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## Reason or Revelation?

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saving faith in the abstract, because faith is life and therefore is bound to show its life. All the changing social situations of every person's being are inevitably influenced and governed by faith, as it emerges from the heart in sanctification, in works of love, in the stewardship life, in missionary endeavors, in a Christlike conduct toward all men.

These facts must be remembered if the teaching ministry of the Church is not to fail. We must not, we dare not, reach the stage when we depend upon occasional, sporadic injections of new life from without. The body which receives food, no matter of what excellent quality, at only irregular intervals cannot achieve a healthy growth or maintain its strength, while the body that is regularly nourished by food, though not so excellently prepared, will be able to endure the stress and burden of the day and to give a creditable account of itself. Even so the church-body that does not depend upon occasional injections of spiritual power but requires all its pastors to be a true teaching ministry, rightly dividing the Word of truth and giving to all the servants their proper food at regular intervals, may depend upon a growth that will produce results. It may take some years or decades, for education is a slow process, but the final results will both justify and repay the efforts made.

P. E. KRETZMANN

## Reason or Revelation?

(Continued)

Making reason the norm, that is, in reality, the source of religious teaching, is a wicked, evil, noisome thing. We have shown that rationalism is engaged in a *wicked*, evil business. It is, at the same time, and necessarily so, an evil, noisome, *pernicious* thing. "*Ratio inimica fidei.*" (Luther, IX, p. 157.)

When reason rules in theology, there can be no certainty of faith; for then there is no certainty of teaching. Reason knows nothing of the God of salvation. It can only speculate. It deals only in guesswork. The rationalist can therefore never be sure of his theology. He does not know what he is going to tell the anxious seeker after truth tomorrow. He does not know whether that which he is proclaiming today is the absolute truth. What has reason accomplished in philosophy, its own proper field? Which philosopher has answered the important questions with which philosophy deals, once for all? Did the system of Aristotle give us finalities? Did Kant and Hegel and Schopenhauer succeed? And when reason now comes and offers to solve our religious problems, we shall tell her: You cannot set your own house in



order—do not meddle in our affairs. But reason keeps on dabbling in theology, and we have this situation: as philosophy is continually shifting its position, so the philosophizing theologians, the rationalists, are like “children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine.” The philosophers like to deal with “divers and strange doctrines,” and the rationalists delight in exchanging the familiar and old teachings for what is new and strange.

And the rationalists are proud of this attitude. They say that theology must be progressive. They frown upon those whose theology is fixed. Continual change—yes, and the uncertainty involved therein—is the ideal situation. The old rationalists said so. J. S. Semler, the father of rationalism, declared that Christianity even in its original form was imperfect and that there can be no absolute, final theology. (See J. P. Koehler, *Kirchengeschichte*, p. 566.) He declared that the Christian religion was in need of purification (*purgatio*). W. T. Krug wrote *Briefe ueber die Perfektibilitaet der geoffenbarten Religion* and J. E. Tieftrunk a book *Religion der Muendigen*, as though now at last Christianity had arrived at maturity. (See A. Hahn, *Lehrbuch des christlichen Glaubens*, p. 63 f.) And Lessing, the philosopher, told the rationalists that on this point they were right: “If God held in His right hand all truth and in His left hand the ever active impulse to search for truth, even with the condition that I must always make mistakes, and said to me, ‘Choose,’ I should humbly bow before His left hand and say, ‘Father, give me this. Pure truth belongs to Thee alone.’”

The modern rationalists take the same position. J. S. Whale quotes Lessing’s statement as “a profound remark.” “Freedom—though it involves grievous error and pain—is the very condition of our human being.” (*The Christian Answer*, etc., p. 49.) And since God wants His children to remain in doubt, He has not given them a final, a sure, revelation. H. E. Fosdick wants us to make use of the Bible but tells us: “Finality in the Koran is behind; finality in the Bible is ahead. We have not reached it. God is leading us out toward it.” (*The New Knowledge and the Christian Faith*, p. 141.) And in a sermon published in the *Christian Century*, Dec. 4, 1935, he declared: “God has never uttered His final word on any subject; why, therefore, should prescientific frameworks of thought be so sacred that forever through them man must seek the Eternal and the Eternal seek man?” R. W. Sockman: “Can we say that the Christ of Nazareth has given us the final wisdom? May not the future outgrow Him? . . . He was the child of His time.” (*Recoveries in Religion*, p. 70.) And so was Paul the child of his time. He could not speak with absolute authority. Gains Glen Atkins wrote a chapter on “The Quest for



Authority" in his book *Christianity and the Creative Quests* and said, p. 126: "The epistles of Paul belong to the literature of quest, since he was himself a creative seeker who has left his mark upon the world. His letters are the first in the long literature of Christian confession, and what we call his theology is no more than his own attempt to share with others the great conceptions and the dynamic faith by which he was empowered and emancipated. He has suffered as much at the hands of the unimaginative who have made him a *patterned authoritarian* as he suffered at the hands of magistrates and courts." And so, since "we do not stop with Christ," who only "gives us the line of advance," "Christianity has been a religion of freedom and change and advance." (H. F. Rall, *A Faith for Today*, p. 50.) Freedom—that was the slogan of the old rationalists. At the 1830 tercentenary celebration of the Augsburg Confession J. F. Roehr, Oberhofprediger und Generalsuperintendent, took as his theme "Fromme Betrachtungen ueber die christliche Glaubens- und Gewissensfreiheit, welche uns unsere ersten evangelischen Glaubensbrueder erwarben." Point 4 under I was: "Nur die unbeschraenkte Herrschaft derselben vermag das Heil der christlichen Welt [zu] begruenden." Celebrating the three-hundredth anniversary of the posting of the Ninety-five Theses, the night watch sang on his rounds: "Hoert, ihr Herren, und lasst euch sagen! Der Geist ist nicht mehr in Fesseln geschlagen. Gedenket an Luther, den Ehrenmann, der solche Freiheit euch wiedergewann. Bewahret das Licht, der Wahrheit Licht." (*Allg. Ev.-Luth. Kirchenzeitung*, 19. Sept. 1930.) Rall and Fosdick have taken up the old chant. They, too, are standing up for a religion of freedom and change and advance.

