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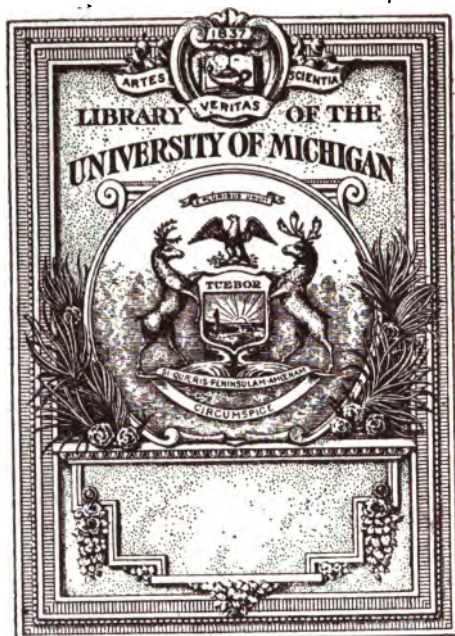
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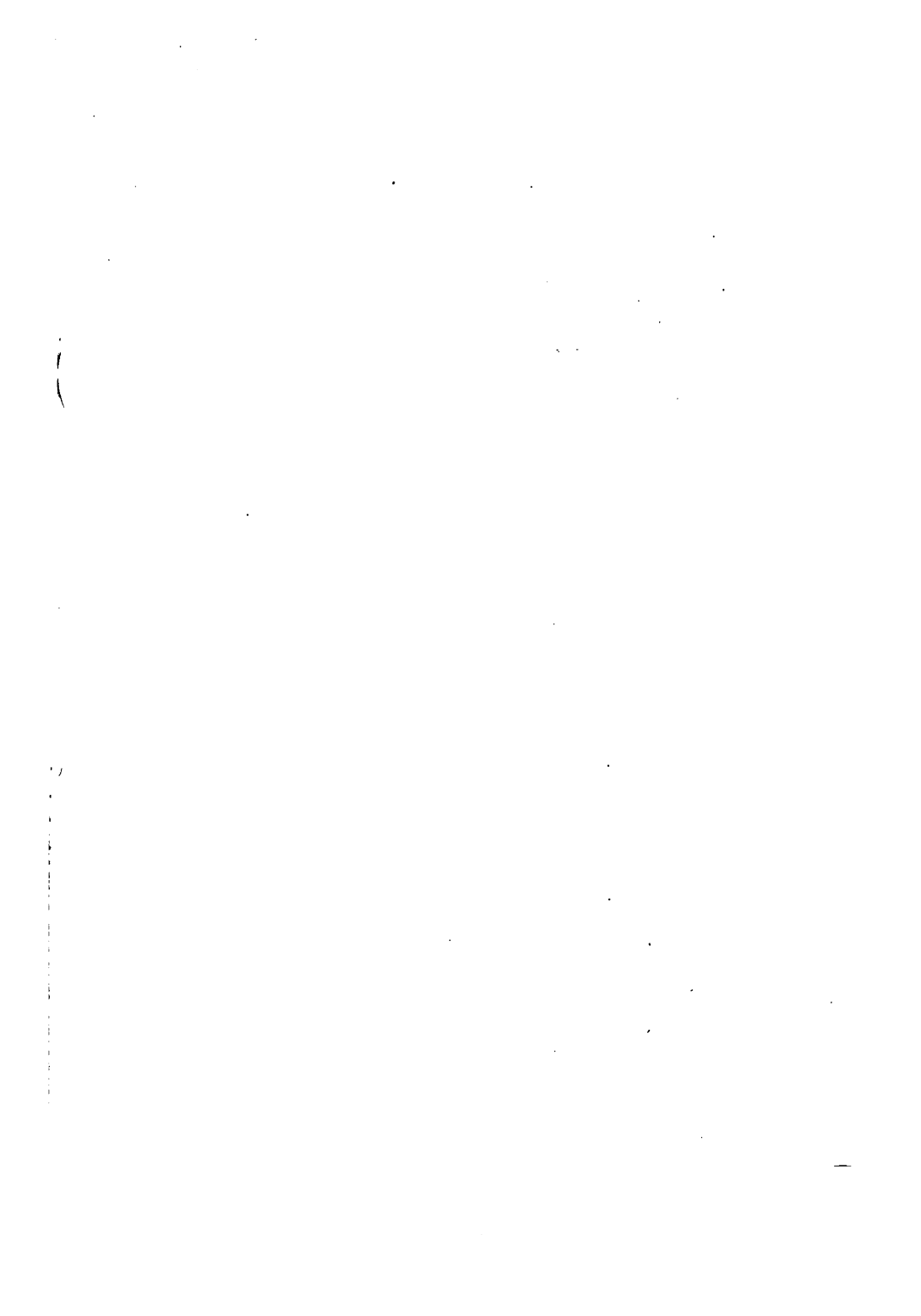
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THE WINGLESS HOUR

Freedom of Thought in Religious Teaching

By
R. J. COOKE, D. D., LL. D.,
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TO MY BELOVED FRIEND

THE CHRISTIAN GENTLEMAN, THE WISE COUNSELOR,
THE DEVOTED CHURCHMAN,

Robert U. Miller.

371784

PREFACE

IN presenting the following pages to the thoughtful consideration of those who have at heart and before all else the interests of the Redeemer's Kingdom, it is earnestly desired that what is written shall not be taken as an exhaustive treatment of the subject. Such a work, indeed, might well engage the best efforts of Christian scholarship, had one the leisure and the courage for so great an undertaking. But the possibility of such a work is beyond me. The incessant demands of uncompromising duty in a large and varied field leave neither time nor strength for that continuity of thought absolutely necessary for such a task. Even these few pages could be written only at intervals while on long journeys, and had there been to my knowledge any work treating directly the distinct and specific question here discussed—this particular theme within the larger theme of Christian Liberty—these pages would not have been written. This brochure, therefore, is nothing more than an humble attempt to indicate the metes and bounds of Critical Thought and Ecclesiastical Authority—a non-partisan attempt

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at a solution of a question affecting the peace of the Church, a contribution toward the abatement of antagonism active or suppressed between conservative defenders of the Faith and the progressive interpreters of the same Divine Revelation.

The really valuable work, *The Principle of Authority*, by Prof. Forsyth, of Mansfield College, Oxford; Huffner, on *Christian Liberty*; Förster's *Auctorität u. Freiheit*, and the notable *Lectures on Religion and Culture* delivered by the late Auguste Sabatier at the Religious Science Congress, Stockholm, 1897, did not, I regret to say, come into my hands until after these pages had been given to the Publishers. These works, however, valuable as they are for a general survey of the subject, do not deal specifically with the particular phase here treated. Now, whether this contribution shall definitely settle any particular difficulty, or satisfy the intellectual convictions of opposite parties, is not a matter of so great moment as that it may assist in promoting among reasonable Christians the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace. For this purpose it was written, and that, under the blessing of Him who gave His life for the Church, it may accomplish this is the earnest prayer of the author.

R. J. C.


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Freedom of Thought in Religious Teaching



I

TO THE student of social, political, and religious forces in modern life two tendencies, each opposed to the other—Authority and Freedom, Collectivism and Individualism—stand out distinct from all others. To the broadly educated and seriously minded Christian who is alive both to the importance of maintaining sound doctrine and of encouraging critical thought as a necessary condition of progress in scientific theology, the exercise of ecclesiastical authority and the rights and limitations of free thought within the Church can not be other than a matter of profound concern. Many perplexing questions constantly arise from the present welter of human thinking and arrest our attention. But this is an immediate question; one of which, in the nature of things, some understanding must be arrived at before there can be any clear conception of the metes and bounds of rational inquiry in religious teaching and the limits of authority in the Christian Church.

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The subject is not an easy one. It is not crystal clear to the end. Over it all there hangs a certain vagueness often blurring fine lines of distinction and boundaries. Nor is it easy in a judicial manner to discuss a subject which so quickly awakens prejudice and so easily kindles religious animosity, without laying one's self open to the invidious criticism of mutually opposing parties. As a believer in the Historic Faith of Christendom—the Faith of the Early Church—the Faith of the Martyrs and Confessors who surrendered their lives for the Gospel—this living Faith of the ages which has its roots in the Oracles of God, which, in spite of all schisms, in spite of all attacks, philosophical, literary, and scientific, still maintains the Divine Nature of Jesus Christ, the redeeming power of His atonement, the Witness of the Holy Spirit, and the Life Eternal,—as a firm believer in this holy faith believed in by millions in all ages and by all sorts and races of men, I shall be expected, perhaps, since I touch the subject at all, to defend the Authority of the Church,—to show the weakness and lawlessness of those who set themselves in opposition to it—to exhibit them as old foes with new faces, the successors of ancient heretics, the aides and abettors of Agnostics, Rationalists, High Priests of Skepticisms—vain men, proud, boastful of their intellectual

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gifts and attainments, seeking notoriety, enemies of the truth,—to show that the program of this Liberal Theology, so radical and sweeping, is but an offspring of German Rationalism, the first-born of Anti-Christ, that the science so proudly vaunted in support of it, anti-miraculous, anti-supernatural, anti-Christian, is the forerunner of anarchy in the State, the destroyer of all dignity in man, of his hope of immortality, of his kinship with the eternal.

Then, perhaps, as a believer in the Divine character of truth, I shall be expected to show that truth is self-evidencing and needs no external authority; that Authority in the Church or in the State which needs defense has already lost its defense and its power; that all progress in the struggle for human rights, and all advancement in intellectual pursuits have been struggles against Authority; that the Church must surrender to the spirit of the age; must hold all doctrines of Holy Scripture, all questions of Inspiration, of Miracles, of Prophecy, of the Nature and Work of the Lord Jesus, as open questions; that the Church must impose no creed; challenge no teaching, but must grant widest liberty and equal refuge to all men of all opinions.

One of these two things I may be expected to do. But the better way, I think, is to do neither.

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The difficulties of the task are sufficiently numerous and sufficiently complex without obscuring the issue with partisan judgments. Nevertheless, this should be said, that, however difficult the undertaking may be, the religious situation of the present demands at least a frank discussion of the subject. Even though a failure, an honest attempt toward some settlement or abatement of the antagonism between Authority and Freedom—which continues to divide and weaken the forces of religion—may prove helpful in some remote way; for at present there is neither content in the higher circles of scholarship with the attitude of the Church toward the results of Science, nor satisfaction among religious leaders relative to the expansion of religion and the growth of the Church.

That antagonism more or less pronounced between the Church and so-called Modern Thought does exist to the detriment of both will not be denied, nor will its effects be ignored. That it can not be very well denied is evident from the number and the character of publications antagonistic to orthodox faith from such notable works as those of Martineau, Sabatier, Harnack, Loisy, Bousset, and other representatives of Liberalism, to the cheap products of mere imitators who cry out in the tones of anarchy against

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all authority except their own, and seek to modify or destroy the Historic Faith.

That this conflict which we see does exist can not be ignored is self-evident. No thoughtful man is ignorant of the effect of Modern Thought upon once cherished beliefs, or of the inroads scientific investigations steadily make in the thinking of many in all ranks of Christian teachers and believers.

Judging from the content of theological literature we can not be blind to the fact that Christian belief in some quarters seems to be in unstable equilibrium. As in the political world there is a deep sense of change, a loosening of party bonds, a growing conviction that ancient party war-cries have lost their authority and their inspiration, so in the world of faith there seems to be widespread consciousness of a drift from the unquestioning belief of a few generations ago to loosely-held opinions; to flaccid assent or utter repudiation of dogmatic belief. Patristic theology and Mediæval speculations, the entire system of belief from Augustine to Calvin, and from Calvin to Wesley, no longer commands the assent of all men. Physical Science, Commerce, Biblical Criticism, History, Philosophy, have done their Providential work. They have opened up a larger universe and have

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added vast stores of new knowledge to the already accumulated mass. They have created the modern interrogative mind. When, therefore, larger views of the universe, ideas of law, of evolution, of the origin of beliefs, of religious institutions, which the new knowledge and the special study of comparative religions have introduced, are found to be, or are assumed to be, antagonistic to dogmatic faith, or to the implications of that faith, it can not be otherwise than that there should be religious disturbance, intellectual discontent, and more or less conflict. "There is one fact we can not well overrate," says the late Principal Fairbairn, "the state of conflict or mental schism in which every devout man, who is also a man of culture, feels himself compelled more or less consciously to live. His mind is an arena in which two conceptions struggle for the mastery, and the struggle seems to be so deadly as to demand the death of one for the life of the other, faith sacrificed to knowledge, or knowledge to faith." (*Studies in the Philosophy of Religion and History*, pp. 61, 62.) The result is that the attitude of many thoughtful minds is not that of the prophet, "*Here* am I," but, "*Where* am I?" For such is the constitution of the human mind that it can not be satisfied with less than unity in its beliefs. Reason can never rest in con-

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traditions, which it is assumed the new knowledge provokes. Hence the question which confronts us is: How to harmonize Modern Culture and the religious consciousness.

The issues also seem to be well understood. From the standpoint of Authority it is held that the Church can neither surrender nor change by a syllable the content of the Gospel any more than Science can change the facts of the physical universe. The Gospel delivered to her keeping is not a product of human thought, it is a revelation of God, and therefore, because it is a revelation it is not subject to human revision. But on the other hand, respecting human beliefs, however exact the methods of modern criticism may be in formulating them the conclusions reached are dependent in the long run for their truthfulness upon the soundness of the critic's judgment, upon his powers of analysis and synthesis, his temperament, gifts philological, historical, critical, or metaphysical; his ability to reason through conflicting views, and then, after all, there, like a soul of evil in things good, is the incalculable element in human thinking which may vitiate the whole finding. We should not forget the words of a recent philosopher that "the wisest of critics is an altering being, subject to the better insight of the morrow, and right at any moment only

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'up to date,' and, 'on the whole.' " (William James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 333.) The most thoroughly proved and buttressed theories of one generation, it is affirmed, may prove to be entirely wrong in another, as well-constructed theories have often proved to be in the history of Rationalism, in the history of Biblical Criticism, and of Schools of Philosophy, ancient and modern. Will the Mythical Theory of Strauss, for example, or the romantic *Life of Jesus*, of Renan, bear the white light of recent criticism? In our own day do we not see the radical differences between various Schools of Criticism, between Materialism and Idealism, between Idealism and Speculative Idealism? Each of these philosophies starts from seemingly indisputable premises, each premise is worked out according to scientific methods, and each philosophy is shown with critical exactness to be the only scientific solution of the world-mystery. Nevertheless, each destroys the other, for they can not all be true. "Deists, Pantheists, Agnostics, Pessimists, Atheists, Positivists, and Liberal Theologians unceasingly refute each other; and were their respective opinions put to a vote, out of a dozen systems, each would be found in a minority of one, with the other eleven against it. If escape were sought

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in a theoretical skepticism, which despairs of truth altogether, this would but add another sect to the number, which would encounter the hostility of all the rest." (Professor Orr, *Christian View of the World*, p. 372.)

But, not only in Philosophy in Biblical Criticism, also, similar uncertainty often results. What are regarded as incontrovertible deductions from given historical data by one School of Criticism are vigorously repudiated by another. No one, for example, now maintains the distinctive teachings of the Tübingen School which once dominated many of the foremost theologians of Germany, nor are the findings of the Welhausen-Graf School of Old Testament Criticism which were accepted a generation ago as "assured results" held now even by advanced critics just as they were first announced. Hence the inflexible attitude of the Church toward the demands of unbelief.

From the standpoint of Free-Thought it is maintained that the blunders of Criticism afford no proof that the faith of Christendom is in harmony with the facts of the universe. The teachings of the Creeds, we are told, are no more infallible than are the efforts of Criticism to find the truth; and that any attempt to repress free inquiry is an exercise of tyranny, justi-

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fyng revolt from all ecclesiastical authority. Joined in the same crusade with extreme Rationalists are so-called Liberals in theology. These also demand reconciliation between Church standards of belief and the results of the intellectual advance which has characterized the last half-century. Critical methods in the Study of the Scriptures, Textual Criticism, Comparative Religion, Man's Origin and his Place in the Universe in the light of Evolution, Philosophy in relation to Theology, Miracles in relation to Natural Law, and many other subjects of vital interest to religion, have in the judgment of many profoundly influenced Theologic Thought and demand new interpretations of historical facts, new statements of doctrine, or of dogmatic teaching, in order to bring Christian belief into harmony with scientific inquiry.

Such is the contention outside the narrow circle of Rationalism of many earnest and devout Christian scholars. These are not Rationalists. They are not Agnostics. They are not religious Anarchists. They are Christian men. In order to accomplish the results above indicated they demand liberty of thought, liberty to challenge the validity of any doctrine, liberty to eliminate the wide discrepancy between Scientific Criticism and Church Creed. They denounce as obscur-

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antism that exercise of ecclesiastical authority which would put a limit to their search for truth or exclude them from the body of Christian believers, or from the hope and consolation of the Gospel. They stand upon what they assert to be their rights to defend within the Church the principle of intellectual freedom.

