to modify, to tone down, and to tone up, and to supplement, the others. But this absolutely correct conception of Christ — this true Christology — would evidently not be such a simple matter as to be gathered together from a mere glance through the several writers of the New Testament. On the contrary, it would be the far-off goal of milleniums of profoundest exegetical and speculative theological toil. The means of constructing this conception are given in the elementary and self-correcting germs contained in the Gospels and Epistles. The completed conception is the task of the present, as helped by the past, and as to be continued by the future.

Our notion of the matter, on the whole, then, is this: The book of no one apostle, taken by itself, is free from error. A Christology constructed out of it alone would not only be defective, but would contain errors of a positive sort. But the collective books of the whole sacred volume contain the perfect conditions of an absolutely errorless conception of Christ. In other words, the Bible is not *absolutely* errorless; but it is the perfect means to an absolutely correct understanding of God's revelation, inasmuch as it contains in its different parts not only the germs of the absolute truth, but

also the means of correcting the relative errors of other parts.

Here, then, is the true infallibility of the Bible—a view that we are glad to see prevailing among several of the leading dogmatists of the day, such as Martensen and Lange. Its infallibility lies in its *total effect* as resulting from the self-correction of the one-sidednesses of its single parts by other of its single parts. And the sole means of rendering this infallibility effective upon the world is, not to hamper our thoughts by servilely following the dogmatic definitions of remote ages, but to search ever deeper and deeper into the sacred records themselves, under the light of the intuitions of right reason.

Now, this infallibility of the Bible is of very different nature from that insisted on by the old theology. That was an infallibility of separate books, epistles, texts; this is an infallibility of the whole, resultant upon the self-correction of the minor parts by the general drift. The one is the ready-prepared infallibility of a formal compend; the other is an infallibility as resultant upon the scientific construction of what is given in the Bible simply in the state of germs.

And this, we hold, is the only kind of errorlessness or infallibility called for by the religious interest of the case. In fact, our evangelical experience plainly teaches us that it is by the comparison and modification of Scripture with and by Scripture, and by cleaving to certain parts and elements of Scripture, to the relative neglect of others, that we receive the full religious effect of the book.

And as thus the old form of infallibility does not seem called for by our moral interests, so also it does not seem practically possible. The errorlessness of a writing evidently presupposes the absolute moral and intellectual perfection of the writer. For how can the stream run higher than its source? The only guarantee of absolute errorlessness in the Bible would therefore be the absolute mechanical dictation of it, word by word, to the merely passive human amanuensis, as insisted on by the old theory. But this

theory we, with nearly the whole drift of modern theology, have rejected. Hence, we repeat it, the infallibility of the Bible is only relative. Hence *all* of the conceptions of all the writers of the Bible are not *per se* of normative authority. This, in fact, has always been regarded as the true state of the case, even by the ultra-orthodox. They have always taken rough liberties with some Scriptures in the interest of others.

But what are the most normative elements of Scripture? There is no need of the possibility of an absolute line here. Our general answer is, Whatever belongs to revelation proper, that is, to the organic series of divine manifestations, or to the inspirational elucidations of the same. The determining of what these elements are is the long task of biblical theology. The elements which would lay the less claim to infallibility would be the mere historical narrations, and the personal reflections of the sacred writers, such as the theological theologizings of John and Paul.

The Bible, then, is not *per se* errorless. But, we emphasize it, it is the *instrument* to an absolutely correct understanding of God's self-manifestation to man. Its significance is that it is an authentic documentation as to God's revelations. We say, *as to* revelation; for the Bible is not *per se* revelation. And to have identified Bible and revelation was one of the most serious errors of the old theology. It is a documentation by the right use of which, as an instrument, we can come to clear conceptions of what God's revelations were. It answers to us instead of our having been ourselves eye-and-ear-witnesses of these revelations. And that it might answer this end requires that it should be, as a whole, essentially correct. And the only rational method of using it as an instrument is to use it judiciously, that is, to put it into the crucible of historical criticism. For the several books of the Bible are able only by collective effect to produce in our souls the correct conception of Christ. Each book reflects him only from one stand-point—reflects only the image made by him in one human soul. It is but a single photo-

graph; but to a fully just impression of such an object there would be needed many photographs. By critically comparing, combining, and supplementing the several reflexes of Christ as given in the books of the New Testament, the devout soul rises to the most perfect possible conception of the incarnation of God — of the Divine Man — of Christ.

And the exercising of this criticism has not even the remotest kinship with rationalism in the tabooed sense. But its kinship is with the most childlike, evangelical piety. For such piety desires, above all things, to get right at the very purest truth itself, and hence is intensely careful against being deceived. For this reason it will not let its eyes be befogged by councils, decrees, or creeds. It will not let the theology of three hundred years ago dictate despotically to it just what conception or sense of the Bible is the only true one, and just what theories it shall hold (and none others) in regard to the Bible. In a word, it claims the freedom of an enfranchised child of God.

