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I. THEOLOGY THE SCIENCE OF RELIGION.<sup>1</sup>

THERE are some things relating to the supply of ministers of the gospel about which the leading Christian denominations are substantially agreed. It would be strange if any serious difference existed as to the first and great question of the source of the supply. It is written, "When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. . . . And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." Ministers are gifts to the church from her triumphant and ascended Lord. As the first verse cited from the Epistle to the Ephesians is a quotation from the sixty-eighth Psalm, the import of the statement of the apostle is that God has never left the church to its own resources in the matter of providing ministers, but has reserved to himself, under every dispensation, the prerogative of furnishing them. This divine arrangement keeps the church dependent on God in a matter upon which her very existence, as well as her growth and prosperity, depends; but it is a wise and gracious one, in that it secures with infallible certainty to the church, in answer to her prayers, an adequate supply of the right kind of ministers, and at the same time enables them to speak as the ambassadors of Christ. The second feature of the divine plan relates to the agency given to the church in the word

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<sup>1</sup> Delivered as an inaugural address in Columbia Seminary, May, 1896.

## II. DR. BAVINCK ON THE PRINCIPIUM EXTERNUM.<sup>1</sup>

IN DR. Bavinck's *Reformed Dogmatics*, theological literature is being enriched with one of the most scholarly and scientific recent expositions of Protestant theology. The first volume, which of necessity treats of introduction only, causes us to look forward with keenest expectancy to the coming two volumes, which will treat of theology proper.

The tone of the work is so modest and moderate, the evidence of wide reading, which has apparently swept the whole field, is so manifest, and the treatment of friend and foe is so courteous, that the reader of this first volume is inspired with profound respect for this rising Dutch theologian, already widely known in America.

According to the author's preface, far more attention has been paid to patristic theology than is commonly the case in works of this kind.

The author professes himself a Calvinist by conviction, since he considers this system of doctrine relatively the purest expression of truth; but he deplors the fact that the development of Calvinistic theology has so soon been replaced by deformatory movements, which have checked its growth, both on the Continent and in America. He prefers the older Reformed theologians to the later, "since in freshness and originality they far surpass the others." He rectifies, however, all false impressions by saying that "to praise the old simply because it is old is neither Reformed nor Christian." "A system of dogmatics does not treat of what has obtained, but of what must obtain."

The preface tells us that the author has considered the many tendencies which cross and recross each other in the field of theology, and has taken position among them all; and his promise to appreciate the good, wherever it is found, is fully reclaimed in the work itself.

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<sup>1</sup>*Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*, door Dr. H. Bavinck, Eerste Deel. Inleiding. Principia. Kampen: J. H. Bos., 1895.

There are certain dogmas which till this day have not been fully formulated, and on these points, especially, it is that we seek for further light from every prominent new theologian. And of these, none is possessed of greater and more practical interest than the doctrine of the Scriptures, which has been considerably influenced by the work of the historical critics. It is the aim of this paper to give a rapid sketch of the position which Dr. Bavinck has assumed on the doctrine of the Scriptures, and especially on the question of inspiration.

The task, however, is formidable, since in giving this necessarily incomplete outline, the greater part of the first volume before us had to be condensed in this brief paper. For one cannot appreciate Bavinck's *theory of inspiration* without a review of his *theory of revelation*, both general and special.

It will be necessary, therefore, first broadly to inquire (I.), What is Dr. Bavinck's idea of *revelation*; and (II.), What is his idea of *inspiration*.

#### I.—AS TO REVELATION.

According to the author, revelation is the necessary correlative of all religion, and as such it is not within the province of science or philosophy to define its meaning and contents.

Both lack the necessary data to do so. Religion presupposes a distinction between God and man, and it consists of a "relation of man to God, not the reverse." Religion and revelation are, therefore, essentially different. In revelation God is active towards man in behalf of that relation which we call religion.

Revelation is, therefore, a voluntary divine act. It is inseparably linked to supranaturalism, and both of them together stand or fall with religion.

Revelation has a wide scope, it embraces both nature and grace. Its exalted aim is to transform humanity, as a unit, into the kingdom of God, and its consummation is only reached when this result has been achieved.

We distinguish this revelation as *general* and *special*.

This distinction dates from the days of patristic and scholastic theology. In the latter, it developed into a complete antithesis,

making reason and faith antipodes, and this complete separation survives in the dualism of Romish theology. For Rome holds that God might be known by the light of natural reason, but that, of his own good pleasure, he has revealed himself by a super-added supranatural revelation. The Reformation removed this dualism, but as the reaction ran into extremes, natural religion, which had first been made a part of Christian doctrine, lost all significance, and man, in his natural state, lost all responsibility. But from this position another reaction took place, for neither Lutheranism nor Calvinism had completely escaped the toils of scholasticism, and thus, first in sectarian and later on in orthodox circles, rationalism lifted its head.

But the rationalistic position destroyed itself; its untenability was proved alike by philosophy, by the comparative history of religion, and by general and Biblical criticism, and in our day the value of the so-called *theologia naturalis* is in the ascendant again.

