

THE PRESBYTERIAN AND REFORMED REVIEW

No. 10—April, 1892.

I.

RECENT DOGMATIC THOUGHT IN THE NETHERLANDS.*

THE Dutch theology of the nineteenth century has been discussed more than once by both foreign and native writers. The following is a list of the more important treatises on the subject: CHR. SEPP, *Proeve eener pragmatische geschiedenis der Theologie in Nederland van 1787 tot 1858*, 3d ed., Leiden, 1859; D. CHANTEPIE DE LA SAUSSAYE, *La crise religieuse en Hollande*, Leyde, 1860; Dr. G. J. VOS, *Groen van Prinsterer en zijn tijd 1800–1857*, Dordrecht, 1886; *Idem.*, *Groen van Prinsterer en zijn tijd, 1857–1876*, Dordrecht, 1891; Dr. J. H. GUNNING, J.Hz., *Het Protestantsche Nederland onzer dagen*, Groningen, 1889; Dr. J. A. GERTH VAN WYCK, art. "Holland," in Herzog und Plitt, *Realenc. für Prot. Theol. u. Kirche*, vi, s. 254–266; JOHANNES GLOËL, *Hollands Kirchliches Leben*, Württemberg (1885); Dr. ADOLPH ZAHN, *Abriss einer Geschichte der Evangelischen Kirche auf dem Europ. Festlande im 19ten Jahrhundert*, 2te Aufl., Stuttgart, 1888, etc. As secondary sources of information all these and other works may render excellent service, but the works of the representative theologians themselves will alone give an insight into the principles and nature of the successive tendencies.

Dutch theology during the present century has been subject to various influences. Its character has been molded in turn not only by Calvinism, which has always continued to live among the

* [Our readers are indebted for the translation of Dr. Bavinck's paper to Prof. G. Vos, Ph.D., of Grand Rapids, Mich.—EDITORS.]

III.

APOSTOLIC ORIGIN OR SANCTION, THE ULTIMATE TEST OF CANONICITY.

THE validity of this test has of late been rudely challenged. Not only so, but some who would be prepared to admit its validity in a general way seem disposed to question its exclusive validity, and its practical applicability. It will be the specific object of this paper to offer some remarks upon Apostolic Origin or Sanction as an *exclusive test* of Canonicity. The statement and exposition of our position is not only naturally the first, but, in some respects, it is also the most important part of our task. For if we can succeed in getting distinctly before the reader's mind the position to be maintained, many of the objections urged against it will at once be seen to be imaginary.

I. The first point claiming our attention in this discussion is the Nature and Origin of Canonicity.

There are those who hold that the principle upon which the early Church determined the right of a book to a place in the Canon was fitness to edify. Of this fitness experience was the test, and the Church the judge. Without admitting the correctness of this statement we ask attention to what it involves. It implies that Canonicity, like the Presidency, with its accompanying authority, is conferred by suffrage. Hence those who hold this view will be found disposed to confound Canonicity with influence tending to edify, plus personal or ecclesiastical sanction. This leads them again to maintain that Canonicity is in some way or other correlated to the conviction that a certain writing does exert an edifying influence—so correlated that it cannot exist apart from such conviction. But, aware of the truth of the proverb, *quot homines tot sententiæ*, those who hold this view frequently ground the conviction as to the edifying influence of the writing upon the testimony of the Holy Spirit in the heart, thus apparently hoping to secure unity for their Rule of Faith and Life. Here they seem to fancy that they have at last reached solid ground. We cannot stop to comment upon this theory. It looks like an attempt to introduce the favorite dogma of the American demagogue, viz., that all government rests upon the consent of the governed—into the sphere of

religion. And this calls to mind the words of the Psalmist: "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh, the Lord shall have them in derision." It seems to indicate that all attempts to get rid of a rational supernaturalism in religion are likely to end in embracing an irrational supernaturalism—the most serious feature of which is not its irrationality, but its tendency to beget agnosticism, and ultimately atheism.