And the same historical criticism that is to be exercised in the using of the Bible as a whole is also to be exercised as to the canonicity of the several books. Whether any particular book is a primitive authentic document as to revelational facts is to be decided not by blindly accepting old decisions as final, but by our rational investigations under the light of a God-conscious, earnest heart. The Canon is, then, not to be regarded as *per se* definitively closed. It is easy to interject, that surely Divine Providence would take care to have collected into one book just all the documents that have a right to be regarded as sacred! But this interjection rests upon an utterly false, that is, upon a purely mechanical, conception of God's providence. Analogy would, on the contrary, say that Providence would take care of the canonicity of the Bible only just in so far as to place humanity in a condition to attain through it to the desired goal. This would not, however, strictly imply that un-sacred books might not for ages find place in the Bible (as the Apocrypha did), or that some sacred book might not go astray from it. The

question of the canon, then, is not to be regarded yet as *per se* absolutely settled. But the pious thought of ages to come may and will properly still work upon the question.

It was one of the worst mistakes of our old Protestant theology that it absolutely identified religion and theology. Thus it degraded the Bible to the level of a hand-book of dogmatics. Thus, also, it necessitated itself to a method of exegesis in many cases forced and arbitrary.

Another of its mistakes was to represent the Bible as important almost exclusively for the isolated individual. It thus largely ignored its no less importance for society, for humanity as a whole. It failed to see that Christianity is not merely in the lids of the sacred book, but also very largely in the objective forms and institutions of our world at large.

The old notion of the Bible was misleading, also, in the manner in which it regarded the Scriptures as the exclusive source of Christian doctrine. This resulted from confounding revelation and dogmas. Doctrine springs, in fact, not simply from the Bible, but also from the laws of human thought. The Bible is, indeed, *for us*, the sole primitive records *as to* revelation which are accessible. But it is not the only sacred records that have ever existed. Several prophetic and apostolic books have confessedly been lost. And the Bible lays no claim to be the sole source of the knowledge of Christ. It nowhere lays claim to exhaustive completeness; and theology, in making such a claim for it, lost sight of the unity, the solidarity, of all truth. Written revelation speaks truly of Christ; for it is reflected out of souls who knew Christ. But creation (nature) speaks also truly of Christ; for it is his work. The Bible is a chief help toward a perfect knowledge of Christ; but this perfect knowledge itself will be the synthetic product of many co-operative factors. All study, all science, all criticism, and, above all, all possible exaltation and clarification of the human intelligence in general will have to contribute thereto.

To this clarification, to this enlarging of the horizon of

the human mind the Bible is one of the richest contributors. What, then, are we to think of the talk about the Bible's setting "limits" to human knowledge, in which some theologians indulge? Of such a function the Bible itself knows nothing. On the contrary, it is a revealer, not a hider. It leads us up to unscaled heights, opens to us vistas out toward the infinite, and bids us to never weary in exploring them.

It follows from the views that we have presented, that the Bible is something quite different from that which the traditionally trained believer *thinks* it to be. But the *heart-relation* of him and us to it is essentially the *same*. To both of us it is the supernatural means of receiving Christ into our hearts, and of rising from sin into perfect God-likeness. The difference is that we have placed the Bible in the light in which Christian science shows that it *must* be placed, if it is longer to retain the faith and confidence of those who are abreast with the results of modern philosophy and science.

The views I have insisted on are not peculiar to myself. They are essentially identical with those held by the most of our evangelical German theologians. The chief difference is, that whereas these theologians generally, and honestly, aim to represent their views as in harmony with the older theology, I, for my part, regard them as radically different, and have hence not hesitated to discard the old phraseology, and to express myself directly and squarely, just as I understand the matter.

The motive which has, consciously or unconsciously, occasioned what seems to me a disingenuous and damaging retention of old phraseologies (when the sense had entirely changed), is readily seen, and of praiseworthy intent. For he who breaks with time-consecrated traditions is sure to suffer in repute, as also in present influence over those whose prejudices are shocked. To me, however, the gain seems to be bought at too great a sacrifice. Moreover, the hour of disenchantment is sure to come at last. The believing multitude will ultimately awaken to the fact that the old bottles contain no longer the old wine. Then they will feel that

they have been disingenuously dealt with. Would not a more frank course be far better? When dogmatic definitions become obsolete, were it not wise to disuse them, and gradually to put in their stead the views that have actually taken their stead?

It is in this conviction that I have placed these views before the church. Cold as they may seem to some, they yet come out of a very warm heart, and are the sentiments of one who yields to none in childlike reverence for the Bible, and who finds in it a sanctuary in regard to which he joyfully exclaims, with the patriarch: "Surely the Lord is in this place; this is no other than the house of God, and here is the gate of heaven."

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## ARTICLE II.

### ARISTOTLE.

BY D. MCGREGOR MEANS, MIDDLEBURY, VT.

#### NO. III.—HIS ETHICS.

IN spite of man's vain-glory, he is yet ever haunted by a secret feeling of the shortness of his destiny. There is something in mere permanence that carries with it a dignity that man enviously confesses himself—as phenomenon—to lack. Even wholly insignificant men can so little content themselves with the oblivion that necessarily awaits them, that they seek out the hardest granite, compelling it to preserve the remembrance of the names and deeds that they dare not entrust to their fellow-creatures. When temporal aids fail, it is to the "eternal hills" that we lift our eyes for help. The Colosseum of Rome was at its building no more imposing than that of Boston, except from the lasting nature of the material. It is only because the Roman amphitheatre has so long endured that it oppresses the mind with its greatness; while the ephemeral creation of modern times