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II

THIS, then, in general, is the situation. Now that such a breach between Reason and Faith works incalculable injury to the peaceful progress of thought and the authority of religion as represented by the Church is evident wherever religion and science come together in the thought-life of the people. The human intellect was made to think. No limits can be established by human authority to its operations. It must know. In nothing, except willful sin, does it dishonor its Creator more than in refusing to think, that is, in refusing to obey the laws of its own nature, or in stultifying its convictions. The crime against truth is not in thinking wrongly, but in refusing to think at all. "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, My people doth not consider." (Isaiah 1:3.) When freedom to think is denied, or freedom to think is allowed only as the Church dictates to think, alienation from that Church, and even from religion itself, becomes an almost inevitable result, for where doubt is dominant faith is impossible.

But alienation from religion does not end here.

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Separation of the intellectual element in Society from the Church extends rapidly to thoughtless masses of the people, who, notwithstanding the stock phrase that "the masses are hungry for the Gospel," are ever ready, as fallen human nature always is, to find justification for their quick surrender to the material, and to throw off all restraints imposed upon them by the moral spirit of the age. The Christless example of the cultured element in modern civilization to the millions who look up to them, imitate them, or are influenced by them, is one of the gravest dangers to modern institutions and constitutes that element a most dangerous class, as much as they may be surprised at it, and as much as they may resent it. No more pathetic picture of fallen humanity is seen in human history than the revolting degradation of the peoples of France and Germany when the intellectual classes having abandoned belief in Christianity, the masses, as in England also in the eighteenth century, plunged into the wildest excesses. In the logic of nature, and as all history teaches, this moral degeneracy must certainly be expected. To the philosopher its arrival will occasion no surprise, and to the moralist it will present no problem. For, if, as in the minds of many, Religion is superstition and the Church is an imposition, what reason is there in the nature of

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things why every man following the impulse of his instincts should not do as he pleases? What argument is there addressed to Reason strong enough to convince us that the individual should be subordinated to Society? Certainly, we may teach that the individual can reach his highest development only in and as a member of the social organism, and that there can be no social progress without the subordination of individual interests to the interests of the whole, but why should the individual seek such development at such cost as is involved in such a struggle as social membership demands? Why, on any rational ground, should he sacrifice himself to the interests of Society, or to the progress of Society in a future in which he will have no part, when he can enjoy himself in the present, which is all he has, and let the future take care of itself? Science may assume that he does not do this willingly, but that in unconscious obedience to a social instinct, that is, in general, to the laws of evolution which operate in all realms of life, the individual is caught up in the sweep of cosmic law. But, being a reasoning being and not unreasoning as are the lower forms of life, and is, therefore, able by exercising his reason to resist this law, why does he not resist? Why does he not follow Rousseau's advice to fall back into primitive savagery, and,

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in obedience to the primitive law of self-preservation, sink himself in the beast for present enjoyment? If the Utilitarian philosopher tells us that this subordination is for the greater good or happiness of the whole, the question immediately arises, Whose happiness? Must the rich and cultured elements of Society forever walk on the high places, the poor and the unfortunate always remain at the foot? What rational sanction is there for the subordination of the individual man to the interests of generations yet unborn? It is useless, as it is illogical, to discant for our own safety, against the evils we have generated, on the Gospel of Utilitarianism, to philosophize on natural religion, or to preach with oratorical fervor on the Brotherhood of Man. There is no brotherhood in barbarism, or in that society, if such it may be called, where God is denied or deliberately ignored, that is, where supernatural or religious sanctions are set aside, as Mr. Herbert Spencer does in his *Data of Ethics*, and where human nature is allowed unrestricted sway. Equality and Fraternity sounded well enough and promised much in the philosophy of French infidels before the horrors of the Revolution familiarized the people with blood and debauchery, but such pretty terms proved to be of very little value when the Reign of Terror set every man in defense

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of his life against the life of every other man. Let us not deceive ourselves. Never yet was a State held together by abstractions. Words are not things. From natural necessity religious beliefs and moral ideas found their way in primitive times into laws and statutes which became the religion of the gens, or of the tribe, or of the State. Even then such beliefs, however crude or false they may have been, could never have made possible a State had it not been that those beliefs were believed to be sanctioned by the gods, that is, at last, because of a dominating belief in the supernatural. Every nation in history rested on its religion, and as that religion gradually lost its original vigor or influence, the nation became enfeebled with it and with it passed away. What has been will be, for the reason that in such a fate is a law of nature. The nations that forget God shall perish. This is the Biblical, the religious side of it, but the scientific side of it presents the same conclusion. Benjamin Kidd clearly shows (*Social Evolution*, p. 263) that "*the evolution that is slowly proceeding in human society is not primarily intellectual, but religious in character.*" This means that the races which win out in the struggle for the survival of the fittest are just those races which have the highest ethical character, and therefore the unethical or God-

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less race, or nation, is fighting against the inexorable laws of nature. "The stars in their courses fought against Sisera." The nation without a religion must therefore necessarily perish. The more ethical a nation is, the better is its chance in the struggle for existence. Not natural religion, but supernatural religion, is the cohering bond of Society.

Now, on the other hand, if this alienation of the educated and influential classes from the Church is contrary to the well-being of the State, it is also detrimental to the vitality of religion, to the authority and even existence of the Church as an organized institution. The Church can not, and never was intended to, exist for itself. It is not an end in itself, but is a means to a larger end. If it is the Church of God it must be the Church of Humanity. But in order to become this in fact, as well as in idea, it must embrace Humanity. By this it is not meant that it must accept humanity *en bloc*, its groping philosophies, false religions, fruitless aims, and inane purposes which center in mere culture for purely intellectual pleasure, or for art's sake. Nor do I mean its identification or alignment with the world in the sense that in any degree the Church should give its endorsement to the spirit of the world, its manifold inanities, greed, Epicureanism, and all things that make for the gratifi-

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cation of the flesh on the ground that by insisting on a rigorous ascetic life, or even a life of restraint, the world is alienated from the Church. Of course it is, and the more alienated the better, the better for the Church, and in the long run, the better for the world, for it is only by contrast with the Church that the world will ever become conscious of itself as *the world*. In the Fourth Century the Church surrendered to the world, and the world has never yet been wholly eradicated from it. But what is meant by embracing the world, is that the Church must identify itself with humanity, in its best moods and highest endeavors, inspiring it in all its aspirations for Justice, and in politics, social and commercial life, stimulating and guiding it in truth and in all its efforts to realize the Good which we instinctively feel to be the fundamental reason, the root idea of the universe, or as Saint Paul conceives it, "The purpose of the ages." For, there is undoubtedly a definite goal toward which humanity moves, otherwise human history is without purpose, and the whole evolutionary process so appalling in its vastness and moral grandeur is after all nothing but "an idiot's tale full of sound and fury signifying nothing," a movement without teleological idea or directive force, which is only to say that the universe is irrational,

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a conclusion itself irrational. Now, this impulse toward a realization of the Good is created by discontent with existing conditions, Political, Economic, Social, or Religious. Indeed, the entire history of humanity may be conceived in the one word, "Discontent." It is the push outward of the human spirit to larger worlds, the desire of the race soul to transcend its present limitations and to realize the Good, however vaguely that Good or that larger life may be considered. This instinctive desire for progress manifests itself in social outbreaks, in political revolutions, in literature, art, and science; in the breaking down of barriers and changing of conditions, for the growing life within must find expression of itself outwardly; must have room in which to exercise its powers and find itself in the struggle for the Ideal, and it is with this struggle of the human to realize itself that the Church must find itself in complete sympathy.

Furthermore, a primary condition of all true progress is spiritual motive. As motive is, life is. Science, Art, Law, Commerce, Politics, or other creations of the human spirit are not in themselves spiritualizing forces. Otherwise the Art of the Greek and the Law of the Roman would long since have redeemed humanity; nor can they be unless they are vitalized by the Eternal Spirit. However lofty the reach of the

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human intellect, and however marvelous the progress of the race in material things, discoveries, inventions, adaptations of physical science to social comforts and refinements of luxury, commercial expansion, Politics, Music, Literature, and Art, that progress of whatever kind it is which is without the spiritual is still on the dead level of the human and can never lift itself above the human. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." If the human race has made any real progress it is because religion has persisted through all political and social changes in the history of the race, eliminating the animal, restraining the barbaric, directing influences, creating currents of thought and new ideals, re-molding customs, establishing institutions, and sustaining governments by its mighty sanctions. "The two great forming agencies in the world's history," says Professor Alfred Marshall (*Principles of Economics*, London), "have been the religious and the economic. Here and there the ardor of the military or the artistic spirit has been for awhile prominent, but religious and economic influences have nowhere been displaced from the front rank even for a time and they have nearly always been more important than all others put together." If modern comforts, inventions, and luxuries were the evidences

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of true progress, Plato would stand below the modern machinist in the scale of development. But true progress does not lie that way. "Man does not live by bread alone." True progress is spiritual, not material. Real culture is within, not without. Culture is in the realm of spirit. Now, Christianity alone supplies sufficient motive for the highest civilization. It is the motive power of progress. This is a large statement. But so recent a thinker as Rudolph Eucken in his *Problem of Human Life*, pp. 141, 142, may be quoted to the same effect, when he says: "This is especially evident when we compare the philosophers of the declining period of antiquity with the earlier Church Fathers. The philosophers far surpass the latter in the perfection of form, in the analysis of conceptions, indeed in the whole matter of theoretical demonstration. But upon all their work there weighs the fatal consciousness of the emptiness and worthlessness of human existence. It prevented them from putting forth strength and forbade all dedication to high aims. It is therefore perfectly intelligible that the victory fell to the Church Fathers who had a new life, a great future to offer, and who could summon men to triumphant, joyous activity, and to positive happiness." To the impulse of a new life which Christianity gave the world, to the preaching of new ideals

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created by its Divine Founder every student of human progress must attribute in large measure the height of civilization to which we have attained. The reform of Roman law under Justinian; the sanctity of Marriage, the end of feudal wars, the humanizing of laws and social conditions in the Middle Ages; and in the Modern Period such moral advances as the abolition of slavery, arbitration, the elevation of woman, international law, the multiplication of humane institutions, and the growth of political ideas which have made possible the enlarged conceptions of human rights and individual values and of the moral character of the State must all be attributed to that initial impulse.

Does religion afford less motive now? Experiencing in our own day the results of Christian influence upon human thought and conduct for twenty centuries, we can not deny that behind all other forces working in the social evolution of the race Christianity is the most effective. But if the Church fails to work in the service of humanity by co-operating with it, but sets itself in indiscriminate war against it, against its Science, its Politics, its Freedom, its Art and its Literature which afford a field for the expression of its innermost thought and feeling; if it fails to furnish motive for progress, but plays the

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part of the Roman Church in France before the Revolution which, as Carlyle says, was like a fat ox tied up to the stall waiting to be fed, if it fails to understand or to spiritualize these creations or activities of the human spirit and to direct them to their true and final purpose, but on the contrary endeavors to limit them or to suppress them, it is evident that in so doing the Church will not only lose Humanity which will go its own way, but will also limit itself, and thus destroy itself, for the Church of God can only advance with the advance of Humanity.

No evil ends with itself. Not only does a Church which declines to identify itself with the noblest endeavors of the race fail by reason of that blunder to enlarge the area of its influence in regenerating Society; it must on the same principle also resist all growth from within itself, a condition which we see at the present time the Roman Church is in by the operation of this very law. Unused powers die out. "To him that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance, but from him that hath not shall be taken even that which he hath." Such a Church is compelled, therefore, by its own act to think the same thought from age to age, notwithstanding the increase of human knowledge through the presence of God in human history. The result slowly reached, per-

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haps, but nevertheless inevitable, must be either revolution and reformation, or surrender to intellectual stagnation. The truth of this observation is seen in the present intellectual revolt known as Modernism in the Church of Rome. The ultra-conservatism which refused all inquiry and simply demanded unquestioning obedience to traditional teaching, dogmatic and historical, in the teeth of modern scholarship has at last produced the reaction which was sure to come. The result is that eminent scholars in all fields of research in England, Italy, Germany, and France have been compelled in self-defense to expose the stagnant condition of religious thought in that Church and its irreconcilable attitude toward the spirit of progress. Modernism as represented by the Abbé Loisy, Le Roy, and many co-workers will not awaken abounding enthusiasm among Protestants who believe in the Historic Faith, but this will not prevent them from recognizing the folly of a Church which seeks to destroy erroneous teachings by condemnation rather than by refutation. No living thing can live on itself. No Church can live on the Scriptural interpretations or theological definitions of other ages, determined as those interpretations and definitions were by the philosophical or scientific conceptions of those times. There is a fidelity which is infidelity—a fidelity to the past

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which is treason both to the past and to the present. Neither the teachings of the Lord Jesus as interpreted by the Ante-Nicene Fathers, nor the purposes of the Church as interpreted by the ecclesiastical courtiers of the Emperor Constantine, can be standards for all time. The truth of God is here and now. Every age is a modern age, and every age is a Patristic age. Every age must interpret the truth for itself in the light of its own knowledge. This does not mean, of course, that we must necessarily discard or ignore apprehensions of truth which former ages climbed up to. Nor does it mean, on the other hand, that we should repudiate the progress which humanity has made and go back for instruction to uninspired men who had not the faintest glimmerings of what science and history and the Christian experience of twenty centuries have to teach the modern mind. It is sometimes said if the early Fathers of the Christian Church suddenly came to life in our day they would not be able to discern clearly their ancient forms of belief in our diversified theology, a statement which is doubtless true, but which is wholly inconsequential; for there is little or nothing in the attitude of those early Fathers toward progress of Christian thought to warrant the assumption that if they had continued to live through all the progressive changes of theologic

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thought from their day to ours, as we can from our standpoint, they would discard the result of those changes and cling to their former modes of thought, any more than that they would discard our higher conceptions of the universe and the rich content of the Christian revelation unfolded to us by centuries of patient thought and holy experience. Was there not a vast difference between the Predestination doctrine of Augustine and that of the early Fathers? When his *Treatise on Correction and Grace* reached the Christians in Gaul many who lived in Marseilles wrote to him and declared his doctrine unscriptural and novel; "we never so much as heard of it before." The only reply Augustine could make was his inference from certain other teachings of the Church, which if true made his doctrine true also. Augustine believed that he saw more clearly than the Fathers the content of the Pauline teaching, and therefore did not in his controversy with Pelagius rely solely upon former teachings of the Church from which nothing pertinent could be obtained because "She was not wont to bring forward, in preaching, the doctrine of Predestination, because, formerly, there were no adversaries to answer." Why should this modern age, then, go back to the early Fathers for their views on subjects of which they were totally ignorant?

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And would the Greek Fathers with their doctrine of synergism discern clearly their theology in the monergism of Augustine? Why, then, should it be necessary for the early Fathers to find all their beliefs in the theology of the present? Even the creeds of the Post-Reformation Churches have undergone change. Under the influence of Methodism, than which as a theological solvent of unscriptural teaching and theological crochets and vagaries, no other Church has done more to modify certain beliefs, what has become, for instance, of the once dominant Calvinism, that Calvinism which consigned non-elect infants to Hell, which limited the atonement, and turned over millions of humanity to the "uncovenanted mercies" of God? Change is a law of life. We *grow* in grace and *in the knowledge* of His Son Jesus Christ. But true growth conserves the past while appropriating the present and reaching for the future. "In a tree the real life from the roots is found in the present new layer. The solid stem of deadwood which defies the storm is formed by the earlier growths. The leaves and fruitage of past years help toward the year's fruitage only as they fall to the ground and form soil for the roots, while the slight annular growth has increased its girth, height, and solidity. Holding all these in the embrace of its newest layer gives it expansion as well as

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strength. Hence the first law for the newly sprouting ring is really to embrace and enfold all its predecessors. Secondly; to grow from the roots upwards semi-independently." (Hartman's *Philosophy of the Unconscious*. Notes by Professor Sterrett.) Hence, Intellectual freedom is essential to religion.

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III

WHAT, then, is the solution? Is reconciliation possible between Freedom and Faith? Or, Is there no solution of the problem without killing it by denying the rights of Criticism or the Authority of dogma? We think there is. To our thinking it can not be that antagonism between true Faith and Freedom has at the heart of things any real ground for existence. The opposite, of course, is insisted upon by those who do not believe in the Christian Revelation. But we do not have to recognize their contention. Such conceptions of Freedom and of Faith as are represented by such one-sided works as Draper's *History of the Conflict Between Religion and Science* can not be recognized as having any authoritative value in such a discussion. The arguments presented in such books with so much assurance are usually as illogical as they are inapposite. They are just as valid arguments against the constitution of Nature as they are against Religion or true intellectual freedom. Professor Draper, for instance, tells us that "A Divine Revelation must necessarily be intolerant of contradiction; it must repudiate all improvement on itself

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and view with disdain that arising from the progressive intellectual development of man." All of which no doubt is very true, but at the same time all of which is just as true of Arithmetic as it is of Revelation. Must we, therefore, discard Arithmetic? And, since Divine Revelation is that which unaided reason could not discover, how can unaided reason improve upon it? Furthermore, if reason could not discover the content of Revelation because it is above reason, how is it conceivable that reason should be able to add to that content or to subtract from it? For, clearly if reason could do either then Revelation would not be above reason but within the reach of reason, and thus would be no Revelation at all. Then, is Chemistry tolerant of contradiction? Are any of Nature's laws tolerant? The Universe is not a house divided against itself. It is a unit. No truth can contradict another truth. No Revelation of God can be contrary to reason since God is the primal postulate of reason. It belongs only to the feeblest order of intellect to imagine that because some statement or doctrine of Scripture is incomprehensible to reason it is therefore contrary to reason. It is just as infantile to assert that the authority of dogma renders reason useless, since it is only by the exercise of reason that dogma itself is formulated or understood. For,

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as Bishop Butler says, "Reason is the only faculty we have wherewith to judge anything, even Revelation itself." (*Analogy*, Part III, 3.) And with Chillingworth we may say, "For my part I am certain that God hath given us our reason to discern between truth and falsehood; and he that makes not this use of it, but believes things he knows not why, I say it by chance that he believes the truth, and not by choice." There is a vast difference between Reason and ratiocination which some writers not altogether analytical in their thinking nor precise in their selection of exact terms to express their ideals fail to observe.