Their religion changes and advances by drawing new ideas from the new science and patterning itself, under the guidance of maturing<sup>1)</sup> reason, on the changing conditions of society. The ideas of the dark prescientific age, we are told, are dispelled by the Enlightenment which was ushered in by science and the progress of society. M. H. Krumbine, the erstwhile Lutheran, says: "It has been the argument of this essay that our beliefs grow out of the way we live. . . . Changing societies are constantly creating new values as they exercise the fundamental human activities.

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1) Krug, the old-school rationalist, said: "Reason is, like everything else in this world, capable of improvement under the laws of evolution. . . . Just see to it that you and the rest sufficiently develop your reason, and you will very soon see that reason may be a safe guide and judge also in divine things." Krug knew, of course, that that would lay him open to the charge of fostering the pride of reason. No doubt August Hahn, the defender of the old Lutheran faith, had raised that charge. So he at once adds: "If reason were indeed proud and arrogant, it would naturally be corrupted; but reason is neither proud nor corrupted." (On the controversy between Krug and Hahn see *Lehre und Wehre*, 46, p. 270.)



Truth, morals, art forms, and canons of taste we know to be in a state of more or less perpetual oscillation. The same is true of beliefs and for the same reasons, namely, because societies change. . . . Our beliefs grow out of the way we live and are expressed in the thought forms of our time." (*Ways of Believing*, p.127 f.) And O. J. Baab begins his book *Jesus Christ Our Lord* with the sentence: "The aim of this book is to declare the divinity of Christ in terms that have definite meaning and value for *modern* men living in a time of unprecedented social confusion and personal despair."

Is, then, what we are preaching today not the absolute truth? Of course not. Each generation must find its own truth. William Temple, Archbishop of York, says in *The Church and Its Teaching*: "We shall not suppose that it is the task of the Christian theologian to go on saying in every generation what was said by all his predecessors. The reason why theology always must be changing is that it represents a relationship between an unchanging Gospel and a changing world. . . . As all other ages must, so our age must begin with accepting much on authority. But it is less prepared than most ages have been to rest there." C. S. Macfarland, who quotes this in *Trends of Christian Thinking*, p.145, adds: "Dr. Temple believes that this all calls for rethinking in Christian theology. Faith must submit itself to three tests." The third test applied by Dr. Temple is: "There must be the test of philosophic adequacy." So, naturally, there must be a change after one or two or three generations; philosophy changes that often. The Modernists do not care to wait even so long. They will tell us "How My Mind has Changed in This Decade." (*The Christian Century*, 1939.) And they are not at all disturbed by the observation that the time seems to be ripe for substituting for the old Modernism, which replaced the old rationalism, a "New Modernism"—which is going to be the same as the old, after all.

There are those who are disturbed by this situation. Every Christian would be disturbed if his pastor told him that what is going to be proclaimed in the pulpit next Sunday is not absolutely reliable. Even Dr. E. Lewis is protesting: "'Give us a sure Word,' that is the cry we daily hear. . . . We read our comparative religion; tell us, is there nowhere one word which stands above all other words, no truth of rocklike quality, which nothing can move? . . . Tell us, must we always flounder, must we always be experimenters, must we always build up only to tear down? . . . The preacher always preaches *today*, but what he preaches today must be that which was true yesterday and will be true forever." (*The Faith We Declare*, p.188 f.) The secular magazine *Fortune*, too, castigates the uncertainty, the instability, the hopelessness, of



the theology of rationalism. In its January issue it writes: "As laymen dedicated to the practice of Christianity we can merely record our certainty that in order for humanity to progress, it must *believe*; it must have faith in certain absolute spiritual values or at least have faith that absolute spiritual values exist. The Church, as teacher and interpreter of those values, is the guardian of our faith in them. And *as laymen we do not feel that that faith is being guarded.*" There can be no faith where only uncertainties are offered. Faith cannot live on doubt. And where rationalism, which relies on unstable, wavering, groping, doubting reason, rules, faith dies. *Ratio inimica fidei.*

Rationalism has no place in Christian theology and in the Christian Church. It does occupy a large space in the churches of today. "Make no mistake about it," says the *Lutheran Herald*, in discussing that editorial in *Fortune*, "it is Modernism which speaks for much of American Protestantism. As for much of American Protestantism, we challenge any one to find an absolute among the shifting currents of Modernism." Rationalism is indeed filling the Church with its blatant voice, but it has no right to be heard in the Church. If rationalism is right in practicing the theology of progress, of doubt, of uncertainty, the Church has lost its right of existence. If the Church has no absolute truth, no finalities to offer, it should close its door. "What need would there be for a Church of God in the world, of what use would a Church be, if she wanted to waver and be unsure in her message or offer something new every day, now giving something, now taking away something?" (Luther, XVII, 1340.) If the Church would subscribe to the principle of rationalism, she would be signing her own death-warrant.

