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I. IDEALISTIC MONISM.

I do not care to prefix a rubric of titles of idealistic authors to this criticism, as could be very easily done after the pretentious and pedantic fashion of some review writers. I could cite quite a list, beginning with Fichte, Schelling and Hegel, down to Herbert Spencer, Kuno Fischer, of Heidelberg, and Paul Deussen, of Kiel, and could profess to give outlines of their several phases of Monism from histories of philosophy. But my object is to instruct students who are guided by common sense and their Bibles in the central doctrines of this pretended philosophy which are common to all its phases, and to expose their common errors. No two idealists are consistent with each other, nor even with themselves; hence the attempt to particularize their different schemes would be tedious and hopeless, and would disappoint my practical aim.

Idealism is, in plain terms, that doctrine which tells us that the whole universe, including ourselves, consists of ideas only, and contains no other perdurable substantive beings, material or spiritual, distinguishable from mere trains of ideas or actions. Monism is the doctrine which insists that there is no distinction of mind and matter, that both are one and that there is no true philosophy until all things are traced to one single principle of being. The monism of idealists is, that the universe exists for me only as my representation in thought. Thought and real being are identical. To think a thing is to give it existence, the only kind of existence which anything has. There is not, and cannot be, any creation *ex nihilo*, even if there were an almighty

II. THE LATEST PHASE OF HISTORICAL RATIONALISM.¹

I. "DOGMA," AND "EXTERNAL AUTHORITY."

MR. G. A. SIMCOX, reviewing Dr. Liddon's recently published *Life of Pusey*, tells us that Dr. Pusey "developed into a great tactician, who kept an academical majority together in face of all manner of discouragement from outside." Nothing is more remarkable, indeed, than the prosperity of Dr. Pusey's leadership, and the success with which he impressed his peculiar modes of thinking upon a whole church. The secret of it is not to be found, however, in any "tact" which he may be supposed to have exercised—as we might be led to suspect by the mere sound of the word "tactician." Dr. Pusey had as great a capacity for blundering as any man who ever lived; and one wonders how his cause could survive his repeated and gross errors of judgment. "What strikes us rather," says Mr. Simcox truly, "is how many false moves he made and how little harm they did him." The secret of it is found in his intensity, steadfastness, and single hearted devotion to what he believed to be divine truth. The mere "tactician" has always ultimately failed, since the world began. The blunderer who lays himself a willing sacrifice upon the altar of what he believes to be the truth of God has never wholly failed. This is true even when truth has been misconceived. The power of truth is the greatest power on earth. Next to it, however, is the power of sincere, earnest, and steadfast conviction.

Dr. Pusey himself lays open to us the secret of his power, in a letter written to Dr. Hook in the period of the deepest depres-

¹ Portions of this paper have appeared in type before, as follows: The sections marked I., III., IV., V., VI., in *The Presbyterian Journal*, of Philadelphia; the section marked II., in *The Presbyterian Messenger*, of Pittsburg; and the section marked VII., in *The Sunday-School World*, of Philadelphia. The editors of these journals have kindly permitted them to be reprinted in a revised form here. The section marked VII. has been copyrighted by the American Sunday-School Union, and can be had at their house at 1122 Chestnut street, Philadelphia, in tract form.

sion of the fortunes of "the party." "I am quite sure," he says, "that nothing can resist infidelity except the most entire system of faith; one said mournfully, 'I could have had *faith*; I cannot have *opinions*.' One must have a strong, positive, objective system which people are to believe, because it is true, on authority out of themselves. Be that authority what it may, the Scriptures through the individual teaching of the Spirit, the primitive church, the church when it was visibly one, the present church, it must be a strong authority out of one's self." Here is the most successful leader of modern times telling us the principles that gave force to his leadership. What do they prove to be? Two: the steadfast, consistent proclamation of an "entire system of faith," strong, positive, objective, which people are required to believe on the simple ground that it is true; and the foundation of this system upon an external authority, an "authority out of one's self." All experience bears Dr. Pusey out. The only propagandism that has ever won a lasting hold upon men has been the bold proclamation of positive, dogmatic truth, based on external, divine authority; and the only power that can resist the infidelity of our day is the power of consistently concatenated dogmatic truth, proclaimed on the authority of a fully trusted, "Thus saith the Lord."

The value of positive truth proclaimed on the basis of divine authority, is not to be measured, of course, simply by its usefulness in propagating Christianity. It has an individual importance which is far greater. Without it Christianity would not be able to acquire or maintain empire over the soul. Adolphe Monod points out, for example, how dependent we are for all adequate conceptions of sin upon the dogmatic teachings of "external authority." "Our own personal meditations," he tells us, "will never reveal to us what sin is; and here I particularly feel the necessity and the reality of the inspiration and the divine authority of the Scriptures, because we should never have learned to know what sin is, unless we learned it from obedience to an outward authority superior to us, independent of our secret feelings, upon which we ought certainly to meditate with study and fervent prayers. But enlightened truth comes from above, is given by

the Spirit of God, speaking with the authority of God himself; for we must begin by believing the horror that sin ought to inspire, before we are capable of feeling it." And he points out equally how dependent we are for a proper basis for faith on the same "external authority." "The more I study the Scriptures," he says, "the example of Jesus Christ and of the apostles, and the history of my own heart, the more I am convinced that a testimony of God, placed without us and above us, exempt from all intermixture of the sin and error which belong to a fallen race, and received with submission on the sole authority of God, is the true basis of faith." "If faith," he says, "has not for its basis a testimony of God to which we must submit, as to an authority exterior to our own personal judgment, superior to it, and independent of it, then faith is no faith." That this witness is true, the heart of every Christian may be trusted to bear witness. But for the moment we may fix our attention on the more external fact already adverted to, that the only basis of an appeal to men which can at all hope to be prevalent is positive truth commended on the credit of "external authority."

What is ominous in the present-day drift of religious thought is the sustained effort that is being made to break down just these two principles: the principle of a systematized body of doctrines as the matter to be believed, and the principle of an external authority as the basis of belief. What arrogates to itself the title of "the newer religious thinking" sets itself, before everything else, in violent opposition to what it calls "dogma" and "external authority." The end may be very readily foreseen. Indefinite subjectivism or subjective indifferentism has no future. It is not only in its very nature a disintegrating, but also a destructive, force. It can throw up no barrier against unbelief. Its very business is to break down barriers. And when that work is accomplished the floods come in.

The assault on positive doctrinal teaching is presented to-day chiefly under the flag of "comprehension." Men bewail the divisions of the church of Christ, and propose that we shall stop thinking, so that we may no longer think differently. This is the true account to give of many of the phases of the modern movement

for "church union." Men are tired of thinking. They are tired of defending the truth. Let us all stop thinking, stop believing, they cry, and what a happy family we shall be! Look into Mr. David Nelson Beach's recent book, which he calls *The Newer Religious Thinking*, but which seems to us to be rather a plea for unthinking irreligion, and see how clearly this is its dominant note. He tells us that God is no more a respecter of religions than of persons; that the doctrine of the Trinity is a mere philosophy and ought no longer to stand between brethren; that access to God is no longer to be represented as exclusively "as a matter of terms," through Christ. In a word, the lines that separate evangelical from "liberal" Christianity, and those that separate distinctive Christianity from the higher heathenism, are to be obliterated. We are no longer to defend anything that any religious soul doubts. We are to recognize every honest worshipper as a child of God, though the God he worships may be but another name for force or for the world.

We find the seeds of this movement towards "comprehension" in the most unlikely places. Even Dr. Schaff, in his latest book, represents himself as occupying a position in which not only Arminianism, Lutheranism and Calvinism, but also Rationalism and Supranaturalism, are reconciled. It is essentially present wherever the concessive habit of dealing with truth has taken root. For what is the "concessive" method of controversy but a neat device by which one may appear to conquer while really yielding the citadel? It is as if the governor of a castle should surrender it to the foe if only the foe will permit him to take possession of it along with them. On this pathway there is no goal except the ultimate naturalization of Christianity, and that means the perishing of distinctive Christianity out of the earth. Dr. Pusey calls attention to the fact that the Rationalists of Germany were the descendants not of the unbelievers of former controversies, but of the "defenders" of Christianity. The method of concession was tried, and that was the result. The so-called "defenders" were found in the camp of the enemy.

Along with this attack on distinctive truth goes necessarily an accompanying attack on "external authority in religion." For if

there be an "external authority," that which it teaches is true for all. This canker, too, has therefore necessarily entered our churches. It exists in various stages of development. It begins by rejecting the authority of the Bible for minor matters only—in the "*minima*," in "circumstantials" and "by-passages" and "incidental remarks," and the like. The next step is to reject its authority for everything except "matters of faith and practice." Then comes unwillingness to bow to all its doctrinal deliverances and ethical precepts; and we find men like Dr. DeWitt, of New Brunswick, and Mr. Horton, of London, subjecting the religious and ethical contents of the Bible to the judgment of their "spiritual instinct." Then the circle is completed by setting aside the whole Bible as *authority*; perchance with the remark, so far as the New Testament is concerned, that in the apostolic age men depended each on the spirit in his own heart, and no one dreamed of making the New Testament the authoritative word of God, while it was only in the later second century that the canon was formed, and "external authority" took the place of "internal authority." This point of view comes to its rights only when every shred of "external authority" in religion is discarded, and appeal is made to what is frankly recognized as purely human reason: we call it then Rationalism. It is only another form of this Rationalism, however, when it would fain believe that what it appeals to within the human breast is not the unaided spirit of man, but the Holy Ghost in the heart, the Logos, the strong voice of God. In this form it asks: "Were the Quakers right?" and differs from technical Rationalism only in a matter of temperature, the feelings and not the cold reason alone being involved: we call it then Mysticism.

Of course men cannot thus reject the Bible, to which Christ appealed as authoritative, without rejecting also the authority of Christ, which is thus committed to the Bible's authority. Accordingly, we already find not only a widespread tendency to neglect the authority of Christ on many points, but also a formal rejection of that authority by respectable teachers in the churches. We are told that authority is limited by knowledge, and that Christ's knowledge was limited to pure religion. We are told

that even in matters of religion he accommodated himself, in the form at least of his teachings, to the times in which he lived. Thus all "external authority" is gradually evaporated, and men are left to the sole authority each of his own spirit, whether under the name of reason or under the name of the Holy Spirit in the heart. As each man's spirit has, of course, its separate rights, all basis for objective doctrine thus departs from the earth.

The attitude of mind which is thus outlined constitutes the most dangerous, because the most fundamental, of heresies. Distinctive Christianity, supernatural religion, cannot persist where this blight is operative. It behooves the church, if it would consult its peace or even preserve its very life, to open its eyes to the working of the evil leaven. Nor will it do to imagine that we shall have to face in it only a sporadic or temporary tendency of thought. It is for this tendency of thought that the powerful movement known in Germany as Ritschlism practically stands. And it has already acquired in America the proportions of an organized propaganda, with its literary organ, its summer schools, its apostles and its prophets. It is something like this Ritschlite Rationalism that Professor George D. Herron teaches in his numerous works, as the coming form of Christianity. It is something like it that Mr. B. Fay Mills is propagating in his evangelistic tours. It is something like it that *The Kingdom* is offering to the churches; and that those whom that newspaper has gathered to its support are banded to make a force in the land. Surely there is clamant need to inform ourselves of its meaning and its purposes.

II. RITSCHLITE RATIONALISM.

"Rationalism" never is the direct product of unbelief. It is the indirect product of unbelief, among men who would fain hold their Christian profession in the face of an onset of unbelief which they feel too weak to withstand. Rationalism is, therefore, always a movement within the Christian church; and its adherents are characterized by an attempt to save what they hold to be the essence of Christianity, by clearing it from what they deem to be accretions, or by surrendering what they feel to be no longer defensible features of its current representations. The name historically represents specifically that form of Christian

thought which, under the pressure of eighteenth-century deism, felt no longer able to maintain a Christianity that needed to appeal to other evidences of its truth than the human reason; and which, therefore, yielded to the enemy every element of Christian teaching which could not validate itself to the logical understanding on axiomatic grounds. The effect was to reduce Christianity to a "natural religion."