Now the view we are attempting to expound stands in marked contrast to all this. Instead of regarding Canonicity as an active influence proceeding from the possession by a writing of peculiar properties, or as a function exercised by these writings as the result of personal or ecclesiastical suffrage, or as a curious complex of all three, the influence, the conviction, and the function—we say, instead of looking upon Canonicity in any such light as this, it views it as a simple, original quality of certain writings, viz., *authoritativeness*. It regards this quality as being as truly simple and original as is spirituality, or "edifyingness," or any other. Moreover, it is an inherent and permanent quality. It is not conferred by man; not even by the apostles. It is not conferred by any testimony which the Holy Spirit may bear to them. It is stamped upon them by God. It belongs to them by divine right, and not by mere suffrage. It does not wait upon conviction any more than does the right of Christ to reign. Christ was as truly King when he hung upon the cross, crowned only with thorns, as He is to-day seated at the right hand of His Father, or as He will be in the day when to Him every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that He is Lord to the glory of God the Father. So the Scriptures are a *Rule*, and their authoritativeness remains, despite all the commotions of the passion-swept sea of opinion. They are as truly a Rule for those who reject them as for those who accept them.

This point, obvious as it will appear to many, is nevertheless of prime importance. In proportion as we grasp it firmly will we be in a position to apprehend the real issue joined when the question of the test of the Canonicity of a writing is raised. The question is not, How may the conviction of Canonicity be produced? Nor, What is necessary to give practical efficiency to the Canon? Nor, What is the essence of Canonicity? But the question is simply and solely, What conditions must hold in regard to a writing to ground not *the conviction* that it possesses this quality, but *the possession of it*. The answer is: In order to the possession of this quality a writing must have proceeded from some authorized exponent of the divine authority, and expounder of the divine will. This must be so: (1) because nothing can be a Rule that is not an expression of the divine will; otherwise our faith would "stand

in the wisdom of man;" and (2) because, if even the divine will is to be expressed through a human writing, there must be a human author. Hence, the ultimate and only valid test of the possession of such authority is the possession of such authorship. And, let it be carefully noted that this is true, however our conviction of the Canonicity of a writing may have been produced, whether by the direct testimony of the Holy Spirit or otherwise. For it is manifest that the testimony of the Holy Spirit is to the *fact, merely* to the *fact*, of the possession of authoritativeness by a writing. But we are seeking the ground upon which this fact itself rests. And there is but one ground upon which it can rest. For, if the question be asked, Why does the Holy Spirit bear this testimony? the only answer must be, Because this writing proceeded from an authorized exponent of the divine authority and expounder of the divine will. If not, let some one frame another answer. The case stands thus: for the validity of the claims of a writing to Canonicity, the test is *authorship*; for the validity of the claim to be the author of such a writing, the test is *miracles*. The two are indissolubly connected—yet each test is distinct. The validity of this test of Canonicity rests upon the legal maxim, *facit per alium facit per se*. Its exclusive validity, upon the impossibility of devising another that does not involve it and cannot be resolved into it.

II. Resting upon these views as to the nature and origin of Canonicity, the theory we are expounding maintains that apostolic origin or sanction is the exclusive test of the possession of this quality.

Let us notice first the exact contents and limitations of this statement, and then the grounds for it. It is not maintained that all the writings of the apostles were characterized by Canonicity. Nor is it said that writings from no other source possess this quality. It is only said that the apostolic writings of apostles, or the writings of others which had received apostolic sanction, possessed it. We use the adjective "apostolic" in its strict technical sense, as expressing the official action of the apostles. The grounds for this position are two. 1. The apostles were the authorized exponents of the divine authority, and expounders of the divine will. 2. They were *quoad* the matter in hand, the *only* authorized exponents of the divine authority, and expounders of the divine will.