The first question, then, that presents itself is, What is Freedom? We shall make the task easier and insure clearness of understanding if at the beginning we rule out from our definition all mere *license* in thinking, that reckless play of imagination which submits to no law of logical thought. In the abstract, all thought is free. The mind is free to wander at will through all worlds and explore all spaces. Nothing can fetter its activity. Stretched on a rack, tied to a stake, or immured in a dungeon, the victim of tyranny may still exult in that mental freedom which no power can limit. Thought is free. But *action is not free*, and it is thought *in action* which

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as a product of the will has in it a moral element, that is meant by freedom, or lawfulness of thought. Now, no sane person will contend that all action is free, that is, all actions are lawful. One is not free to slander his neighbor; one is not free to publish a libel. The astronomer is not free; that is, he has no scientific right to construct a universe out of his inner consciousness and insist that his pipe-dream is the universe about us; nor is the physician free to kill as many people as he may on the ground that his theory of medicine is correct. If one, again, adopts a certain philosophy, say the Hegelian, and straightway attempts to reconstruct the history of a people, for example, the Hebrew people, in harmony with that philosophy, rather than construct his philosophy from the facts, that is not freedom of thought. It seems to be more like the license of poetic imagination. No one is free to do as he pleases, for the reason that "doing as one pleases" is not freedom, that is, it is not lawful unless he pleases to do right. No one has the right to do wrong. Freedom is conformity. Thought must fit fact. But lawless thinking disregards facts. It is anarchy, that is, without a guiding principle, conformable to no law. There is nothing to prevent a lunatic from thinking, but he has no freedom in his thinking. Freedom is conformity to

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fact, so that only in obedience to law, whether laws of thought or laws of society, is there true freedom of thought, that is, of thought in action.

Should one, however, set forth his hypothesis as an hypothesis, or announce as tentative such an interpretation of historical fact which may be contrary to and even subversive of established beliefs, he is, nevertheless, exercising true freedom, however disturbing to our conservatism or prejudices his daring may be, and however mistaken he may prove to be in his theory. His hypothetical constructions of history or interpretations of doctrine are not masquerading in the stolen garments of reality. If, on the contrary, it is asserted that one has the right to publish or teach as fact anything he pleases, and we should apply such a doctrine, "Do as you please," to social or national life, the nation or community permitting it would soon cease to exist; incontrovertible proof that the doctrine is wrong. Nature's penalty for violation of the laws of freedom is extinction of freedom. Freedom is the rightful exercise of one's powers. "The freedom to do what the law permits." (Montesquieu's *Esprit des Lois*, Book II, p. 3.)

Second, What is Authority? It has come to pass, somehow, that Authority is assumed to be synonymous with restraint, something that is opposed to reason;

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that reason is always right, and Authority probably always wrong; that it is the refuge of conservatives and the enemy of progress. "The current theory," says Lord Balfour (*Foundations of Belief*, pp. 203, 204), "by which these views" (such as are stated above) "are supported appears to be something of this kind. Any one has a 'right' to adopt any opinions he pleases. It is his duty 'before exercising this' right critically to shift the reasons by which such opinions may be supported, and so to adjust the degree of his convictions that they shall accurately correspond with the evidences adduced in their favor. Authority, therefore, has no place among legitimate causes of belief. If it appears among them it is an intruder to be jealously hunted down and mercilessly expelled. Reason and reason alone can be safely permitted to molest the convictions of mankind. By its inward counsels should beings who boast that they are rational submit to be controlled. Sentiments like these are among the commonplaces of political and social philosophy. Yet, looked at scientifically, they seem to me to be not merely erroneous, but absurd." He then proceeds to show the absurdity of rejecting Authority and Religion wholly on subjective judgments.

Authority is not arbitrary exercise of ignorance.

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Authority is collective reason. The corporate reason of scientists is authority in Science, of artists in the realm of Art. The corporate reason of the Church is authority in the religion taught by the Church. It is quite true that the corporate reason of the Church when engaged in construction of dogma, or when it steps beyond its legitimate sphere, may go wrong. The Church is not omniscient. It is not infallible. Churches have erred. Councils have erred. Condemned heretics have been right and the Church that condemned them wrong. But all this is equally true of Science. Do we scout the authority of Science because scientific experts fail to explain rightly the phenomena of the Universe—the facts which they present? An erroneous interpretation of a Scientific fact does not destroy the fact, and a false theology built about religious truth does not invalidate that truth, whatever it may do for its dogmatic exposition. The facts accepted by scientists are the reasons for their collective belief. The facts accepted by the Church constitute the grounds for its reasoned teachings. These facts are contained in the Holy Scriptures, especially the life and teachings of the Lord Jesus, the doctrines taught by the teachers of the Church, and the experience of the body of believers. Facts in Nature supported by scientists in every coun-

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try constitute our body of scientific belief, and the teachings of scientific experts is sufficient authority for that belief. Certainly there is a difference between belief in physical facts and belief in the content of Christian creed, but the difference is such as must necessarily exist when dissimilar things are compared. If we compare things that are similar, facts of faith with facts of psychology or the world of thought which we accept but can not prove for ourselves as we prove physical facts by experiment in a laboratory, we shall see that the testimony of the Church is as valid and therefore as authoritative in its sphere as is the concensus of scientists in the world of physics.

The function of Authority in the Church is not, as some suppose, to stifle truth, but to protect truth. Authority in the State enacts laws for the protection of the State. It prohibits certain things because in its collective reason such things are judged to be harmful, and it permits other things because they promote the interests of the State. In the Church the function of Authority is to prohibit what in its judgment is detrimental to the well-being and mission of the Church. It must also protect those who belong to the Church in the undisturbed possession of the truth they have accepted, otherwise it ceases to be

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a Church, as a State ceases to be a State when it proves powerless to enforce its laws.

In pursuance of this duty the Church must of necessity guard against all innovations upon the truth, just as Science is intolerant of quackery. There is nothing so intolerant as fact. Those who have accepted the truth of God from any Church have the right to be protected in that truth and to protest against that truth being adulterated or destroyed. No Church can exist which guarantees equal freedom to all faiths or philosophical notions that may creep into its fold. Of course, if there is no positive truth in religion, and one creed is as good as another, all equally useful and all, perhaps, equally false, why have any religion at all? Is *opinion* religion? Truth is more valuable than freedom. Freedom of thought, however, speaking of it now in its popular sense, is not a monopoly, as it is quietly assumed by those who are opposed to the teachings of the Church. Such freedom, it should not be forgotten, belongs also to the Church which has the same right to reject the teachings of its opponents as they claim to have to criticise or reject the tenets of the Church.



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IV

BUT in order to find even yet more solid ground for reconciliation it may be well to consider the teachings of our Lord, and of His Apostles, and of the Early Church. I know not where else to look for a standard to which our conduct in such matter may be conformed with any feeling of certitude. Now, study of the Gospels shows clearly that while our Divine Lord appealed to the faith faculty in men, He always appealed to men's reason as a ground of faith. "Search the Scriptures," said He, that is, critically judge their meaning and content, "for in them ye think ye have eternal life," and determine for yourselves in the light of your own reason the truthfulness of My claims. Evidence, by the way, that our Lord knew that the Old Testament certified of Him whether His opponents found Him there or not.

Again, there were those so blinded by prejudice that they would not reason. "O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?" (Matthew 16: 3.) He rebuked those who would not exercise reason in religion, but depended on the evidences of their senses.

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"Except ye see signs and wonders ye will not believe."
(John 4:48.) On another occasion when the Pharisees and Sadducees propounded a question to Him, He said, *Why do ye not judge these things among yourselves?* It is in harmony with the fitness of things that the Incarnated Logos should declare that in truth alone is true freedom, whether moral or intellectual, and that "therefore if the truth shall make you free ye shall be free indeed." In that mighty saying of Jesus, "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's," all modern civil and religious freedom have their birth. It has given Divine sanction to all struggles for liberty. It has been both doctrine and inspiration to every age.

In the Apostle Paul we have the same teaching. No one in any age before or since ever stood more staunchly for liberty of thought in religion than did this champion of the faith. This is the same great thinker who changed his entire intellectual and moral attitude toward new truth, who revised his whole system of Rabbinical Theology, flung away his racial prejudices, and even withstood Peter to his face in defense of the religious freedom of Gentile Christians at Antioch. With convincing reason based on the alternative—Christ or Moses—he resented in that great debate the illogical position of Peter and the

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heresy-hunting assiduity of "false brethren unawares brought in who come in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage; to whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour, that the truth of the Gospel might continue with you." "Stand fast therefore," he writes bravely to the Galatian Christians, "Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." (Galatians 2:4.) In the Epistle to the Romans the same principle is affirmed, and is there practically applied in the Discipline of the Church. "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. For one believeth that he may eat all things; and another that is weak eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth; for God hath received him." (Chapter 14. See also 1 Corinthians 10.) Freedom of Thought is also asserted in the declaration concerning Holy Days. "One man esteemeth one day above another; another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind." (Chapter 14: 5.) Thus it is clear that the principle of liberty was recognized both by our Divine Lord and, on the foundation of His teachings, by His greatest Apostle.

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The same assertion of this Divine right is seen in the teachings of His disciples and in the attitude of the Apostles toward the Jewish hierarchy, even before the conversion of Paul. Arrested for preaching, Peter and John are brought before the Council and are "commanded not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said unto them whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God judge ye. For we can not but speak the things we have seen and heard." (Acts 4: 19, 20.) The spirit of inquiry among the Berean converts is mentioned with approval by Luke, the historian of the Acts. "These were more noble than those of Thessalonica in that they received the word with all readiness of mind and *searched the Scriptures daily whether those things were so.*" (Acts 17: 11.) Paul, it will be remembered, has stern words in Romans for those who *suppress*—κατεχω—the truth: and Peter, so far from repressing inquiry, exhorts those he is writing to "to be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear." (1 Peter 3: 15.)

In the Early Church this same principle was recognized. Of that early period Pressense says: "We must ever bear in mind that if the Church of this

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age prepared the way for the triumph of hierarchy, it did not itself come under the yoke; that it still enjoyed a time of true liberty in which the unity of the faith laid no fetters upon diversity of opinions and free inquiry. There were still broad lines of distinction between East and West, and no necessity was felt for effacing these distinctions or enforcing the adoption of a uniform symbol of faith. Full scope was given for the various individualities which found bold and broad expression within the Church. External restraint only tends to add force to that reaction of thought and feeling which is the sublime vindication of the soul under any despotism whatsoever. The martyr-theologians of the third century are not the faded copies of one and the same doctrinal type forcibly impressed upon the mind by a mechanical process. All acknowledging with equal reverence the authority of the Divine Master, they have no hesitation in preserving intact the independence of Christian thought. They move at liberty within a broad area of doctrine, from which nothing is excluded but avowed heresy." (*Martyrs and Apologists*. English Translation, p. 262.)

This characterization of the Early Church is fully sustained by the writings of the Apologists who had occasion at all to assert the principle of freedom. The

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freshness of the morning filled believers with holy joy in the experience of faith. Life's emphasis was placed not on metaphysical disquisitions, but on what they had seen and felt. Even the sacred Scriptures were sometimes subordinated, or rather the interpretation of them, to experience. Ignatius says: "When I heard some saying, If I do not find it in the ancient Scriptures I will not believe the Gospel; on my saying to them, It is written, they assured me, That remains to be proved. But to me Jesus Christ is in the place of all that is ancient; His cross and death and resurrection and the faith that is by Him are undefiled monuments of antiquity." (*Ep. to the Phil., Shorter Recension*, Chap. VIII.) The Larger Recension reads: "For I have heard some saying, If I do not find the Gospel in the archives, I will not believe it—to such persons I say that my archives are Jesus Christ. . . . My authentic archives are His cross and death and resurrection. He who disbelieves the Gospel disbelieves everything along with it. For the archives ought not to be preferred to the Spirit."

Papias, a hearer of John, and friend of Polycarp, according to Irenæus, writes, "If, then, any one who had attended on the Elders came, I asked minutely after their sayings—what Andrew or Peter said, or what was said by Philip, or by Thomas, or by James,

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or by John, or by Matthew, or by any other of the Lord's disciples, which things Aristion and the presbyter John the disciples of the Lord say. For I imagined that what was to be got from books was not so profitable to me as what came from the living abiding voice." (*Euseb. Hist. Eccles. C. III, 39.*)

Pantænus, the head of the celebrated Catechetical School in Alexandria, and his pupil Clemens Alexandrinus, Christian philosophers, versed in all the philosophies and religions of Paganism, respected the reason they appealed to in their defense of the Gospel. Heracles, the colleague of Origen, Origen himself, and Dionysius, Bishop of Alexandria, also maintained the right of free inquiry though living in a period of transition when, owing to the increase of heretical sects, who then as now abused the rights of freedom, the Church began to limit the bounds of speculation. The historical fact is that, before Constantine came to the throne and the Church was united with the State freedom of conscience was demanded by the Fathers.

The Fathers of the Christian Church were the founders of religious liberty. These champions of intellectual and religious freedom were too consistent to deny in the Church what they demanded from the State. In his Apology addressed to the Roman rulers Tertullian says, "For see that you do not give further

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ground for the charge of irreligion by taking away religious liberty and forbidding free choice of Deity, so that I may no longer worship according to my inclination, but am compelled to worship against it." And in his Treatise, *Ad Scapulum*, C. 2, he says further: "It is a fundamental right, a privilege of nature, that every man should worship according to his own conscience. One man's religion neither harms nor helps another. It is assuredly no part of religion to compel religion—*nec religionis est cogere religionem*—to which free will and not force should lead us." Even Athanasius, the adversary of Arius, (*Hist. of the Arians*, 39), declared that is proof that men have no confidence in their own faith when they compel others to think as they do. And Lactantius, the Cicero among the Christian writers of that age, in a most eloquent passage, (*Instit. Div. V. 20*), says, "Nothing is so much a matter of free will as religion, in which the mind of the worshiper is disinclined to it, religion is at once taken away and ceases to exist." "The whole of the Patristic period," says Illingworth, (*Reason and Revelation*, p. 4), "was one of intellectual activity in which the leading Christian thinkers were not only fearless in their use of reason, but profoundly convinced that their position was intrinsically rational."

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Such, then, are the Scriptural and historical grounds for the reconciliation we hope to find. They confirm the belief that variation in thought, weakness in faith, doubt, any deviation from the common understanding or interpretation of doctrine, except intentional heresy, was tolerated in the Christian community.

Too much emphasis, however, should not be placed on this lenity. However tolerant the Church may have been to those who were weak in the faith, or to those who, loyal to the truth, speculated on divine things, it would be entirely erroneous to conclude that because our Divine Lord, His Apostles, and the Fathers of the Ante-Nicene Church, and some great leaders of Christian thought since then respected the rights of human reason, *therefore*, any one is at liberty to think or teach as his ignorance, his love of novelty, his intellectual pride, or his sinful self-assertiveness may inspire him. Freedom is not anarchy. Nothing was more abhorrent to the Apostles of our Lord and the teachers of the Early Church than the ever-increasing brood of heresies, Gnostic speculations, and mongrel mixtures of Oriental vagaries and Pagan philosophies which sprang up, as similar heresies and bizarre imitations of religion spring up to-day, and by interpretations more ingenious than rational, and accommoda-

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tions more artful than honest, sought to corrupt the purity of the Gospel. "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye," said the Apostle, "*but not to doubtful disputations.*"

The Church was a Body of Believers, not a Debating Society. Never before had the world witnessed such intellectual greatness—never before were there so many illustrious men, world-conquerors, orators, poets, philosophers, and historians as appeared in the period extending B. C. 100 to the close of the Apostolic Age, and creating a far-reaching intellectual climate. What a galaxy of greatness! What names shine out there for all time! Horace, Cicero, Terence, Sallust, Livy, Juvenal, Julius Cæsar, Pompey, Cassius, Brutus, Emperor Augustus, Seneca, Tacitus, Pliny, Flaccus, Epictetus, Apion of Alexandria, Suetonius, and others that might be named as these without regard to order. And yet there was never a time when the world was more doubtful of itself. Never when religion was more loudly professed and less believed. Doubt sat comfortably at the altars of the gods. "The philosophers of the Academy," complained Cicero, "affirm nothing. They despair of arriving at any certain knowledge." And later, in the days of Juvenal, this uncertainty deepened into ridicule. But over against the doubt of the world was the abso-

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lute certainty of the Church. The contrast between the literature of that age and the New Testament is the contrast between darkness and light. The philosophers knew nothing; but in contrast to their doubt the characteristic note of all believers in Christ was, WE KNOW. "We know that the Son of God is come and hath given us understanding that we may know Him that is true." (1 John 5:20.)