The most recent form of Rationalism, the Ritschlite, partakes, of course, of the general Rationalistic features. In its purely theological aspect, its most prominent characteristic is an attempt to clear theology of all "metaphysical" elements. Otherwise expressed, this means that nothing will be admitted to belong to Christianity except facts of experience; the elaboration of these facts into "dogmas" contains "metaphysical" elements. For example, the Ritschlite defines God as love. He means by this that the Christian experiences God as love, and this much he therefore knows. Beyond that, he cannot define God; since all question of what God is in himself, as distinguished from what God is to us, belongs to the sphere of "metaphysics," and is, therefore, out of the realm of religion. Similarly, the Ritschlite defines Christ as Lord, and declares that the saying of Luther, *Er ist mein Herr*, includes all that we need to believe concerning Christ. He means by this that the Christian experiences Christ as his master, bows before his life and teaching, and therefore knows him as Lord. But, beyond what he can verify in such experiences, he knows nothing of him. For example, he can know, in such experience, nothing of Christ's præexistence, and cannot control anything told us about it by any available tests; he can know nothing of Christ's present activities by such experience; but he can know something of the power and worth of his historical apparition, in such experience. All that is outside the reach of such verification belongs to the sphere of "metaphysics," and is, therefore, out of the realm of religion. The effort is to save the essence of Christianity from all possible danger from the speculative side. The means taken to effect this is to yield the whole sphere of "metaphysical" thought to the enemy. The result is the destruction of the whole system of Christian doctrine. Doctrine cannot be stated without what

the Ritschlite calls "metaphysical elements"; a theory of knowledge underlies, indeed, the Ritschlite construction of "Christianity without metaphysics itself." But, however inconsistently, the Ritschlite contention ultimates in an "undogmatic Christianity." Theology, we are told, is killing religion.

But Christianity as it has come down to us is very far from being an undogmatic Christianity. The history of Christianity is the history of doctrine. Ritschlite Rationalism must, therefore, deal with a historical problem, as well as with a speculative and a practical one. What is it to do with a historical Christianity which is a decidedly doctrinal Christianity? Its task is obviously to explain the origin and development of doctrinal Christianity in such a manner as to evince essential Christianity to be undogmatic. Its task, in a word, is historically to explain doctrinal Christianity as corrupted Christianity; or, in other words, to explain the rise and development of doctrine as a series of accretions from without, overlying and concealing Christianity. Ritschlism, in the very nature of the case, definitely breaks with the whole tradition of Christian doctrine, from Justin Martyr down. Adolf Harnack, one of the most learned of modern church historians, has consecrated his great stores of knowledge and his great powers to the performance of the task thus laid upon his school of thought.

The characteristic feature of Harnack's reconstruction of the history of Christian dogma, in the interests of Ritschlite Rationalism, is to represent all Christian doctrine as the product of Greek thought on Christian ground. The simple gospel of Christ was the gospel of love. On the basis of this gospel the ancient world built up the Catholic Church, but in doing so it built itself bankrupt. That is, the ancient world transferred itself to the church; and in what we call church theology we are looking only at the product of heathen thinking on the basis of the gospel. To make our way back to original Christianity, we must shovel off this whole superincumbent mass until we arrive at the pure kernel of the gospel itself, hidden beneath. That kernel is simple subjective faith in God as Father, revealed to us as such by Jesus Christ.

These new teachings have been variously put within the reach

of the American churches. Professor Mitchell, of Hartford Seminary, has given us a translation of Harnack's *Outlines of the History of Dogma*. Mr. Rutherford has published a translation of Moeller's *History of the Christian Church*, in which Harnack's views are adopted and ably reproduced. Williams & Norgate, the great "liberal" publishing-house of London, are issuing a translation of Harnack's great *History of Dogma*. The writings of Edwin Hatch, the Oxford representative of Ritschlism, have had a wide circulation on this side of the sea. But of late years something more has come to be reckoned with within the American churches than such literary importations. Young American students, visiting German universities, have returned home enthusiastic devotees of the "new views." They have been commended to them by the immense learning of Harnack; by his attractive personality and his clear and winning methods of presenting his views; by the great vogue which they have won in Germany; and possibly by a feeling on their own part that they offer a mode of dealing with the subject which will lessen the difficulty of the Christian apologist in defending the faith. The less faith you have to defend the easier it is apt to seem to defend it. At all events, it is a fact that the historical Rationalism of the Ritschlites is now also an American movement and needs to be reckoned with as such. There are in particular three recent American publications in which the influence of Harnack's rationalizing reconstruction of Christian history is dominating, to which attention ought to be called in this connection: The first of these is a very readable *Sketch of the History of the Apostolic Church*, by Professor Oliver J. Thatcher, formerly of the United Presbyterian Seminary at Allegheny, but now of the University of Chicago. Another is the very able *Inaugural Address*, delivered by Professor Arthur C. McGiffert at his induction into the chair of Church History at Union Theological Seminary, New York, which deals with the subject of *Primitive and Catholic Christianity*. The third is a lecture by the Rev. Dr. Thomas C. Hall, of Chicago, pronounced before the students of Queens University, Kingston, Canada, and bearing the title of *Faith and Reason in Religion*. Anyone who will take the trouble to look into these publications

will soon become convinced of the importance of observing what the American churches are now being taught by the pupils of Harnack as to the origin of Christianity.

It will then, doubtless, repay us to look for a moment into this matter. The best way to do so is doubtless to analyze briefly one of these three publications. We select for the purpose Dr. McGiffert's brief and admirably clear paper. And in the following pages we shall attempt to give as clear an account of its contents as the necessity for succinctness will allow.

Dr. McGiffert begins with a few remarks on the function of church history and the duty of the historian of the church. The object of the whole of church history is, he tells us, to enable us to understand Christianity better, and to fit us "to distinguish between its essential and non-essential elements." And the special task of the historian is to "discover by a careful study of Christianity at successive stages of its career whether it has undergone any transformations and, if so, what those transformations are." It is not the duty of the historian to pass judgment on the value of any assimilations or accretions which Christianity may be found to have made. That is the theologian's work. The historian's is only to make clear what belonged to the original form of Christianity and what has been acquired by it, in its process of growth, in its environment of the world. Dr. McGiffert gives us to understand, however, that, in his opinion, the value of an element of our system is not to be determined merely by its origin: whether it belonged to original Christianity or has been acquired by it from the world. Its right to a place in the Christian system is to be determined solely by what we deem its vital relation to, or at least its harmony with, Christianity itself.

He chooses as his subject, the portrayal of "the most vital and far-reaching transformation which Christianity has ever undergone, a transformation the effects of which the entire Christian church still feels, and which has, in his opinion, done more than anything else to conceal Christianity's original form and obscure its true character." This is the transformation of the primitive into the Catholic Church; and it was "practically complete before the end of the second century of the church's life." He

points out that it would be too much to attempt to explain such a momentous transformation in all its features in the limits of a single discourse. He confines himself, therefore, to indicating and explaining as fully as the time at his disposal permitted, the *change of spirit* which constitutes the essence of the transformation.

He begins with a picture of the primitive, that is, of the apostolic church. Its spirit was "the spirit of religious individualism, based upon the felt presence of the Holy Ghost." That is to say, it was the universal conviction of the primitive church that every Christian had, in the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in him, a personal source of inspiration at his disposal, to which he could turn in every time of need. There was, therefore, no occasion for an authority for Christian teaching, external to the individual's own spirit; and there had arisen no conception, accordingly, as yet, of a "rule of faith," or of a "New Testament Canon." The only authority that was recognized was the Holy Spirit; and he was supposed to speak to every believer as truly as he spoke to an apostle. There was no instituted church, and no external bond of Christian unity. There were some common forms of worship, and Christians met together for mutual edification; but their only bond of union was their common possession of the Spirit of God and their common ideal and hope. There was no intervening class of clerics, standing between the Christian and the source of grace; but every Christian enjoyed immediate contact with God through the Spirit. Such was the spirit of the primitive church—of the church of the apostles and of the church of the post-apostolic age, for there was no change of spirit on the death of the apostles. The church of the second-half of the second century believed itself as truly and exclusively under the authority of the indwelling Spirit as the apostolic church and as the apostles themselves. On historic grounds, we can draw no distinction between the apostolic and post-apostolic ages on the ground of supernatural endowment.

The change of spirit which marks the rise of the Catholic Church took place, then, in the second century. In general terms, it was the result of the secularization of the church and of the effort of

the church to avoid such secularization. Among the heathen brought into the church in the second century, gradually more and more men of education were included. Among these were some philosophical spirits of a Platonizing tendency, who brought into the church with them a habit of speculation. Their speculative theories they represented as Christianity, and they appealed to the authority of the apostles in their favor. Thus arose the first theologizing in the Christian church; the Gnostics were the first creed-builders within the limits of the church and the first inventors of the idea of apostolic authority, and of the consequent conception of an apostolic Christian canon. And it was in conflict with them that the church, for her part, first reached the conception of apostolic authority and of an apostolic canon, and gradually developed the full conception of authority which gave us finally the full-fledged Catholic Church.

The steps by which this transformation was made were three: "First, the recognition of the teaching of the apostles as the exclusive standard and norm of the Christian truth; second, the confinement to a specific office (viz., the Catholic office of bishop) of the power to determine what is the teaching of the apostles; and, third, the designation of a specific institution (viz., the Catholic Church) as the sole channel of divine grace." The transformation was, it will be seen, complete. The spirit of free individualism under the sole guidance of the indwelling Spirit, which characterized the primitive church, passed permanently away. The spirit of submission to "external authority" took permanently its place. The transformation to Catholicism means simply, then, that the church had emptied itself of its spiritual heritage, that it had denuded itself of its spiritual power, and that it had invented for itself, and subjected itself to, a complete system of "external authority." The first step was to recognize the exclusive authority of apostolic teaching. Thus Christians laid aside their privilege of being the constant organs of the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and framed for themselves a "rule of faith" (Creed) and a New Testament Scripture (Canon). The next step was to confine to a particular office the power to transmit and interpret that teaching. The believer was thus perma-

nently denied not only the privilege of receiving divine revelations, but also the right to interpret for himself the revelations received and transmitted by the apostles. The last step was to confine the transmission of grace itself to the organized church, so that out of it there could be no salvation. Thus the believer's last privilege was taken from him; he could no longer possess anything save as through the church. When this last step was completed, the Catholic Church was complete.

No "transformations" of the church have taken place since this great transformation. Changes have occurred, and changes which may seem to the casual observer of more importance. But, in fact, the church is still living in the epoch of the Catholic Church. The Reformation was, indeed, an attempt at a real "transformation," and it has wrought a real "transformation" upon as much of the church as has accepted it. It was a revival of the primitive spirit of individualism, and a rejection of "external authority." But the Reformation has affected only a small portion of the church; and it was, even for the Protestant Churches, only a partial revival of the primitive spirit. It "did not repudiate, it retained, the Catholic conception of an apostolic Scripture canon—a conception which the primitive church had entirely lacked." Thus it has retained the essential Catholic idea of an "external authority;" But the Reformers sought to bring this idea into harmony with the primitive conception of the continued action of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of true believers; and it is by this fact alone that Protestants can be justified in retaining the Scriptures as a rule of faith and practice. The true statement of the Protestant position, therefore, is not, That the word of God contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments is the sole and ultimate standard of Christian truth. It is, "That the Spirit of God is the sole and ultimate standard of Christian truth—the Spirit of God, who spoke through the apostles, and who still speaks to his people"; it is, That "the Holy Spirit, which voices itself both in the teaching of the apostles and in the enlightened Christian consciousness of true believers, is the only source and standard of spiritual truth."

