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I. THE FACT OF THE TRINITY AND THE FACTS  
OF EXPERIENCE.

PRESENT-DAY philosophy may be characterized as an attempted explanation of the whole of human experience through a synthesis of its fundamental facts, on the basis of one ultimate and supreme fact. These fundamental facts, or principles, constituting the subject-matter of philosophy, are elucidated by a twofold method of procedure. First, an analysis of consciousness must disclose such principles, implicated in all experience as its necessary conditions, the *sine quibus non* of the very existence of human experience.

Next, the perils of faulty, incomplete, or fanciful analysis, and of the inadequate interpretation of the true and full significance of first principles, must be safeguarded by a supplementary and objective method. The evidences presented by the various aspects and successive phases of human experience, touching the character and significance of all ultimate facts must be scrutinized, and, if convincing, must be allowed due weight in the philosophical interpretation and reconstruction of experience as a whole. So far as may be competent to human intelligence, the sum-total of the results of the twofold method, must be brought into relations of harmonious adjustment.

Let us assume that through application of the methods indicated to human experience, including, of course, man's religious experience as an essential and supreme aspect of universal experience, a unitary conception of the ultimate principle of the uni-

## VII. AN INFALLIBLE REVELATION PRACTICABLE AND NECESSARY.

### “CAN WE HAVE AND DO WE NEED AN INFALLIBLE REVELATION?”

THE above is the caption of an article in the November number of *The Arena*. It is signed by one who styles himself Rev. T. Ernest Allen, thus claiming himself to be an ambassador of the Lord Jesus Christ. He then proceeds to discredit his pretended commission, and to disprove the trustworthiness of his message, by an attempt to demonstrate, according to his own language, “That the dogma of Bible infallibility is not one entitled to be accepted as a postulate of Christianity.”

It is the purpose of this paper to expose the fallacy of his reasoning, and to show that such a position must lead not merely to the rejection of the infallibility of the Scriptures, but that it even involves the rejection of the idea of the “higher critics,” that the Bible contains an infallible revelation. According to the teaching of this new apostle it cannot be proved that one single statement of the Bible contains an infallible truth. His theory would not only permit us to consider the accounts of the fall and of the flood as probable myths, and to discredit the authenticity of the Pentateuch and Isaiah, but there could be no certainty that God had ever infallibly revealed to man a plan of salvation. There could be no proof of an infallible Christ. In fact, there could be no infallible truth. Thus we shall find that beneath the clerical coat there grins the ghastly skeleton of agnosticism, the rankest infidelity of the nineteenth century.

1. The first argument of the Rev. T. Ernest Allen is founded on “*the antecedent improbability that a man or book is infallible*.” This fact has always been recognized by those who claim an infallible Bible and an infallible Christ. Christians claim that it is the one infallible book, and the one infallible man; that the infallibility of the book is attested, as no other book has been, by the character of its revelation, the fulfilment of its prophecies, the

miraculous attestation of the authority of its writers. The infallibility of the Christ is manifested in that he possesses the only perfect character ever lived or portrayed, in that his teachings are wiser and better than all human philosophy, and his claims of infallibility are enforced by the miracles that he wrought, and by his resurrection from the dead. These and like facts we hold are sufficient to remove the antecedent improbabilities of the case.

2. The second and third arguments of this clerical agnostic are so near akin that we shall consider them together. He says: "*We have no test whatever which can discriminate between a finite authority not yet transcended and an infallible authority. Only an infallible being can apply the necessary tests to prove that a man or book is infallible.*" These illogical and truth-destroying propositions he endeavors to uphold by the following illustration: Scientist A is supposed to hold that "all x is y." After a time P comes along, and by greater knowledge discredits A, by finding that "in some cases x is not y." This formula of logic he applies to the Bible as follows: B supposes "the whole of the Bible is true," C, more unfolded than B, may at any time point out errors which will compel the restatement, "Some of the Bible is not true."

We acknowledge, in the case of the scientist, that in many instances his conclusions have been proven erroneous by later scientists, and therefore, the deductions of scientists are not all of them infallible; but the pseudo-preacher, in applying this principle to the Bible, does not claim at this point that C has ever proved that some of the Bible is not true, but only asserts that "C may point out errors." Neither A, nor B, nor C, nor D, nor E, down to the end of the alphabet, through many centuries, embracing the periods of man's highest development and greatest enlightenment, have ever proved the Bible to be erroneous, so that it is not probable that the proposition of B can ever be overthrown.