The Church was built upon a rock, upon the historic personality of the Lord Jesus, His death and resurrection. It was in possession of facts of history, and facts of experience. Nothing was more certain to the Church than the facts it believed. The founders of the Church were eye-witnesses of the facts. Denial of fact was not tolerated, as it could not be and never can be. Explanation of fact was another matter. But no explanation of fact that emptied it of its supernatural character could be accepted, for such explanation was denial and contrary to experience. For example, it was no explanation that on the Day of Pentecost the disciples were "filled with new wine." The disciples knew they were filled with the Holy Ghost. It was no explanation of the fact of an empty grave that the Jews said the disciples of Jesus stole His body while the soldiers slept. So of all the facts concerning the life, the death, the resurrection, and

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the mission of their Divine Lord. The Apostles and the primitive community of believers were witnesses, and their testimony was corroborated by signs and wonders and the redeeming effects of the Gospel.

This body of truth was "the faith once delivered to the saints." It was final. It could not be added to, for it embraced all the essential facts. It could not be superseded, "even though an angel from Heaven preached another"—for it was universal in its significance and for all time. Such sublimity of conviction was the conviction of the Church, and such was the inspiration of its martyrs! It was not to be wondered at, therefore, that this very Apostle who so emphatically asserted freedom of thought yet, nevertheless, for all that, exhorted Timothy, to "keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called, which some professing have erred concerning the faith." To Titus he writes a word of warning. "For there are many unruly men, vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision, whose mouths must be stopped; men who overthrow whole houses, teaching things they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake." "But speak thou the things that befit sound doctrine." "Shun foolish questionings and genealogies and strifes and fightings about law, for

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they are unprofitable and vain. A factious man after the first and second admonition refuse." (Rev. Ver.) In Second Peter we read: "We did not follow cunningly devised fables—~~Mythol~~—myths—when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were witnesses of His majesty." "Among you also shall be false teachers who shall bring in destructive heresies denying even the Master that bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction." (Rev. Ver.) In First John is clear warning against false teaching concerning the nature of Christ. "Little children, it is the last hour, and as ye know that Anti-Christ cometh, even now have there arisen many Anti-Christes whereby we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they were not of us." "This is the Anti-Christ, even he that denieth the Father and the Son." "Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father." "As for you, let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning." In the Didache which comes down to us from the Church immediately following the death of the Apostles, and was probably written by a disciple of the Apostles, we read, "Now whosoever cometh and teacheth you all these things, before spoken, receive him; but if the teacher himself turn aside and teach another teaching so as to overthrow *this*, do not hear him;

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but if he teach so as to promote righteousness and knowledge of the Lord, receive him as the Lord.” (Chap. XI.)

The Apostolic Church, then, knew what is believed. It had a definite Credo. This creed may not have been formulated in distinct propositions everywhere the same and in the same order, but every one baptized into the name of Jesus knew why he was baptized and what his baptism signified. Nevertheless Tertullian in his *Proscription Against Heretics*, CXXXVI, refers the heretics of his day to the Apostolic Churches in which the Apostle’s “own writings were read”—Corinth, Philippi, Thessalonica, Ephesus, Rome—which held the same creed taught by the Churches of Africa. “The sacred care,” says Farrar, (*Critical History of Free Thought*, p. 348), “with which the Christians treasured the doctrine, and spurned the attempt of heretics to explain it away, proves the strength of the conviction that they possessed a definite treasure of divine truth, introduced at a definite period. The very want of toleration, the tenacity of their attachment to the faith is proof of their undoubting conviction concerning the historic verity of the facts connected with redemption and the definite character of the dogmas which interpreted the facts.” And as a matter of history which we can not ignore, what

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glaring heresy, imperiling the integrity of the faith which was condemned by that Primitive Church, has the scholarship of this age found to be correct and the condemnation of the Church to be wrong? Around that faith grounded in historic facts which were not debatable the Church stood guard against all corrupting influences. It could not, unless it denied what it knew, reconcile itself to strange perversions of truth which gradually crept in; heresies which were then just as philosophical and just as plausible as attempted innovations on this same faith are at the present time. Nevertheless, that same Church, as we have seen, and the Church in the succeeding age, did fully recognize the principle and the exercise of freedom of thought; for it appeals to all clear thinking that it is absurd to define free thought only as that exercise of thought which is opposed to the belief of the Church.

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IV

PERHAPS it is not going too far to say that in all the ranges of the centuries there is no age which so closely resembles the period of the Early Church as does this age of ours. Along whatever lines of analogy our thought may run, Politics, Conflict of Classes, Culture, or Religion, the resemblances are as remarkable as they are suggestive, affording to the philosophic mind a fertile field for largest thinking. A similar analogy in broadest outline may be drawn between the Church in that period and the Church in our present day. It is well known that when the Infant Church stepped beyond the confines of Palestine to become a World-Religion, it came into immediate conflict with Greek philosophy, Pagan civilization, Oriental cults, religious quackery, appalling vice, and universal doubt. In the days of Paul and Peter and John the intellect of the world was on the side of Paganism. But all religions, all philosophies had been tried and all had failed. World-weariness, paralyzing doubt, deep-rooted pessimism were eating out the heart of humanity. A few years before the birth of our Lord, Julius Cæsar, Imperator, and Pontifex Maximus of

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the Roman Religion, had declared in the presence of the assembled Senators of Rome on the occasion of the Cataline conspiracy that death was an eternal sleep. The immortality of the soul was a philosophic dream. Not a Senator in the Temple of Concord that day, not even Cato who was present, challenged the statement. Well, three hundred years later, in solemn assembly, and in the presence of a converted Emperor, three hundred confessors and lowly ministers of the Lord Jesus declared, "We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, in one Lord Jesus Christ, who suffered and rose again on the third day. We believe in the Holy Ghost, the remission of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting."

What an infinite distance in thought between that Senate Chamber in Rome and the Nicene Council! The world had been turned upside down. The Gospel of the Son of God had at last conquered the heart and the intellect of the world. It was a fierce conflict. Out of it the Church did not come without wounds, but it left Paganism dead, or dying, on the field. What did it? What was that power which under God matched itself against the combined powers of Hellenic thought and the religions of a thousand years and destroyed them? It was not enough that martyrs should die on the block, or like Polycarp and

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the martyrs of Lyons, at the stake: it was not enough that holy lives should put to shame unparalleled wickedness: there was yet another battle to be fought, another fortress to be taken—the citadel of philosophic thought and scientific culture. The appeal of the Christ to the reason of men, to the rational faculty of the human mind which can never rest in doubt, must be made in Academy and Grove: the babblings of “knowledge falsely so called” must be met by eternal truth made crystalline to the souls of men, and the intellect of the world, which is the commanding power of the world, must be made subject to Jesus Christ, “in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom.”

The literary attack of Pagan philosophy was fierce and stubborn, supported as it was by the culture of the Empire and the fanaticism of hatred to the Cross. But the Church responded. The great schools of Antioch and Alexandria poured forth literature which gripped the reason of men and held them to the truth. Century after century witnessed the rise of defenders of the Faith, whose brilliant apologies, trenchant criticisms, thought-compelling and convincing, riddled every nook and corner of Pagan thought and life, every attack made by a Marcion, a Celsus, or Porphyry on the Old and New Testaments, every subtle heresy which sprung up inside or outside the Church, and

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when the battle was over, the intellect of the world was on the side of the Cross, and has remained there ever since!

As was situated the Church of the Ante-Nicene period, so is the Church of to-day. When was there such an age? When such ferment of ideas, such chaos of notions, such confusion, worse confounded, theological, philosophical, political, and religious? When were there more dangerous problems, social, political, industrial, threatening the peace of the world and the long results of time? When were there deeper convictions of religion and wider indifference to the Church? Deeper joy among the lowly, and deeper cynicism and pessimism and sadness among Christless intellectuals? Listen to Matthew Arnold on Dover Beach, watching the full tide of the ocean and the round moon shining over all:

"The Sea of Faith

Was once, too, at the full and round Earth's shore,
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furl'd.
But now I only hear
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,
Retreating, to the breath
Of the nightwind, down the vast edges drear
And naked shingles of the world."

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The question is, What must be the relation of the Church to this wild welter of human thought? Like a rock against which the yeasty waters beat from all points of the compass the Church is surrounded by swarms of multitudinous theories, philosophies, so-called sciences, and vagaries of aberrated intellects, popped illusions and bizarre recrudescences of Pagan ideas and Gnostic cults well suited to the mental degenerates who play them. There are also schools of theological thought, the products of Kantian, Hegelian, or other philosophy, with their popular cries of, "Back to Jesus," "Theology without Metaphysics," "Religion without Dogma," a baseless dream, indeed for what the Ritschlian school calls the "Religion of the Spirit" never did and never can exist separate and apart from historical fact. What, it must again be asked, should be the attitude of the Church toward all these notions and varieties of philosophies and theological schools? The answer to this question will determine the relation of the Church to freedom of thought.

To this modern Church, the Church of to-day, as to the Primitive Church is transmitted the Historic Faith. This Faith rests on facts. Facts never change. Whatever occurred in the life of Jesus is a fact forever. If Jesus died and rose again it never can be that He did not die, and did not rise again from the

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dead. If the Apostles preached this Jesus as the Redeemer of men, that through His atoning blood there is forgiveness of sins, and eternal life, these facts remain. The writers of the Gospels may have deceived us, they may have given us an ideal Jesus, and colored His statements as radical writers suggest; His disciples may have misinterpreted Him, and the Primitive Church under the influence of Pauline teaching may have invented an entirely erroneous theology, alien to the pure Gospel of the Galilean ministry—and, finally, we may not believe at all any of the things that are written in the Gospels or taught in the Epistles, but may assume with Martineau that “the historical life of Jesus of Nazareth fell upon a time and related to Him a people charged with preconceptions which threw a variety of false colors upon His figure, and have handed down the image of it in several editions, no one of which can claim photographic truth.” (*Seat of Authority in Religion*, p. 450.) We may assume all this. But does our assumption change the facts? Let us not forget the words of Galileo, “And still it moves.” Believe or not believe—*there is the record*. Has that record been disproved? Not yet. The assumption that the Gospels are not photographs of facts, but colored statements, personal reflections of the authors upon the

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unique personality of Jesus made long after His departure from the earth is the last hope of radical criticism. Strauss based his epoch-making *Life of Jesus* on the theory of myths. Saner scholarship showed that between the death of Jesus and the writing of the Gospels there was not sufficient time for the growth of myths. This assumption stated by Martineau can not hope for better success. The Gospels were written in the lifetime of those who were witnesses, or were disciples of those who were witnesses, of the Gospel facts. Criticism has utterly failed to prove that the Synoptic Gospels and the Book of Acts are second century productions. In his latest work on the *Date of the Acts and Synoptic Gospels*, Professor Harnack, having reviewed the argument of Wellhausen supporting a late date for Luke's Gospel, says, "Hence it is proved that it is altogether wrong to say that the eschatological passages force us to the conclusion that the third Gospel was written after the year 70 A. D. And since there are no other reasons for a later date it follows that the strong arguments which favor the composition of the Acts before 70 A. D. now also apply in their full force to the Gospel of St. Luke, and it seems now to be established beyond question that both books were written while Paul was yet alive." In a note he adds,

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"Among the scholars who are of this opinion I specially mention von Hofman, Thiersch, Wissler, Resch, and Blass." From this it follows that since Mark was one of the sources for Luke's Gospel, therefore Mark's Gospel was also written "while Paul was yet alive." The facts recorded in these Gospels must have been known to Paul. He knew these facts from the Apostles at Jerusalem, before the Gospels were written, for he tells us that he went up to Jerusalem to consult Peter, that is to learn the facts in detail of the whole Movement from the beginning as they were known to Peter and James, the Lord's brother. Fourteen years later he was with Peter and John and the rest, but during all these years he had been preaching and teaching, and writing Epistles to the Churches, on the foundation of his personal experience and the facts which were later recorded in the Gospels but which were then in the possession of the Apostolic College. Everything, therefore, that is recorded in the Gospels was common knowledge in Christian communities before the Gospels were written. But in order that radical criticism might have some ground for denial, must we imagine that all the witnesses of the Gospel history had died before Paul wrote his Epistles, and before the Gospels of Luke and Mark were written? This can not be. There were many

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disciples alive when Paul wrote his Epistles to the Corinthians who had seen the Lord after His resurrection. "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died . . . was buried . . . and . . . rose again the third day . . . that He was seen of Cephas, then of The Twelve: after that, He was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; *of whom the greater part remain unto this present*, but some have fallen asleep." That is, twenty-five years after the death and resurrection of Jesus the "majority" of five hundred people who had seen Him at His final appearance were alive and could bear testimony to the fact that they had seen the risen Lord.

Now, to return to the text, is it not asking too much that the Church should surrender these facts of the Gospels as not being facts under penalty of being antagonistic to freedom of thought? But let us exhaust this subject as far as we may, let us go to the very roots of it and let it be granted that this surrender can be made. To what school of philosophy, then, or of theology, shall it surrender?—to the Kantian, the Hegelian, the Tübingen, the Ritschlian? If the Church should surrender the fact that Christ rose bodily from the dead because a certain view of the universe insists that miracles are contrary to Na-

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ture, without the proviso, *Nature as we know it*, as Augustine said, what theory of our Lord's resurrection shall we adopt? Strauss'? Renan's? Keim's? Schmeidel's? Or, since these writers differ from each other, shall we adopt no theory at all and simply assume, as Harnack does, an Easter faith without an Easter fact? But, can the mind rest on this? Can we have faith in a risen Christ if there never was a risen Christ? Can the mind rest in contradictions? Schmeidel insists that the appearances of Jesus after the resurrection were of a purely subjective character, but what kind of subjectivity is that which can be *touched* and *heard*? Professor Lake finds a textual interpolation wherever he finds a pointblank contradiction to his theory. How can we change the narratives in the Gospel so as to satisfy all these inventions? And how, after all, having done this, can the Church escape the odium of antagonism to free thought? For it is clear that whichever theory is adopted the Church must insist that *that* is the true theory. It must, therefore, resist as false the teachings of all other theories, and thus again be open to the charge of opposing freedom of thought, or else hold that all other views or theories are of equal value with its own, although they are all known to be equally false.

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It would seem, then, that there is only one way out of this dilemma, that is for the Church to renounce all authority, all dogmas as such, to shake itself free from all formulas, rites, and ceremonies, as it is insisted it should, and fall back on the religion of the Spirit. Let this be done. And let us hasten to affirm, since it is true, that Religion is not Theology—that it is not a series of dogmatic propositions, traditions of faith handed down from misty beginnings—but that it is *life*, that it is the kingdom of God in the soul, a living experience of God. This is what Harnack, the most brilliant representative of liberal theology and chief among the foremost scholars of modern times, insists it should be.

Now, it is quite true, to begin with, that this definition of religion is neither new nor necessary. It was not new with Schleiermacher, the real founder of the Ritschlian school to which Harnack belongs; nor was it new to Wesley, who preached the same all over England before Schleiermacher ever wrote his famous *Discourses on Religion*. No thinking man of our day would identify religion with dogma. Harnack's insistence, and Sabatier's also, that religion should be separated from dogma seems to be entirely superfluous unless he had in mind the religion of some State Church. But, since we have agreed to adopt

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this program, the query arises, Does this rejection of dogma solve any questions for us? Does it really show us the way out of the difficulty of reconciling Authority of Truth and Freedom of Criticism within the Church? No one will deny that there is a distinction between Religion and Theology, as there is between the Church and the Kingdom. Religion is not dogma, as Piety is not Ritual. But it does not follow that Religion can exist wholly separate from dogma. It is incontestably true, as Harnack says, that "the Gospel is no theoretical system of doctrine or of philosophy." But that explains nothing. There is a "God the Father" in that Gospel, and a Christ Jesus who therein reveals the Father to us. That "God" and that "Jesus" must be interpreted. No being but an intelligent being can be a religious being. But if he is an intelligent, reasoning being he must think. He can not satisfy himself by merely looking at such naked terms as "God," he must know or ask, "What is 'God?'" "What does 'Father' mean?" He must interpret. Religion is not thought, but there is no Religion without thought. There is no Christianity without Christ. Who, then, is "Christ?" Is He the historical Christ of the Church, or the Christ of imagination, the Christ of Paul, or the Christ of the Unitarian?