This is, as briefly as possible, the gist of Dr. McGiffert's ad-

dress. Two things are to be especially noted in it: First, the whole development of a Christian "authority"—the rise alike of the very conception of authority as attributed to the apostles, and of the conception of a New Testament canon—is assigned to post-apostolic times. The church of the apostles, and the apostles themselves, knew nothing of an authoritative Christian teaching. Thus all Christian doctrine is a human product, and of no real authority in the church. And, secondly, the Christian Scriptures are in no sense the authoritative rule of faith and practice which we have been taught to believe that they are. The apostles who wrote them did not intend them as such. The church which received them did not receive them as such. The Protestant Churches can be justified in declaring them such, only provided they do not mean to erect them over the Christian spirit—"the Christian consciousness of true believers"—but mean only to place them side by side with it as co-source of the knowledge of Christian truth. This is, of course, to deny "authority" to the New Testament *in toto*. If we are to follow Dr. McGiffert, therefore, we are to renounce all doctrinal Christianity at a stroke, and to reject all "authority" in the New Testament, on pain of being unprimitive and unapostolic. These things are, according to his conception, parts of the accretion that has gathered itself to Christianity in its passage through the ages.

This, then, is the question which the introduction of the Ritschlite historical Rationalism has brought to the American churches. Are we prepared to surrender the whole body of Christian doctrine as being no part of essential Christianity, but the undivine growth of ages of human development, the product of the "transformations" of Christianity, or, as Dr. T. C. Hall phrases it with admirable plainness of speech, the product of the "degradations" of Christianity? Are we prepared to surrender the New Testament canon, as the invention of the second-century church to serve its temporary needs in conflict with heresy? Once more, Dr. Hall gives us an admirably plain-spoken account of what, on this view, was actually done when the canon was made: "The need of an infallible authority to interpret a code gave rise to the fiction of apostolic authority, at first confined to

written and spoken messages, and later imbedded in an organization, and inherited by its office-holders." Are we prepared to represent the authority of the apostles, as imbedded in their written words and preserved in our New Testament, as a "fiction"? This is the teaching of the new historical Rationalism; and it is with this teaching that the church has now to reckon.

Let us now enter a little more into detail as to the meaning of this new teaching; and in order to do this, let us examine more fully one or two of the fundamental positions of Dr. McGiffert's *Address*. And first of all let us look a moment at

III. DR. MCGIFFERT'S THEORY OF DEVELOPMENT.

The learning, the ability, and the skill in the presentation of its material, which characterizes Dr. McGiffert's *Inaugural Address*, will occasion surprise to no one. These things have been confidently expected of the accomplished annotator of Eusebius. There will be many, doubtless, however, who will be surprised to find the fundamental thought of so learned an address, delivered by a Presbyterian professor, to be the presentation of Christianity under the form of a development, of a sort not merely outside the ordinary lines of Protestant thinking, but apparently inconsistent with the most fundamental of Protestant postulates.

When the body of revealed truth was committed into the hands of men, it of course became subject to adulteration with the notions of men. As it was handed down from age to age, it inevitably gathered around it a mass of human accretions, as a snowball grows big as it rolls down a long slope. The importance of that committal of the divine revelation to writing, by which the inspired Scriptures were constituted, becomes thus specially apparent. The "word of God written" stands through all ages as a changeless witness against human additions to, and corruptions of, God's truth. The chief task of historical criticism, in its study of Christianity, becomes also thus very apparent. Dr. James M. Ludlow, who delivered the charge to the new professor, and whose charge is printed along with the address, does not fail to point this out. Because "what the truth receives by way of admixture from the passing ages it is apt to retain," therefore; he charges the new

professor to remember that "the most pressing demand upon historical criticism" is "to separate from essential Christianity what the ages have contributed."

The Reformation was, in this sense, a critical movement. The weapon it used in its conflict with the pretensions of Rome was historical criticism. The task it undertook was to tear off the mediæval and patristic swathings in which Christianity had become wrapped in the course of the careless ages, and to stand her once more before men in her naked truth, as she had been presented to the world by Christ and his apostles. "The fittest and most suggestive criticism we can to-day pass on Catholicism," says Adolf Harnack justly, "is to conceive it as Christianity in the garb of the ancient world with a mediæval overcoat. . . . What is the Reformation but the word of God which was to set the church free again? All may be expressed in the single formula, *the Reformation is the return to the pure gospel*; only what is sacred shall be held sacred; the traditions of men, though they be most fair and most worthy, must be taken for what they are—viz., the ordinances of man."

The principle on which Protestantism proceeded in this great and salutary task had two sides, a negative and a positive one. On the negative side, it took the form that every element of current ecclesiastical teaching or of popular belief, which, on being traced back in history, ran out before Christ's authoritative apostles were reached, was to be accounted a spurious accretion to Christianity and no part of Christianity itself. On the positive side, and this is the so-called "formal principle of Protestantism," it took the form that everything enters as an element into the Christian system that is taught in the Holy Scriptures, which were imposed on the church as its authoritative rule of faith and practice by the apostles, who were themselves appointed by the Lord as his authoritative agents in establishing the church, and were endowed with all needed graces and accompanied by all needed assistance from the Holy Spirit for the accomplishment of their task. This is what is meant by that declaration of Chillingworth which has passed into a Protestant proverb: "That the Bible, and the Bible only, is the religion of Protestants."

And this is what is meant by the Westminster Confession, when it asserts that the whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture, "unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit or traditions of men." This is the corner-stone of universal Protestantism; and on it Protestantism stands, or else it falls.

This "formal principle" of Protestantism, of course, does not deny that there has been such a thing as a "development of doctrine." It does not make its appeal to the early church as the norm of Christian truth; and it does not imagine that the first generation of Christians had already sounded all the depths of revelation. It makes its appeal to the Scriptures of God, which embody in written form the teaching of Christ through his apostles upon which the earliest as well as the latest church was builded. Protestantism expects to find, and does find, a progressive understanding and realization of this teaching of Christ in the church. The Reformers knew, as well as the end of the nineteenth century knows, that there is a sense in which the Nicene Christology, the Augustinian Anthropology, the Anselmic Soteriology, their own doctrine of Justification by Faith alone, were new in the church. They thought of nothing so little as discarding these doctrines because they were "new," in the only sense in which they were new. They rather held them to constitute the very essence of Christian truth. They believed in "the development of true Christian doctrine," and looked upon themselves as raised up by God to be the instruments of a new step in this development. Following the Reformers, Protestants universally believe in "the development of true Christian doctrine"; but, as Dr. Ludlow pointedly and truly adds, "not the growth of its revelation, for that we believe was made complete in the New Testament, but its development in the conception of men."

This "development in the conception of men," Protestants are very far from supposing ever to take place, in ever so small a one of its stages, without the illuminating agency of the Holy Spirit. They affirm the activity of the Spirit of revelation in the church

of God continuously through all the ages. And they attribute to his brooding over the confused chaos of human thinking every step that is taken towards a truer or a fuller apprehension of God's saving truth. But they know how to distinguish between "the inward illumination of the Spirit of God," by virtue of which Christian men enter progressively into fuller possession of the truth which was once for all delivered unto the saints, and "new revelations of the Spirit," by virtue of which men may suppose that additions are made to the substance of this truth.

Despite Dr. Ludlow's faithful warnings in the charge which he laid upon him, Dr. McGiffert appears to have failed to make this distinction. In opposition to the fundamental Protestant principle, he teaches that the true system of Christianity has gradually come into existence during the last two millenniums through a process of development. He conceives of "Christianity" (the word has somewhat of the character of an "undistributed middle" in his use of it) as having been planted in "the days of Christ" only in germinal form. From this original germ it has grown through the ages, not merely by unfolding explicitly what was implicitly contained in it, but also by assimilating and making its own elements from without, elements even of late and foreign origin. "The fact that any element of our system is of later growth than Christianity itself does not necessarily condemn it, nor even the fact that it is of foreign growth." For "guarantee of truth" is not given by "general prevalence" or by "age" (as if the question of its tracing to the apostles were a question of mere age!); but the "right of any element to a place within the Christian system is vindicated only by showing its vital relation to, or at least its harmony with, Christianity itself." Though present-day Christianity contains elements "of late and foreign origin," elements which materially modify the forms of expressing the spirit of primitive Christianity, conceptions even which the primitive church (*i. e.*, the church of the apostles) "certainly lacked," it may not be the less pure Christianity on that account. It may even be the more pure Christianity on this very account: it may "mark a real advance" on primitive Christianity.

For we must bear constantly in mind that the right of any ele-

ments "to a place within the Christian system" is vindicated solely by their power to express the Christian spirit. This is the true test alike of elements of late and foreign origin and of the elements which entered into primitive Christianity itself. When speaking of the former, Dr. McGiffert makes a significant addition to his sentence so as emphatically to include the latter also. "By the degree to which they give expression to that spirit" (*i. e.*, "the Christian spirit"), he says, "is the value of such elements, *and of all elements*, to be measured." "If they contribute to its clear, and just, and full expression," he adds, "they vindicate their right to a place within the Christian system; if they hinder that spirit's action they must be condemned." Thus we learn that there were in primitive Christianity itself—the Christianity of "the days of Christ" and of his apostles—both essential and non-essential elements; elements of permanent and universal worth, and others of only temporary and local significance; and the criterion for distinguishing between them is our own subjective judgment of their fitness to express "the Christian spirit"—of course, according to our own conception of that spirit.

Thus Professor McGiffert takes emphatic issue with both sides of the fundamental Protestant principle. As over against its assertion that the whole counsel of God is set down in Scripture, "unto which nothing at any time is to be added," he declares that it is a "pernicious notion that apostolic authority is necessary for every element of the Christian system"; and that elements of even late and foreign origin can "vindicate their right to a place within the Christian system" "by showing their vital relation to, or at least their harmony with, Christianity itself." That is to say, the test of a distinctively Christian truth is not that it is part of that body of truth which was once for all delivered to the saints, as all Protestantism, with one voice, affirms; but whether it seems to us to harmonize with what we consider that Christianity is or ought to be. A subjective criterion thus takes the place of the objective criterion of the written word of God.

Accordingly, as over against the fundamental Protestant principle that "the Holy Scriptures of the Old and the New Testaments are the word of God, the only rule of faith and obedience,"

Professor McGiffert declares that the teaching of the apostles is not "the sole *standard* of truth." He is willing to allow, indeed, that the teaching of the apostles was regarded by the primitive church, and may be rightly regarded by the modern church, as "a *source* from which may be gained a knowledge of divine truth." But that it is "the only rule," or "*standard*," he will not admit; or even that it is more than a "source" along with others. For he tells us that Protestants can be justified "in retaining the Scriptures as a rule of faith and practice" only on the condition that they join with the Scriptures for this function "the enlightened Christian consciousness of true believers," affirming the two to be alike the organs of the Holy Ghost, "the only source and standard of Christian truth." "The true statement of the Protestant position," he adds, "is not that the word of God, contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, but that the Spirit of God, is the sole and ultimate authority for Christian truth—the Spirit of God who spoke through the apostles, *and who still speaks to his people.*" If this be so, the reformers, the first Protestant divines, and the Reformed Confessions, including our own Standards, were not only ignorant of the "true statement of the Protestant position," but in ineradicable opposition to it. When the Shorter Catechism asserts that "the word of God which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments is the only rule" it speaks with the intention and effect of confining the "word of God," which it declares to be "the only rule," to the Scriptures, and of thereby excluding not only the "word of God" which the Romanist affirms to be presented in objective tradition, but also the "word of God" which the mystic affirms that he enjoys through subjective illumination. And, therefore, the Confession of Faith explicitly explains its assertion that "nothing at any time is to be added" to the "whole counsel of God set down in the Scriptures," by adding: "whether by new revelations of the Spirit or traditions of men." A theory of development on a mystical basis is no less in open contradiction to the "formal principle of Protestantism" than one on a Romish basis.

We have spoken only of Dr. McGiffert's formal theory of development, and have pointed out its inconsistency with the

“formal principle” of Protestantism. The material development which, under this formal theory, he would ascribe to Christianity, he does not draw out in the present *Address*. The *Address* is consecrated, no doubt, to the depicting of one of the greatest changes which Christianity has undergone; but this change is not one which appears to Dr. McGiffert to commend itself, according to the tests he lays down, as a proper development of Christianity. The material changes in Christianity which are brought to our attention by the *Address*, therefore, are not illustrations of his theory of development, but are instances of the progressive deterioration of Christianity in its environment of the world. Let us, however, attend for a moment to them.