Pardon us, if we rehearse as briefly as we can the proof of our first proposition. Much depends upon feeling the full force of all that it involves. The claim just made for the apostles then rests: 1. Upon their official character and position. In estimating these we must remember, (a) that their number was limited; (b) that they were appointed directly by Christ; (c) that their relations to the Church, their functions, and their authority were absolutely unique;

(d) that they were without associates or successors. All of which needs no argument with Presbyterians. 2. The claim made for them is further established by the fact that they acted and spoke under the special guidance of the Holy Spirit, and in terms that would have been little short of blasphemy upon any other supposition than the justice of the claim we have made. What minister of to-day dare use language like that of Peter to Ananias, or of Paul to the Galatians, or of the Council of Jerusalem? It would not only imply intolerable arrogance, but would be impious in any other than a specially authorized agent of the Godhead. 3. The ultimate foundation of this claim is the miracles wrought by them. No man could have done their works except God were with him. This language may grieve the naturalism of the nineteenth century; even so, it must grieve, so far as we are concerned, until it comes to a sounder mind. This much is certain, that here the apostles were content to rest their claims; and the theory which we seek to unfold is content to do the same. In a word, it seems as if Christ in reorganizing His Church under the New Dispensation appointed a committee of her members, authorized them to act as His agents, vested them with His authority, and instructed them to draw up a constitution for His Church. This committee performed its work under the constant and immediate presidency of the Holy Ghost. Its deliverances were ratified and authenticated to the Church by having attached to them the seal of the Godhead in the shape of miracles.

Who will dare affirm that to prove that a writing was thus originated and authenticated is not a valid test of its Canonicity?

It may be said that the validity of apostolic origin or sanction as a test of Canonicity is granted, but that its *exclusive* validity is challenged. If so, it must be on the ground that there were other authorized exponents of the divine authority and expounders of the divine will. For as we have seen such authorship is a *sine qua non* to the Canonicity of a writing. But if there were such, who were they? When and where did they live? What evidence did they adduce in support of such high pretensions? Until these questions are satisfactorily answered our proposition that the apostles were the only authorized exponents of the divine authority and expounders of the divine will stands. But it may be said that as a matter of fact the Holy Spirit testifies to the Canonicity of certain writings the apostolic origin or authorization of which cannot be established by satisfactory evidence. This statement contains an implication and raises a question, both of which merit careful consideration. The implication is that there is some sort of evidence, however unsatisfactory it may be esteemed, to connect every writing of either Testament having any claims to Canonicity with the apos-

tles either as its authors or endorsers. The question is, What kind and amount of evidence must be produced in such a case to be satisfactory to sound reason? Both of these points will receive our attention in due time. For the present it will be enough to ask, whether it is more probable that men coördinate in authority and qualification with the apostles should have lived and died without leaving name, trace, or memorial behind, except an anonymous writing, or that the testimony of the Holy Spirit to the Canonicity of such writing which some saint of to-day supposes that he enjoys is a delusion? The fact is that we would feel little interest in or concern about this fanciful and mystic way of dealing with the question of Canonicity, were it not for the fact that its advocates ignore the palpable and vital distinction between the *ground of the Canonicity* of a writing and the *ground of their conviction* of its Canonicity. Let it once be admitted that the writing comes by its Canonicity, not by virtue of its supposed or real tendency to edify, nor by virtue of any personal or ecclesiastical suffrage, nor by virtue of any testimony of the Holy Spirit, real or supposed, but simply and solely from having proceeded from some authorized exponent of the divine authority and expounder of the divine will—we say let this once be admitted, and mystics and Christian irrationalists will either have to quit the camp or else confess that the authority of Scripture rests upon a rational, provable, historical basis which has miracles for its cornerstone. And when they come to this mind we suspect that they will find it easier to obtain such a basis in apostolic origin or sanction than anywhere else. But whatever course their “vagarious” minds may adopt, the vast majority of men will find no difficulty in adopting the next fundamental position of our theory—which is that:

III. A natural and proper way, if not, indeed, the shortest, surest, safest, most satisfactory way to beget a rational conviction of the Canonicity of a writing, is to adduce suitable historical evidence that it proceeded from or was sanctioned by the apostles as a Rule of Faith and Life.