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To every age and to every thinker and to every seeker after God comes the challenge of Jesus Himself, "Whom say ye that I am?" It will not do to fall back on experience. If we reject the Gospels as they are, which Harnack does not do, but which Radical Criticism would have us do, and the Apostolic Epistles also, upon what in the last analysis does experience rest? How can subjective experience of Religion be final authority for historical fact? Certainly we must and do trust experience, but what proof or assurance have we that there is any objective reality corresponding to experience? There can be no experience of a thing without a knowledge of the thing. If one would experience God he must know of God. Otherwise how would he know that it was God he experienced or believed he experienced? Experience must have a reason. There must be an Objective to a Subjective. Experience must be justified by an adequate cause. Faith must be faith in a thing or a Person, but what that faith or belief is *that* is dogma, *that* is theology. To tell the world, as Martineau and some eminent writers of the Ritschlian School would have us do, that we may still have the spirit of Jesus even if as a result of scientific criticism we lose the historic Jesus, the Jesus of the Gospels, is simply to substitute a philosophical dream for an historical fact.

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Deliberate self-deception is no cure for historical difficulties. Suppose we apply this self-deceiving method to other historical personalities—accept, for example, a supposed spirit of Washington, but deny the historic Washington; picture to our thought an invented Washington, but deny the reality of the flesh-and-blood Washington as he was known to his contemporaries?

The simple truth is, The idea of a Religion of the Spirit is an idea which never was an historical fact. Such a religion never existed and never can exist. There never was any other Christianity than that of the Gospels, and that is a miraculous Christianity. The Religion of the Spirit is never found separate from dogma. From the day that Peter in answer to his Lord cried out, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," the disciples of Jesus had a doctrine of Jesus. There is no such thing as an Easter faith without an Easter fact. Christianity is not an abstraction. The moral power of Christianity is not the continuance of self-deception or belief in ghosts. Pentecost does not explain itself. That the pure doctrine of Jesus has been overlaid by false interpretations is platitude; and that the task of the critic is to present the Christ of the Gospels apart from dogmatic theories of His Person is no less ele-

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mentary; but it does not follow that freedom of thought is therefore resisted because the Church fails to recognize the Christ which the critic with a philosophy presents to us when the false interpretations have been removed.

The error of those who would divorce religion from doctrine is the assumption that all dogma is a theological proposition dependent solely for its validity upon the authority of the Church. This is a mistake. The Authority of the Church is the authority of the reason, of truth itself. True dogma is a product of reason; a proposition in theology which does not depend upon any external authority for its vitality, but upon its own inherent truth.

This way out of our difficulty, then—that is, rejection of all dogmas and theology which occasion conflict—does not help us much. It leads only to a blind alley through which there is no thoroughfare. The Church can not surrender the facts of the Gospel, the facts which constitute Christianity. Those facts would still be with us even if the Church in some frightful apostasy should surrender them. We can not ignore the sun. The attitude of the Church toward theories and philosophies which deny or explain away these facts, must be, in the nature of things, an irreconcilable attitude. The Incarnation as a fact and

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not a mode of Divine manifestation is not a speculation, and it is not debatable within the Church. Nor is the Atonement, nor the Personality of the Holy Spirit, nor any other fact or foundation truth of the Christian religion. What great teachers, or Councils, or Synods have said in explanation of these facts is entirely another matter. Fact is one thing, explanation of it is quite another thing.

It appeals to reason, therefore, that when such facts are denied, or explained away by one who would enter the Church or its ministry, or attempt by writings to modify or destroy its belief, the Church is compelled by its own claims as a witness of the truth to forbid the intrusion. Such person has *de facto* by his avowed dissent withdrawn himself from the unity of those who do believe and have the right to be protected in their faith. In this act of exclusion the Church, however, can not be open to the charge of intolerance, for every judicial mind will at once concede that the Church has as much right to exercise its freedom of thought against the supposed heretic as he has to exercise his judgment against the Church. No one has a monopoly of freedom. The truth is, he who does not believe the essential teachings of Christianity is not a Christian at all, unless he invents a definition of Christianity as does the Uni-

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tarian specially designed to cover his own case. Indeed, one might with equal logic demand admission into the kingdom of God without repentance, on the ground that to deny him that right is to interfere with his moral freedom to be either good or bad. Certainly no one has the right to be bad, for there is no rightness in badness, and the kingdom of God is the kingdom of righteousness into which badness can not enter.

And, after all, what is freedom for? Freedom, it will be conceded, is not an end in itself. It must be a means to an end. But to what end? Certainly it can not be intellectual gymnastics, nor the exploitations of one's own knowledge, nor of his personal idiosyncrasies, his likes and dislikes, his beliefs or unbeliefs, all of which ends or purposes must be regarded as evidences of egotistical mania. We can only conceive of freedom in the last analysis as a means for attaining to truth. Any other motive for its exercise in religious thinking is in itself immoral, for how can that be moral which has in the heart of it an immoral purpose—the exploitation of the ego?

Furthermore, the Church as “the heir of all the ages” is not organized for the purpose of scattering to the winds the “long results of time,” the teachings and experiences of centuries. We can not break loose

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from all that has gone before if we would; we can not reconstruct the universe of thought and life all over again every time a cry arises for readjustment of the Church to the spirit of the age. There is something greater than the spirit of the age, and that is the Spirit of the Ages.

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VI

WHAT has just been said leads us, in the interest of fairness, to consider briefly the function of the Church. What is the Church? And what is the Church for? First, the Church is Religion organized. It is the visible expression of the Gospel in human experience. Its function is determined by the spiritual energy which gave it birth. It is not a Philosophical Club, nor an Association for the Advancement of Science, or of Commerce. It is an Association for the Spiritual Development of Humanity. It was born in faith and in the experience of the Eternal Spirit, and its sole purpose or function is to bring men into the same relation.

The means by which this is accomplished is preaching or teaching. "Go preach, disciple all nations," is its charter. No other institution among men can compare itself to it or show similar charter. It can not, therefore, become a mere reproduction of ancient schools of philosophy, or of present thought, forever debating but never coming to a knowledge of the truth. It has the truth to begin with. It has the facts. They are not doubtful to itself. Certainly it

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is often asserted that "No historical fact, attested by documentary or any secondary truth, can ever be a fundamental religious truth," that "A religious truth can not be proved by an historical event," that "No mathematical fact is doubtful; no historical fact is certain," that "It is no longer possible to saddle with the whole weight of eternity any historical personage or facts however remarkable or unique." How do we know that? But, leaving this aside, we can not attach much importance to such fallacies. The Church has never depended solely on documentary evidence for its belief. The Church existed before the Gospels. The documentary evidence originally was a product of the Church, and not the Church of the documents. From age to age the Church continues its own testimony. In the whole of Christian history the facts have never changed. The Lord Jesus is not a product of yesterday. He is not a fact in human history isolated from all that has gone before, or happened since. The Christ of history is the Christ of the Here and Now, a present Divine Reality, and has been every day since He ascended from Olivet. The effect of His once coming into human history is visible to all. From this fact there is no escape, no matter how we explain it. Now, it is not the business of the Church to debate the facts over and over, but to preach them.

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This does not mean that the verbal forms of Church creeds are fixed and unchangeable. They never were fixed. Deeper apprehension of truth must ever find new expression. The Church is a living organism. Like all living things it is subject to biological laws. It must have the power of assimilation, the instinct to absorb assimilative matter from without and to build it into its own life or to use it as a means of self-expression. It must have the power of adjustment to changing environment, thus possessing inherently the faculty of development. But the principle of life does not change. Life does not become not-life and yet continue life. The facts in the historic creed of Christendom do not change, if they are facts. The letter changes, but the underlying truth remains forever the same. In order to prevent misunderstanding of what is here meant by development it may be necessary to state that I do not mean by development of doctrine what John Henry Newman (late Cardinal) so ingeniously attempted to prove in his famous work, the principles of which have been adopted by Abbé Loisy and the Modernists in France and England. The teaching that the doctrine of Christianity was given only in germ and intended by our Lord and His Apostles to be developed in later times, that many doctrines were held in reserve, or only faintly

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suggested; in a word, that we may apply the theory of evolution to the Doctrines of Christianity as we see that hypothesis later in the Darwinian theory of the Origin of Species, which doctrine of development Newman anticipated, is not Scriptural, nor is it in harmony with the historical facts. On such a theory as Newman elaborated with so much genius any addition to the original deposit of faith—the perfect Revelation of God in the New Testament, could be defended, and however necessary in the judgment of Modernists it may be to the Church of Rome, although the conservative theologians of that Church will repudiate it as used by Modernists who avowedly build on Newman, it can in no sense be adopted by Evangelical teachers.

But the function of the Church is not exhausted in bearing witness to the truth, or in propagating it. The Church has a duty to those within its fold. Its function there is the development and enrichment of the spiritual life imparted. The Church is the fostering mother of the soul. What the character of life is depends largely upon its environment. No organism or institution can realize its purpose or justify its existence if it fails to exercise its functions, and since the function of the Church is to establish among men the kingdom of God, it follows as a necessary con-

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clusion that the Church can exercise such functions with vigor only in the degree of the completest subordination of the individual members of the Church to the interest of the whole *compatible with the largest freedom of the individual*. For that institution only, whether religious or secular, is the most effective in which the living principle is: All for Each and Each for All. Where this principle does not obtain, but the opposite, rivalry, aggrandizement of self, competition without restraint, has open field, the law of the struggle for survival comes in and dominates the whole, with the result that, in the long run, internecine warfare destroys the organism, whether it be political or ecclesiastical, social or spiritual. It is, therefore, necessary that the individual should be subordinate to the whole for the benefit of the whole.

It is quite easy to denounce such teaching as spiritual despotism and irrational. But it is not despotism and it is not irrational. As members of the social organism we have to be, that is, our individual interests must be, whether we like it or not, subordinated to the larger interests of Society. If they were not subordinated there would be no Society and no civilized individual. Man is a social being. Being that he can reach his true development only in social relations, that is, as a member of Society. But the mo-

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ment he becomes a member of Society he comes under the operation of laws which are at work solely for the evolution of the social organism. These laws irresistibly play upon him not simply as a self-sufficient individual, but also as a single unit in the body politic which must adjust itself in harmonious relation to all other units in that organism for the perpetuity and development of the whole. Should the individual rebel against these laws, and withdraw from all social relations, as he may, he gradually succumbs to the dominion of other cosmic laws and inevitably reverts to primitive conditions, as tribes and races have done among whom the social bond was broken, and thus fails to reach his highest efficiency. So it is in the Church. Man is a religious being. As such he can reach his highest spiritual development only in the Church, for it is in the Church only that he can find that which is necessary to his spiritual life and growth. The Church is not an accident. It is not a convenience. It is a necessity. It is as necessary to the religious man as the social organism is to the social man. For it is there only in the beauty of the sanctuary; in its solemn worship; in its hymns of adoration and praise; in its hallowed associations; its mystic meanings; its holy fellowships in a common faith linking the devout soul on his knees with all the holy

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ones of the ages gone; in the strengthening influence of its saints whose memories linger as a sweet perfume though the vase be broken; and in its far reaches of vision beyond the visible and the present to the unseen glory and companionships of an illimitable future—it is there only in the fellowship of the redeemed that man finds his true environment, his deepest satisfaction in holy living and his needful stimulus to the highest attainments of the spirit-life. It is evident, then, that as in the social world the individual necessarily surrenders those personal qualities, aims, and pursuits which are inimical to the well-being of Society, so he who enters the Church, that is, the Spiritual Society, must make his relation to that Society operate for the highest good of the whole body. His purposes and desires, his mental attitude and personal conduct must all be subordinated to its highest interests, its final aims and present functions.

This adjustment of the individual to his spiritual environment is not irrational. Nothing could be more rational and more in harmony with our common sense ideas of unity of law and order. It is more rational than is the surrender of the Social Man to the Social Organism, since while he is impelled by his social instincts to labor for the progress of Society, his unsentimental reason is in unceasing warfare against his

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instinct. For what is Social Progress and what are its underlying conditions? Social Progress is that development of humanity from unrelated and disorganized conditions of existence to associated interests; from lower states of thinking and living and feeling and pursuits, to the highest enjoyment of realized potencies, mental, moral, and physical, of which man as a rational and social being is capable. How is this attained, that is, what are the conditions of Social Progress? Subordination. History clearly teaches that there can be progress only where there is subordination of individual interests to the interests of the Social Order. The Social Organism is everything, the individual nothing, except so far as he contributes to the welfare of the whole. Driven by the compelling power of instinct the individual submits to Social conditions which his reason wars against, since they deprive him of liberty and militate against his personal desires. But such is his nature and such is the influence upon him of the forces working for the evolution of the race, that only as a participating unit in the Social Organism, and only by such subordination of himself to the interests of the larger and more extended life of the whole, can he himself find his true development. But where is the reason for it all? Reason demands that the individual should care for

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himself, his own ease, comforts, pleasures, and immediate interests of the living present. What possible sanction of reason, then, can there be for the sacrifice of himself in the present for the sake of an unknown future, for the benefit of generations yet unborn, but for which the forces of evolution are working; for the expansion of Social Progress in the ages yet to come in which he personally will have no part? Here is an irreconcilable antagonism in man himself—an irreducible conflict between Reason and Instinct—Nature driving him one way, his Reason impelling him another. George Eliot, following the teaching of Comte, may sing of the "Choir Invisible, of those immortal dead who live again in minds made better by their presence." But poetic sentiment is no substitute for cold Reason. And in his tenth chapter of the *Data of Ethics*, Herbert Spencer tries to show how this conflict between Egoism and Altruism may be reconciled in the progressive development of Society by the growth of compromise in which shall be found conciliation between Personal and Social interests. But of what benefit now is the present state of social development to the millions of forgotten ages who were caught up in the sweep of cosmic law? to the multitudes that once toiled on the fertile plains of Babylon, or the deltas of the Nile? Or, of what benefit

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is it to the millions of toilers in our modern civilization who submit now to social and industrial conditions which are burdensome and galling, to be told that they are building the future, that they are contributing in altruistic spirit to the future progress of the race, the development of humanity? What does the miner toiling in the darkness, the victims of the sweat-shop, the wage-earners living on the thin edge of starvation, the millions who submit to the limitations of poverty throughout their entire existence and pass away at last like a bubble on the boundless sea, care for the Social Good of future millenniums which they will never enjoy? For,

“Observe—it had not much
Consoled the race of Mastodons to know
Before they went to fossil, that anon
Their place would quicken with the Elephant;
They were not Elephants, but Mastodons:
And I, a man, as men are now, and not
As men may be hereafter, feel with men
In the agonizing present.”

—*Aurora Leigh.*

Where is the rational sanction for it all?

But in the Church this irrational conflict between man and his social condition, this antagonism between reason and instinct in man himself, is wholly done away. Reason rebels against onerous limitations

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and toil in the present for the sake of the future because man has no rational interest in that social or political future. *In the Church this is reversed.* Man is a spiritual being and will live in a spiritual future. He, therefore, has the profoundest and most personal and immediate interest in that future. All his hopes of redemption from the evil that is in him are centered in that future, his dreams of happiness, of soul freedom, of eternal peace with himself and God and the universe are there. Hence to that future he rationally sacrifices the present, and in doing so finds the reconciliation of the conflict that is in him, that is, between Reason and Instinct. He is building for *himself* the future which he *himself* will personally enjoy and which he enjoys even now in this present, for he sees

"The triumph from afar,
By faith he brings it nigh."

The natural man lives in the present, the spiritual man in the future. He is not a mere unit utilized by evolutionary forces for the preservation and development of a Social Organism toward an indefinite end, and then cast aside when his efficiency is gone. He is an integral part of the whole forever. He is an immortal being in whose personal redemption and transcendent glory of spiritual peace and power and

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development the whole Heaven of the future is mirrored. The redeemed millions of past ages did not subordinate their present to the building of the Church in vain. The martyrs, singed with flame, holy men and women pouring out their prayers, subduing in themselves the lure of the world, sacrificing carnal pleasures and personal interests, living for others, and dreaming of the ever coming kingdom, did not suffer or toil in vain, nor are they personally lost to the Church Triumphant as is the dust of Babylon to the Society of the future. What they lived for and toiled for they shall inherit, they with us and we with them; the whole Church of all ages and of all climes and of all tongues and races and tribes of men. "And these all having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise, God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect." (Hebrews XI.)