Of one thing the rationalists were, and are, sure: the specific teachings of Christianity are not true. At the command of reason they have cast away most of the Bible. The old rationalists retained three truths: God, virtue, immortality. How much have their children retained? One of them, Dr. Carl S. Patton, moderator of the Congregational National Council, said in an address delivered at the 125th anniversary of the foundation of Andover Seminary that "there are only two planks left in the creed of the intelligent and modern American Protestant: first, that there is some sort of God; secondly, that Jesus, while not God, is man at man's best and therefore probably indeed very much like God." (See *Chr. Century*, Oct. 4, 1933.<sup>2</sup>) Some rationalists indeed have

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2) B. I. Bell, who quotes the above, adds: "If that is all the churches have to offer to troubled, puzzled people, I cannot for the life of me see why any one should bother with churches at all." *Ratio inimica fidei et ecclesiae.*



saved a few more planks, but C. S. Macfarland, himself a liberal, tells us that almost everything of importance has gone by the board: "Of over three hundred contemporary volumes that have been read or have passed under my eyes during the past year, there is a conspicuous absence of the subjects of the earlier day, at least in terminology.<sup>3)</sup> They are, the Trinity, the Atonement, Christology, the Incarnation, Miracles, Biblical Inspiration, Eschatology." (*Trends of Christian Thinking*, p. 197.) Naturally, for "man's reason or natural intellect is so ignorant, blind, and perverted that, when even the most ingenious and learned men upon earth read or hear the Gospel of the Son of God and the promise of eternal salvation, they cannot from their own powers perceive, apprehend, understand, or believe and regard it as true, and before they become enlightened and are taught by the Holy Ghost, they regard all this only as foolishness or fictions." (*Trigl.*, p. 883.)

There is, first, the Christian teaching of the necessity of revelation, of the inspiration of Scripture, and its absolute authority. In place of this the old rationalists set up reason as the norm, yes, as the source, of religious teaching. That is the true formal principle of their theology. The Bible is "inspired" exactly like any other good book which has a good moral influence (Semler). Away with "bibliolatry!" (Henke.) We follow the light of reason! J. C. F. Loeffler wrote an article entitled: "Die Entbehrlichkeit des Glaubens an eine unmittelbare Offenbarung" and J. G. Toellner: "Beweis, dass Gott die Menschen bereits durch die Offenbarung der Natur zur Seligkeit fuehrt." (See A. Hahn, *op. cit.*, p. 20.) H. Kraemer describes the situation thus: "The conception of 'natural religion' as the 'normal' and 'standard' religion became paramount, and in their humanist theology the light of reason became the organ of revelation." (*The Chr. Message*, etc., p. 116.) A. Hahn knew what these men taught. He lived among them and valiantly opposed them. In his *Lehrbuch*, published 1828, he gives this summary of their teaching, p. XIV: "In the opinion of all consistent rationalists, from the 17th century down to our days, all religion and religious culture, inclusive of the Christian religion, is the result *solely* of the development of the natural powers inherent by birth in the human mind, influenced indeed by that general providence which causes the seed to germinate and rules all things, but without any *extraordinary* divine action, which never takes place, and—Christ, nobler and wiser than all, is in their estimation only a wise but not infallible man of antiquity, like Socrates, Plato, Zoroaster, Mohammed, and

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3) Remember what Henke of old said about freeing the Christian doctrine of "onomatology."



others, and Christianity is indeed the best religion so far established, but only a transient religion, which is gradually returning into the original elements of all natural religions; accordingly most of the extraordinary facts of sacred history have been relegated by the rationalists into the domain of mythology and symbolism, and the characteristic teachings of our religion, products of a former age of superstition, have been banned from their system of religion."<sup>4</sup>) The rationalists of today are fighting for the same principle: "Religion without Revelation." The humanists cannot take any other position. Since there is no God, they must hold with John Dewey that man is the true source of all religious ideas. (See *CONC. THEOL. MTHLY.*, X, p. 81.) But the moderate rationalists, the deists, are today saying the same thing. And when conservative theologians presume to delete from the divine Revelation those portions of Scripture as uninspired to which their reason, their scientific mind, and their moral sense object, they, too, set reason above Revelation. The liberal A. C. McGiffert (Union Seminary) declares: "We have learned not to think of the Bible as the final and infallible authority and have come to see that there is no such authority and that we need none. . . . The Bible is merely the outgrowth of men's thinking, just as all other religious books." (*Am. Journal of Theol.*, 1917, p. 355.) The Liberals get this from the old rationalists by way of Schleiermacher, who said: "Every sacred scripture is but a mausoleum of religion. . . . He does not have religion who believes in a sacred scripture, but rather he who does not need one and *could make one if he so desired.*" (See H. Sasse, *Here We Stand*, p. 46.) John Oman: "Christ encourages His disciples to rise above the rule of authorities and to investigate till *each is his own authority.* . . . Christ

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4) A historical note: When Walther studied theology at the University of Leipzig, all the professors, with two exceptions, were rationalists. Two, F. W. Lindner and August Hahn, taught Biblical Christianity.—Perhaps the printer will find space for another remark, which has no bearing on our subject. On the fly-leaf of my copy of Hahn's *Lehrbuch* this is written: "Dieses Buch habe ich als Weihnachtsgeschenk erhalten von Herrn Doktor Volkmann in Leipzig. 1830. F. Walther." Walther gives the same description of rationalism as Hahn: It claims to be "Christianity purified." "In the lecture halls of universities rationalism was held up as a new and great light to young theologians, who afterwards preached it to the common people as true Christianity—Christianity purified. Thus rationalism gradually became the dominant type of religion." "Praise and thanks be to God that these awful times are past,—let us hope forever!" (*Law and Gospel*, pp. 259, 332.)—Another remark—and that touches our subject directly. Dr. J. W. Volkmann, mentioned above, said in his writing *Der Rationalist kein evangelischer Christ*: "The rationalists make reason the absolutely supreme source of knowledge; God's dealings can never be incomprehensible to it. An immediate revelation is therefore, say the rationalists, a self-contradictory conception." (See K. Hennig, *Die saechsische Erweckungsbewegung im Anfange des 19. Jahrhunderts*, p. 62.)