It will be important for the reader to note some things which are not said or implied in this proposition. 1. It is not said or implied that it is only by an examination of the historical evidences that a conviction, a legitimate, well-grounded conviction of the Canonicity of a writing can be produced. It is simply asserted that such an examination is a natural and proper way of arriving at such a conviction. That it may be and often is otherwise produced is granted. For as has been shown, while the *basis of our conviction* of the Canonicity of a writing may vary, the *basis of its Canonicity* is invariable, and is invariably apostolic origin or sanction. Competent testimony may ground my conviction of the

Canonicity of a writing, but such testimony presupposes the fact of Canonicity, which fact must therefore rest upon its own proper ground. 2. It is not said or implied that the conviction of Canonicity produced by an examination of the historical evidences will be practically operative and productive of ethical and spiritual results. This may or may not be the case. Conduct does not always follow convictions. 3. It is not said or implied that a conviction of Canonicity thus originated may not be otherwise confirmed and strengthened, and endued with power to bend the will and determine the conduct. All this is freely admitted and wholly irrelevant. For, as we have seen, Canonicity does not wait upon conduct any more than it does upon conviction. The authority of a Rule is one thing, the recognition of that authority is another, and actual obedience to it is still a third. And it is simply preposterous to make the first depend upon either of the last two. 4. It deserves to be noticed, also, that the expression *historical evidence*, as used in this proposition, has a definite, well-defined meaning. It does not mean a consensus of ecclesiastical opinions, "testimonies" or decisions, whether these were given privately or publicly, individually or collectively, personally or officially. By evidence is meant evidence proper, as distinguished from opinions or declarations from whatever source proceeding, or by whatever authority backed. It is used as it would be in a court of justice.

IV. It will be proper to observe that this mode of establishing Canonicity has the following considerations to commend it, viz.:

1. *It is the natural method.* It would be used to establish the Canonicity of any other written rule, as, for instance, that of the Rule under which the Order of Jesuits lives to-day. Let us suppose a question springing up in that Order as to its Rule—how would it probably be settled? Would it not be by tracing the present Rule back, by a chain of historical evidence, to the founder of the Order? True, a novice might and probably would accept it merely upon the testimony of his superiors. But it is very evident that its authoritativeness would in no proper sense be derived from their testimony or be dependent upon it. It is evident, further, that such testimony upon their part would imply that they had evidence that it proceeded from the founder of the Order. In other words, there must sooner or later be a recourse to the historical evidence. Such evidence must furnish the basis for all reliable testimony.

The same is true of the Scriptures. Men may, and many do accept these as an authoritative Rule upon the testimony of particular Churches, or even it may be upon that of individuals. But this testimony itself, if it is worth anything, presupposes the existence of historical evidence connecting these writings with the

“Apostles and Prophets” upon whom the Church is built. How can any individual or Church testify that certain writings were designed by Christ to be a Rule for His Church, unless such writings, which are human productions, can be connected with human agents authorized to represent Christ and frame such a Rule? If it be said that the testimony of the individual is based upon the testimony of the Holy Spirit, many legitimate questions arise. But we repress them, and content ourselves with remarking, with all reverence, that the testimony of the Holy Spirit, no less than that of a Church, or of an individual, rests upon historical evidence. For the Rule is a human writing. It must, therefore, have had a human author. And if there is no evidence to show that it proceeded from one authorized to give a Rule, there is and can be no ground upon which any being can testify that it is a Rule. Granted that the Holy Spirit may have evidence of authorship that is not accessible to us, this does not invalidate the reasonableness, but rather the practicability of our method. This, however, is a matter for separate consideration.