The Scriptures convey the idea that all revelation, even that of nature, is supranatural. For revelation is God's self-manifestation, in any sphere whatever, and thus the Scriptures inseparably link religion to a supranatural revelation; the first is destroyed by the destruction of the latter. There is, therefore, no question of a *religio naturalis*, for the antithesis is not between supranaturalism and rationalism, but between supranaturalism and naturalism.

The idea of revelation is involved in that of God.

And yet we must distinguish between *supranatural* and *immediate* revelations. Great confusion was created by a wrong use of the terms *mediate* and *immediate*. Strictly speaking, there is no room for immediate revelation, for *Finitum non est capax infiniti*. Both in the supranatural and in the natural revelation God comes to us mediately. In the *status integritatis* both therefore go hand in hand. From the very first God revealed himself by appearance, word, and deed, and sin did not change this.

God's witness of himself, in nature and in the human conscience, is universal and is appreciable by every man and this universal revelation has ever been accepted by Christian theology.

But, according to the Scriptures, this natural revelation contains supranatural elements; the history of fallen humanity bears witness to it. God wrought miracles before the eyes of the heathen, and *a priori* the working of supranatural powers among those heathen is neither impossible nor improbable. There seems to be a stratum of revelation common to all religions. Whole periods of sacred history, of the utmost importance to the *historia revelationis*, are devoid of any supranatural manifestation.

*Natural* and *supranatural* revelation must, therefore, not be identified with *general* and *special* revelation.

The testimony of the church as to the insufficiency of general revelation is practically unanimous. It is but a partial revelation, and lacks the very thing which sinful man needs—*redemption*. Philosophy, in its limitations, could never offer an authoritative religion. What is called *religio naturalis* has never satisfied any people, and the sober historical sense of our nineteenth century has utterly discarded it.

All heathen religions, however, are founded on general revelation. Two theories now present themselves: (1), That of the Scriptures, which considers all heathen religions darkness and ignorance, vain wisdom, sin and unrighteousness, hence a process of degeneracy; and (2), That of science, which beholds in all religions a succession of evolutionary steps. The latter theory is far more improbable than the former, and, after all, it has no higher rank than that of a *questionable hypothesis*.

By the general revelation, which the Scriptures teach, we are enabled to appreciate the elements of truth which we find in all false religions; and especially the Reformed doctrine of *common grace* enables us to value them aright. The ideas of God, guilt, need of pardon, sacrifice, priesthood, temple, cultus—all these, in whatever distorted form, are found in all religions. But Christianity is the highest and purest religion, because it is the true one. It is the original of many caricatures, the reality of many semblances.

Thus the *revelatio generalis* is of importance to the Christian. By its aid he is kept from feeling himself a stranger in the world. *Subjectively* the Christian beholds God in nature only by what



he knows of God from the Scriptures, but *objectively* nature precedes grace, the general revelation precedes the special. The *revelatio generalis* offers problems for solution which disquiet the souls of men, and which philosophy vainly endeavors to solve. Thus man is kept from sinking to the animal level; his higher destiny is kept before him, and indirectly it contains the prophecy of man's restoration in Christ.

Thus nature and grace, creation and regeneration, are kept inseparably connected. Without the general revelation the special would lose its connection with the Kosmos.

Religion is organically connected with man's nature, general and special revelation join hands; God, who does not leave himself without a witness in the first, reveals himself in the second as a God of mercy and grace. Special revelation, in all its forms, seems reducible to the following three means:

1. All religious faith desires a near and not a distant God. Hence the theophany.

2. All religious faith expects a revelation of the divine will. Hence the diviner, the magician, the oracle, the prophet.

3. They all expect divine interposition in the hour of need. Hence the miracle.

Now, superstition is a bastard form of true religion. Spiritism and hypnotism prove that, on the darker side of the spirit's life, forces lie hidden which may establish a closer contact with the unseen world. The Scriptures, however, unequivocally condemn all such things. Here is precisely the difference between true and false religion. In the latter, man seeks God; in the former, God seeks man. What is a caricature among the heathen, and a shadow among Israel, has, in the Christian religion, become a veritable and spiritual reality.

Jehovah reveals himself as a personal *theophany* till the giving of the law; thenceforth he withdraws into the holy of holies till in Christ the theophany is fully realized. Through him and through the Spirit, whom he sends, the indwelling of God among his people becomes a true spiritual reality, and finally its complete consummation is reached in the New Jerusalem. *Prophecy* brings the special revelation to us as a direct communication of

the divine thought. It always places the divine truth over against the human lie. It may appear in higher and lower forms, and usually comes directly, without any vision. Prophecy proceeds from the indwelling Spirit of God. In itself imperfect, it looks forward to the day of perfect things, to him of whom Moses prophesied, to him who does not *receive revelations*, but who *reveals*, and who imparts his Spirit to his disciples and to his church.

The *miracle* also belongs to the special revelation. The Old Testament teems with them. But Israel does not understand their import. On this account the prophets begin to point to the *יום יהוה*, the day of the Lord, which, according to the Scriptures, comes in the New Testament revelation. With Christ a new cycle of miracles begins, which for a time survives his departure, and then gradually merges in the spiritual miracle, until at last, in the *αἰὼν μέλλων*, the miracle will become nature, and the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdom of God.