The Bible has endured successfully every test of fallibility known to man. Its prophecies have been unfailingly fulfilled; and every honest mind that admits these facts must exclaim, "thy testimonies are true," "thy word is truth," it is infallible.

To the statement that only an infallible being can apply the necessary tests to prove a man or book infallible, we might reply that an infallible God has attested the infallibility of the Bible and of the Christ, but in order to convince this incredulous believer it would be necessary to have some other infallible being to test the infallibility of the infallible God, and so on, *ad infinitum*.

If only an infallible being can decide as to the infallibility of a book, or of a man, then only an infallible being can judge of the infallibility of any statement of that book, or of any other book. In fact, none but an infallible being could judge of the infallibility of any fact, statement, or thought. Thus fallible man could know nothing infallible. He would be cast upon a sea of doubt, without chart or compass. He could not be certain as to the truth of any statement contained in the Bible, or any other book. What he thinks he knows to-day may prove false to-morrow. He cannot know infallibly that he himself exists, so that it is useless to speculate about God, or Christ, or heaven. Such is the dark abyss of agnosticism into which this would-be-spiritual guide would hurl us. May God deliver us and him from such a philosophy!

3. The fourth argument aimed by this modern theological Aristotle at the "dogma of Bible infallibility" is, that "*the fallibility of man necessarily involves a fallible interpretation and application, and so destroys that very certitude, the alleged need for which constitutes the raison d'être for such a revelation.*"

Under this head he endeavors to show that such is the weakness of some of our mental faculties, and so divergent the comprehension of men that even if we had an infallible revelation we could not comprehend it, nor agree as to its meaning. In proof, he cites us to the large number of creeds and sects which have sprung up in the church, and inquires, "If infallibility is worth anything in every-day life, how happens it that there are so many sects?"

(1), The mere fact that a truth or a book is infallible does not indicate necessarily that it is difficult for a fallible mind to comprehend it. Because  $1 + 1 = 2$  is infallibly true, it is not, therefore, difficult to comprehend.

(2), The Bible, emanating from a divine source and treating of many spiritual things, must necessarily contain many things beyond human comprehension. This only proves its divine origin. His fourth argument, if true, would disprove the divine origin of a revelation as well as its infallibility.

(3), Granting an all-wise God, he could reveal an infallible truth so that it could be comprehended by the human mind, or he could reveal it so that every mind might comprehend as much of it as would be needful. This is all that has ever been claimed by those who hold the "dogma of Bible infallibility." God has given us an infallible book, which contains an infallible revelation of his will concerning our salvation, and every man may comprehend as much as is needful for salvation, and the book itself is sufficiently clear as to what is essential. "Seek and ye shall find."

(4), There are many infallible truths contained in the infallible Bible about which fallible men may differ. They are more or less important in their nature. By a consecrated life, and constant prayer for the illumination of the Spirit, some are brought to comprehend more of these truths than others, but this only makes our views the more divergent.

Who knows but that God, according to his purpose, has so revealed his truth that these diverse creeds might arise concerning many things, not essential to salvation, that he might so overrule these differences in his church as to perfect the whole body of Christ, and hasten the coming of his kingdom? Let no Christian in his earnest desire to unify the church destroy the infallible rock, Christ Jesus, upon which the church is built. The foundation of an infallible Christ revealed in an infallible Bible, together with "the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace," are far more essential to the life and existence of the church than any outward formal union.

4. Mr. Allen's fifth argument is that "*A consideration of the internal evidence shows the Bible not to be infallible.*" While he claims that there are many discrepancies in the Bible, yet he seems to stake this argument upon what appears to him "a clear case of contradiction" in the variations to be found as to the in-

scriptions on the cross, recorded by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. He arranges them thus: "This is Jesus the King of the Jews"; "The King of the Jews"; "This is the King of the Jews"; "Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews." He notes the fact that it was written in three languages—in Hebrew and in Latin and in Greek—but says, "Granting that it was different in the three languages, and that three of the evangelists took their records, one from each language, both of which suppositions are improbable, how are we to account for the fourth?" The variation only appears in the name or address. Now why should it be thought improbable that the inscription differed somewhat in the title which was prefixed to the accusation? The Jews would have been concerned to know not only the accusation, but the name of the man, and the place of his birth, that they might know his city and tribe, and for them Pilate may have written the longer inscription.