appeals to the testimony of Scripture but never offers a word of it as a final reason for belief. His final appeal is always to the heart taught by God. . . . The truth He taught was not a deliverance from on high, which He or some one else had at one time received, to be now accepted on the ground that it was once enunciated. But it is to be received because, however it may have been first delivered, it remains eternally true, proving itself to be the true revelation of God, because it has its evidence in the hearts made in His image." (*Vision and Authority*, p. 188 f.) H. L. Willett: "The authority which we recognize as truly present in the Biblical record does not inhere in the Book as such. But rather it is found in the appeal which the Scripture as a whole makes to the moral sense within humanity. It exercises that power by the sheer force of its appeal to all that is best within men." (*The Bible through the Centuries*, p. 292.) *The Christian Century*, March 30, 1938: "The writers of the Bible were men like ourselves—like E. Stanley Jones and Kagawa, if you wish. I cannot imagine what added authority the Bible would have if it were conceived as having been dictated by God to a stenographer. Its values would be no more precious. Its meaning would be no more clear. Its truth would be no more authoritative. Indeed, I fear it would detract from its authority, if God so dictated it, for I would be at a loss to account for the obvious errors in it." One more sample. Eleven modernist clergymen, among them Bishop Francis J. McConnell, Dr. Edmund B. Chaffee, and Dr. H. E. Fosdick and two Rabbis, discussing the statement that birth control is contrary to the commandment of the Deity, declared: "This is true if by the Deity we mean the God that is found in ancient myth and legend. This is not true, however, if by the Deity we mean that God who is revealed in the endless sweep of evolution and whose majestic message is being slowly translated by science into the accents of the human tongue. . . . We choose to base our faith upon the evidence, the knowledge, and the experience available in our own time." (See *CONC. THEOL. MTHLY.*, VII, 308.)

So much for the rationalists of the liberal school. When conservative theologians, Lutherans and others, warn us against taking every statement of the Bible as true, warn us against committing Bibliolatry, declare with Hans Rust (Koenigsberg): "We would like to have God's infallible Word placed in our hands directly, by means of Holy Scripture, in order to have all questions decided at once. But God willed otherwise. . . . God has kept His Church from making the Bible a revelation-idol, *sich aus der Bibel einen Offenbarungsgoetzen zu machen*" (*Vom Aergernis des Menschenworts in der H. Schrift*, pp. 25, 30), they have joined the rationalists in rejecting the Protestant, Christian, Scriptural



principle: *Sola Scriptura*—the Bible is the sole authority in religion.<sup>5)</sup>

Rationalism next disapproves of the Scripture doctrine of sin. *Religion in Geschichte u. Gegenwart, s. v. Suende*, presents the teaching of the old rationalists thus: "‘Die Vernunft weiss nichts vom Fall Adams.’ Man betrachtete Gen. 3 als moralisches Lehr-gedicht. Die Vererbungslehre galt als religioes und moralisch anstoessig. ‘Alle Kreatur Gottes ist gut’; das edelste Geschlecht der sichtbaren Geschoepe davon auszunehmen, hiesse die All-macht heruntersetzen." Their leading dogmatician, J. A. L. Weg-scheider, denounced the doctrine of original sin, of the total depravity of man, as "a dark delusion," "that lie which so effec-tually chokes all striving after morality." It had become the fashion to exalt the goodness and worth and the moral capabilities of man. Dr. J. W. Volkmann, reviewing a sermon of Roehr (the man who called Pelagius "the venerable defender of reason against un-reason"), wrote: "Das Hauptuebel des Rationalismus steckt in der pelagianischen Zufriedenheit mit der Beschaffenheit des Her-zens." (See K. Hennig, *op. cit.*, p. 63.) No original sin! And it was no longer considered good taste to speak of actual sins as something abominable and damnable. When a candidate for the ministry was about to recite the old formula of confession at his ordination, the officiating minister, Troschel, stopped him and said: "I am sorry for you, my friend, if you feel that this prayer ex-presses the true feeling of your conscience. We need to recognize our deficiencies, mistakes, blunders, carelessness, imperfections, disapprove of them, and humble ourselves before God; we should apply this knowledge to our self-improvement," but had he, the candidate, not always used his best endeavor to lead a blameless life? (When the candidate pointed to Rom. 3:23, "Wir sind all-zumal Suender," he was told that the correct translation reads: "All have sinned," that is, as Gentiles we were sinners; Christians, however, usually are decent and virtuous people. See F. Uhlhorn, *Geschichte der deutsch-lutherischen Kirche*, II, p. 87.) In those days men had lost the consciousness of "the exceeding sinfulness of sin." Pelagius had come into his own. "Im 18. Jahrhundert feierte Pelagius einen mehr als vollstaendigen Sieg." (A. Hahn, *op. cit.*, p. 398.)