It is, therefore, not irrational that for the building of the Church, for its efficiency in promoting the very purposes for which the Church exists at all, the individual who would relate himself to the life of the Church should subordinate himself to the interests of the Church. By such subordination of self the Church is enabled without conflict between jarring interests to reach the highest development of spiritual growth,

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and its individual members at the same time to reach their highest development in spiritual culture and redeeming efficiency without the distractions of destructive criticism. But where there is discord, disputings, poverty of spiritual sustenance, and chaotic confusion, there can be no healthful, normal development. The quality of one's life depends largely upon one's theory of life. In the Church that theory is formed by the teaching of the Church, and the influence of holy fellowship. Any teaching, therefore, the logical result of which must be disintegration of unity of thought and fellowship, must be destructive of the very purpose for which the Church exists, and equally destructive of the peace and comfort of souls who do not find spiritual strength or joy in exchanging the certitude of faith for the probabilities of criticism. For, of what value, after all, is it to a devout soul to exchange exalted faith, the consciousness of God, and that mystical peace of the soul resulting therefrom, for all the interrogation points that critics of the faith from Celsus to Renan or Schmeidel have punctuated the New Testament with without ever having added a single truth to religion or having solved for a single earnest soul the mysteries of life and death? Of what value is it? "*Will a man leave the snow of Lebanon?*" Will he leave the heights of clear

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vision, the bracing air of God, the snow-capped peaks where the springs break forth and rivers of inspiration are born for the arid plains of doubt? There are no springs in the desert! There is no certainty in the conclusions of criticism like that certainty which is felt in the conclusions of the heart. No religion ever did yet, nor ever can, rest primarily on the intellect. As Mr. Lecky asserts (*History of European Morals*, Vol. I, p. 56), "All the nobler religions which have governed mankind have done so . . . by speaking as common religion describes it, to the heart." There is that in human nature which responds to religion, and therefore the appeal of religion is not to the intellect, but to the heart, which demands religion as that in which it finds supreme satisfaction for its needs. Therefore, as Benjamin Kidd in his *Social Evolution*, p. 122, points out, "We see why, despite the apparent tendency to the disintegration of religious belief among the intellectual classes at the present day, those who seek to compromise matters by getting rid of that feature which is the essential element in all religions make no important headway; and why, as a prominent member of one of the Churches has recently remarked, the undogmatic sects reap the scantiest harvest while the dogmatic Churches still take the multitude." Religion can never be sus-

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tained on a negative. If religion depended on the intellect the few intellectuels only out of the millions of humanity could be saved, while the remainder would be outlawed. This is no plea for pious ignorance. Nor is it a defense for ostrich theology. The widest knowledge and the severest critical spirit are entirely compatible with sanctity of soul, else we should be driven to exclude such men of the kingdom as Tholuck, Neander, Dorner, Schleiermacher, Delitzsch, Alford, Westcott, Hort, Ellicott, and hosts of other Biblical critics, historians, and theologians who have "adorned the doctrine of God" both by their piety and their learning.

Then, since one is bound to give reasons for his unbelief as one likewise is for his faith, think seriously of the process by which the conclusions of criticism must be reached for one's self, unless he depends solely on the authority of scientific critics, which if he does he only substitutes one authority for another. Linguistics, history, philosophy, comparative religions, manuscripts, translations, recensions—what unity of thought would come of it all? What Lord Balfour, (*Foundations of Belief*, p. 204), presents as the result of a community investigating political or moral problems, dissecting "all the great loyalties which make social life possible and all the minor conventions which

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help to make it easy; and to weigh out with scrupulous precision the exact degree of assent which in each particular case the results of this process might seem to justify," is applicable here. "To say," says this statesman, "that such a community, if it acted upon the opinions thus arrived at, would stand but a poor chance in the struggle for existence is to say far too little. It could never even begin to be; and if by a miracle it was created it would without doubt immediately resolve itself into its constituent elements." The function of the Church, evidently, is to preach the Gospel, and to establish believing men and women in the life of God. To subordinate one's interests to this purpose does not seem to be either despotic or irrational.

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VII

AND here, to take a more comprehensive view of the subject, it may be worth while to express the judgment that every attempt to force the Church aside from this distinctive mission into the forum of science and philosophy, economics or politics, will inevitably end in dismal failure for Society, and a no less distressing humiliation to the Church. The Church was not established primarily for such purposes. Its mission is the redemption of men from sin, the guilt of it, the love of it, and the power of it. Accomplish this and the regeneration of Society will inevitably follow, as effect follows cause. For no one can be filled with the spirit of the Gospel and all that it means, and not work and pray for the realization of the ideal society which is in the program of Jesus, and which will be a visible reflection on earth of the kingdom of God. Jesus was not a social reformer. He was not a political leader. He was, and is, the Redeemer. He would save Society from *within*, for out of the inner life of men is Society evolved and all its problems. That theory of social regeneration which imagines that without religion it can save humanity

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by utilitarian philosophy, applied science, education, literature, and art will discover in the end that the soul of man is more than all of them; that greed is stronger than theory; that envy and jealousy are deeper than science; that evil propensities are more forceful than education; that, in a word, primitive instincts are mightier than all the forces of civilization. But, *"If the truth shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."* In that truth lies the hope of humanity. And, as an historical fact, in whatever nation or among whatever group of men the vitalizing and regenerating power of the Gospel has become a fact in personal experience, there and there only have social ideas been evolved; there and there only have justice and mercy and brotherly love become recognized principles to which, however imperfect the realization may be, the conduct of life has been made to conform." "There is not," says Martineau, "a secular reform in the whole development of modern civilization which (if it is more than mechanical) has not drawn its inspiration from a religious principle." Certainly, it is not affirmed that the Gospel of Jesus can ever determine the value of wheat, or fix the price of coal. But what is more important, it will put an infinite value on the man who digs the coal. It will exalt the man "for whom Christ died." In doing this it

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necessarily makes all social good possible—civil freedom, religious liberty, justice between men, whether rich or poor, employer or employee, and the pursuit of happiness for all. It will do all this by heightening and ennobling man's consciousness of his own personal worth and dignity as a child of God and heir of immortality. For the Gospel of Christ is not primarily for the salvation of men, but for the salvation of Man. The prophetic denunciation of those who "sold the righteous for silver, the needy for a pair of shoes," (Amos 2:6), rings out clear and sharp in the Gospel, and so it comes about that wherever this Gospel has influenced the life of a people there will be found those who stand up for the rights of man against political tyranny or commercial greed. It is, therefore, of the first importance that the Church should guard with jealousy the essential truths of the Gospel without which there would be no Gospel at all. And further, it is not only of prime importance that the Church should defend with energy these truths for the sake of religion itself; it is also of the deepest importance that they should be preserved unadulterated for the sake of humanity, for unless these truths permeate and influence the race there is no progress for the race.



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VIII

THUS far we have viewed the subject mainly from the standpoint of the Church. We may now consider it from the viewpoint of the liberal critic. The fundamental question here is: Has the Church the right to stifle legitimate inquiry, that is, to prohibit scientific research which does not deny but investigates?

If we can assume that any Church claims such a prerogative, the answer of reason, conscience, and history must be in the negative. Certainly no Church can claim Scriptural grounds for such an assumption. Among Protestant Churches such an idea is impossible. No reason whatever could be given justifying the existence of colleges and universities or theological seminaries, or for the study of any Christian subject, if the only intellectual exercise allowable were the repetition of theological formulas of past periods, the memorizing of dogmatic utterances of ancient teachers. What is the intellect for? Our Lord has said, "Every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of Heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old." (Matthew 13: 52.) We may even go farther and deny

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that any Church has the right to demand that the form or precise expressions in which the belief even of the Early Church cast its conceptions or interpretations of the Revelation of God should be understood and taught exactly as they were then taught and understood. To affirm the contrary is to deny the educating power of the Spirit of God in human history. The form in which any truth is embodied, as a kernel in a husk, is in its nature temporal and must in time undergo some change. Words take on new meanings with the expansion of thought. Sometimes they resist and then they fall away, for the idea within must find adequate expression. Just as on the other hand when doctrines are discarded the terms expressing them drop out of use, as the word *Theotokos* forced upon the Church by the Councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon has been relegated with the doctrine it expressed to the theological dictionary.

All teaching is limited by the knowledge of the teacher. Dogma is condensed history. It is the product of the collective reason of the age in which it was declared. Now, no age is omniscient. It, therefore, follows that there never can be a final and perfect statement of Divine truth. "We know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be

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done away." (1 Corinthians 13:9, 10.) No human word can express the fullness of Divine thought. Revelation is always greater than its medium. Words are symbols. Hence every age must present to itself its own interpretation of the historic facts from the standpoint of its own knowledge, its own experience, necessities, and providential position in time. It would be injurious to the Revelation of God to insist that the Church of the Twentieth Century must abide by the interpretations and the methods of interpretation of the Second, the Third, or the Fourth Century. If it did, which method of interpretation must it adopt—the Alexandrian or the Antiochean, the literal or the allegorical? Few will be willing to admit that Irenæus, Tertullian, the Gregorys, Augustine, Luther, Calvin, or Wesley spoke the last word on any subject of Divine Revelation. They were holy men, providential men, but they were not inspired men. They were not infallible. Augustine not being well versed in Greek, built his Predestination theology on a Latin text and buttressed his teaching that all men sinned in Adam with the text in Romans 5:12, *in quo omnes peccaverunt, in whom all have sinned*. What a terrible misfortune that stupendous blunder was to Christian theology! Who can estimate the suffering that teaching produced, the

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infidelity it occasioned, the contentions it engendered! Professor J. Denney, commenting on this text in the *Expositor's Greek Testament*, says, "Nothing has been more pernicious in theology than the determination to define Sin in such a way that in all its damning import the definition should be applicable to infants; it is to this we owe the moral atrocities that have disfigured most creeds and in great part the idea of baptismal regeneration, which is an irrational, unethical miracle, invented by men to get over a puzzle of their own making." What the Apostle did write was that death passed upon all men *for the reason that*—ἐφ' ᾧ—πάντες ἥμαρτον—all have sinned. ἐφ' ᾧ is not *in quo*, "*in whom*," quo being a personal pronoun, whereas ἐφ' ᾧ, which is for ἐπὶ ταῦτα ὅτι, is an adverbial phrase, *on this account, for the reason that, etc.* Then Luther, it will be remembered, declared the Epistle of James to be an Epistle of straw. Calvin's Foreordination and Predestination, with his "horrible decrees" so elaborately worked out in his *Institutes*, are repudiated now even by Presbyterians. Wesley tells us that the Apostolic Fathers were "not mistaken in their interpretations of the Gospel of Christ; but that in all the necessary parts of it they were so assisted by the Holy Ghost as to be scarce capable of mistaking," an extraordinary statement considering Clement's

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teaching on the Resurrection and Irenæus on the Millennium. No! the Holy Spirit alone who gave the first word must have the last word. The Spirit of God is the soul of the Church. The Church is the medium of the Spirit. The more holy the Church is, the more sensitive it is to the inspiration of the Spirit. No limitations can be placed on the influence of the Holy Ghost dwelling in a holy Church. Larger views of God, insight in holy mysteries, far-reaching thoughts resulting in revolution of thought in all realms of thought and action, are the results of the inspiration of God acting on holy men who brood over the messages of the Prophets, the works of our Lord, and the teachings of the Apostles.

The old heresy that God set the universe going and then left it to operate under its own laws crops up too often in another form in our theological thinking. Many seem to think that the Lord Jesus established His Church and then gave it over once for all to the transcendent superintendency of the Spirit. But this is scarcely a half-truth. The Spirit of God does govern the Church. But the Spirit of God is not only the Transcendent Spirit, He is also the Immanent Spirit. He is the Inner Life of the Church, the Inspirer of all Christian activity, the Guide to all truth essential to the building of the kingdom of God. We

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must never lose sight of the promise of our Lord to the Church. "When He, the Spirit of truth is come, He will guide you into all truth." That promise has never been canceled. The whole content of Divine Revelation did not drop into the minds of the Apostles at once. They had to learn many things not spoken to them by the Lord during His earthly ministry. But He would never leave them. Through the Spirit of Truth He would speak to them and to the Church to the end of time. "He shall guide you into all truth"—ὁδηγήσει—*He will show you the road* to all truth. Their knowledge would be progressive. He who is guided is seeking; he has not attained. In a thousand manifold ways in thought, action, purpose, the silent workings of the Spirit would lead them finally into the Truth. We can not study the Book of Acts without perceiving that the Apostles were conscious of their limitations and did not rely upon personal infallibility or omniscience. It took Peter a long time to realize that "the middle wall of partition" was broken down between Jew and Gentile. In the great Council at Jerusalem when considering the question of circumcision the whole company of Apostles and disciples present gave earnest attention to the tremendous subject before them. No one of that company, however eminent or earnest, declared

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himself, as Prof. Swainson shows (*Creeds of the Church*), to be in possession of fullness of knowledge miraculously bestowed upon him, and that he was, therefore, ready to decide without deliberation. The Apostolic company first heard the report of Paul and Barnabas how the Gospel had been received in Seleucia, Cyprus, Pamphylia, Lycaonia; then they listened to the judgment of Peter and James on the report, and when they had all agreed they then recognized *in that unanimous agreement* the mind of the Spirit. "It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us." (Acts 15:28.)

The life of the Apostle Paul is another illustration of the gradual progress in the knowledge of Divine Revelation, and this unveiling of the things of the kingdom which the Apostle had experienced in his own case he wished for all the Churches in his care. To the Ephesians he writes, "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto them the spirit of wisdom and revelation, ἀποκαλύψεως, in the knowledge, ἐνεπιγώσεν, clear perception, discernment, internal knowledge of Him—that is, God; that the eyes of their understanding being enlightened they might know the whole sweep of the purpose of God in Christ Jesus," (Ephesians 1:17), all of which means that the Church should grow into fuller knowl-

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edge of Divine truth, through the working of the Holy Ghost dwelling in them as a Church. Where, then, shall we draw the line? When did the Spirit of Illumination leave the Church—which Spirit should, according to our Lord's declaration, be forever the Guide of the Church? He has never left it. The Spirit of God is still with us, and the prayer of the Apostle for the Ephesian Church has power to quicken our hearts and minds as it had to arouse the spiritual energies of the Church at Ephesus.

This truth of the Holy Spirit needs special emphasis in the present time lest our God be to us a God afar off. It needs to become an energizing reality in the consciousness of the Church, lest instead of an intelligent, patient recognition of His blessed Presence we "limit the Holy One of Israel," and, as those who retained not the knowledge of God were by the laws of retribution turned aside to idols, we be forced by the same law to tie ourselves up to definitions of the passing day, and thus forestall any advance in apprehension of Divine truth, or be able to create new apologetics to meet new assaults on Christian Faith. The letter killeth, the spirit giveth life. Forms change. Thought stays. The only unchangeable thing in religion is religion itself.

(2) The Church, then, it would seem, can not by

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Divine authority prohibit free criticism of theological formularies. But does this apply also to the origin, composition, genuineness, and authenticity of the Holy Scriptures? How else did the Church itself originally come to separate genuine Gospels and Epistles from apochryphal writings but by the use of criticism? Why, for example, was the Epistle of Clement, which was read in all the Churches, excluded from the Canon? Why was the Book of Enoch, though quoted by an Apostle, excluded? A critical study of the Old Testament—indeed, a casual comparison of the Books of Kings and Chronicles—reveals sufficient ground for the documentary hypothesis of Higher Criticism, whether all the “assured results” of individual critics with their preconceptions of how history should have been made, are accepted or not. Adam Clarke, the great Commentator, and he is expressly mentioned here because he was the standard authority for three generations of preachers and teachers in interpretation of Scripture, declares that the Twenty-third Psalm is not David’s; he quotes with approval the statement of Prideaux that all the additions and interpolations of the Old Testament were made by Ezra: that the Books of Kings and Samuel are a compilation out of public and private records: that those books were written during or after the Babylonish Captivity, and

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that the author, whoever he was, was not contemporary with the facts he relates. The Fifty-second chapter of Jeremiah, he intimates, is not the work of that Prophet. His comparisons of the Hebrew and Septuagint show his critical spirit, and in many places he goes as far as most modern critics of moderate type would care to go. For example, in his notes on Second Kings 8: 26, he says: "After all, here is a most *manifest contradiction*, that can not be removed by having recourse to *violent modes* of solution. I am satisfied the reading of Second Chronicles 22: 2 is a *mistake*. . . . And may we not say, with Calmet, which is the most dangerous: to acknowledge that *transcribers* have made some mistakes in copying the Sacred Books, or to acknowledge that there are *contradictions* in them and then to have recourse to solutions that can yield no satisfaction to any unprejudiced mind?" Then again, in the important field of Textual Criticism, how shall we be able to decide between variant readings? The Apostle Peter (1 Peter 2: 6, 8) quotes Isaiah 28: 16 and 8: 14, following the Septuagint, but that version differs from the Hebrew. Compare again Acts 7: 42, 43 with the Hebrew and Septuagint of Amos 5: 25-27, and these two with each other. Where is "Sakkut" and "Kewan" of the Hebrew text in either the Septuagint or the Acts?

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In the Septuagint we have "tabernacle of Moloch and the star of your god Raiphan;" in the Acts we read, "The tabernacle of Moloch and the star of the god Rompha." Observe further, in the Hebrew we read, "And I will carry you into *captivity* beyond Damascus." In the Septuagint it reads, "And I will carry *you away* beyond Damascus," but in the Acts we read, "And I will carry you away beyond *Babylon*." In questions of verbal inspiration what will be done with variations in texts? And since correct teaching depends upon correct interpretation, and this upon a true text, how important it is that genuine criticism shall have unfettered freedom!

Then, if we take up the New Testament, perplexing questions immediately confront us here also. What were the sources of Luke's Gospel? Of Matthew's? Is the Fourth Gospel biography or reflection? history or theology? Is Mark's Gospel the base of the First and Third Gospels, or did Matthew borrow from Luke, or Luke from Matthew? Or, did they both use Mark and another source marked "Q" by recent critics? Can we go behind the writers of the Gospels to find another Jesus than the Jesus they give us? Such questions inevitably arise, and it is impossible to intelligently answer them, if they can be

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answered at all, except by the untrammelled exercise of scientific investigation. It would seem, then, that even to the most conservative critical study and interpretation of facts should not only be permitted, but enthusiastically encouraged. "We can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth."