IV. DR. MCGIFFERT'S THEORY OF THE TRANSFORMATIONS OF CHRISTIANITY.

“The subject of study in church history, as in all theological sciences,” Professor McGiffert tells us in the opening of his *Inaugural Address*, “is Christianity itself.” The church historian’s aim is, therefore, “to contribute to a clearer and fuller understanding of Christianity.” In the prosecution of this aim he must learn to distinguish between the “essential and non-essential elements” of Christianity, “between that in it which is of permanent and universal worth and that which is of only temporary and local significance,” (page 16.) He must, further, make it his special task to discover, by a careful study of Christianity at successive stages of its career, whether it has undergone any transformations, and, if so, what those transformations are, (p. 17.) One would think, as we have already pointed out, that the purpose of this discovery would be to obtain knowledge of what belongs really to Christianity, so that the accretions which have gathered to it from without may be rejected, and the original form of that deposit of faith once for all delivered to the saints may be recovered. But Professor McGiffert excludes all passing of judgment on results from the sphere of the historian as such. The historian’s business is merely to present a complete picture of the transformations that Christianity has undergone. The theologian comes after him, and estimates the value and meaning

of the assimilations and accretions which the historian's labor has brought to light. But Dr. McGiffert, as we have seen, cannot resist the temptation so far to desert this rôle of pure historian as to tell us on what such an estimation must turn. It must not turn, he tells us, on the question of the originality of this element or that in the Christian system, but solely on its ideal harmony with the Christian spirit. Doubtless, the "theologian" who comes after him, however, along with the whole body of Christian people, may be trusted to disagree with him in this pronouncement. It is the Christianity of Christ and his apostles alone that they will care to profess; and they will thank the historian for tracing out the transformations of Christianity, chiefly because his work will enable them to recover for their souls the Christianity which Christ and his apostles taught.

Dr. McGiffert devotes his *Inaugural Address* to the discussion of a single one of these "transformations" of Christianity, the one which he believes to be the "most vital and far-reaching transformation that Christianity has ever undergone," the "transformation of the primitive into the Catholic Church," (p. 18.) This transformation, which was "practically complete before the end of the second century of the church's life," was so radical that "it has done more than anything else to conceal Christianity's original form, and obscure its true character"; and it has been so powerful and far-reaching in its influence that "the entire Christian church still feels the effects of it." In fact, in Dr. McGiffert's view, it gave to the greater portion of the church what has proved to be its permanent form. In it the spirit of primitive Christianity permanently disappeared (p. 28), and the spirit which still rules the Catholic Church permanently entered. The Catholic Church is still living in the period inaugurated then (p. 40), the Greek and Roman Churches being but localizations of the one church which had existed in undivided form for some centuries before their separation.

Since this great "transformation" of the primitive into the Catholic Church, therefore, there have been no "transformations" of Christianity. There have been changes. And these later changes have often been such as to "impress the casual observer

more forcibly, and to seem to him more worthy of notice," than this great fundamental transformation itself. He will think of "the cessation of persecution with the accession of Constantine, and the subsequent union of church and state; the preaching of Christianity to the barbarians of western and northern Europe; the development of the Greek patriarchate and of the Roman papacy; the formation of the elaborate liturgies of the eastern and western churches; the rise of saint and image worship, of the confessional and of the mass; the growth of monasticism, which began by renouncing the world, and ended with subjugating it; the development of Nicene trinitarianism, of the Chalcedonian christology, of the Augustinian anthropology, and of the Anselmic theory of the atonement." And as he thinks of these, he may think them "of greater historical significance than any changes which took place during the first two centuries." But he will be mistaken. The transformation of the primitive into the Catholic Church, which took place in the course of the second century, was a far more fundamental change than any of these subsequent changes, or than them all taken together.

Before this great transformation, it was the free spirit of primitive Christianity that reigned; after it, the church was a completely secularized institution. For the secularization of the church "was not due, as has been so widely thought, to the favor shown the church by the Emperor Constantine, or to the ultimate union of the church and state. The church was in principle secularized as completely as it ever was, long before the birth of Constantine. The union of the church and state was but a ratification of a process already complete, and was itself of minor significance," (page 38.) Of all subsequent movements only that one which we know as the Reformation was sufficiently radical to promise a new "transformation." This movement was in essence a revival of the spirit of primitive Christianity, and it did open a new epoch in the church, so far as it produced its effects. But unfortunately Protestantism has affected only a part, and that the smaller part, of the church. The church at large is still living in the epoch which was inaugurated by the great "transformation" which took place in the second century.

If, then, we speak of the "transformations" of Christianity we must have our eye fixed upon changes which took place before the great transformation that gave birth to the Catholic Church—changes greater and more radical than any that have occurred subsequent to that event. In the days of the church's strenuous youth, she rapidly passed through a series of "transformations" of fundamental importance; much, we suppose, as the stages of babyhood, childhood, boyhood, youth and manhood are all run through in some twenty restless years, to be followed by an extended period of unchanged manhood for the better part of a century. If we understand Dr. McGiffert, he would count, including the Reformation, some four such transformations in all, three of which were suffered by Christianity during the first two centuries of her existence. In other words, by the time that two hundred years had rolled over it the introduction of alien ideas had three times fundamentally transformed the gospel of Christ. In quick succession there were presented to the world, each largely effacing its predecessor, first the Gospel of Love, which Christ preached; then the Gospel of Holiness, which ruled in the primitive church; then the Gospel of Knowledge, announced by the Greek spirit not so much converted by, as converting, the church; and, finally, the Gospel of Authority, the proud self-assertion of the Catholic Church. Last of all, after ages of submission, the primitive spirit once more rises in what we call Protestantism, and revolting against authority proclaims anew the Gospel of Individualistic Freedom.

Let us look a little more closely at Dr. McGiffert's conceptions of these several "transformations."

1. "Christ's Christianity was, above all, ethical; the Sermon on the Mount strikes its key-note." According to Christ, "the active principle of love for God and man constituted the sum of all religion," (p. 24.) Christ came, in other words, not teaching a dogma, but setting an example of a life of perfect love; proclaiming the kingdom of God, founded on the fundamental principle of love for God and man; and announcing the law of the kingdom in such language as that preserved for us in the Sermon on the Mount. It was his example of holy love which reveals

God to the world as Father; and all the emphasis of his teaching was laid on the principle of love.

2. But Christianity extended; and, as it grew, it changed its environment from the Jewish to the Gentile world. This change induced in it certain modifications which were of permanent significance, (p. 21.) These modifications centred in a change of emphasis of fundamental importance, "by which, in consequence of the conception of the immediate and constant presence of the Holy Spirit, and in opposition to the moral corruption of the age, the element of personal holiness or purity naturally came more and more to the front, and increasingly obscured the fundamental principle of Christ," (p. 24.) This is the Christianity of the primitive church, or the church of the apostles, though the latter name is the less descriptive one, inasmuch as the death of the apostles and the close of the apostolic age introduced no change of spirit, but the church of the first-half of the second century remained in principle the same church as that of the last-half of the first century.

When Dr. McGiffert speaks of the consequent obscuration of "the fundamental principle of Christ" as "increasing," he seems to refer to the effect of the introduction into the church, early in the second century, of the educated classes of society. Wherever the influence of Stoicism predominated among these, they readily assimilated with the spirit which already characterized the primitive church. For with the Stoics "the ethical element came to the front, and religion lost its independent significance, having no other value but to promote virtue by supplying it with a divine basis and sanction." This tendency, we are told, "was in entire harmony with that of the Hebrew mind and of early Christianity in general," (p. 25.) Primitive Christianity, therefore, was simply an ethical system with a changed ethical ideal from that of Christ—laying the emphasis on holiness rather than on love. It was, in a word, a "Society for Ethical Culture," with a background of monotheism, and looking to Jesus as its founder and example. "It is true that from the beginning belief in one God and in Jesus Christ was demanded of all converts, but such belief was commonly taken for granted—the formula of baptism

itself implied it—and all the emphasis was laid on the ethical element,” (p. 31.)

3. With the introduction of the educated classes into the church, however, another class of philosophers came in besides the Stoics—a class which brought in a speculative tendency grounded in Platonism, and which began to lay stress on *knowledge*. Christianity seemed to these thinkers only a *revelation*; and accordingly they busied themselves at once with its rational investigation and elucidation. Here appeared the first Christian theologians, and they gave the church, for the first time, a “theology.” In their hands arose the first Christian creeds; through their work Christianity became for the first time a system of belief. The transformation of Christianity which they wrought did not come without throes and conflicts. Nevertheless, so far as this it did come; and its coming is marked later on by the approval and adoption by the church of “the speculative theology of the great fathers and doctors.” In this sense “the spirit of gnosticism lived on, and finally won a permanent place within the church.” Here is a transformation as great as it is possible to conceive: the “Society for Ethical Culture” becomes an institution for the propagation of a body of truth.

4. But the temporary dualistic form in which the speculative spirit first entered the church could not, and did not, find acceptance. “And it was in the effort to repudiate it that steps were taken which resulted” in that momentous transformation, to the description of which Dr. McGiffert gives his *Address*—the transformation into the Catholic Church. These efforts to repudiate gnosticism involved an appeal to authority, and the essence of this great transformation consists, therefore, in the substitution of the idea of external authority for the individualistic spirit of earlier Christianity. “The spirit of Catholicism means submission to an external authority in matters both of faith and practice, and dependence upon an external source for all needed spiritual supplies,” (p. 21.)

Three steps are counted in this transformation: “First, the recognition of the teaching of the apostles as the exclusive standard and norm of Christian truth; second, the confinement to a spe-

cific office (namely, the Catholic office of bishop) of the power to determine what is the teaching of the apostles; and third, the designation of a specific institution (namely, the Catholic Church) as the sole channel of divine grace," (p. 29.) When the transformation was complete, therefore, the whole Catholic machinery of "external authority" had been invented, and the last vestige of spiritual freedom had been crushed out. But its earlier stages included the invention of the very first and simplest forms of "external authority" to which Christians bowed, the first recognition of the authority of the apostles as teachers, and the rise of the very conception of an apostolical Scripture canon. The greatness of the transformation that is asserted can be properly estimated only by remembering that it thus includes, not only the completion of the full Catholic system, but, at the other extreme, the very earliest conception of a Christian "external authority" at all. Before this change, Christians had no external law; by virtue of the Holy Spirit dwelling in them, each was a law unto himself. The change consisted in the finding of an external Christian authority. This was found first in the teaching of the apostles, either as written in their extant books (and hence arose the idea of a New Testament), or as formulated in clear, succinct statements (and hence arose the idea of a rule of faith, and of creeds). That it was found afterwards in the bishop, considered as the living representative of the apostles, and still later in the organized church as the institute of salvation, constitutes only a minor matter. The finding of an "external authority" at all was the main thing, and constituted a tremendous transformation in the spirit and the nature of Christianity. This great transformation took place in the course of the second century. Before that there was no external Christian authority at all.

5. It was only after ages of submission to external authority that a partial revival of the individualistic spirit of primitive Christianity arose in the Protestant Reformation. By the Protestants "the Catholic principle was definitely rejected" (page 40); "but elements of Catholicism were retained which materially modified the forms by which the revived spirit of primitive Christianity was expressed, and which have served to make the Protestant a dif-

ferent thing from the primitive church," (page 42.) In so far as Protestantism restored to the individual his spiritual rights, and "made the Holy Spirit, which voices itself both in the teaching of the apostles and in the enlightened Christian consciousness of true believers, the only source and standard of spiritual truth," it is a revival of the spirit of primitive Christianity. But in so far as it did not repudiate but "retained the Catholic conception of an apostolic Scripture canon, a conception which the primitive church entirely lacked," it remains in bondage to the Catholic conception of "external authority." The true statement of the Protestant position is not, then, "That the word of God contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments is the sole and ultimate authority for Christian truth." That is Catholic. But it is, "That the Spirit of God is the sole and ultimate standard of truth—the Spirit of God who spoke through the apostles, and who still speaks to his people," (page 43.) No doubt the voice of the Spirit must always accord with itself, and we may, therefore, allow that the genuine teaching of the apostles is also true; for they, too, had the Spirit. But the true Protestant spirit finds "authority" in the Holy Ghost alone; and he speaks in the hearts of Christians to-day as truly as he ever did to the apostles. It cannot, then, come under bondage to the "external authority" of the apostolic teaching. In a word, the specific Quaker position is the only true Protestant one.