And our days have witnessed another Restoration of Pelagius. Thousand voices are repudiating the story of the Fall as being

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5) Dr. M. J. Stolee, writing in the *Lutheran Herald*, puts it this way: "The more conservative *Modernists* feel perfectly competent to pick and choose from the Bible just what people need to believe and what they do not need to believe. They say many beautiful things about the Bible and quote it as authority when it happens to agree with their own opinion."



merely "a tale" (R. J. Barker, *It Began in Galilee*, p. 67), "a story, a myth, if one prefers the term" (H. L. Willett, *Chr. Century*), "the explanatory myth of Eve and the apple" (S. McDowall, *Is Sin Our Fault?* p. 234). We need not multiply instances. Thousand voices are fulminating against the doctrine of the total depravity of man as denying the greatness, the goodness, the freedom, of natural man. McDowall: "The doctrine of original sin has by the long custom of time become so amalgamated with the central truths of the Christian religion that it is not easy for us to see that it does not belong to them." (Author's italics.) "Paulinism is largely responsible for this. St. Paul adopted one of the three doctrines of original sin current in Jewish circles, that of sin inherited from Adam." (Op. cit., p. 245.) H. L. Willett: "It was the belief of Paul. . . . The assumption of original human perfection and gradual decline is open to serious objection in the light of anthropology and evolution." (In the *Chr. Cent.*, Nov. 4, 1936.) We need not multiply examples. Thousands of professors and preachers are assuring us that sins are not sins but only weaknesses, relics of animal imperfections, the result of physical or mental maladjustment, with no culpability attached, because man is impelled by necessity to do what he does. And it is not only Prof. H. E. Barnes who is telling us that sin is merely a medical and sociological problem, that "sin has been relegated by science into the limbo of ancient superstitions." Men not as radical as he are warning us not to make so much of sin. K. Reiland thinks that, "if more of us could manage to think less of sin, we would have greater success in getting rid of it." (*The World's Miracle*, p. 142.) H. F. Rall is compelled to pose the question: "Why is there a lessened sense of sin?" Two pages farther on, however, he sneers: "The fact is, Christianity does not ask men to 'whine about their condition' or 'lie awake and weep for their sins.'" (*A Faith for Today*, pp. 156, 158.) Pelagius again has his way, so much so that in many churches sin is not mentioned at all. S. T. Grey visited the churches where he "spent the Sabbath on an unusually long vacation trip," and he found this: "Men are trying to get away from preaching the doctrine of sin. I heard it once only this trip." (*The Presbyterian*, Sept. 11, 1930.) Dr. Shelton reported that in 41 sermons preached in New York he found the word "sin" but once. The Laymen's Foreign Mission Inquiry mentions "sin" one time. Verily, rationalism is still in flower, and in some respects it has developed beyond the ideas of the old rationalists. "As a matter of fact some have gone 'way beyond Semi-Pelagianism and outstripped even Pelagius himself in their volatilization of the concept of sin." (L. Berkhof, *Vicarious Atonement*, p. 36.)



What is the trouble? The doctrine of original sin, they say, is against reason. Surely not against any law of logic or psychology. What is the trouble? First, the human mind and heart and conscience cannot see the vileness and enormity of sin. And secondly,—this is the real reason,—man *does not want* to see it. The pride of fallen human nature rebels against the judgment of Scripture.—Fools of reason! There stands Satan's paramour (Luther's apt phrase, XX:232), painting her face and donning fine silks and persuading herself that she is keeping her ugliness and hideousness hidden from God and conscience.

And now, queerly enough, she does not like to have the name of her seducer, of Satan, mentioned. The rationalists insist—and this is an important *locus* in their dogmatics—that what Scripture teaches concerning a personal devil and his baleful power over man is utterly unacceptable. The old rationalists always named this as one of their grievances against Scripture. This is the list according to *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*: "the doctrine of original sin, the eternity of hell and the damnation of the heathen, the belief in demons and the devil, Inspiration, and the Atonement." Their catechism stated: "Der Teufel ist kein persoenlicher boeser Geist. Huete dich vor allem Teufelsaberglauben!" Jesus indeed spoke of the devil, but, said Semler, you must here apply my accommodation principle. And Semler was right, say the present-day rationalists. J. S. Whale: "Christ used the categories of His age, speaking as does the rest of the New Testament about the Evil One, Satan, the Enemy. . . . What has been called the fall of man, original sin, and the devil, these are, at best, great mythological theories." (*The Christian Answer*, etc., pp. 35, 83). G. Aulén, on the Scripture statements concerning the devil's fighting against God: "Die 'mythologische' Praegung dieser Gedankengaenge ist offensichtlich. Aber sie wegen des mythologischen Gewandes als unwesentlich und minderwertig zu betrachten, verraet wenig Tiefblick." (*Das christliche Gottesbild*, p. 30.) S. Cave: "Where Paul speaks of 'demons,' we speak of 'neuroses,' 'complexes,' and 'repressions.'" (*What Shall We Say of Christ?* P. 55.) W. Hermann, who says that "Jesus shared in the idea of a devil as He did in general in the whole world-view then current in Israel," assails this idea with an argument which fully measures up to the shallowness of the old rationalistic ratiocination: "The notion that a creature such as the devil can bar the ways of the seeker after God must ultimately be rendered impossible by the religious knowledge of God's *omnipotence*." (*Syst. Theol.*, p. 100.)

Why is the plain teaching of Scripture concerning the personality and the power of the devil so obnoxious to these



rationalists? It goes against their fundamental obsession: the dignity, the worth, the power, of man. They abhor the idea—the truth, the terrible truth—that “Satan now worketh in the children of disobedience.” They do not want to be told that they are miserable slaves. Their vaunted free will is at stake. And if they admitted that they are helpless against Satan, they would have to admit that nothing short of divine help can save them. And man’s dignity cannot stand for that.—In the interest of this vaunted dignity and power they deny, next, even the deity of Christ and the Atonement.

“Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?” Why, a son of man, answer the rationalists, and nothing more; a great man, greater than Socrates and Mohammed, but nothing more. The preacher who pronounced the eulogy over the remains of W. A. Teller (Oberkonsistorialrat in Berlin) was not ashamed to declare on that occasion: “If only a few more men like Jesus, Luther, and Teller would arise, all would soon be well with the world.” This preacher is the man who reprimanded people for confessing their shortcomings as sins. And Teller was the man who told the deistic Jews that by indorsing the Christian morality they would become members of the Christian Church. (Uhlhorn, *op. cit.*, p. 87.) The catechism used in the church in which F. Brunn was ordained (1842) stated: “Jesus Christus war ein Mensch wie wir, der in der innigsten Verbindung mit Gott stand.”<sup>6)</sup> The slogan was: Away with “Christianity”! So said Henke. Away with “Christolatry”! says Fosdick and preaches and publishes a sermon on the “Peril of Worshipping Jesus.” (See C. G. Trumbull, *Prophecy’s Light*, p. 95. See also *Modern Use of the Bible*.)<sup>7)</sup> It would be idolatry, for Jesus was a mere man. O. L. Joseph: “The Gentile Christians were nurtured in pagan polytheism, but with a new emphasis they exalted Jesus to the highest position of deity.” (*Ringing Realities*, p. 51.) C. S. Patton: “Jesus, while not God, is man at man’s best and therefore probably indeed very much like God.” (*The Chr. Cent.*, Oct. 4, 1933.) Bishop F. McConnell, one-time president of the Federal Council: “Is not the tendency to deify Jesus more heathen than Christian? Are we not more

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6) Brunn states that in this congregation the attendance at the services had dwindled to just about nothing. According to Uhlhorn that was the situation throughout the land. (*Op. cit.*, p. 98.) And B. I. Bell asks, What else can you expect?—Oh, yes, some rationalists draw large crowds. But that is due to some carnal attraction.

7) Some even go so far as to say with Pearl Buck: “And what if Christ never lived? What of that!” (*Ibid.*) Before her D. C. Macintosh, professor of theology in Yale, had said in his book *The Reasonableness of Christianity*: “Christianity would still be valid if it should turn out that Christ was not truly historical at all.” (See *Theol. Mthly.*, VI, p. 250.)



truly Christian when we cut loose from a heathen propensity to take Jesus simply for the character He was and for the ideal He is?" Leaders in the Christian Church are saying this. Satan's paramour knows no shame.

Since Jesus was, according to the rationalists, a mere man, there can be no Trinity. And in itself the concept of the Unity of the Divine Essence and the Trinity of Persons is foolishness to reason. It should never have found a place in Holy Scripture. "It is an antichristian dogma," said Roehr. It has no place in the Church.<sup>8)</sup> On this point the deistic Jews and the Christians believe alike. And with the old rationalists the Modernists are taking common ground with the Jews and the Mohammedans. Wm. Adams Brown is proud to relate that after a Mohammedan had told a Roman Catholic that he could not accept the doctrine of the Trinity because "we Mohammedans believe that, if God intended to reveal Himself to man, He would do it in simple ways, such as a child could understand," he (Brown) later suggested "that the truth for which the doctrine of the Trinity stands was not a recondite mystery concerning the nature of God in Himself but the summary of certain facts of which we have first-hand evidence in experience," etc. And "the Supreme Being has given us in the person of Jesus, whom Mohammedans as well as Christians revere, our clearest revelation of what He is like," etc. And we found that "there was a common ground of religious experience on which we both could meet." (*Beliefs that Matter*, p. 171.) Yes, the Mohammedan and the Jew and the rationalist have a common ground: whatever reason cannot comprehend cannot be true. Wegscheider and his fellow-unbelievers declared that whoever accepts the doctrine of the Trinity has abjured the laws of human thinking. The truth of the matter is, of course, that *these people* refuse to listen to the voice of reason. Their reason tells them that finite reason cannot measure the Infinite. Still they keep on reciting the rules of common arithmetic, and because three times one makes three, the doctrine of the Trinity is a fable and fiction. In his *Discourse on Unitarian Christianity* W. E. Channing sets forth at great length that, when it is taught that Jesus is a dif-

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8) And so it would be wrong to baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. An agenda published in 1808 in Zerbst offered fifteen formularies for the baptism of infants, fourteen of which substituted for the Trinitarian formula various rationalistic cacoynms; the fifteenth, to be used in baptizing an illegitimate child, did use the words "Ich taufe dich auf den Namen des Vaters, des Sohnes und des Heiligen Geistes," but with this provision: "Er muss den Anwesenden diese Formel dahin verstaendigen, dass er durch diese Worte auf den Glauben taufe, Gott, der Allvater, habe Jesum gesandt, um durch seine Lehre die Welt mit heiligem Geiste, mit Weisheit und Tugend, zu erfuellen." (See *Lehre und Wehre*, 41, p. 50.)



ferent person from the Father but Himself God, and the same as to the Holy Ghost, three Gods are conceived, and "when common Christians hear these persons spoken of as conversing with each other, how can they help regarding them as different beings?" "We do, then, with all earnestness protest against the irrational and unscriptural doctrine of the Trinity." (*Works of W. E. C.*, p. 371.)<sup>9</sup> The *Christian Century* of Sept. 13, 1939, utters the same sort of sophomoric wisdom when, in discussing the announcement that "tomorrow [Trinity Sunday] a doctrine will be commemorated which no one understands and yet which is fundamental in Christian thinking," it remarks: "Why should a preacher try to preach about a subject which, he admits, is beyond his comprehension? A good many congregations — and some who are less frequently found in congregations than once was their wont — will ask that question." Do these men really believe that there is profound wisdom in the theory that what does not agree with the laws of mathematics cannot be true? Luther is not impressed with their wisdom. He tells them: "When we begin to be so proud and overweening as to judge according to our reason that God in His deity must consist of a single person, we who have never seen anything of these things and never can see it but have the testimony of Scripture that there are three persons in the Godhead, then we are rude fellows, thinking more of our blind and poor reason than of the statements of Scripture. For Scripture is God's own witness concerning Himself, and our reason cannot know the divine nature; yet it wants to judge concerning that about which it knows nothing." (X:1018.) — Fools of reason! Fools in that they do not know the limitations of reason. More fools in that, led by blind, proud reason, they cast aside the salvation provided by the blessed Trinity.