2. *It is the method suggested, if not appointed, in the Scriptures themselves.* Paul evidently assumes in Gal. vi. 16 that evidence of apostolic authorship establishes Canonicity. In 2 Thess. iii. 17 he seems to assume that nothing else will establish it. In Galatians, he says, “as many as walk by this rule (τῆ κανόνι) peace upon them and mercy.” But the Canonical character of the epistle has nothing upon which to base itself except its apostolic authorship. In 2 Thessalonians his language is, “The salutation of me Paul with mine own hand, which is the sign in every epistle.” This implies that Paul recognized the fact that the Churches must be able to connect his writings with himself in order that those writings might come to them with the authority of a Rule. Nowhere does he appeal to any inward testimony of the Spirit either as the ground, or the evidence of the authority of his letters. But to his apostolic office as the former, and to his apostolic signature as the latter—the office of the signature being to certify authorship. This seems to be the significance of the fact that it was the custom of both apostles and prophets to preface their writings with their names and official titles. Nor is the force of this Scriptural argument impaired by the presence of anonymous writings in Scripture. It still remains true that the Scripture, where it does speak, endorses our method. It contains no hint even of any other.

3. *It was the method adopted by the early Church in forming the Canon as we now have it.* The writer is aware that there are authorities in abundance who affirm the contrary. If he sets aside their affirmations, it is not because he respects their opinions less,

but their facts more. What are the facts then? Briefly these. There is no book in our New Testament to-day which has not from the earliest times rightly or wrongly been connected with an apostle, either as its author or sponsor. Every book coming down from the first century which can make out a reasonable, or some would say a plausible, or even passable claim to apostolic origin or sanction, is to-day in our New Testament. Many books besides those actually in the Canon sought a place in it and were refused. The New Testament we have to-day represents the *mature* judgment of the early Church as to what books are entitled to be regarded as the Church's Rule of Faith and Life. The result above described was reached either under the operation of design or of chance. If reached under the operation of design, our position is established. If reached under that of chance, the result borders on the miraculous.

It may be said that our statement is not correct, if by "early Church" is meant the Church of the second century. It is sometimes alleged that during that century, and possibly the early part of the third century, books such as the Shepherd of Hermas and the like, were admitted to the Canon. We have never seen reason to believe the correctness of this allegation. Surely, those are easily convinced who accept it merely because books like the Shepherd of Hermas were sometimes read in the churches, or referred to in glowing rhetorical language, or even bound in the same volume with books now regarded as Canonical. But at present we do not care even to challenge its accuracy. We wish to note a single fact and to raise two questions. The fact is, that this book, and others alleged to have once had a place in the Canon were subsequently ejected. And so our statement that the New Testament of to-day represents the *mature* judgment of the early Church as to what books are entitled to a place in the Canon is simply confirmed by the objection. There may have been a time when the Church was like a bird circling in the air before taking its course, but when she took her course she left behind her all books which could not furnish evidence, either real or feigned, of an apostolic source or sanction. The questions we would raise are: (1) If books like the Shepherd of Hermas were admitted, as is asserted, to a place in the Canon—Why were they admitted? (2) Why were they subsequently ejected? These, rather than their alleged admission, touch our present contention at its centre. Dr. S. Davidson may answer our first question. He is writing of the Church of the second century, and says: "The exact principle that guided the formation of the Canon in the earliest centuries cannot be discovered. Definite grounds for the reception or rejection of books were not very clearly