Now there is much that occurs to us to say of this scheme of the "transformations" of Christianity which Dr. McGiffert presents. That in the course of the ages Christianity did undergo very real "transformations" there is, of course, no reason to deny. And no Protestant will doubt that, of these, the most complete and the most destructive to the conceptions of primitive Christianity was that great transformation which gave the world the Catholic Church, with its claim to all the authority of heaven for the execution of its will. But it is another question whether Dr. McGiffert's characterization of the several "transformations" which he thinks Christianity has undergone—or even his characterization of that great "transformation" alone which produced the Catholic Church—is just and accordant with the facts. Had

in proclaiming and defending it? To look back, thus, to the past, is it not to hanker after the leeks and onions of Egypt?

We are told that the whole conception of authority in religion is unprimitive and the invention of the second century, in the effort of the church to conquer its temporary heresies. If we wish to be "primitive," if we desire to be followers of the apostles, we must cast off all "external authority," and especially must we cast off the fancy that the teaching of the apostles is authority. But why should we wish to be "primitive," or desire to be followers of the apostles? It can only be because, in feeling after the authority we have lost, we instinctively look to them as authoritative teachers whom we can trust. We cannot question the truth of their teaching, (page 29.) But in matters of truth, authority consists precisely in the possession of unquestionable truth. How can we fail, then, to recognize and appeal to the authority of this unquestionable truth taught by the apostles, as the standard to which all so-called teachings of the Spirit in the heart shall be conformed? According to Professor McGiffert, however, such an appeal to the authority of the apostles is itself unapostolic. To go back to the apostles is to renounce the authority of the apostles; it is to renounce every "external authority," for they knew nothing of an "external authority," and to submit everything to the internal authority of the Holy Spirit, who speaks in every Christian's heart. This is what the apostles teach us. Is not this to cut the limb off on which he is sitting? He appeals to the authority of the apostles in order to destroy the authority of the apostles. This seems to us a most illogical proceeding. It appears to us that we ought either to renounce all appeal to authority, and cast ourselves wholly on the Holy Spirit in the heart as the sole revealer of truth, or else, making our appeal to the authority of the apostles, roundly to accept their authority as supreme.

To this, indeed, it must come. We cannot have two supreme standards. Either the Holy Spirit in the heart is the norm of truth and the deliverances of the apostles must be subjected to what we consider His deliverances (and then we have Mysticism cooling down into Rationalism), or else the apostolic revelation is

the norm of truth, and the fancied deliverances of the Spirit in our heart must be subjected to the Apostolic declarations (and then we have Protestantism). There can be no doubt which view is Confessional. The *Westminster Confession* (chap. i. 10), for example, tells us distinctly that the Supreme Judge is the Holy Spirit speaking in Scripture and that all private judgments are to be subject to it. There can be as little doubt which is apostolic. The Apostle Paul, for example, demands that the reality of all claims to be led by the Spirit shall be tested by their recognition of his claim to speak authoritatively the word of God (1 Cor. xiv. 37). Nor can there be much doubt which is rational. Is it still asked: What difference does it make what the Apostle Paul says, if we have the revealing Spirit as truly as he had it? This much, at any rate, we must reply: If his words were really not authoritative they were not even true, for he asserts them to be authoritative. And if the words of Paul and his fellow-apostles were not true, we do not even know whether there be a Holy Spirit. It is on the authority of the New Testament alone that we know of the existence of a Holy Spirit, or of his indwelling in the hearts of Christians; that we are justified in interpreting inward aspiration as his leading. If their authority cannot be trusted we have no Holy Spirit. After all, we must build on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being our chief corner-stone, or we build on the stand.

BENJAMIN B. WARFIELD.

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I. THE LATEST PHASE OF HISTORICAL RATIONALISM.

IN the last number of the QUARTERLY (pp. 36 *et seq.*), we undertook to give some general account of the new historical rationalism which is being now introduced to the American churches by certain enthusiastic pupils of Adolph Harnack; and then, for its better elucidation, began a somewhat fuller exposition of one or two of the more fundamental positions assumed by Dr. A. C. McGiffert in his *Inaugural Address*, in his advocacy of it. We pointed out in that section of our article Dr. McGiffert's conception of Christianity as a development, and gave some account of the "transformations" which he conceives Christianity to have undergone since its origination by Christ. The most important of these "transformations" he represents, certainly with the best of right from his point of view, to be that from the primitive to the Catholic Church, to the better understanding of which his *Address* is devoted. For our better estimation of the significance of his teaching here, we should next consider more closely:

V. DR. MCGIFFERT'S THEORY OF THE PRIMITIVE CHURCH.

One of the most striking passages in Dr. McGiffert's *Inaugural Address* is that in which he draws a picture of "primitive Christianity" as it is conceived by him, preliminary to expounding what he calls the momentous "transformation of the primitive into the Catholic Church, of the church of the apostles into that of the old Catholic fathers." That important changes did take place

in the spirit, teaching, and organization of the church during the first two centuries of its life is, as we have said, of course, undoubted. Whether these changes were, however, of the nature which Dr. McGiffert represents them to have been is a different matter, and depends very largely upon the truth of his picture of "primitive Christianity." We desire now to look for a moment at this picture.

He sums up his conception of "primitive Christianity" in the brief formula: "The spirit of primitive Christianity is the spirit of religious individualism, based on the felt presence of the Holy Ghost." There are combined in this statement the recognition of a fundamental truth of the first importance and the assertion of a fundamental error of the utmost seriousness. The truth is, that all vital Christianity was conceived by the apostles and their first converts as the product of the Holy Spirit working upon the hearts of men. The error is, that the result of this conception was "religious individualism" in Dr. McGiffert's sense, that is, in the sense that each individual Christian felt and asserted himself to be, by virtue of his possession of the Spirit, a law unto himself, independent of the objective revelation of God's will through the apostles, of the objective means of grace provided in the ordinances of the church, and of the objective discipline exercised by the organized Christian societies; which three things Dr. McGiffert brings together under the somewhat contemptuous designation of "external authority." The diligent reader of those documents of "primitive Christianity," which we call the New Testament, will scarcely need to be told that the effect of the work of the Holy Spirit upon the hearts of Christians is represented in them to be to draw and to bind Christians to these "external authorities," not to array them against them.

It is impossible to exaggerate the emphasis which is placed, in these primitive documents, upon the presence of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of believers as the indispensable condition of their becoming or remaining Christians. They were Christians by virtue of their new relation to Christ. Christ was preached to them, and that as crucified; the truth concerning him was made known to them, and accepted by them. They were Christians because

they accepted him as their Prophet, Priest, and King. But no man could say Jesus is Lord but in the Holy Spirit. It was only by the work of the Holy Spirit, therefore, that Christians were made Christians, and he remained the immanent source of all spiritual life. It was this feature of the new covenant which had engrossed the attention of Joel when he foresaw the glories that should come. It was this great promise that the dying Master had presented as the comfort of his people. It was by the visible and audible descent of the Spirit that the church was constituted on that first great Pentecost. It was by receiving the Spirit that men became Christians, in the Spirit that they were baptized into one body, by his presence within them that they were made the sons of God, and by his leading that they were enabled to cherish the filial spirit. Christians were taught to look to the Spirit as the source of every impulse to good and of every power to good. In him alone was the inspiration, the strength, the sphere of the Christian's whole life.

The presence of the Spirit of God in the apostolic church was, moreover, manifested not merely by the spiritual graces of Christians, of every one of which he was the sole author, but also in a great variety of miraculous gifts. It is no exaggeration to say that the apostolic church was a miraculous church. It is not easy to overestimate the supernatural character of either our Lord's ministry or the apostolic church. When the Son of God came to earth, he drew heaven with him. The signs which accompanied his ministry were but the trailing cloud of glory which he brought from heaven, which is his home. His own divine power, by which he began to found his church, he continued in the apostles whom he had chosen to complete this great work; although their use of it, as was fitting, appears to have been more sporadic than his own. And they transmitted it, as a part of their own miracle-working and the crowning sign of their divine commission, to others, in the form of what the New Testament calls "spiritual gifts," that is, extraordinary capacities produced in the primitive communions by direct gift of the Holy Ghost. The number, variety, and diffusion of these "spiritual gifts" are, perhaps, quite commonly underestimated. The classical passage concerning them

(1 Cor. xii.—xiv.) only brings before us a chance picture of divine worship in an apostolical church; it is the ordinary church service of the time, and we have no reason to suppose that essentially the same scenes would not be witnessed in any one of the many congregations planted by the apostles in the length and breadth of the world. The exception would be a church without, not a church with, miraculous gifts. Everywhere the apostolic church was marked out among men as itself a gift from God, by manifesting its possession of the Spirit through appropriate works of the Spirit: miracles of healings and power, miracles of knowledge and speech. The apostolic church was characteristically a miraculous church.

In such circumstances, it would seem very difficult to exaggerate the supernatural claims of the "primitive church." But Dr. McGiffert has managed to do so. How he has managed to do so, and with what serious consequences to the fundamental bases of our religion, it will now be our duty to point out.

1. He exaggerates the supernatural character of the apostolic church, in the first place, by representing the enjoyment of the "spiritual gifts" in it as absolutely universal. This is the constant assumption of the *Address*, and is expressed in such statements as this: "It was the universal conviction of the primitive church that every Christian believer enjoys the immediate presence of the Holy Spirit. The presence of the Spirit . . . meant the power to work miracles, to speak with tongues, to utter prophecies," (p. 19.) "The consciousness of the possession of supernatural gifts" is made, accordingly, the characteristic of the primitive Christian.

But, widespread as the supernatural gifts were in the apostolical church, they were not universal. They were the characteristic of the apostolical church, not of the primitive Christian. The circumstances attending the conversion of the Samaritans are recorded for us, in the eighth chapter of Acts, apparently for the very purpose of teaching us this. The first converts were all brought into the church by the apostles, and the primitive Christians themselves were, it appears, in danger of supposing that the possession of miraculous gifts was the mark of a Christian. There-

fore, it was ordered that the conversion of the Samaritans should take place through non-apostolic preaching, that all men might learn (and Simon among them) that "it was through the laying on of the hands of the apostles that the Spirit was given." In a word, the miraculous gifts are, in the New Testament, made one of the "signs of an apostle." Where he conveyed them they existed; where he did not convey them they did not exist. In every case where there is record of them they are connected with apostles; usually they are conferred by the actual laying on of the apostles' hands. In no recorded instance are they conferred by the laying on of the hands of one not an apostle. In fine, the supernatural gifts of the apostolic church are attestations of the apostles' commission and authority. By detaching them from the apostles, and representing them as the possession of the primitive Christian as such, Dr. McGiffert depreciates the apostles relatively to other Christians, and assimilates Christians as such to the apostles. He can gain no authority for this from the New Testament record.

2. The seriousness of this error is exhibited so soon as we note the stress which Dr. McGiffert lays, among the supernatural gifts, on the special gift of revelation as the universal possession of primitive Christians. This, again, is the constant assumption of the *Address*, and comes to expression in such statements as this: "Christian believers had from the beginning believed themselves in immediate contact with the Holy Spirit, and had looked chiefly and directly to him for revelations of truth, as such truth might be needed," (p. 33.) Accordingly, we are told that the "original conception" was that "of continuing divine revelations"; and the "communion with God through the Holy Ghost," enjoyed by the primitive Christians, is spoken of as involving "the reception of revelations directly from him" (p. 21); and this is sharply emphasized by contrasting it with "the submission to an external authority in matters both of faith and practice," which characterized later times. In a word, Dr. McGiffert teaches that the primitive Christian as such, by virtue of his communion with God through the immediate presence of the Holy Spirit with him, needed no source of knowledge of God's truth and will ex-

ternal to himself: "The Holy Spirit was in the church, imparting all needed truth and light" (p. 29), and spoke as truly to the other Christians as to the apostles themselves.