Rationalism will hear nothing of the redemption gained by Jesus. It rejects the vicarious atonement as a fable and fiction. "The doctrine of redemption and atonement through the death of Christ," said Roehr, "has been fabricated by ignorant Church Fathers," and this "Jewish theology [the Biblical teaching concerning the sacrificial and atoning death of Jesus] has no place in any handbook of religion written for Christians of our day." (See *Kirchliche Zeitschrift*, 1939, p. 137.) In 1939 J. W. Hudson wrote a book, *The Old Faiths Perish*, in which he states on page 49: "The death of one man could not have the anomalous effect of saving other human beings from the consequences of their deeds."<sup>10</sup>

9) On page 369 the true thought is expressed: "We indeed grant that the use of reason in religion is accompanied with danger."

10) Other statements in this rationalistic handbook: "Jesus cannot have really died and then come to life again. That would be a ridiculous



Professor Hudson is merely a philosopher, but the theologians say the same. Dr. H. E. Fosdick is compelled, "for the sake of intellectual and spiritual integrity," to reject this "special theory of the atonement—that the blood of our Lord, shed in a substitutionary death, placates an alienated Deity and makes possible welcome for the returning sinner." (*The New Knowledge*, p. 46.) Lyman Abbott: "The notion that Jesus suffers the penalty of our sin, the innocent punished for the wrong-doing of the guilty, I repudiate absolutely and with indignation as irrational, unscriptural, and unspiritual, . . . this isolated, artificial arrangement by which God agrees to a bargain fundamentally immoral." H. F. Rall dismisses the doctrine with the gratuitous assertion: "It is not a courtroom affair, a plan by which a debt can be paid or a penalty remitted" (*op. cit.*, p. 188), and S. A. McDowall, fully measuring up to the vulgarity and conceit of the old rationalists, speaks thus: "Rightly or wrongly, we resent the idea of any one suffering instead of us. . . . We always feel that it is rather beneath our dignity to expect some one else to get us out of a mess. . . . Ideas which simply mirror the limited outlook of a period and a nation must go—the unethical conception of a transactional substitute," etc. . . . "The idea of fair play lies very deep in the Englishman's mind, and if God is omnipotent, as he is told, he does not see why God should allow this kind of thing; nor does he see that it is fair for Christ to suffer innocently in order that he himself may be left off when he does what he knows is wrong." (*Is Sin Our Fault?* Pp. 266 ff., 316.) Yes indeed, the doctrine of the vicarious atonement goes against our natural feelings. "Forgiveness of sins by virtue of an alien merit, alien righteousness, reason cannot comprehend." (Luther, VI:733.) And so men are disgusted with this most precious doctrine. Intoxicated with the sweet, delicious wine Satan has handed them (Luther's phrase, Weimar Ed., 47, p. 841), with the idea of the supremacy of reason and the moral worth of the natural man, they are trampling the blood of redemption under foot.

Rationalism does away with all the articles of the Christian faith and so, of course, with the *articulus fundamentalissimus*, justification by faith alone. Where the formal principle of Christian theology, *sola Scriptura*, has been replaced by *sola ratio*, the material principle will be: salvation by works. "Human reason

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contradiction of the very meaning of physical death. When a man is genuinely dead, he stays dead. . . . Jesus cannot have ascended into heaven, since, without pulleys, or an airplane or some such mechanical device, it would contradict the law of gravitation." Professor Hudson is not a sophomore but "a professor of philosophy in a State university supported largely by Christian taxpayers," according to the *Presbyterian*, February 8, 1940.



naturally admires these, and because it only sees works, it dreams accordingly that these works merit remission of sins and justify. This opinion of the Law inheres by nature in men's minds." (Apology. *Trigl.*, p. 197.) Where reason inspires, Pelagius is the prophet ("Pelagius, the venerable defender of reason against unreason"), Augustine and Paul, the detractors of noble man, must keep silence, and the disciples of Pelagius extol the integrity of human nature and the powers of free will. All that man needs is to realize his goodness. "What a man needs is not regeneration in the old sense or a change of heart, but simply an awakening to what he really is." (A. C. McGiffert, in *The Rise of Modern Religious Ideas*, p. 206.) And what is he really? McGiffert: "Christ is essentially no more divine than we are." (See C. G. Trumbull, *Prophecy's Light*, p. 89.) Dr. J. H. Boyd: "Men are what they are because of a fatal disbelief in their own divinity." (*Ibid.*) Jesus is the Savior because "He releases these spiritual forces among men. . . . It is our higher self waiting to be achieved." (H. F. Rall, *op. cit.*, pp. 159, 189.) "How, then, does Christ save? The answer is: Not by magic or formula but by a steadfast and complete allegiance to the spirit and character of the Son of God. To live in and with Him means salvation and immortality." (O. J. Baab, *op. cit.*, p. 199.) Men are saved by cultivating their moral character—that is the sum of Christianity. Said Semler: "Der Kern der Religion ist das, was zur moralischen Ausbesserung dient." Said the manual of H. Stephani: "Common religious instruction deals only with what a man must know in order to lead a virtuous life." Says Fosdick today: "The second liberal aim is to put first things first in religion—the creation of personal character and social righteousness. Christlikeness is the central criterion of Christianity." (In the *Ladies' Home Journal*, Jan., 1925; April, 1926: "The New Religious Reformation.") Says O. L. Johnson: "Paul's purpose was not to formulate a system of religious thought but to furnish incentives to men and women to live worthy of Christ." Christ's work "is to focus attention on the culture of character and the performance of duty. . . . Christ knew His hearers were capable of unlimited response, and He incited them to the limit of their abilities." (*Op. cit.*, pp. 47, 174.) Then, how is a man justified? Wegscheider: "God is not a bloodthirsty Moloch. All that the sinner needs is moral betterment. By striving after the good a man obtains God's favor, that is, he is justified." (Uhlhorn, *op. cit.*, p. 162.) What does Rom. 3:25 mean, Dr. Willett? "It is not the imputing to a man a righteousness which he does not possess, but an imparting to him of a righteousness which he attains through trust in the Lord and fellowship with Him." (*The Chr. Cent.*, Dec. 2, 1936.) Then, Dr. Cave, what is the Gospel?