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IX

(3) **THERE** is a difference, however, which it is well to note, between fact and *interpretation* of fact. The universe seems to be a rather conspicuous fact, but explanations of it are quite numerous. Every school of philosophy has its *Weltanschauung*, and it is no discredit to dogmas that they are neither final nor infallible. They are the best thought of the age producing them, an effort to express the inexpressible. Is there any one theory of the Atonement, the Moral, the Governmental, the Substitutional, or other, that all theologians will agree upon? The patient investigators of doctrinal developments, then, must have, in the nature of things, the inalienable right to explore the thought underlying all symbols, to interpret the exact idea intended in the Holy Scriptures, and if his findings are contrary to the present teachings of the Church they are not to be met by proscriptive authority, but by better scholarship. The Church is pledged to facts, but not to theories. Every serious thinker has the right within the Church to examine and explain grounds of belief, providing he does not deny the facts which are the objects of belief. Certainly neither Augustine, nor

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Calvin, nor Wesley had any Divine right to exercise their critical thought, which same right does not belong to every religious thinker and every Critical Scholar of the modern day.

(4) But the right to interpret includes the *right to investigate*. This will not be denied. We must know before we can judge. Not every one is entitled to an opinion on a scientific subject. The value of any one's opinion upon any subject depends upon his knowledge of the subject. It is utterly useless for any one to pretend to interpret the Old Testament as an authority who is unacquainted with the labors of Archæological experts—the British Museum alone has published twenty-six volumes folio of the Cuneiform Inscriptions from Babylonian texts. What will one do as an interpreter who is ignorant of the vast literature resulting from the discoveries of these experts and the application of texts Grecian, Phœnician, Egyptian, Babylonian, to parallel texts in the Bible? And how inadequate must that New Testament scholarship be which is innocent of the rich finds of recent explorers, and the critical works produced by such specialists as Ramsay, Crum, Deissmann, Grenfell, Harris, and others who have thrown new light on the New Testament days! Once helpful works upon which the knowledge of our teachers was grounded are no longer

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of any special value. There is not, perhaps, even a Lexicon of the Greek Testament that is up to date. Even Cremer's great work is lacking here and there in the wider knowledge of recent research. For instance, opening Deissmann (*Light from the Ancient East*, p. 74) almost at random, there is the word *ἀλλογενής* (Luke 17:18), which Cremer and other lexicographers say is confined to Biblical and Patristic Greek, but Deissmann says: "The Roman authorities, however, in placing inscriptions on the marble barriers of the inner courts of the Temple at Jerusalem thought differently of the word, or they would not have employed it in a notice intended to be read by Gentiles, who were thereby threatened with death as the penalty for entering. One of these inscriptions was discovered by Clermont Ganneau in 1871. The stone on which it is cut—a substantial block, on which the eyes of Jesus and Saint Paul may often have rested—is now in the Imperial New Museum at Constantinople. The inscription begins as follows:

<i>Μηθένα ἀλλογενῇ</i>	}	LET NO FOREIGNER, etc.
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Many other words which, according to the Lexicons are to be found only in the Bible, Deissmann shows

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from inscriptions to be quite common. But suppose that a sincere scholar in his studies of this vast literature from Babylonian cylinders, inscriptions, etc., should find parallels to narratives in the Book of Genesis, which are purely the mythical form of primitive thought brooding over the mystery of Creation, that certain Babylonian myths are often mentioned in the Bible; and that even the Messianic Idea, so strongly developed in the prophetic period of Israel's history, reached down to the very roots of these Ancient Myths, indicating that from the beginning there has been in humanity the thought and expectation of a Deliverer—should this investigator be compelled to throw away the results of his investigations and leave this accumulated wealth of material for others outside the Church? Would this not mean that scholarship has no standing in the Church? Would it not be better to meet such conclusions by better scholarship, by showing, if it were possible, that the modern definition of myth is a revival of the method of late pagan philosophers who, ashamed of the character of the gods, interpreted or rather read into the myths whatever was necessary to show that they contained profound truths not discerned by the multitude? That Plato and Cicero and all the Christian Fathers of the Ante-Nicene Period, who had them-

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selves been pagan philosophers or were well versed in mythology, denied these myths contained any truth and denounced them as false and shameful? At any rate, whether such an answer would suffice or not, it is certain that if these ancient myths did embody traditions of a Redeemer revealed in prophecy to the fallen pair in Eden, denying the rights of untrammelled investigation will neither destroy the myth nor rob it of its significance in the religious education of the race. There is a wide difference between endorsing the conclusions of science and hastily incorporating them into the belief of the Church, and refusing to grant liberty of inquiry and presentation of results.

But here again, to keep an even scale it is only simple justice, which Liberal Critics should take note of, to state that much of the distrust and much of the antagonism manifested toward radical Higher Criticism is not so much owing to the fear of results or even prejudice in favor of former views of the Bible, as it is resentment against the spirit and tone of Criticism, the assumptions and half-baked theories of sciolists whose limitations do not prevent them from imposing upon others under the name of science their individual opinions. Even sometimes a famous scholar will invent a definition of science and rule out all

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others who do not agree with his views on the ground that they do not recognize the "results of science." Wellhausen, for instance, says, "About the origin of Deuteronomy there is still less dispute: in all circles where appreciation, (*Anerkennung*—recognition), of scientific results can be looked for at all, it is recognized that it was composed in the same age in which it was discovered." (*Proleg*, p. 9.) That is: All who do not believe this do not appreciate scientific work. But this condemnation would include such scholars as Dillman, who declares it is absurd to suppose that the priestly and ceremonial laws were written during the Exile, which this theory of Wellhausen involves, when there was no worship. When we turn our attention to New Testament critics, especially such as deny the historicity of the Gospel narratives, as for example, the Resurrection of our Lord, the same dogmatic assurance confronts us. Read the arguments of those who propose and defend the Vision Theory, the Swoon Theory, the Telegram Theory, the Apparition Theory, the Mythological Theory, and several other Theories, all of which are pure inventions of ingenious theorizers, mere jugglers, who could just as easily have invented any other theory and made it look just as plausible and, in our opinion, just as absurd, as the theory they did invent, and then seriously consider

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whether "in circles where appreciation of scientific results can be looked for" such products of reckless imagination are entitled to recognition.

The Church is not to be criticised for refusing recognition to such so-called "free thought," since such "thought" is not free any more than prejudice is free. One may fill bulky volumes with learned notes, and may give other evidence of being widely read, and yet possess very poor judgment. Sir William M. Ramsay, in the preface of his destructive review (*The First Christian Century*) of Dr. Moffat's *Introduction to the Literature of the New Testament*, says: "As a German classical scholar remarked . . . some years ago, the methods of Biblical Criticism are coming to be a jest among philologists. This book is a protest in the name of history and of literature against the revival of a method in Criticism which I had supposed to be antiquated and discredited." Even Professor Harnack is compelled to utter emphatic protest and even ridicule against reckless treatment of serious subjects. "Men soar away," he says, "into sublime discussions concerning the meaning of the 'kingdom of God,' 'the Son of Man,' 'Messiahship,' etc., and occupy themselves with investigations into the 'history of religion,' and with problems of genuineness, in the light of 'Higher Criticism' (as

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if the critics were inspired with absolute knowledge of historical matters from some secret source), while the 'lower' problems, whose treatment involves real scavenger's labor in which one is almost choked with dust, are passed by on the other side. Or when this is not the case, the investigation is still never carried far enough; it breaks off prematurely, and the critic rests satisfied with work only half done." Harnack then goes on to ridicule with righteous indignation those who thoroughly investigate nothing, but accept anything. "They are like reeds swaying with the blasts of the most extreme and mutually exclusive hypotheses, and find everything in this connection which is offered them 'very worthy of consideration' . . . If, therefore, one only keeps hold of all the reins, naturally with a loose hand, one is shielded from the reproach of not being up to date, and this is more important by far than knowledge of the facts themselves, which indeed do not so much concern us, seeing that in this Twentieth Century we must of course wean ourselves from a contemptible dependence upon history in matters of religion." (*The Sayings of Jesus*, Introduction, XII.)

If facts are facts, the Church has everything to gain from investigation and nothing to lose. For a hundred years the most searching criticism has been

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brought to bear on the historicity of the New Testament, and with what results? This, that more vividly real than ever before the Lord Christ of the Gospels stands before us as if time and space had been pushed aside and He again is seen as He was seen by His disciples, and is apprehended more clearly in all the glory of His mission as the Redeemer of men and Creator of the kingdom of God than He was seen or understood by the Church in any previous age. It should also be understood that this searching criticism has discovered no material fact which was not generally known to the Church. Many New Testament questions which are raised to-day were discussed in the Early Church, and we may rest assured that the Christians of the Apostolic days had very much more knowledge—intimate, personal knowledge—of the facts in our Lord's life than appears in the Gospels. Forty Gospels could have been written as well as four. Not every detail in that Life could be given, as the Apostle John suggests. But a Priscilla coming from the Christian community in Rome could teach an Apollos "the way of the Lord more perfectly" before any Gospel had been written. It is interesting to note also that to that same community the Apostle Paul in his Epistle sends his greetings and says, "Salute Rufus." But who was Rufus? Evidently he was well known among

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the Christians in Rome. Now Mark, it is said, wrote his Gospel in Rome. But in that Gospel (15, 2) he mentions a "Rufus" and an "Alexander" as if they were well known to the Church in Rome, since he seems to think that the mere mention of their names is all that is necessary. "And they compel one Simon, a Cyrenian who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear His cross." There is every reason to believe that this is the same Rufus. But what detailed personal information could Rufus impart to the Church in Rome concerning the crucifixion and the mighty events of those days which are not at all written in the Gospels! "*Christ was crucified! My father carried His cross!*"

But suppose that further investigation will show that John did not write the Fourth Gospel; would such a discovery invalidate the facts recorded in that Gospel? Is it absolutely necessary that John the Apostle and not John the Presbyter should have written it? If, then, no sane man will rest his faith in the record of Jesus on the supposition that John wrote the record, or that he must have written it, neither will he risk his soul on the belief that Moses wrote the Pentateuch as it is, or that there was only one Isaiah, or that the Book of Daniel was not a product of the Maccabean age. It is a fine thing to distinguish between the

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kernel and the husk, the essential and the non-essential. What, for example, has the Mosaic Authorship of Deuteronomy in its present form to do with the crucifixion and the resurrection of our Lord? Grant that John was not the author of the Fourth Gospel—which we think he was, notwithstanding the long-drawn controversy to the contrary—grant that even the Synoptic Gospels are of unknown authorship, still did not all four Gospels originate in the Church, were known by the Church, indorsed by the Church, and preserved by the Church to this day? And was not the Church out of which the Gospels came, out of which this entire New Testament came, composed of witnesses of Jesus and the disciples of those who were His witnesses? Is it not a fact that even in 100 A. D. there were Christians in the Church at Corinth who were members there during Paul's lifetime. Do we not know from Clemens Romanus' Letter to the Church at Corinth that some Presbyters who were appointed by Paul himself or by other Apostles were yet living in the Church there in A. D. 96? Is there any scholar with a reputation to lose who will deny these facts? Were those ministers of the Church at Corinth ignorant of the New Testament writings and of their origin? How, then, could Clement write to them, "Take up the Epistle of the blessed Paul the Apostle?"

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Suppose further, and beyond this we need not go, that criticism should show beyond reasonable doubt that the Bible in every word is not inerrant or infallible, as differences in duplicate statements in the opinion of critics seem to indicate, would such a conclusion affect in any degree the infallible truth of God which is contained in the Bible and nowhere else relating to the nature and the destiny of man, his sin, his redemption, his eternal joy in harmony with God? Christ and His Apostles spoke the words of eternal life, as Moses and the Prophets assert the morals of Jehovah, and shall we deny freedom of inquiry and Christian encouragement to those who affirm that it is this word that is infallible; that it is this word that is Revelation, and not mere statistics of armies or of tribes of people which do not touch at all the moral life of humanity? Nothing can destroy facts. The historicity of the facts of Revelation is not affected in any conceivable degree by rigid and elaborated doctrines of infallibility or verbal inspiration. No truth of God depends upon its form of expression. The spiritual test of any truth is its vitality. The Word of God is a Living Word. It is infallible. It is validated in history and personal experience by the response it awakens in the soul of man.

(5) But if one is to investigate he must be *free to*

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investigate. Among the questions put to candidates for Holy Orders is this: "Will you be diligent in prayers and in reading of the Holy Scriptures and in such studies as help to the knowledge of the same, laying aside the study of the world and the flesh?" Candidates are exhorted "to consider how studious ye ought to be in reading and learning the Scriptures," "to draw all your cares and studies this way," "that by daily reading and weighing of the Scriptures ye may wax riper and stronger in your ministry." The ministerial candidate is thus under solemn obligation to perform this duty. But is not that a questionable morality which encourages critical study of the Holy Scriptures, or of Church history, with the understanding that that only shall be discovered which we want discovered? that conclusion only is to be reached which we have already determined shall be reached? Nothing is more detrimental to truth than fear for the truth. No one is afraid that the sky will fall. Confidence in God's Word should be just as real, for it argues a secret fear that unbelief after all may destroy some foundation stone when we attempt to restrict investigation of all the facts which are involved in Divine Revelation. The Lord Jesus does not seem to have been afraid of truth, else He would never have revealed it. He never would have invited His antagon-

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onists to "search the Scriptures." His holy Apostles were not afraid of the truth, else they never would have preached it. They would not have commanded those who "searched the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so." What they were afraid of, and what all sincere lovers of Divine truth are ever afraid of, is the distortion of truth, the *suppression* of truth. That there is ground for such fear is very evident when in the study of Comparative Religion Christianity is presented by those who never experienced personal religion in the Christian sense, as only one of the many religions of earthly origin; when in experimental psychology religion is traced to nervous activity or physiological functioning; when the Incarnation, the Atonement, and Regeneration are read in a Christian sense into the sacred Books, legends, and myths of Ethnic Faiths. What freedom of thought is that which will tolerate with intellectual sympathy the aberrations of a Cheyne, or a Pfeiderer, discoursing solemnly under the ægis of scientific theology on the relations existing between the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the solar myths of Marduk, Adonis, or Osiris, or explaining the correspondences between the Lord's Supper and Mithra worship, or the Eleusinian Mysteries? Such "science," such "scholarship" bears about the same relation to that genuine scholarship which is conscious

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of its responsibility for the moral effect of its conclusions as reckless newspaper Jingoism does to genuine statesmanship. Certainly no body of thinkers who take religion seriously can expect to advance the kingdom of God by such aberration of so-called scholarship. One might as well attempt to set the world on fire with a lightning-bug.

Freedom in investigation is the inalienable right of every serious-minded scholar. This right may not be restricted by an arbitrary exercise of ecclesiastical authority; but, on the other hand, the Church is under no obligation to tolerate within its membership that kind of investigation the avowed purpose of which is to destroy rather than to build. Truth is more valuable than freedom. An arbitrary exercise of ecclesiastical power which suppresses that freedom of thought which does not deny the essential truths of religion, nor by any logical inference undermines these truths, is itself destructive to the well-being of the Church. The value of the individual to the social organism is his contribution to its welfare. To the extent, then, that the individual is interfered with and his freedom of action is curtailed, to that extent the organism loses and the individual himself fails to reach his highest development, which is the reason why he becomes a member of the Social Organism at all. In like manner the

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value of the individual member to the Church is his contribution to its health and efficiency of his spiritual experience, his consecration of talents, social, intellectual, administrative—his ability to aid the Church in its self-development and the extension of its influence. But if an arbitrary exercise of power, incited by the clamor of ignorance or the alarm of Conservatism, mistaking petrified principles for living truth, should suppress his activities and prohibit his researches in fields dreaded or unknown to those who happen to "sit in Moses' seat," the Church becomes impoverished through the loss of those very gifts which would enable it to deepen its own life, which would enrich its own thought, and which would extend its frontier in all realms of knowledge for the furtherance of the kingdom of God. That Church must forever be the strongest in which, its spirituality being taken for granted, there is combined the most effective authority on the part of the Church and the largest freedom on the part of the member.