Certainly, however, this is not the state of affairs reflected in those documents of the primitive church gathered into our New Testament. In them, the gifts of prophecy, interpretation, revelation, do not appear as the universal possession of Christians as such. They are expressly confined to some, to whom the Spirit has imparted them as he distributes his gifts severally to whom he will. In them, the authority over all Christians of the apostolic declarations of truth and duty is expressly and reiteratingly affirmed, and is based upon the possession of the Spirit by the apostles in a sense in which he was not common to all believers. In them, so far from the apostolic word being subjected to the test of the Spirit in the hearts of all Christians, it is made the test of their possession of the Spirit. In a word, in them the "external authority" of the revelation of truth and duty through the apostles is made supreme; and the recognition of it as supreme is made the test of the presence of the Spirit in the heart of others. (1 Cor. xiv. 37.) Neglecting the whole body of apostolic assertion of authority, and the proof of the acceptance of that authority by the whole body of Christians which pervades the New Testament, Dr. McGiffert represents the common gift of the Holy Spirit to Christians as constituting every Christian a law to himself, and so depreciates the apostles and the apostolic word relatively to other Christians, and assimilates Christians as such to the apostles. He can obtain no warrant for this from the New Testament.

3. The seriousness of this error is still further increased by the circumstance that Dr. McGiffert extends what we may call the supernatural age of Christianity, or what a writer of the same school of thought with himself calls "the Spirit-permeated community," far beyond the limits of the apostolic period. He expressly tells us that no change of spirit took place synchronously "with the passage of Christianity from the Jewish to the Gentile world," nor yet synchronously "with the death of the apostles, and the close of the apostolic age," (p. 22.) "The church of

the first half of the second century," he tells us, "believed itself to be just as truly under the immediate control of the Spirit as the apostolic church. There was the same consciousness of the possession of supernatural gifts, especially of the gift of prophecy. * * * No line, in fact, was drawn between their own age and that of the apostles by the Christians of the early second century. They were conscious of no loss, either of light or power," (p. 22.) "The only authority that was recognized," we are told again, "was the Holy Spirit, and he was supposed to speak to Christians of the second century as truly as he had ever spoken through the apostles," (p. 33.) Accordingly, we are told that it is only on *a priori* or dogmatic grounds, not on historical ones, that a line can be drawn between the apostolic and post-apostolic ages, so as to "emphasize the supernatural character of the former as distinguished from the latter," (p. 22.)

This is again, however, certainly not the impression which the contemporary records make on the reader. Those records do draw the line very sharply between the apostles and any leaders, however great, of the second century church. To the apostles alone, the Christians of this age conceived, did Jesus give "authority over the gospel," as Barnabas phrases it. They alone were conceived of as in such a sense the mouthpieces of Christ that Ignatius, for example, could say that "the Lord did nothing without the Father, either by himself or by the apostles." It does not mark the personal humility of the men, but the recognized proprieties of the case, when Polycarp, for instance, wrote to the Philippians: "These things, brethren, write I unto you . . . because you invited me; for neither am I, nor is any one like unto me, able to follow the wisdom of the blessed and glorious Paul;" or when Ignatius wrote to the Romans: "I do not enjoin you as Peter and Paul did; they were apostles, I am a convict." From the beginning, therefore, the writings of the apostles are appealed to by name, quoted as "Scripture" along with, and with equal respect with, the Old Testament, and bowed to with reverence and submission. No one apparently dreamed of claiming that equality with the apostles which Dr. McGiffert ascribes to every Christian, as a channel of knowledge concerning divine things; everybody submitted to the "external authority" of their writings.

Nor do these records permit us to believe that the supernatural gifts extended into the second century in an unbroken stream. Who can fail to feel the gulf that yawns between the clear, detailed and precise allusions to these gifts that meet us in the New Testament, and the vague and general allusions to them which alone are found in the authentic literature of the second century? As was long ago pointed out triumphantly by Conyers Middleton, the early second century is almost bare of allusions to contemporary supernatural gifts. The apostolical fathers contain no clear and certain allusions to them. And so characteristic of the age is this sobriety of claim, that the apparently miraculous occurrences recorded as attending the martyrdom of Polycarp, in the letter of the Church of Smyrna, are an acknowledged bar to the admission of the genuineness of the document; and it is only on purifying the record of them, some as interpolations, some as misinterpretations, that Dr. Lightfoot, for example, thought himself warranted in assigning to it as early a date as A. D. 155. When references to supernatural gifts occur, as in Justin and Irenæus, they are couched in general terms, and suggest rather a general knowledge that such gifts had been common in the church than specific acquaintance with them as ordinary occurrences of the time. The whole evidence in the matter, in a word, is just what we should expect if these gifts were conferred by the apostles, and gradually died out with the generation which had been brought to Christ by their preaching. The copious stories of supernatural occurrences in writings of the third and later centuries have their roots, not in the authentic literature of the second century, but in the apocryphal Gospels and Acts. Dr. McGiffert can obtain no warrant from the contemporary records for his assimilation of the Christians of the early second century to the apostles, and his consequent depreciation of the apostles, both in their personal authority and in the authority of their written word, relatively to the Spirit-led Christian, as such.

4. The whole effect, and, we ought, perhaps, also to say the whole purpose, of the speculatively reconstructed picture of "primitive Christianity" which Dr. McGiffert gives us, is to destroy the supreme authority of the New Testament in the church

as the source and norm of truth and duty, and to reduce Christianity to a form of mystical subjectivism.

Dr. McGiffert admits, indeed, inconsistently with his fundamental conception but consistently with historical fact, that "from the very beginning the Jewish Scriptures, to which Christ and his apostles had so frequently appealed, had been appropriated by the Christian church," although not, possibly, in their native sense. He admits, also, that the truth of apostolic teaching was unquestioned, and that "the apostles were universally recognized as the divinely-commissioned and inspired founders of the church" (p. 29); and because they were thus looked upon, "their teaching was everywhere regarded as a *source* from which might be gained a knowledge of divine truth," (p. 32.)

But he very justly points out that thus to look upon the teaching of the apostles as one of the sources from which a knowledge of truth may be obtained is a "very different thing" from "making the teaching of the apostles the sole *standard* of truth," and "ascribing to their teaching exclusive normative authority," (p. 33.) Accordingly, he is able to tell us that "the primitive church entirely lacked the catholic conception of an apostolic Scripture canon" (p. 42); that the church attained the conception of an authoritative "apostolic Scripture canon" only deep in the second century and as a piece of borrowed goods from Gnostic heresy; that the early church needed no New Testament, "especially since the Holy Spirit was in the church imparting all needed truth and light" (p. 29); and accordingly that "the only authority that was recognized was the Holy Spirit, and he was supposed to speak to Christians of the second century as truly as he had ever spoken through the apostles," (p. 33.)

The ideas thus attributed to the "primitive church" are the ideas of Dr. McGiffert; and therefore he tells us that the Protestant churches do not speak the truth when they make "the word of God, contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, the sole and ultimate authority for Christian truth," since the Spirit of God is this sole and ultimate authority—as he speaks still to his people as well as formerly through his apostles, (p. 43.) He tells us, therefore, plainly, that the Holy Spirit still reveals

himself to the members of the several churches "if they keep themselves in touch with him, as truly as to members of the primitive church" (p. 39), and that is, as we have seen, "as truly as he had ever spoken through the apostles," (p. 33.)

Thus the upshot of Dr. McGiffert's speculative reconstruction of the primitive church is to set aside the authority of the New Testament altogether, and to enthrone in its place the supreme authority of an "inner light." This is most excellent Quaker teaching, but it is a direct onslaught upon the very basis of Reformed, and, indeed, of the whole Protestant, theology. It seems to be incumbent upon us, therefore, to scrutinize with some care, before we bring these observations on Dr. McGiffert's teaching to a close, what he has to say regarding the origin of the New Testament.

VI. DR. MCGIFFERT'S THEORY OF THE ORIGIN OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CANON.

The task of Dr. McGiffert's *Inaugural Address*, as we have seen, is to trace the steps in what he thinks "the most vital and far-reaching transformation that Christianity has ever undergone"—"the transformation of the primitive into the Catholic Church, of the church of the apostles into that of the old Catholic fathers." One of the steps in this "momentous transformation"—a step which is justly spoken of as "of stupendous significance," if it can be made good that it constituted a part of a transformation which took place in the church of the second century—is represented to be no less an one than this: "the recognition of the teaching of the apostles as the exclusive standard and norm of Christian truth," (p. 29.) In this was included, as one of its chief elements, what may be called, without exaggerating Dr. McGiffert's conception, the invention by the second century church of the New Testament canon. We must now give some consideration to this astonishing representation.

According to Dr. McGiffert, the primitive church "entirely lacked" the "conception of an apostolic Scripture canon." Its spirit was in fact wholly alien to such a conception. Its spirit was "a spirit of religious individualism, based upon the felt pres-

ence of the Holy Ghost." As all Christians possessed the Spirit, he was "the only authority which was recognized"; and he was supposed to speak to all Christians "as truly as he had ever spoken through the apostles." The apostles were no doubt "reverenced" as "divinely guided and inspired"; they "were universally recognized as the divinely-commissioned and inspired founders of the church;" and "their teaching was consequently everywhere regarded as a *source* from which might be gained a knowledge of divine truth." But we will remember that we are very justly told that "that is a very different thing from making the teaching of the apostles the sole *standard* of truth—a very different thing from ascribing to their teaching exclusive normative authority." All Christians were as truly "in immediate contact with the Holy Spirit" as the apostles; to him directly and not to the apostles they looked "for revelations of truth, as such truth might be needed;" and having him always with them, and having, moreover, along with him, the Old Testament, "they needed no New Testament."

But Gnosticism arose, and the church joined in combat with it. In the effort to repudiate the spirit of Gnosticism it was, that steps were taken which resulted in the disappearance of that spirit of individualism which was the spirit of the "church of the apostles," and the introduction of "the spirit of Catholicism," "which means submission to an external authority in matters both of faith and practice." Three steps were taken towards this consummation. The first of these was "the recognition of the teaching of the apostles as the exclusive standard and norm of Christian truth." And in this step were included the formation of a New Testament canon, and the formation of an apostolic rule of faith.

"The Gnostics were the first Christians to have a New Testament." In seeking to commend their bizarre doctrines, they were led to appeal to the authority of the apostles transmitted orally or in writing. "Hence, they felt themselves impelled at an early date to form a canon of their own, which should contain the teachings of Christ through his apostles, which should, in other words, be apostolic." This was a new thing in Christendom. But no one could deny that what the apostles taught was true; the

apostles, as well as other Christians, had the Spirit. The Gnostics' appeal to apostolic authority could be met, therefore, only by determining what was truly apostolic. Thus "the church reached the conception of an authoritative apostolic Scripture canon and of an authoritative apostolic rule of faith." Thus it was led to gather into one whole all those writings which were commonly regarded as of apostolic origin; in other words, to form an authoritative and exclusive apostolic Scripture canon, which all who wished to be regarded as Christian disciples must acknowledge, and whose teachings they must accept." "The conception of an apostolic Scripture canon had arisen, and the appeal to that canon had been widely made, before the close of the second century."