"As God's children we may and must learn from God's love the way of love—a way of love which is not so much obedience to a command as the spontaneous outcome of the knowledge of His love for us. Severe as were the requirements which God made of His children, Jesus could thus speak of His message as good news. . . . It was good news that our Lord proclaimed—good news of God. That good news means that we are called to love God with all our heart and soul and mind and, as part of this love to God, we have to love our neighbor." (*What Shall We Say of Christ?* Pp. 157, 196.)—These men think much of Pelagius and of the Pelagians, Semler and Wegscheider, etc. "Rational theology in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is another diastole, a dilation of the great heart of Christian faith to take in all worthy striving." (E. E. Aubrey, *Living the Christian Faith*, p. 58.)

Pelagius was right—better say: The Jews and the heathen are right and Luther and Paul were wrong. The Pelagian H. E. G. Paulus said with his dying breath: "Ich stehe rechtschaffen vor Gott durch das Wollen des Rechts." That is the doctrine of justification according to the heathen Cornelius Fronto of Rome († 170). When he approached death, he wrote: "When death comes, I will freely open my conscience and testify that I have never in my life done anything to be ashamed of. I need not reproach myself on the score of any blemish or crime. No leaning towards avarice, no faithlessness, could be found in me," etc., etc. (G. Uhlhorn, *Der Kampf des Christentums*, etc., p. 241.) So said Julian the Apostate: "I die without remorse as I have lived without guilt." So said Rabbi G. Levi at one of these Jewish Christian Institutes here in St. Louis in February, 1936: "The Christian quotes the text 'God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son,' while the Jew says: 'God so loved the world that He gave His commandments, giving men something to do.'" And the Federal Council *Lenten Meditation* says: "What shall I do to gain eternal life? Discharge aright the simple dues with which each day is rife, yea, with thy might."

Satan speaks thus: "Yea, hath God said?" And Satan's paramour says after him: These be fables and fictions.

Not a single revealed truth finds favor with reason. Follow her lead, and you will reject all Christian teachings. Luther has warned us: "It appears, then, that one of the principal causes why the words of Moses and Paul are not received is their absurdity. . . . It is human reason that is offended, which, being blind, deaf, impious, and sacrilegious in all the words and works of God, is, in the case of this passage, introduced as a judge of the words and works of God. According to the same argument of absurdity *you will deny all the articles of faith* because it is of



all things the most absurd and, as Paul saith, foolishness to the Gentiles and a stumbling-block to the Jews that God should be man, the son of a virgin, crucified and sitting at the right hand of His Father; it is, I say, absurd to believe such things. . . . These things, reason will say, are not becoming a God good and merciful. . . . But she will comprehend that, when this shall be said of God: He hardens no one, He damns no one, but He has mercy upon all, He saves all; and He has so utterly destroyed hell that no future punishment need be dreaded.<sup>11)</sup> It is thus that reason blusters and contends in attempting to clear God and to defend Him as just and good." (XVIII:1831 f.) Rationalism throws all articles of the Christian faith overboard.

And that is the banefulness of rationalism. *Ratio inimica fidei!* Removing the Scripture teachings, it takes away that which produces faith and on which faith lives. For them that turn away from "the Law and the Testimony," "for them there is no morning," Is 8:20. Where reason has her way, faith dies. "The devil will turn on the light of reason and turn you away from the faith." (Luther, XII:1174.) Luther adds: "Darum bittet Gott mit Ernst, dass er euch das Wort lasse, denn es wird greulich zugehen." Let men beware; let us beware! Reason, our reason, would have us soar with her, with Satan, beyond the heavens, exalting herself above God. That adventure ends with a Luciferian fall.<sup>12)</sup>

Reason or Revelation? "Let us not dabble too much in philosophy. . . . What matters it if philosophy cannot fathom this? The Holy Spirit is greater than Aristotle." (Luther, XIX:28 f.) Let us remember this when we examine, in the following articles, the subtle forms of rationalism. What Luther says of the scholastic rationalism applies to all forms of it, subtle and coarse: "The universities also need a good, thorough reformation. . . . In them the Holy Scriptures and the Christian faith are little taught and the blind, heathen master Aristotle rules alone. . . . It grieves me to the heart that this damned, conceited, artful heathen has with his false words deluded, and *made fools* of, so many of the best Christians. God has sent him as a plague upon us for our sins." (X:335 f.)

So much for *rationalismus vulgaris seu communis*.

(To be continued)

TH. ENGELDER

11) On account of the lack of space we have not discussed the denial of eternal damnation. It occupies a prominent place in rationalistic dogmatics. The rationalists, old and new, make so much of it that everybody is familiar with it. Why, even Lutherans of the most conservative type insist on a second probation, on a second chance in Hades.

12) H. Diem: "Die Unternehmung der himmelstuermenden Vernunft endet mit luziferischem Sturz." (*Luther's Lehre von den zwei Reichen*, p. 164.)