Dr. Bavinck now proceeds to the *idea* of a special revelation. He shows how the scriptural system of revelation has been neglected and ignored in Christian theology. The theologians have not given themselves sufficient pains to truly appreciate this idea. Both rationalism and supranaturalism saw in it only an *external communication of doctrine*. This position was deservedly demolished by rationalistic criticism. But the intimate relation between religion and revelation remained, and efforts at reconstruction are made by more recent theologians.

German philosophy unduly extended the idea of revelation, or adopted the Schleiermacherian theory, which follows somewhat the following line of thought: Revelation is to be distinguished from theopneusty or from the Scriptures, which are only the record of revelation, not revelation itself. Revelation is a religious, or, rather, a soteriological, idea, a correlative of religion. Proceeding from God as Saviour, its contents are religio-ethical truths. It is rather *natural* and *human* than supranatural, and it presents a double aspect, the *external* (manifestation) and the *internal* (inspiration).

Ritschl takes a different position, and lays special stress on the positive historical character of all revelation, which in Christian-

ity centres in Christ. But till this day Dogmatics lacks a pure and clear conception of revelation. "The theologians are not agreed on anything which is of importance in this idea." (Dr. Bavinck, p. 267.)<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Bavinck now attempts to define the scriptural idea of revelation. He tells us that the revelation which the Scriptures teach is a historical and organic whole, revealing itself in theophany, prophecy, and miracle. God seeks man in this special revelation. It begins at the fall, and reaches out to the incarnation. It enters history, and completely identifies itself therewith. It uses every type of character and talent and individuality. It assumes the shape of types and shadows, imagery and symbol, art and poetry, epistle and chronicle. It borrows from other religions. It even utilizes the lot, the dream, and the vision. In it the divine and the human completely coöperate. The correct view of this revelation is, therefore, a *central* and *organic* one, whose focus is the incarnation of God; for under both the Old and New Testaments the *Logos* is the subject of special revelation. The dispensation of the Spirit begins when God has fully revealed himself in Christ. Then the *αἶων οὐτος* is changed into the *αἶων μέλλων*, in which everything looks back to and is deduced from Christ.

Miracles and prophecy, in a specific sense, may have ceased in this dispensation, but the church itself is from moment to moment the product of that special revelation, which is continued, in a spiritual sense, and looks forward to heaven. Scriptural revelation is, therefore, a historical process, an organic system. God triumphs in it over everything outside of himself. Revelation is soteriological, not in a religio-ethical sense, much less in a merely intellectual sense, but in a scriptural sense; so that the contents of revelation are not doctrine, or life, or emotion, but all of these combined, a divine work, a world of thoughts and acts, an *ordo gratiæ*, which battles with and conquers the *ordo peccati*. Its aim is not intellectual enlightenment (rationalism), nor morality (moralism), nor religious sensibility (mysticism); but its aim is to

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<sup>1</sup> Compare Dr. Geo. Vos' criticism in the *Presbyterian and Reformed Review* for April, 1896, p. 359.



snatch man, the world, the whole κόσμος from the power of sin; so broad is the scope of divine revelation.

Dr. Bavinck now proceeds to point out the relation between this special revelation and supranaturalism, on the one hand, and naturalism, on the other. Both have ignored the organic conception of revelation. These terms, though unscriptural, are yet founded on the Scriptures. But both theologians and philosophers have, on the one hand, understood these terms in a modified sense, identifying the supranatural with the suprasensual, and, on the other hand, this idea has been unduly restricted. It has been separated by some from created things in general, and by others from the spiritual miracles of regeneration, since it was claimed that both, looked at from the divine standpoint, were not supranatural at all. Thus special revelation was severed, on the one hand, from nature, and, on the other, from the works of grace which characterize the life of the church. The historical and organic character of special revelation was ignored, it was made to soar above nature and humanity, instead of entering into it.

This dualistic and supranaturalistic system found its fullest exposition in Romish Catholic theology, but there also its manifest inconsistency aroused great opposition. Protestant theology occupies a different position, inasmuch as it establishes an antithesis, not between *nature and revelation*, but between *sin and revelation*. The qualitative relation between natural and supranatural religion has taken the place of the quantitative one.

As regards the relation between revelation and naturalism, the rationalists may be divided into four groups, which vary between that conception of the relation between reason and faith which makes the former the arbiter of the claims of supranatural revelation, and that other and radical conception of this relation which denies supranaturalism altogether, and deems natural religion sufficient for all purposes. Here the very possibility of a supranatural revelation is denied, both on the divine and human side; for even if it did exist, it is claimed, the data for its appreciation by man would still be lacking. All faith is built on human authority, and reason determines it.

But the task of rationalism was not as easy as was at first sup-

posed. The facts of revelation must be explained, a theory for its miracles must be propounded. In endless ways this task was attempted, only to end in an acknowledged and complete failure. Word and fact in revelation are inseparable. Our view of life and of the world ultimately decides our belief or unbelief in supranaturalism. What we believe is determined by what we are. The supranaturalist may only know in part, he may fail to assign to each several act or word its specific place, but he is in conscious harmony with revelation as a whole. He retains his grasp on religion, for religion and revelation—the religion of the Scriptures and the revelation of the Scriptures—are inseparable.