This is the account which Dr. McGiffert gives of the creation of the New Testament canon. It will be seen that it is very comprehensive. It includes an account of the origin of the ascription of "authority" to the apostolic teaching; an account of the rise of the very conception of an apostolic canon of Scripture; an account of the collection into such a canon of the writings "commonly regarded as of apostolic origin"; and an account of the imposition of this body of collected writings upon the church as its law of faith and conduct. It includes an account, in a word, of the whole "stupendous transformation," from a state of affairs in which every Christian man, by virtue of the Holy Spirit dwelling in him, was a law to himself, and knew no external apostolic authority at all; to a state of affairs when, "under the stress of conflict, they had resigned their lofty privileges and made the apostles the sole recipients (under the new dispensation) of divine communications, and thus their teaching the only source (the Old Testament, of course, excepted) for a knowledge of Christian truth, and the sole standard and norm of such truth." This whole stupendous transformation from beginning to end, is included in the course of the second century, that is, belongs to distinctly post-apostolic times. And it was due to the pressure of the Gnostic controversy, and, indeed, was a following by the church of Gnostic example. In a word, the ascription of any "authority" as teachers to the apostles at all, and the very conception and existence of a New Testament canon, and much more the erection

of such a canon as, along with the Old Testament, the exclusive standard of faith and practice, were no part of primitive or apostolic Christianity at all. They were inventions of the second century church, as expedients the better to meet her difficulties in controversy.

What is to be said of this theory of the formation of the New Testament canon?

1. This is to be said, in the first place: That the cause which is assigned for this stupendous transformation is utterly inadequate to bear its weight.

We are asked to believe that a church which had hitherto known nothing of apostolic authority, and much less of a canon of authoritative apostolic writings, but had depended wholly upon the living voice of the ever-present Holy Spirit speaking to Christians as such, suddenly invented this whole machinery of external authority, solely in order to meet the appeal of the Gnostics to such an external authority. That is to say, in conflict with the Gnostic position, the church deserted its own entrenched position and went over to the Gnostic position, horse, foot, and dragoons. The church, we are told, made its sole appeal to the internal authority of the Holy Spirit, speaking in the hearts of living Christians. The Gnostics appealed to the external authority of the apostles, and were the first to do so. If the situation was in any measure like this, the church was assuredly entitled to meet, and most certainly would have met, this heretical appeal to external authority with the declaration that the Holy Spirit of God which it had was greater than the apostles which the Gnostics claimed to have; and that the living and incorruptible voice of that Spirit in the hearts of Christians, was more sure than the dead, corruptible word of the apostles. Yet instead of doing this we are told that the church weakly submitted to the Gnostic imposition of an external authority upon it, and made its sole appeal to it. This construction is an impossible one. The facts that the Gnostics appealed to apostolic authority, and especially to a body of authoritative apostolic writings as against the church, and that the church appealed to apostolic authority and to an apostolic canon as against the Gnostics, do not suggest that the Gnostics

were the first to appeal to apostolic teaching and to make a New Testament; but rather prove that the authority of apostolic teaching and of the apostolic writings was already the settled common ground on which all Christians of all names stood.

This is not to be met by saying that just what we have supposed the church would do in the circumstances assumed was done—by the Montanists. The Montanists were not the church; but from their first origin were in violent conflict with the church. Nor did the Montanists represent a revival of the primitive spirit. The main reason for fancying so arises from the exigencies of the theory at present under discussion; and they were certainly not recognized as doing so by the men of their time best qualified to judge of their affiliations. They are uniformly represented as smacking more of Phrygia than of Palestine, more of Cybele than of Christ. Nor yet did they essay to do what in these circumstances we should have expected the church to do; but something very different indeed. They, too, accepted the external authority of apostles and canon. They themselves rested in this external authority, and did not seek to add to the deposit of truth handed down by it. They claimed only to “develop” the “practical” side of Christianity; and that not by means of a universal teaching of the Spirit, but by means of the sporadic continuance of the specific prophetic office, and by a series of requirements laid by this external authority upon the consciences of men.

Nor is the case met by the remark that the surrender of the church to the point of view of the Gnostics in this matter of external authority no doubt does presuppose “a partial loss of the original consciousness of the immediate presence of the Holy Ghost.” Of course it does; if such an original consciousness ever existed in the sense intended. The point at issue is whether any such “original consciousness,” in the sense intended, ever existed. The point urged is that if this consciousness existed it could not but have shown itself in the conflict against Gnosticism. The point yielded is that it must indeed have already been “partially lost.” The point claimed is that there is no proof, then, that it ever existed, but every proof that the Gnostics and the church stood on common ground in their common appeal to “external authority.”

2. It is to be said, secondly, that the origin of this stupendous transformation is assigned by this theory to a most unlikely source.

The Gnostics were not just the people whom we can naturally suspect of the invention of the idea of an external apostolic authority. They are known in history as men of speculative intellect, pride of knowledge, rationalistic methods. They are known in history as rejecters of external authorities, not as the creators of them. It is allowed that the Old Testament had from the beginning been accepted by the church as the authoritative voice of God. The Gnostics repudiated the Jewish Scriptures. Marcion is represented to us, by every contemporary witness, as a man who discarded part of the New Testament canon which had come to his hand; and he certainly mutilated and curtailed the books of his "Apostolicum." To such men as these we can scarcely ascribe the invention of the fiction of an apostolic canon. That they held and appealed to such an "external authority" can be accounted for only on the supposition that this was already the settled position of the church, which they sought to rationalize and so to reform.

3. It is to be said, thirdly, that to assign the origin of the New Testament canon to the Gnostics is to contradict the whole body of historical testimony which has come down to us as to the relation of the Gnostics to the New Testament canon.

The fathers, to whose refutation of them we are indebted for well-nigh our whole knowledge of the Gnostics, are unanimous in representing them as proceeding with the church canon as their point of departure, not as first suggesting to the church the conception of a canon. They differed among themselves, we are told, in their mode of dealing with the church's canon. Some, like Marcion, used the shears, and boldly cut off from it all that did not suit their purposes; others, like Valentinus, depended on artificial exegesis to conform the teaching of the apostles to their own views. For all alike, however, an authoritative apostolic canon is presupposed, and to all alike this presupposed authoritative apostolic canon constituted an obstacle to their heretical teachings, and accordingly would not have been presupposed by them could it have been avoided.

4. And this leads to saying, fourthly, that this whole theory of the formation of the New Testament canon involves a serious arraignment of the trustworthiness, or, as we should rather say plainly, the truthfulness, of the whole body of the great church fathers who ornament the closing years of the second century.

Take such a man, for instance, as Irenæus. It is positively impossible to believe that anything like the origination of, or any essential change in, the New Testament canon occurred in his lifetime without charging him with conscious falsehood in his witness concerning it. For Irenæus not only testifies to the existence and estimate as divinely authoritative of the New Testament at the close of his life, but repeatedly asserts that this same New Testament had enjoyed this same authority from the apostles' day. Now, Irenæus was already a young man when Marcion provided his followers with his mutilated New Testament. He had himself sat as a pupil at the feet of John's pupil, Polycarp, in Asia Minor. He had served the church of Lyons as presbyter and bishop. He had kept in full communication with the churches both of Ephesus and of Rome. And he tells us that so strict had been the church's watchfulness over its New Testament that not even a single text of it had been corrupted. It avails nothing to say that, nevertheless, many texts had been corrupted. Irenæus could be mistaken in some things; but in some things he could not be mistaken. If such a thing as the New Testament had been invented in his own day he could not have been ignorant of it. Here the dilemma is stringent: either Irenæus has borne consciously false witness, or else the church in Ephesus, in Rome, and in Gaul, already had in the days of Marcion the same New Testament which it is confessed that it had at the close of the century. And practically the same argument might be formed on the testimony of Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Theophilus of Antioch, or, indeed, the whole body of the church writers of the close of the second century.

5. It is to be said, still further, that the whole theory of the origin of the New Testament canon in post-apostolic circles is inconsistent with the acknowledged position of the church during this period.

It is acknowledged that from the beginning the church received the Old Testament at the apostles' hands as the word of God. (p. 28.) From the beginning, therefore, the church had an "external authority," and possessed already the idea of a "canon." How could it help adding to this authoritative teaching the writings of the apostles, whom, as is admitted, it recognized as the divinely commissioned and inspired founders of the church (p. 29), and whom it revered as divinely guided and inspired? (p. 32.) The whole dealing of the church with the heresies of the day betrays the fact that apostolicity and authority were to it synonymous terms. Every step which Dr. McGiffert traces in the opposition to these heresies is an outgrowth of this conception, and is recognized by Dr. McGiffert as an expression of this conception. Apostolicity was indeed the war-cry in all the church's battles; and yet we are asked to suppose that this was a *borrowed* war-cry—borrowed from her enemies!

6. Finally, it is to be said that there is quite as much evidence from this whole period of the church's possession and high estimate of the New Testament, as the nature of the literary remains from the time would warrant us in expecting.

It is nothing to the point to say that we cannot, with full historical right, speak of a New Testament "canon" until deep in the fourth century, since this word was not applied to the New Testament in this sense until then; or that we cannot, with full historical right, speak of a "New Testament" until late in the second century, for not until then was this name applied to it. We are not investigating the history of names, but of things. The term "instrument" which Tertullian applies to the New Testament is just as good a designation of the thing as the term "canon" that Jerome uses. And there was an earlier name for what we call the "New Testament" than that now hoary and sacred title. Over against "The Law and the Prophets," which was the name then given the Old Testament, men had a "Gospel and Apostles," which was the name they gave the New Testament. And as they commonly called the one-half of the canon briefly "The Law," so they called the other half for similar reasons, "The Gospel." The name still remains in Augustine; it is the common name

for the New Testament in the second century. It was clearly already in use in the days of Ignatius, and of the authors of the so-called second epistle of Clement and the epistle to Diognetus. New Testament books are among the "Oracles" in the days of Papias and of the author of 2 Clement. To Polycarp, Ephesians was already along with Psalms in "the sacred letters." To Barnabas, Matthew was "Scripture"; and indeed, already to 1st Timothy Luke was as much "Scripture" as Deuteronomy (1 Tim. v. 18), and to 2 Peter Paul's letters as much Scripture as "the other Scriptures" of the Old Testament. Dr. McGiffert gives some hint (p 27), indeed, that he may deny that 1 Timothy was a letter of Paul's, or even a product of the first Christian century. Whether he would make 2 Peter also of post-Gnostic origin, he does not tell us. But too many adjustments of this kind will need to be made to render it "historical" to deny that the church had an authoritative New Testament from the beginning of its life.

What color of historical ground remains, then, for the asserted "stupendous transformation" in the church during the second century, by which it acquired not only the actual possession but the very conception of an apostolic Scripture canon?

There is, first of all, this fact: that in the latter part of the second century the evidence that the church possessed a New Testament canon first becomes copious. But this is not because the church then first acquired a canon; the evidence is retrospective in its character and force. It is simply because Christian literature of a sort which could bear natural testimony to the fact first then becomes abundant. It is a great historical blunder to confound such an emergence of copious testimony with the historical emergence of the thing testified to.

Then, secondly, there is doubtless this fact: that in its controversies with the Gnostic sects the church was thrown back upon its New Testament and its authority as before it had never had occasion to be. When the gospel was preached to Jews and Gentiles the simple story was told; and there was no occasion to appeal to books, save in the former case to the prophecies of the Old Testament. When Christianity was defended before Jews or

before Gentiles, the common ground of appeal was necessarily restricted to the Old Testament and to reason; and any allusion to Christian books was necessarily only by the way and purely incidental. But when new gospels were preached, then the appeal was necessarily to the authority of the authoritative teachers of the true gospel. There is a sense, then, in which it may be said that, in these controversies, the church "discovered" its New Testament. It learned its value; it investigated its contents with new zeal and new insight; in the process it strengthened its sense of its preciousness and authority.

Harnack in one place uses phraseology in describing what took place with the New Testament in the second century, which, if we could only be allowed to take it in its strict verbal meaning, would express the exact truth. The transformation, he tells us, must be looked upon as "a change in interest in the Holy Scriptures brought about by the Gnostic and Montanistic conflict." This is just what happened. But this is not what Harnack and his followers demand of us to believe to have happened. They demand that we shall believe that in these controversies the church created these "Holy Scriptures" of the New Testament. They do so without historical warrant, and in doing so they destroy the New Testament as "Holy Scriptures": that is, they reduce its authority as "Holy Scriptures" to the authority of the second century church, which they would have us believe created it "Holy Scripture" in its controversies, and which, indeed, as they would teach us, even created some of the books themselves (*e. g.*, 1 Timothy) out of which this "Holy Scripture" was constituted.