apprehended. The choice was determined by considerations, *of which apostolic origin was chief*" [italics ours], "though this itself was insufficiently attested, for, if it be asked whether all the New Testament books proceeded from the authors whose names they bear, criticism cannot answer in the affirmative." But for the fact that Dr. Davidson belongs to that school of writers who profess to be elevated far above the fogs and miasmas of theological party prejudice, we would be disposed to say that this passage reveals his *bias* sufficiently to render him an unimpeachable witness for us. That he is competent to speak to the matter in hand will scarcely be questioned. That he is unprejudiced, at least in our favor, is also manifest. If we were to venture to criticise his statement at all, it would be on the score of a certain ambiguity and indefiniteness which attaches to it. He says: "The choice was determined by considerations of which apostolic origin was the chief." This may mean that in the case of every writing claiming a place in the Canon, the test was apostolic origin plus other considerations. If so, then our case is abundantly made out. It may mean, however, that apostolic origin was the test ordinarily applied, though, in the case of some writings, other tests were applied. It is greatly to be regretted that he has not informed us what those other tests were. It might have transpired after all (who can tell?) that they involved apostolic origin or sanction. If any one can show that any writing has been received as Canonical by any Church of any century, except under the impression that such writing uttered, or else echoed an apostle's voice, we will abandon our position. We say "*or else echoed it*" intentionally. For granted that such writings as the Shepherd of Hermas were recognized as neither produced, nor specifically sanctioned by the apostles, still, if they were given a place in the Canon, it was, doubtless, because they were regarded as reflecting apostolic sentiments, either as set forth in apostolic writings, or as handed down by tradition. If so, then apostolic sanction was still the test. Why, even the Church of Rome, with all her lofty pretensions, does not venture to claim a place for the Apocrypha in the Old Testament, except upon the ground that they were approved by Christ and His apostles.

But it is time to turn to our second question, and inquire why books like the Shepherd of Hermas were ejected from the place they are alleged once to have had in the Canon. The fact is that they are out. No one can deny this. Why did they go? Was it because the Church came to recognize clearly the difference in authoritativeness between an apostle's voice, and all mere echoes of such a voice? Or will some say that it was due to the development of a healthier spiritual taste, which discarded them as unsuited

to edify? This explanation, even if it were satisfactory, would involve something very singular. It implies that a highly developed spiritual taste can find edification only in writings which claim for themselves official connection with the apostles. What there is to edify in such a claim, apart from their contents, is hard to see, especially when "Modern Criticism" assures us that in many cases the claim is not well founded. But the explanation is not satisfactory, for it rests upon an utterly false assumption, viz., that only writings issued or sanctioned by apostles were found edifying by the early Church. The New Testament writings are not to-day, and never have been, the only ones that have ministered to the Church's edification. A juster explanation is that at a very early day the Church came fully to appreciate the fact that it is only writings proceeding from or sanctioned by the apostles that can be regarded as a *norm of what constitutes edification, and what will minister to edification.*

4. *It is a method which secures to reason its rights in the matter of religion, and so provides religion with a safeguard against the encroachments of fanaticism.* It invites reason to examine into the origin of the writings which are to become its Rule of Faith and Life. It offers a test that is intelligible, one that would be applied to other writings making similar claims in other spheres, one that leaves no room for hocus-pocus, nor for the play of a heated imagination. It assumes that if Christianity has a historic foundation, and miracles are a historical reality, this can be proved. It recognizes the fact that it is the proper province of reason to conduct this examination, and that it is to be conducted upon the same principles that govern the investigation of other historical questions. And so it secures to reason those inalienable rights of which the Christian irrationalist seeks to rob it in the interest of a so-called rationalism. Not only so, but it provides religion with a safeguard against all such caricatures of fanaticism as Swedenborgianism, Mormonism, and the like, with their "inner voices," "inner lights," and what not devices to seduce men into atheism. It declines to have religion reduced to a matter of constitutional temperament, to an emotion, to a shifting subjective impression, or to any other such vain figment as would breed fanaticism as certainly as stagnant water breeds malaria. It honors the religious sensibilities, but remembers that in fallen and even in partially sanctified man they are liable to awful aberrations. It therefore refuses to recognize them as a norm. It claims that instead of themselves being a norm, they need one furnished by competent external authority, and based upon satisfactory historical evidence.

5. *It is a method which brings the unregenerate man into rational*

relation to the authority of Scripture, and leaves him without excuse if he refuses to submit to this authority. If the Scriptures are a rule in virtue of their origin, then they are such to all to whom they come. They will be such regardless of the subjective spiritual condition and regardless of the attitude which those to whom they come may assume towards them. They will be as truly a rule to the unregenerate man as to the regenerate, to the infidel as to the believer. In a word, they will, from their very nature, be an expression of the will of God, and that will, when expressed, is always authoritative. Those who fail to recognize or respect it will be without excuse. For its claims rest upon a kind of evidence that the unaided unregenerate reason is competent to handle and accustomed in all other cases to respect, viz., historical and moral evidence.