In a rapid sketch Dr. Bavinck now points out the failure of monistic naturalism, both in its pantheistic and its materialistic aspect, to solve the riddles which are embodied in the laws which govern mind and matter. Theism finds “their key in God.”

The author shows how science and faith can stand side by side if they will only respect their own boundary lines. Miracles are a matter of history, not of experiment, they rest on testimony. The *κόσμος* is still in a process of teleological development which brings her to her divine destiny, that is, according to the Scriptures, to her complete recreation and riddance of sin.

Revelation, therefore, occupies a definite teleological position in God’s plan with the world. Even without the fall, there would have been room for prophecy and miracles. Supranaturalism is not necessitated by the fall. Not revelation itself, but its soteriological character, was made necessary by sin. Though not a product of nature, revelation is, therefore, perfectly natural.

This revelation is an organic whole, a world by itself, distinct from nature, and yet perfectly adapted to it. In it there are many things which we now but partly understand; but this does not discourage us.

Faith in this supranatural revelation reconciles us to the things that are, in the hope of what they will become. All other systems offer us an outlook on barren vistas; revelation reveals to us the coming of God to humanity, forever to dwell with it. The *status peccati*, changed into a *status gratiae* for the believer, will yonder be changed into a *status gloriae*.

This brings the author to the consideration of the Holy Scriptures. He begins by pointing out the close relation between revelation and religion. The Chinese, Indian, Buddhist, Persian, Mohammedan, Jewish, and Christian religions are called *book-religions* by Max Müller, because they have holy writings.

Thought and word, the idea and its expression, are inseparably connected. Of all writing it may be said that it is the ἐνσάρκωσις of the word.

The idea of the Scriptures is historic, revelation consists of acts and facts, which are transient, nay, from one aspect all revelation may be considered an *actus transiens*, temporary, even momentary. It shares this transitoriness with all earthly things. Christ is the centre of revelation, but Christ is a historic person, the facts in his life cannot be repeated. All revelation, not as doctrine, but as incarnation, must be historic; it is destined for humanity, not considered as an aggregate of individuals, but as an organic whole, living and moving in history.

Writing is the σῆμα of all language. The central fact of revelation, viz., the incarnation, leads to the Scriptures, for in a certain sense the Scriptures are the incarnation of revelation. But since revelation is an *actus transiens*, the Scriptures themselves must be the same.

Formerly the theologians identified revelation and theopneusty, this has changed. A larger conception of revelation, as a historic process, has taken its place; for the past and its inspired record may lie ages apart; *e. g.*, the history of creation, of the patriarchs, etc.

Modern theology, so far from identifying revelation and theopneusty, has gone to the other extreme, and has denied the inseparable connection between revelation and the Scriptures. But since revelation is historic, the only way of knowing it is by testimony. The rejection of the Scriptures is, therefore, the rejection of this attestation, the denial of a special divine act of revelation, and, therefore, in principle, the denial of all revelation. Both tendencies are, therefore, equally dangerous.

Revelation divides itself into two great dispensations, of both of which Christ is the object. The first is, at it were, the prepara-

tion of a tabernacle for the coming Christ; the second is the record and testimony of this tabernacling. In both dispensations revelation and its record go hand in hand. The Scriptures develop as revelation proceeds, till the latter, in a specific sense, is closed, and the dispensation of the Spirit begins. *Objective revelation* now changes into *subjective appropriation*. In Christ an organic centre of a new life has been created. The Holy Spirit now takes everything from Christ, nothing further is added to revelation, and yet in another sense revelation proceeds. Its final aim is not Christ, but *the new man*, the indwelling of God with his people. Again, we find the theophany, prophecy, and the miracle, but in a new and higher sense.

The miracles are those of God's grace in Christ; prophecy lives on in the illumination of the believer by the Holy Spirit; the theophany is now the conscious indwelling of the life of Christ in his church.

Revelation in its continuation is now, therefore, both doctrine and life. The Scriptures are the light of the church; the church is the life of the Scriptures. The Scriptures explain the church; the church understands the Scriptures. Hence these organically developed Scriptures are vital to the church of all ages. They are the *viva vox Dei Omnipotentis ad suam creaturam*. The Scriptures are, therefore, not only inspired, they inspire. Thus the consummation of all things is prepared, in which the Scriptures will fall away, and all believers will be directly inspired of God. There prophecy and miracle have become nature, for God dwells with his people.

## II.—INSPIRATION.

No dogma has been so generally received as that of the Holy Scriptures. The Jewish and Christian church alike received them as the word of God, and have quoted them as such. The church fathers, as early as Irenæus, recognized the inspiration of both Testaments, their divine origin was acknowledged on all sides. The idea of inspiration was conceived as a "driving," a "leading," or especially a "dictating" by the Holy Spirit. As God's word the Scriptures had final authority. But in those early days



the true conception of inspiration occupied the mind of the church less than the establishment of the canon.