How, then, are we to conceive the formation of the New Testament canon? After so much said as to how we are not to conceive it, it is but right that before we bring this paper to a close we should try to place clearly before us the actual process of its formation. Let us now essay to do this in the simplest and most primary way.

VII. THE FORMATION OF THE CANON OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

IN order to obtain a correct understanding of what is called the formation of the canon of the New Testament, it is necessary to

begin by fixing very firmly in our minds one fact, which is obvious enough, and to which attention has been already called, but the importance of which in this connection cannot be over-emphasized. That is, that the Christian church did not require to form for itself the idea of a "canon," or, as we should more commonly call it to-day, of a "Bible"—that is, of a collection of books given of God to be the authoritative rule of faith and practice. It inherited this idea from the Jewish church, along with the thing itself, the Jewish Scriptures, or the "Canon of the Old Testament." The church did not grow up by natural law; it was founded. And the authoritative teachers sent forth by Christ to found his church carried with them as their most precious possession a body of divine Scriptures, which they imposed on the church that they founded as its code of law. No reader of the New Testament can need proof of this; on every page of that book is spread the evidence that from the very beginning the Old Testament was as cordially recognized as law by the Christian as by the Jew. The Christian church thus was never without a "Bible" or a "canon."

But the Old Testament books were not the only ones which the apostles (by Christ's own appointment the authoritative founders of the church) imposed upon the infant churches as their authoritative rule of faith and practice. No more authority dwelt in the prophets of the old covenant than in themselves, the apostles, who had been "made sufficient as ministers of a new covenant"; for (as one of themselves argued) "if that which passeth away was with glory, much more that which remaineth is in glory." Accordingly, not only was the gospel they delivered, in their own estimation, itself a divine revelation, but it was also preached "in the Holy Ghost" (1 Pet. i. 12); not merely the matter of it but the very words in which it was clothed were "of the Holy Spirit." (1 Cor. ii. 13.) Their own commands were, therefore, of divine authority (1 Thess. iv. 2), and their writings were the depository of these commands. (2 Thess. ii. 15.) "If any man obeyeth not our word by this epistle," says Paul to one church (2 Thess. iii. 14), "note that man, that ye have no company with him." To another he makes it the test of a Spirit-led man to recognize that

what he was writing to them was "the commandments of the Lord." (1 Cor. xiv. 37.) Inevitably, such writings, making so awful a claim on their acceptance, were received by the infant churches as of a quality equal to that of the old "Bible," placed alongside of its older books as an additional part of the one law of God, and read as such in their meetings for worship—a practice which, moreover, was required by the apostles. (1 Thess. v. 27; Col. iv. 16; Rev. i. 2.) In the apprehension, therefore, of the earliest churches, the "Scriptures" were not a *closed* but an *increasing* "canon." Such they had been from the beginning, as they gradually grew in number from Moses to Malachi; and such they were to continue as long as there should remain among the churches "men of God who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

We say that this immediate placing of the new books, given the church under the seal of apostolic authority, among the Scriptures already established as such was inevitable. It is also historically evinced from the very beginning. Thus, the Apostle Peter, writing in A. D. 68, speaks of Paul's numerous letters, not in contrast with the Scriptures, but as among the Scriptures, and in contrast with "the *other* Scriptures" (2 Peter iii. 16), that is, of course, those of the Old Testament. In like manner, the Apostle Paul combines, as if it were the most natural thing in the world, the Book of Deuteronomy and the Gospel of Luke under the common head of "Scripture" (1 Tim. v. 18): "For the Scripture saith, 'Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn' (Deut. xxv. 4); and, 'The laborer is worthy of his hire.'" (Luke x. 7.) The line of such quotations is never broken in Christian literature. Polycarp (c. 12) in A. D. 115 unites the Psalms and Ephesians in exactly similar manner: "In the sacred books, . . . as it is said in these Scriptures, 'Be ye angry and sin not,' and 'Let not the sun go down upon your wrath.'" So, a few years later, the so-called second letter of Clement, after quoting Isaiah, adds (ii. 4): "And another Scripture, however, says, 'I came not to call the righteous, but sinners,'" quoting from Matthew, a book which Barnabas (*circa* 97–106 A. D.) had already adduced as Scripture. After this such quotations are common.

What needs emphasis at present about these facts is that they obviously are not evidences of a gradually-heightening estimate of the New Testament books, originally received on a lower level, and just beginning to be tentatively accounted Scripture. They are conclusive evidences, rather, of the estimation of the New Testament books from the very beginning as Scripture, and of their attachment as Scripture to the other Scriptures already in hand. The early Christians did not, then, first form a rival "canon" of "new books" which came only gradually to be accounted as of equal divinity and authority with the "old books"; they received new book after new book from the apostolical circle, as equally "Scripture" with the old books, and added them one by one to the collection of old books as additional Scriptures, until at length the new books thus added were numerous enough to be looked upon as another *section* of "the Scriptures."

The earliest name given to this new section of Scripture was framed on the model of the name by which what we know as the Old Testament was then known. Just as it was called "The Law and the Prophets and the Psalms" (or "The Hagiographa"), or, more briefly, "The Law and the Prophets," or, even more briefly still, "The Law," so the enlarged Bible was called "The Law and the Prophets, with the Gospels and the Apostles" (so Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* vi. 11: 88; Tertullian, *De Præs. Hær.* 36), or, more briefly, "The Law and the Gospel" (so Claudius Apollinaris, Irenæus); while the new books separately were called "The Gospel and the Apostles," or, most briefly of all, "The Gospel." This earliest name for the new Bible, with all that it involves as to its relation to the old and briefer Bible, is traceable as far back as Ignatius (A. D. 115), who makes use of it repeatedly (*e. g.*, *ad Philad.* 5; *ad Smyrn.* 7). In one passage he gives us a hint of the controversies which the enlarged Bible of the Christians aroused among the Judaizers (*ad Philad.* 6): "When I heard some saying," he writes, "'Unless I find it in the *Old [Books]* I will not believe the *Gospel*,' on my saying, 'It is written,' they answered, 'That is the question.' To me, however, Jesus Christ *is* the *Old [Books]*; his cross and death and resurrection, and the faith which is by him, the undefiled *Old [Books]*, by which I

wish, by your prayers, to be justified. The priests, indeed, are good, but the High Priest better," etc. Here Ignatius appeals to the "Gospel" as Scripture, and the Judaizers object, receiving from him the answer, in effect, which Augustine afterwards formulated in the well-known saying that the New Testament lies hidden in the Old, and the Old Testament is first made clear in the New. What we need now to observe, however, is that to Ignatius the New Testament was not a different book from the Old Testament, but part of the one body of Scripture with it; an *accretion*, so to speak, which had grown upon it.

This is the testimony of all the early witnesses, even of those which speak for the distinctively Jewish-Christian churches. For example, that curious Jewish-Christian writing, *The Testaments of the XII. Patriarchs* (*Benj.* 11), tells us, under the cover of an *ex post facto* prophecy, that "the work and word" of Paul, *i. e.*, confessedly, the Book of Acts and Paul's epistles, "shall be written in the Holy Books," *i. e.*, as is understood by all, made a part of the existent Bible. So, even in the *Talmud*, in a scene intended to ridicule a "bishop" of the first century, he is represented as finding Galatians by "sinking himself deeper" into the same "book" which contained the Law of Moses. (*Babl. Sabbath*, 116 a and b.) The details cannot be entered into here. Let it suffice to say that, from the evidence of the fragments which alone have been preserved to us of the Christian writings of that very early time, it appears that from the beginning of the second century (and that is from the end of the apostolic age) a collection (Ignatius, 2 Clement) of "New Books" (Ignatius), called the "Gospel and Apostles" (Ignatius, Marcion), was already a part of the "oracles" of God (Polycarp, Papias, 2 Clement), or "Scriptures" (1 Timothy, 2 Peter, Barnabas, Polycarp, 2 Clement), or the "Holy Books," or "Bible." (*Testaments XII. Patriarchs.*)

The number of books included in this added body of New Books, at the opening of the second century, cannot, of course, be satisfactorily determined by the evidence of these fragments alone. From them we may learn, however, that the section of it called the "Gospel" included Gospels written by "the apostles and their companions" (Justin), which there is no reason to doubt

were our four Gospels now received. The section called "The Apostles" contained the Book of Acts (*The Testaments of the XII. Patriarchs*) and epistles of Paul, John, Peter, and James. The evidence from various quarters is, indeed, enough to show that the collection in general use contained all the books which we at present receive, with the possible exceptions of Jude, Second and Third John, and Philemon; and it is more natural to suppose that failure of very early evidence for these brief booklets is due to their insignificant size rather than to their non-acceptance.

It is to be borne in mind, however, that the extent of the collection may have—and, indeed, is historically shown actually to have—varied in different localities. The Bible was circulated only in hand-copies, slowly and painfully made; and an incomplete copy, obtained, say, at Ephesus in A. D. 68, would be likely to remain for many years the Bible of the church to which it was conveyed, and might, indeed, become the parent of other copies, incomplete like itself, and thus the means of providing a whole district with incomplete Bibles. Thus, when we inquire after the history of the New Testament canon, we need to distinguish such questions as these: (1), When was the New Testament canon completed? (2), When did any one church acquire a completed canon? (3), When did the completed canon, the complete Bible, obtain universal circulation and acceptance? (4), On what ground and evidence did the churches with incomplete Bibles accept the remaining books when they were made known to them?

The canon of the New Testament was completed when the last authoritative book was given to any church by the apostles, and that was when John wrote the Apocalypse, about A. D. 98. Whether the church of Ephesus had a completed canon when it received the Apocalypse, or not, would depend on whether there was any epistle, say that of Jude, which had not yet reached it, with authenticating proof of its apostolicity. There is room for historical investigation here. Certainly the whole canon was not universally received by the churches till somewhat later. The Latin Church of the second and third centuries did not quite know what to do with the Epistle to the Hebrews. The Syrian churches for some centuries may have lacked the lesser of the Catholic

Epistles and Revelation. But from the time of Irenæus down, the church at large had the whole canon as we now possess it. And though a section of the church may not yet have been satisfied of the apostolicity of a certain book, or of certain books, and though afterwards doubts may have arisen in sections of the church as to the apostolicity of certain books (*e. g.*, of Revelation), yet in no case was it more than a respectable minority of the church which was slow in receiving, or which came afterwards to doubt, the credentials of any of the books that then, as now, constituted the canon of the New Testament accepted by the church at large. And in every case the principle on which a book was accepted, or doubts against it laid aside, was the historical tradition of apostolicity.

Let it, however, be clearly understood that it was not exactly apostolic *authorship* which constituted a book a portion of the "canon." Apostolic authorship was, indeed, early confounded with canonicity. It was doubt as to the apostolic authorship of Hebrews, in the west, and of James and Jude, which seems to underlie the slowness of the inclusion of these books in the "canon" of certain churches. But from the beginning it was not so. The principle of canonicity was not apostolic authorship, but *imposition by the apostles as "law."* Hence Tertullian's name for the "canon" is "*instrumentum,*" and he speaks of the Old and New *Instrument* as we would of the Old and New Testament. That the apostles so imposed the Old Testament on the churches which they founded as their "instrument," or "law," or "canon," can be denied by none. And in imposing new books on the same churches, by the same apostolical authority, they did not confine themselves to books of their own composition. It is the Gospel according to Luke, a man who was not an apostle, which Paul parallels in First Timothy v. 18, with Deuteronomy, as equally "Scripture" with it, in the first extant quotation of a New Testament book as Scripture. The Gospels which constituted the first division of the New Books—of "The Gospel and the Apostles"—Justin tells us, were "written by the apostles and their companions." The authority of the apostles, as founders of the church by divine appointment, was embodied in whatever

books they imposed on the church as law, not merely in those which they themselves had written.

The early churches received, as we receive, into their New Testament all the books historically evinced to them as given by the apostles to the churches as their code of law; and we must not mistake the historical evidences of the slow circulation and authentication of these books over the widely-extended church for evidence of slowness of "canonization" of books by the authority or the taste of the church itself.

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