Let it never be forgotten that the Church which encourages free inquiry the least and taxes faith the most becomes itself the best promoter of infidelity. No Church is more jealous of its authority; none more swift and vigorous in the use of it; none more conservative in its theology; none making so great and

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ever-increasing demands on the faith of its people, and none more determined and persistent in its resistance to every form of modern progress, than the Latin Church. And yet there is no Church out of which in all lands there have arisen more Freethinkers and Infidels and against which in the circles of Science and Culture there has arisen so great a revolt against its teachings, traditions, and dogmas. In Italy, among the Modernists, such eminent men as Abbé Romolo Murri and Minnochi; in France, Abbé Loisy, M. Le Roy, Père Laberthonniere, Battifol, Houtin; in England, the late Jesuit Father Tyrrell; in Germany, Professor Schnitzer, Hugo Koch, the late Doctor Schell of the University of Wurzburg, all of whom represent large following, not to mention men of science and letters, testify to the inutility of mere authority when the rights of free inquiry are sacrificed on the altar of ultra-Conservatism. The individual has his rights, his natural rights, which the Church did not give him and which it can not take away. Among these is the right to discover the truth of things, to discern between that which is true and that which is false. It is quite true the Church may expel him for insisting upon such rights, and itself become the heretic and the greater loser, but there is no institution known among men in which such rights should be more

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stoutly defended than in the Church itself, because no institution is so thoroughly committed to the knowledge, the defense, and the preaching of the truth as is the Church of God. And is there any field of inquiry in which one has so much right to pursue critical investigation as in the Word of God? But what becomes of his freedom if the arbitrary exercise of ecclesiastical authority, jealous of traditional interpretation, puts a finish to his labors? And who or what can compensate for the loss of sacred learning in the Church when the critic, the historian, and the philosopher are no longer at liberty to go contrary to received opinions, should their investigations result in that, but must pursue their labors in opposition to the Church and thus expose its weakness in the error of its teaching? For three hundred years the seventh verse of the First Epistle of John has stood in our Authorized Bible and has done much service as a proof text for the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity. It is now known to be spurious. The verse is not found in any of the one hundred and eighty manuscripts of the Epistle, nor was it quoted by any of the Greek Fathers in the Arian Controversy, in which it certainly would have been used. But what of the effect of the injudicious zeal of those who, stoutly contending for its genuineness, endeavored to set aside the results of

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honest criticism? The effect was injurious to the doctrine as stated in the Athanasian Creed. Who does not know of the marvelous effect upon European history and the growth of the Papacy as an Imperial Power, of the so-called Donation of Constantine in the forgeries known as the False Decretals? Then again, for nearly a thousand years the theology of the Roman Church (that is, of all Europe) was profoundly influenced by the writings of Dionysius, St. Paul's convert at Athens, and even so late as 1897 the authority of these writings was defended by members of the Church of England. Thanks to the labors of critics over long periods, the Areopagite writings are now known to be the work of a Greek Bishop, who borrowed the whole of them from a heathen philosopher, Proclus, about 490 A. D. No Church can safely suppress the free investigations of scholars. On the contrary, by encouraging the boldest research it can separate itself by anticipation from whatever may be found to be false, and thus confirm the faith of men in those things which it declares to be true.

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X

Now, gathering up the threads of all that has been said, what is the conclusion of the whole matter? In this brief survey we have seen that the principle of free inquiry was recognized by our Lord and His Apostles and by the Early Church. That the Church that preaches the Gospel, and would keep pace with the progress of human knowledge while defending the undoubted truth of the Gospel, must also acknowledge the right of free inquiry within the Church. These facts being before us, there is, it would seem, no other conclusion which would be just to all the facts in the case than this: **THE SPIRIT OF DENIAL IS THE LIMITATION OF FREEDOM.** He who denies the essential truths of the Gospel can have no rational expectation of indorsement from a Church set for the propagation of that Gospel, for that Church has the same right to reject him as he claims to question its teachings. He who in the fear of God and with a sincere desire to enrich the Church with the results of patient thought would pursue scientific studies should have no fear of the arbitrary exercise of authority chilling his enthusiasm or of repudiating his conclusions. A

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sincere man face to face with Truth can do no other than acknowledge the supreme authority of Truth and, if condemned by the Church of To-day, appeal in all humility to the Church of To-morrow.

Perhaps no better illustration of the principles and the meaning of this and of all that has been said here can be found in Church history than the principles and practice of Wesley. With Wesley the test of orthodoxy was the Cross. All dogmas, all creeds, formularies, systems, or schools of theologic thought were tested not from the standpoint of history however ancient, nor from the standpoint of ecclesiastical authority however venerable, but from the point of the Cross experienced in the soul and witnessed there by the Holy Spirit. There, in the soul of man, Wesley taught, the Spirit of the living God creates a conviction that the Son of God has power to forgive and put away sin. Whatever, therefore, is opposed to this fundamental truth is contrary to the meaning of God, for such is the purpose of the Atonement of the Son of God, redemption from sin and holiness unto eternal life and glory. Of what value, then, were creeds and formularies, theories of salvation, philosophies of religion, if they did not minister to this conviction, confirm it, or even square with it? This inborn conviction, however, is not, in the thought of Wesley,

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independent of authority in itself. It is capable of verification, but by Scripture and reason. It can not, of course, determine historical events, dates of documents, scientific questions. It can determine nothing outside of itself, but it does afford a starting-point from which the investigation can proceed to test the value of dogma, and to discern between truth and error in the multiplicity of opinions which are a standing reproach to Christian men, an indictment of their spirit, their intelligence or their judgment, a stumbling-block to faith and a barrier to the progress of Christianity.

Wesley applied this principle, this religious spirit in his own life as a preacher of the doctrines which he announced—doctrines new to that period in the Church of England, but not new to the Apostolic Church, nor to the Fathers of the Ante-Nicene Church, nor to the Holy Scriptures. At a Conference which met in London, June 25, 1774, he met with his assistants, all clergymen of the Church of England, "to consider, (1) What to teach; (2), How to teach; (3), What to do; *i. e.*, to regulate our doctrine, discipline, and practice." The principles which were to regulate their considerations—principles if applied by radical critics of the present day in their investigations might save Biblical Criticism from

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"many a blunder and foolish notion"—were "that all things be considered as in the immediate presence of God: that we may meet with a single eye, and as little children who have everything to learn; that every point which is proposed may be examined to the foundation; that every person may speak freely whatever is in his heart; and that every question which may arise should be thoroughly debated and settled."

Question: "Need we be fearful of doing this? What are we afraid of? Of our overturning our first principles? If they are false, the sooner they are overturned the better. If they are true they will bear the strictest examination. Let us all pray for a willingness to receive light, to know of every doctrine whether it be of God."

Could any searcher for truth be more sincere, more scientifically thoroughgoing in probing every question to its "foundation," more willing to surrender previously formed judgments, or more open to conviction resulting from wider knowledge? Methodism should ever be grateful to a superintending Providence that its Founder under God was of such intellectual caliber, of such broad scholarship, and of such spiritual devotion to Divine truth for truth's sake. Here is scientific method, liberty of thought, freedom of inquiry, and a humble "willingness to receive light, to know

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every doctrine whether it be of God," which suggests ideal attitudes and conditions of all true scholarship, and against which no Church can rightly or safely exercise restraining power.

In these Conferences, during which for three years every essential doctrine was discussed on the principles agreed upon at the first, such doctrines as Repentance, Justifying Faith, Justification, the Witness of the Spirit, there must necessarily have been some diversity of judgments, but all these were settled on the basis of other principles also presented by Wesley at the first Conference bearing on the subject of Authority.

Question: "How far does each of us agree to submit to the judgment of the majority?"

Answer: "In speculative things each can only submit so far as his judgment shall be convinced. In every practical point each will submit so far as he can without wounding his conscience."

Question: "Can a Christian submit any further than this to any number of men on earth?"

Answer: "It is undeniable he can not: either Council, Bishop, or Convocation. And this is that grand principle of private judgment on which all the Reformers proceeded. 'Every man must judge for himself; because every man must give an account of himself to God.'"

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How consistently Wesley practiced these principles in one of the most serious events of his life may be seen in his thoroughly critical work on the Revision of the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England for use by the Methodists in North America, then about to be organized into a Church separate from the jurisdiction of the Church of England. In this Revision he exercised great liberty of thought in omitting from the Formularies of the National Church, to which he was devotedly attached, such articles as:

“The Descent into Hell; The Three Creeds; Of Works Before Justification; Of Christ Alone Without Sin; Of Predestination and Election; Of Obtaining Salvation Only by the Name of Christ; Of the Authority of the General Councils; Of Ministering in the Congregation; Of the Unworthiness of Ministers Which Hinders Not the Effect of the Sacrament; Of the Wicked Which Eat Not the Body of Christ in the Use of the Lord’s Supper; Of Excommunicate Persons, How They Are to be Avoided; Of the Homilies; Of the Consecration of Bishops and Ministers; Of the Civil Magistrates.”

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In several of the Articles which he did not retain he made such omissions as in his judgment were necessary to reconcile the Article with his Arminian theology, or were unnecessary in a Christian Church. Can we fully understand the broad conceptions of Christianity implied in such a revision of the Articles of the Church of England? That was a daring intellect which undertook such responsibility. If we would at all appreciate the work of Wesley in this respect we must study the theological significance of the Articles he struck out, their relation to the historical position of the Church of England in the Reformation, their relation to the theological thought of his time, their place in the creeds of Christendom, in the faith of the people, and all this subject to the criticism and attack of theologians and churchmen.

But it was not only in doctrinal theology that Wesley exercised his Christian freedom. Not since the violation of the Canonical Laws of Christendom by English Reformers in the Consecration of Parker to the Archbishopal See of Canterbury was there a bolder act by a clergyman of the Church of England than the consecration by Wesley of Doctor Coke, and thereby the founding by him of an Episcopal form of government for the Methodists in North America. It was not an ill-considered act, nor was it one in line

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with his early education, Church training, or the prejudices which High Church views of the differences between the established Church and Dissenters generate. Wesley's ordination of the presbyter Coke to the Episcopacy was, as all exercise of religious freedom should be, the result of continuous investigation and prayerful consideration. In his letter dated Bristol, September 10, 1784, giving reasons for this momentous act, he says: "Lord King's Account of the Primitive Church convinced me, many years ago, that Bishops and Presbyters are the same order and consequently have the same right to ordain. For many years I have been importuned from time to time to exercise this right, by ordaining part of our traveling preachers. But I have still refused not only for peace' sake, but because I was determined, as little as possible, to violate the established order of the National Church to which I belonged. But the case is widely different between England and North America. Here there are Bishops who have a legal jurisdiction. In America there are none, and but few parish ministers; so that for some hundred miles together there is none either to baptize or to administer the Lord's Supper. Here, therefore, my scruples are at an end; and I conceive myself at full liberty, as I violate no order and in-

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vade no man's rights, by appointing and sending laborers into the harvest."

A more reasonable declaration of personal liberty in the Gospel was never written. What recognition of established order is here! What self-restraint! What respect for law, for the rights of others! What sensitive regard for the peace of the Church! Wesley is no heresiarch declaiming against ecclesiastical authority and loudly asserting his own infallibility. "If any one will point out," he writes, "a more rational and Scriptural way of feeding and guiding those poor sheep in the wilderness I will gladly embrace it." Wesley as a Liberal may well be the model for all who declare for liberty of thought in the Christian Church. "The Methodists alone do not insist on your holding this or that opinion. . . . I do not know any other religious society, either ancient or modern, wherein such liberty of conscience is allowed, or has been allowed since the age of the Apostles. . . . I have no more right to object to a man for holding a different opinion from me, than I have to differ with a man because he wears a wig and I wear my own hair; but if he takes his wig off, and begins to shake the powder about my eyes, I shall consider it my duty to get quit of him as soon as possible." In the Meth-

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odist Episcopal Church, as a result of his toleration, no member can be disciplined for holding any opinion, but only for sowing dissensions by inveighing against its doctrines and Discipline. The law of the Church takes cognizance not of what a man thinks, but of what he does. It should not be inferred from all this, however, that Wesley was indifferent to creeds or formulas of Christian doctrine. He was no Latitudinarian. He was too well balanced for that. While his tolerance in opinions which were purely speculative was sententiously expressed in the saying, "We think and let think," no man of his time or of any time more stoutly maintained the fundamental doctrines of evangelical Christianity. So strict was he in his orthodoxy that in 1763 the doctrinal standards which Wesley had compiled were inserted in the Trust Deed for all Chapels of the Wesleyan Societies. Under this Deed, issued by Court of Chancery, the trustees "Shall permit John Wesley and such persons as he shall from time to time appoint, and at all times during his natural life, and *no other persons*, to have and enjoy the free use and benefit of the said premises, and the said John Wesley and such other persons as he appoints may therein preach and expound God's Holy Word. Provided always that the said persons preach no other doctrine than is contained in Mr. Wesley's Notes upon

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the New Testament, and four Volumes of his Sermons."

These Standards of Doctrine, which are also standard of authority in the Methodist Episcopal Church, are not intended, however, and never were intended to be prohibitive of doctrinal development or of scientific research. In the *Notes to the New Testament* Wesley departed from the Authorized Version whenever he deemed it necessary, as for example, John 6:64, Acts 4:27, Jude 4, 1 Peter 1:19, 20, Revelation 22:19. It can not be, therefore, that he intended nor has the Church ever supposed that Exegetical Scholarship or Textual Criticism should be confined forever to his particular translations of the Greek text, or the particular text he used. These Standards are not prohibitions, they are safeguards. The Atonement, Faith, Repentance, the New Birth, the Witness of the Spirit, are not to be denied nor explained away, but apart from this full liberty is still the privilege of all students of the Word who would pursue their labors in scientific or theological investigation.

Methodism is no mere sect. It is not the product of human ambition seeking the highest places and flung down into isolation from all that has gone before it; it is not the fruit of heresy assailing the Historic Faith of the Universal Church; it is not the result

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of narrow prejudice, sectional passions running riot among people ignorant of the history, the theology, and the devotion of the centuries. It is one in faith, economy, and piety with the Church of the Ages. Midway between the Anglican and other Protestant Churches it stands as a revival of Primitive Christianity, that is, of the Early Church, the Church of the Apostolic Fathers. Its doctrines do not run back to the Reformation and *stop* there as if originated there by the divisive contentions of that time; nor is its distinctive theological heritage traceable, as an eminent English scholar affirmed at the Ecumenical Conference at Toronto, to Luther, Calvin, and Augustine, but through the great Divines of the Church of England, Bishops Bull, Andrewes, Laud, Jewel, and the Cambridge Platonists to the Churches of Gaul and the Greek Fathers, who knew nothing of the Augustinian doctrines of Particular Redemption, Election, Foreordination, Predestination. The common assumption that because Wesley felt his heart "strangely warmed" while listening to Luther's Preface to his Commentary on Galatians, which was read by Peter Böhler at a meeting in Aldersgate Street, he is therefore doctrinally indebted to Luther is a great mistake. In 1733, three years before he ever met Böhler, he preached at Saint Mary's, Oxford, a sermon which

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contains every distinctive doctrine he preached in later years. Thirty years after, in 1765, referring to this same sermon, he writes, "This sermon contained all that I now teach concerning salvation from all sin, and loving God with our undivided heart." Wesley always leaned to the Early Church, to the teachings of the Apostolic Fathers, whose lives he published, and their successors in the Ante-Nicene period. It is to the Greek Fathers that Wesley appeals in defense of the distinctive doctrines he proclaimed, spiritual regeneration, and the witness of the Spirit. And when he would draw up the General Rules for the conduct of the Societies still within the Church of England, or delineate their spiritual aims, it is to the writings of the Greek Fathers, to Clemens Alexandrinus, he has recourse. "Five or six-and-thirty years ago," he says, "I much admired the character of a perfect Christian drawn by Clemens Alexandrinus. Five or six-and-twenty years ago a thought came into my mind of drawing such a character myself, only in a more Scriptural manner, and mostly in the very words of Scripture: this I entitled 'The Character of a Methodist.'" The *Pædagogus* and the *Stromata* of Clemens of Alexandria are the true basis of the General Rules which are now embodied in the Constitution of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Methodism, therefore,

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is not, either in its government or doctrines, a thing of yesterday. In its affinities, its teachings and worship, using in its Ritual the Liturgy of the Church of England, modified from the ancient Liturgies of England and Gaul, which Liturgies themselves came down from the Greek Churches of Asia Minor, it is in all its sympathies one with Historic Christianity. At its very beginnings it determined to make the Bible as interpreted by the Church of England and the *Primitive Church* its sole Rule of Faith and practice; and in his Letters of Episcopal Orders delivered to Doctor Coke for the Societies in America which were to be organized into an Episcopal Church, he declared those Societies to be "at liberty to follow the Scriptures *and the Primitive Church.*" The freedom of the Church in the morning of its career is the heritage of Methodism.

Influenced consciously or unconsciously by these leanings and affinities, the notable characteristic of Methodism is that while faithful to the essential truths of the Gospel, as we have seen, it is in its ecclesiastical polity and range of teaching among the most comprehensive Churches of Christendom. It is riveted to nothing but the vital facts of Redemption. Its government is elastic, adapting the Church to the needs of the changing times. Its worship is cast in no un-

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changeable molds, but is conformable to the spiritual needs of the people, with due regard to the unity of the Church in its solemn ministrations. It can not be, therefore, that narrow prejudices, provincial notions, and an unworthy fear for the truth of God as proclaimed by the Fathers, and which is the joy of all who love the Lord Jesus in sincerity should "crib, cabin, and confine" the freedom of scientific research, the inalienable right to investigate in all fields of philosophy, history, archæology, and the ever-expanding domain of Biblical Study. The world is the field of the Church. Nothing human or divine is alien to the Church. Art, Literature, and Science should have their home, their inspiration in the Church, and within its comprehensive fold there should be room for all who, however right or wrong their views may be, nevertheless stand for the eternal truths of the Revelation of God to men. We can not all see alike. It would be the death of religion if we did. We now see through a glass darkly, but some bright day in the clear vision of our God we shall see and know even as also we are known. Till that day dawns it would be well in keeping with the history and teachings of the Church to remember the words of the great Augustine—"In Essentials, Unity; in Non-Essentials, Liberty; in All Things, CHARITY."