The theology of the Middle Ages added nothing to the dogma of the Scriptures, since their authority was fixed and recognized by all. The Council of Trent accepted the scholastic idea of the Scriptures, but extended it to tradition also.

Strange to say, the first avowed opposition to the doctrine of inspiration came from the Jesuits, of Louvain, in 1586 (312), who rejected verbal inspiration, and denied the necessity of an immediate revelation. Erasmus limited inspiration to the dogmatical and ethical contents of the Scriptures. This idea survived, and was reproduced by many Catholic theologians, who ascribed to the other portions of the Bible a common divine assistance and supervision instead of inspiration.

Most of the post-reformatory Catholic theologians, however, reject both the negative and verbal inspiration, and cling to the theory of an *inspiratio realis*, which may be either true revelation or mere assistance (314). But the Catholic Church *symbolically* maintains the Tridentine position, and considers inspiration as a positive activity of God's Spirit, which produces an infallible word.

Luther may have attacked the canon, but he strenuously defended the old faith of the church in regard to inspiration; hence the Lutheran symbols possess no separate article on the Scriptures. The erratic Zwingli admits the inerrancy of the Scriptures, but extends inspiration also to heathen literature. Calvin admits the canonicity of the whole Bible, and considers it fully and literally the word of God.

Almost all the reformed symbols have an article on the Scriptures. Their views of inspiration, however, are largely mechanical; they considered the sacred writers merely as *scriptores*, *amanuenses*, *notarii*, etc., but inspiration was held to be *plenary*, in the fullest sense. Then came the reaction. All the old attacks of the early Christian ages against the Scriptures were renewed by rationalism and deism, and by the historical criticism of the day. These attacks caused a revision of the old doctrine of inspiration. Thus arose the dualistic conception of inspiration, which once more separated doctrine and history, ethics and chronology, in the Scriptures.

As a further reaction from this view, Schleiermacher's dynamic theory of inspiration originated, which makes it a *habitual characteristic* of the sacred writers, differing in degree only from that common to all believers. The Scriptures are not infallible, for they are not revelation itself, but only its record. This theory, therefore, makes inspiration a *quality of the writers*, rather than of *the Scriptures*. It is a *habitual* instead of an *evanescent* quality; it is dynamical, and, therefore, does not exclude the possibility of error.

This theory has almost entirely supplanted the earlier doctrine, and yet it is manifestly unsatisfactory both to faith and science.

The rationalistic theologians have, therefore, entirely discarded inspiration, whilst they uphold the Scriptures for their historical value, as a means of grace and as an aid to the religious and moral life. The radicals among them alone have openly ridiculed the sacred Scriptures.

Dr. Bavinck now proceeds to give us the scriptural data for the doctrine of inspiration. The Old Testament affords the following data :

1. The prophets are conscious of a divine calling.
2. They speak what Jehovah revealed to them.
3. They know *when* and *where* he spoke to them, and are conscious of these inspired moments as special occasions.
4. They distinguish between their own knowledge and divine revelation.
5. Whether speaking or writing, they know themselves to be divine oracles.
6. They affix the same authority to their written and to their spoken word.
7. The prophets recognized the existence of the thora, and stand on this basis together with their opponents. Their religion is not different from that of the people, as modern criticism avers.
8. It is *a priori* probable that the written law existed long before the time of the prophets. This thora was from the beginning authoritative as God's word.
9. The historical books are all written by prophets, and in a prophetic spirit.

10. The poetical books of the Scriptures have a religio-ethical character. \*

11. The Jewish Scriptures obtained authoritative force as they became known to Israel. The canons of Philo and Josephus are like our own.

That this canon had divine authority for Christ and the apostles appears from the following considerations—

1. The formula of citation proves it.
2. The fact itself is expressed and taught.
3. Christ and the apostles, so far from assuming a critical attitude towards the Scriptures, always accept them without question.
4. Dogmatically, the Old Testament is both for Christ and the apostles the *sedes doctrinæ*.
5. Yet the Old Testament is usually cited in the New Testament from the Septuagint.

6. There is great difference in the material use made of the Old Testament in the New Testament.

As to the inspiration of the New Testament the following data present themselves:

1. The testimony of Jesus is considered infallible in the whole New Testament.
2. This infallible testimony of Jesus is communicated through his apostles, who are appointed witnesses of his life and doctrine, through the operation of the Holy Spirit.
3. The apostles fulfil this divine mission.
4. The witness of Paul stands by itself.
5. The writings of the apostles were from the beginning authoritative in the church. Their canonization is not an arbitrary act of the church, met in council. It is rooted in their very existence. *Suo jure*, they possess authority.

6. It is impossible to settle the question of the principles which have guided the church in fixing the canon. The Spirit, who inspired them, led the church to recognize them.

Of all this revelation Christ is the centre, it cannot be separated from him. Revelation exists, because he is the *λόγος*. *What, then, is the Biblical idea of inspiration?*

The Scriptures nowhere give us a clearly formulated dogma of

inspiration. And yet the Scriptures teach it, but just as they do the dogmas of the Trinity, the incarnation, the atonement, etc. It is quite universally admitted that Christ maintained the inspiration of the Old Testament Scriptures. Rothe, however, is one of the few who doubt it, and he severs the testimony of Christ from that of the apostles, thus unintentionally undermining Christ's own authority, for it was he who appointed the apostles as witnesses of the truth.