6. *It is a method, the correctness of which is practically and most strikingly confirmed by the testimony of those who reject and denounce it.* There are those who claim to have enjoyed some special, mysterious, inexplicable testimony of the Holy Spirit to the Canonicity of certain writings. We are happy to say that, widely as we are compelled to differ from this class of writers in many points, we see no reason to question the fact that many of them give evidence of being renewed and spiritually enlightened men. Now we esteem it no little confirmation of our method that the books which they accept as a rule upon the alleged testimony of the Holy Spirit in their hearts, are the very books which, from time immemorial, have been supposed to have been produced or sanctioned by the apostles. It is, to say the least, singular that the Holy Spirit should witness to the Canonicity of those books and *only* those for which such claim has so long been made. One thing is certain, namely, if the testimony of the Holy Spirit in their hearts is a reality, and we see no reason to doubt this, though much to question the mysterious mode in which it is said to be delivered—if, we say, this testimony is a reality, then it follows, notwithstanding all that "Modern Criticism" may say to the contrary, that these writings must have proceeded from or been sanctioned by the apostles, for this, as we have seen, is the ultimate test of Canonicity in the case of any writing. If so, we leave these brethren to reconcile their critical theories and the direct testimony of the Holy Spirit as best they can. For ourselves, we do not hesitate to accept the testimony which, they say, the Holy Spirit bears in their hearts, as against the so-called assured results of "Modern Criticism." We add merely, that if these books did proceed from the apostles, as the testimony of the Holy Spirit implies, then there ought to be producible historical evidence to connect them with the apostles. For, in the absence of the actual production of such evidence, many

will be disposed to recall the maxim, "*De non apparentibus et non existentibus eadem ratio*," and the inevitable conclusion will be that this alleged testimony of the Holy Spirit is a delusion and Christianity a humbug.

We have given this detailed exposition of the theory: 1. Because we are persuaded that the opposition to it which seems to have arisen in the minds of some, is due, (a) either to overlooking the nature and origin of Canonicity, or (b) to a failure to distinguish between the *ground of the Canonicity* of a writing and the *ground of a conviction* of its Canonicity—the former being but one and always the same, the latter variable. 2. Because we are persuaded of the vital importance of maintaining not only the propriety, but the possibility, of connecting every book claiming a place in the Canon with the apostles by a chain of historical evidence. For granted that the testimony of the Holy Spirit furnishes a legitimate ground for a conviction of the Canonicity of a writing, it does so either because such testimony *confers* Canonicity, or simply because it *attests* the possession of it. To assert the former is an abuse of language and a misconception of the nature and origin of Canonicity. But if the testimony of the Holy Spirit merely attests the possession of Canonicity, this implies that the Holy Spirit has knowledge upon which to ground His testimony. The only fact that will ground such testimony is the fact of apostolic origin or sanction. To admit the existence of the fact, but affirm the impossibility of adducing historical evidence of it, is to imperil the historical basis upon which Christianity has been supposed to rest. 3. Because we desire to lay all possible emphasis upon the fact that the *basis* for a claim to Canonicity is simply and solely apostolic origin or sanction—*this and nothing less, this and nothing more*. It is a mistake to regard the internal evidence or the testimony of the Holy Spirit as furnishing either in whole or in part the *basis* for such a claim. They may furnish evidence of it, but never a basis. To expect to support such a claim by such means is like expecting to support a brick wall by buttresses, when neither wall nor buttress has any foundation. This is evident from simply asking the question, Internal evidence of what? testimony to what? The only possible answer is, Evidence of the fact of Canonicity; testimony to the fact of Canonicity. But if this be a fact, *it is such antecedent to the production of the evidence, and hence must rest upon its own independent base*.