Romans might have been interested to know the name as well as the accusation, but the Greeks would care nothing about name nor lineage, only they would know of what he had been accused.

The fourth or shortest inscription might be accounted for by the fact that Mark quoted in Greek from the Latin, and that the slight variation was caused by the difference in the idioms of the language. To my mind, however, there is yet another and better explanation. Mr. Allen has failed to give a full statement of the case. It is recorded thus:

Matthew xxvii. 37: "And (they) set up over his head his *accusation* written, THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS."

Mark xv. 26: "And the *superscription of his accusation* was written over, THE KING OF THE JEWS."

Luke xxiii. 38: "And a *superscription* also was written over him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS."

John xix. 19–22: "And Pilate wrote a *title*, and put it on the cross. And the writing was, JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS. This *title* then read many of the Jews; . . . and it was written in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin. Then said the chief priests of the Jews to Pilate, Write not, The King of the Jews;

but that he said, I am King of the Jews. Pilate answered, What I have written I have written."

Concerning these inscriptions note (1), That each of the evangelists includes the brief inscription of Mark, "The King of the Jews." The Jews had preferred the charge against him before Pilate, that he claimed to be the King of the Jews. Pilate had examined him as touching that point. It was upon that charge he had been condemned. The soldiers had mocked him, saying, "Hail! King of the Jews." The Jews derided him while on the cross, saying, "If he be the King of Israel"; and it was to these exact words in the inscription that the chief priests took exception when they said to Pilate, "Write not, The King of the Jews."

2. The remaining words of the inscription are, according to Luke, "This is"; Matthew adds, "This is Jesus"; and John records, "Jesus of Nazareth."

The words "this is" are implied in each inscription, and must be supplied, at least in the mind, in order to complete the grammatical construction of the sentence, and it is very natural to suppose that they were inserted in the title as it appeared in one or the other of the three languages. The other words, "Jesus" and "Jesus of Nazareth," only give the name and address of the person crucified, and do not form a part of the accusation at all. They were probably written above the accusation, according to ancient custom, and were omitted in whole or in part by the evangelists as they saw fit, without altering the real inscription.

3. Finally, it is evident from the language used by the various evangelists that each did not purpose to write out every word just as it appeared on the cross.

Matthew wrote, "his accusation" (*τὴν αἰτίαν ἀντοῦ*); Mark records, "the superscription of his accusation" (*ἡ ἐπιγραφὴ τῆς αἰτίας ἀντοῦ ἐπιγεγραμμένη*); Luke quotes, "a superscription" (*ἐπιγραφῇ*), and John gives, "a title" (*τίτλον*).

If, then, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John did not purpose each of them to quote the same thing, or to use the identical words, and all the words that appeared on the cross; and if the inscription quoted appeared in three languages, how, then, can they be made to contradict each other? Yet they all alike record the

same thing, using the identical words, except that three of them add words omitted by others which do not in the least alter or modify the meaning.

Surely Rev. T. Ernest Allen will find few Christians who can be convinced by this argument that "the dogma of Bible infallibility is not one to be accepted as a postulate of Christianity."

It seems to my mind that one who would thus destroy the certain foundation of the Christian's faith, which he has come professedly to establish, must prove a blind leader of the blind. Does he imagine that if he can destroy the "infallible book" and "the infallible man," that he can do away with creeds and sects and bring man nearer to God? Surely not! Religions would be multiplied and creeds would be as diverse as men. If the one infallible book and the one infallible plan of salvation do not unite the church of God, it will never be united. If we are not brought in close touch with God through the infallible man, Christ Jesus, and through the constant indwelling of his divine Spirit, it is not probable that we will be brought any nearer to him by our "religious environment," or by the "universality of revelation," which is the "new gospel" that this man preaches.

Conclusion: *We must have and we do need an infallible revelation.*

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