The position of the critics who allow only such a theory of inspiration as is consistent with their view of the phenomena of the Scriptures is wholly untenable; for these phenomena cannot set aside the testimony of the Scriptures concerning themselves. The critic, therefore, virtually places his scientific estimate of the Scriptures over against and above this testimony.

Historical criticism may be valuable within its own sphere, but it is manifestly unable to give us a dogma of the Scriptures, for the reason that the methods of the critics place over against the doctrinal *self-witness* of the Scriptures the dogmas, which result from the scientific treatment of isolated facts. This can never be. When, therefore, the contention is raised that our doctrine of inspiration must correspond with the phenomena of the Scriptures, we announce the principle that the phenomena of the Scriptures, not as they appear to the critics, but as they are in themselves, are *consistent* with the self-witness of the Scriptures.

Θεόπνευστος (2 Tim. iii. 16) may have an active or a passive sense; it may mean *God-breathing* or *God-breathed*. The latter sense seems preferable, because it best harmonizes with the extra-scriptural use of the word. The classical meaning of the word was much wider. All great acts were due, according to the Romans and the Greeks, to a divine afflatus or inspiration. To this cause the greatest geniuses have ascribed their happiest thoughts. It is a patent fact that the human spirit is able, by its own operation upon the souls of others, to change the thoughts of millions and to entirely alter the complexion of their consciousness. Now, according to the Scriptures, God's Spirit is immanent in all created things, and this immanence is the basis of all theopneusty. All life is inspired by the Spirit, and he is the source of all wis-



dom and understanding. In the church, he regenerates and renews, and all prophecy comes through him. Thus, also, in the Scriptures. He is the Spirit of inspiration. His activity in this regard, however, does not stand by itself, but is closely related to this immanent work in the world and in the church.

On the other hand, inspiration may never be identified, as is done by some modern theologians, with heroic, poetic, and religious enthusiasm, for the gift of theopneusty is only given within the circle of revelation. These two, however, again, are to be sharply distinguished, for the one is the work of the *Logos*, the other of the Spirit. Inspiration is founded in revelation, but rises above it. Neither must inspiration be identified with regeneration, as has been done by ethical theologians, although it stands vitally connected with it, for regeneration touches the whole man, inspiration only the consciousness. The one sanctifies and renews, the other enlightens and teaches. Regeneration is a *habitus permanens*, inspiration an *actus transiens*.

What, then, is inspiration? God speaks by the mouth of the prophets. Of him, the true subject, alone the preposition *ὑπό* is used; of the prophets, *δία* with the genitive. The Holy Ghost is, therefore, the true speaker. Our conception of the process of inspiration, according to the Scriptures, should be as organic as possible. There is a difference between the inspiration of prophets and apostles, and of both classes again amongst themselves. The inspiration of the prophets is momentary, that of the apostles is permanent; in them the Holy Spirit dwells immanently and leads and enlightens and teaches them. Different, however, as the character of the inspiration in various persons may be, we must not conceive of it as something mechanical, but as something organic. Just as the *Logos*, through his incarnation, has entered into humanity and has organically united himself therewith, so also the Holy Spirit in inspiration. He speaks through inspired men, and yet they speak themselves. The Holy Spirit has prepared these men, with their various characteristics and antecedents, and uses them, such as they are, in character, inclination, intellectual attainment, etc. They are but rarely *impelled* to write, but naturally the act leads to the recital, and the

recital to the written record; and on this very account, that the writings of prophets and apostles have originated *in* and not *outside* of the sphere of history, there is room for the science of biblical criticism. Thus, also, the difference between the various authors can be explained. Entering into the man, the Holy Spirit entered into his style and language and intellectual equipment. This also explains why Hebrew and Hellenistic Greek were used as the vehicles of divine truth. In the latter, in the marriage between pure Hebrew and pure Attic Greek, lies the thought of the universality of that salvation which was from the Jews. This organic inspiration alone does justice to the Scriptures. In the doctrine of the Scriptures it is the application of the central fact of revelation, the incarnation of the Word. These two run parallel. What the *λόγος* became in his incarnation, the revelation of God inspired in the hearts of men became when it was reduced to writing. It entered into the sphere of creation, into the lives and history of the nations, in every possible human form, even into the weak and despicable; and, as a written word, it subjected itself to the common lot of all Scripture. As every human thought and act is due alike to the action of God, and is at the same time wholly the fruit of human activity, so, also, are the Scriptures a product of the Spirit of God, and yet at the same time wholly a product of the activity of the writer. "*θεία πάντα και ανθρώπινα πάντα.*" This organic conception has often, though wrongly, been used to minimize the authorship of the Spirit. Just as the doctrine of the incarnation demands that we follow it in all its implied weakness and shame, so, also, in the doctrine of inspiration. There, also, we must recognize weakness and poverty, and the servant attitude; but so that, as in the incarnation, here, also, the idea remains of the immaculate conception of the Scriptures.

The history of the doctrine of inspiration is very suggestive. Up to the seventeenth century the idea of inspiration was always further extended, until it reached the *vowels* and *pointing* of the Scriptures (*inspiratio punctualis*). Since then it has shrunk back, first, to the *words* (*inspiratio verbalis*), then to the mere *thought* (*inspiratio realis*), then to the *religio-ethical contents* of the Scrip-

tures (*inspiratio fundamentalis*, or *religiosa*), thence to that of the person (*inspiratio personalis*), and finally to a complete denial.

Now the doctrine of the Scriptures has nothing sectarian in it. It is a fundamental article of faith for the whole church. This dogma has fought its way back again from a place among the *media gratiæ* to its legitimate position in the introduction to dogmatics. The position of the mediation school, which denied the inspiration *theoretically* and *scientifically*, and yet used it *practically* from the pulpit, has been relinquished. The radicals even now acknowledge that the Scriptures *teach inspiration*, and that this dogma stands or falls with the Scriptures themselves. The doctrine of inspiration has survived all assaults on it, like that of the Trinity, the incarnation, etc. It is accepted by the church, not because it is fully understood, but because God has so revealed it.

The scriptural dogma of inspiration is inconsistent with the *inspiratio fundamentalis* and *personalis*. It is admitted that the Holy Spirit has made use of different persons and talents, and that all books of the Bible are not of equal value; but this conception of inspiration is scientific rather than scriptural.

It wipes out the boundary lines between inspiration and illumination, or regeneration; between the intellectual and the ethical life; between the Scriptures and edifying literature. Moreover, it makes the church dependent on critical science, to tell her *what is* and *what is not* Scripture. In vain does this theory appeal to Christ as the source and authority of all dogmatics; for the writings of the apostles give us the Christ of the Scriptures, and if that Christ be authoritative, his testimony must settle the doctrine of the Scriptures, and that of inspiration must be accepted on his authority.

The *inspiratio fundamentalis* goes still further and accepts inspiration only for some portions of the Scriptures. This dualistic and deistic theory does not commend itself to reason. Facts and words, the historical and the ethical, are so interwoven in the Scriptures as to be inseparable. Neither of the above theories is a whit more scientific than the strictest *inspiratio verbalis*.

The remaining theories of inspiration are virtually identical.

*For the fact remains, that the Holy Spirit, availing himself of all the antecedents, and of the present environment of the sacred writers, awoke in them the consciousness, the thoughts, and the words, which expressed his ideas. The thoughts call for words, the words for vowel points. This, however, does not oblige us to accept the inspiration of the vowel points, as we possess them from the Masoretic text. The Scriptures may never be viewed atomistically, its parts do not stand by themselves with an individual and infinite meaning.*

Our conception of inspiration should be organic, thus assigning a meaning to the smallest thing, though not of equal importance with all the rest. Nothing in the Scriptures is accidental, yet some things lie nearer the centre, others on the far distant periphery, yet these things are one and all the thoughts of God. *Grades of inspiration, therefore, do not exist.*

There is one life, one under all its aspects, *tota est in toto corpore et in omnibus partibus.* It is one Spirit from which the entire Scriptures proceed, through the consciousness of various and different writers. In the Scriptures, also, there is a difference of gifts, but the same Spirit.

Many objections have been raised against the doctrine of inspiration. They originate in historical criticism, in the discrepancies of the Scriptures, in the citations of the Old Testament in the New Testament, in secular history, in the fixedness of natural laws, in religion and ethics, etc. We should not wonder at this. Since the Scriptures describe God's revelation in Christ, the world cannot treat them differently than it treated him. Its attitude to the Scriptures has been the same throughout the history of the church.

The Scriptures demand that every thought of man shall be brought into obedience under Christ; the world refuses to do so. This battle is fought by the simplest and the wisest alike, the believer shares this conflict with the unbeliever. In nature, in history, in all science, the same difficulty has to be faced, and the same law of faith is imposed. By the organic conception of inspiration, however, many of the difficulties vanish.

It shows that the human, in all its weakness, can become the



organ of the divine, it explains the difference between different authors. *Gratia non tollit sed perficit naturam.* This organic conception of inspiration does not exclude the common, human, and natural life, but it makes it subservient to the thoughts of God.

The picture needs the shadow as well as the light. To draw a correct picture of Christ, human sin and Satan's lie must be portrayed in all their nakedness. Christianity and humanity are not antitheses, the first is the restoration and renewal of the latter. Moreover, the aim of the Scriptures is a religio-ethical one, the Scriptures are not a manual of science, only a source of theology, and as such they should be *read theologically.*

They mistake, who imagine that the Scriptures offer us a complete history of Israel, or that it is possible to construct a life of Christ from the four Gospels. The Holy Spirit never intended such a thing. Inspiration is no notarial record. Hitherto all attempts at a harmony of the Gospels have failed. Exact knowledge, like that imparted by mathematics, astronomy, etc., the Scriptures do not afford. It is wrong to make such demands on them, and for this very reason the autographs are lost; the text of the Scriptures is corrupt, however slightly it may be, and for this reason the church (and not the laymen only) possesses the Scriptures only in poor and fallible translations. These are undeniable facts, and they teach us that the sole aim of the Scriptures is to make us wise unto salvation. And yet these Scriptures, although not a manual for art and science, affect and influence man in all his relations. Sin is not wider than God's grace in Christ, and the Scriptures are God's word unto salvation, but also on that very account, a word for the family, for society, for science, and art. Without entering into scientific details and using the language of common life, that of intuitions and first impressions, this word will abide forever, side by side with sciences and schools of philosophy. It is forever young and fresh. *Verbum Dei manet in aeternum.*

I have been able to touch only on the salient points of this masterly discussion. As has been seen, the great thought of the entire mental process on the doctrine of revelation is the necessi-

ty of its *supranatural and historic character*; and as regards inspiration, its *organic character*.

The author has the courage of his convictions, a peculiarly transparent style, a wide reach of information, and is, unquestionably, master of his subject. It may be desirable to recapitulate all that has been said in the following theses, which, I think, fairly represent the author's process of reasoning:

1. Revelation is a voluntary divine act, and is to be distinguished as *general* and *special*.

2. This distinction dates from the days of patristic and scholastic theology, and, notwithstanding all attacks, survives till this day.

3. According to the Scriptures, all revelation, even that of nature, is *supranatural*.

4. The idea of "natural theology" must be discarded.

5. Supranaturalism must be distinguished from immediate revelation.

6. General revelation is the common basis of all religion. By its aid Christianity can appreciate what is good in all other religions. Itself is the true, and, therefore, the highest form of religion. Thus the great importance of general revelation becomes apparent. Nature and grace are, by its aid, kept inseparably connected.

7. The means of special revelation are indicated by all religious faiths. The false and the true are like the caricature and its original.

8. Special revelation is characterized by the theophany, prophecy, and the miracle.

9. Christian theology, till this day, has never given itself pains to truly appreciate the idea of special revelation.

10. This special revelation is a historic and organic whole, completely identifying itself with humanity, and having for its aim the destruction of the power of sin.

11. This organic conception has been ignored by supranaturalism and naturalism alike.

12. Naturalism fails to explain the facts of revelation; supranaturalism finds the key of the mystery in God, and retains its hold on religion.

13. Revelation occupies a definite teleological position in God's plan with the world.

14. Supranaturalism was not necessitated by the fall, but is inherent in the very plan of creation. Sin caused, not revelation itself, but its *soteriological character*.

15. Revelation is incarnated in the Scriptures, and is destined for humanity as an organic whole.

16. Revelation and theopneusty must not be identified; nor must revelation be separated from the Scriptures.

17. Revelation divides itself into two dispensations, alike centering in Christ. It is only fully and really closed when humanity is renewed in Christ.

18. The church has been practically unanimous on the dogma of the Scriptures. Patristic theology concerns itself but little with the technical idea of inspiration. Scholastic and Catholic theology hold to plenary inspiration with a largely mechanical aspect.

19. Schleiermacher's dynamic theory has almost entirely supplanted this older view, but it satisfies neither faith nor science.

20. The Scriptures both of the Old and the New Testament afford abundant data for the doctrine of inspiration. Christ, their centre, is also their very life.

21. The scriptural idea of inspiration is utterly at variance with that which severs the testimony of Christ from that of the apostles, and also with that of the Higher Critics, which makes the doctrine of inspiration dependent on the scientific treatment of isolated scriptural facts.

22. Inspiration differs from the heroic inflatus of the heathen, and it cannot be identified with either revelation or regeneration.

23. The scriptural idea of inspiration is *thoroughly organic*, and thus the differences between the inspired books are explained.

24. The incarnation of the *Logos* runs parallel with the reduction of revelation to writing.

25. The inspired record is the product of the Spirit of God, and yet wholly the product of the inspired writer.

26. Like the doctrine of the incarnation, that of inspiration implies weakness and shame, and at the same time immaculacy.

27. It has survived all assaults, and is received by the church on God's own authority.

28. The scriptural doctrine of inspiration is incompatible with the theory of *fundamental* and *personal* inspiration. Neither of them is more scientific than the baldest *verbal* theory.

29. The latter (*inspiratio verbalis*) commends itself to reason, although it does not prove the inspiration of the words and points as we now have them.

30. There are *no grades* of inspiration, but *one* inspiration under various aspects.

31. The objections raised against this doctrine arise from the innate enmity of man against God and his revelation in Christ.

32. The organic theory of inspiration disposes of many of these objections, since it shows us the true relation between God's revelation in Christ and humanity.

33. It is the aim of the Scriptures to make us wise to salvation, not to impart knowledge after the manner of the exact sciences. They give us neither a complete history of Israel nor of Christ. All efforts at harmonizing the Gospels have failed.

34. The Holy Spirit allowed the *autographa* to be lost, and left to the church only a text which is corrupt, however slightly it may be, and poor and fallible translations.

35. As God's word unto salvation, as "the voice of life," however, the Scriptures will abide forever, and will endure all assaults and all tests.

I close by expressing the fervent hope that this system of "reformed dogmatics" may be made accessible to English readers by a competent translation.

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