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## Reason or Revelation?

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## Reason or Revelation?

(Continued)

### II

There are more rationalists in the churches than go by that name. It is not a nice name. Rationalism is, as we have shown in the preceding articles, an ugly, wicked thing. It sets itself above Scripture, above God. Who would want to proclaim himself a rationalist? Our Liberals indeed are not ashamed of the name. But the great majority of theologians dislikes it. However, many of them, very many of them, are doing the very same thing the rationalists have been doing, and they do it because they like it. They fall into two groups. The first group, made up of those who carry on their rationalistic business under an alias, is the subject of the present article. In the following article we shall deal with those who strongly insist on the *sola Scriptura* but still engage in rationalistic practices.

The first group recognizes other authorities besides Scripture, but does not name reason, that is, natural reason, as such an additional source and norm of the Christian teaching. What it enthrones as authority in religion is introduced under the name of "*enlightened reason*." These men tell us that natural reason, the authority of the rationalists, is blind in spiritual matters but that the enlightened reason of the Christian, regenerate reason, is capable of judging spiritual matters and must be permitted to sit in judgment on Scripture. These men say: "The source from which the dogmatician gets his material is his reason, enlightened through revelation. . . . So there is a threefold source of the Christian doctrine, the enlightened reason of the dogmatician, the teaching of the Church, and the canonical Scripture of the Old and the New Testament." (See Baier, *Compendium*, I, p. 91.) John De Witt tells us: "Our enlightened moral instinct rejects it un-



reservedly and forever." (*What Is Inspiration?* P.180.)<sup>1)</sup> A.H. Strong: "The science of theology is a product of reason, but of reason as including a power of recognizing God which is practically inseparable from a love of God." (*Syst. Theol.*, p. 3.) Modern theology—liberal and conservative—is obsessed with the idea that in regeneration reason receives additional powers, so that it can understand, more or less, the mysteries of God and is privileged to sit in judgment on Scripture.

Nothing of the kind takes place in regeneration. 2 Cor. 10:5 ("bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ") is addressed to the Christians, too. They understand the mystery of the Trinity and the mystery of inspiration as little as the unchristians. What takes place in regeneration is that the Christian receives the power to put his reason into subjection to Scripture. When a Christian is tempted to criticize Scripture and to set his own thoughts above Revelation, it is not his regenerate mind but the old unregenerate Adam that is speaking. In the words of Dr. Walther: "Nor can enlightened and regenerate reason be made the source and norm of religious knowledge, equal and on a level with Scripture. For the nature of an enlightened and regenerate reason consists just in this, that it does not make itself but Scripture the source of knowledge in matters of faith, 2 Cor. 10:5. Besides, in no man is there to be found, in this life, a perfectly enlightened and regenerate reason, Gen. 18:10-15." (*Lehre u. Wehre*, 13, p. 99. *Vier Thesen ueber das Schriftprinzip*.) Even Dr. Robert Jelke

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1) In order to show how this "regenerate" reason works and what wickedness it is capable of, we shall transcribe the entire passage. "We go fearlessly to the *old inspiration, approving or rejecting, as it may be*. If anything agrees not with these words of Christ in the gospels and with the life of God incarnate, we renounce and denounce it as evil. Our enlightened moral instinct rejects it unreservedly and forever. Any disciple of Christ that does not speak according to this word knows not what spirit he is of. Let him come closer to Christ in His pervasive, effluent, and communicative moral purity. Let him take John's position, pillowing his head on the Master's bosom, where he can hear His faintest whisper and feel every throb of His pure, tender, and loving heart, and he will come to a better mind" and repudiate the doctrine of verbal inspiration. We ought to quote the preceding paragraphs, too, because they show where "enlightened reason" and those who operate with it really belong: "If, besides the divine truth that the Old Testament embodies, it also contains partial truths, which are sometimes as misleading as falsehoods, and moral incongruities and monstrosities from which our souls recoil, how shall I separate the gold from the dross? By the use of my reason? Would you have me become a rationalist? Yes, rather than be a sophist or simpleton. Yes, a thousand times, if one becomes a rationalist by making use of his reason, including conscience and every spiritual faculty with which God has endowed him, strengthened and enlightened by the Word and life and spirit of Christ. Who will fling a gibe at us for such rationalism, a rationalism that verges so closely upon inspiration?" We are going to say the same thing—men who operate with the "enlightened" reason are rationalists.



points this out to his colleagues: "They appeal, not to corrupt reason, but to reason as renewed through the Word of God. But they forget that the decision as to whether reason is renewed or regenerate must be taken solely from the Word of God and that accordingly the real categories of revelation must be derived not from formal reason but from the Word of God." (*Vernunft und Offenbarung*, p. 36.) Long ago J. Gerhard upheld this correct principle over against the Reformed. He wrote: "'But,' they say, 'you must distinguish between the regenerate and the unregenerate reason.' Bucanus asks: 'Is all authority to be denied human reason and the principles of philosophy in determining the nature of Christ's body?' and answers: 'In so far as human reason received spiritual qualities in regeneration, it can bear true testimony. . . .' We answer: Regenerate reason must believe and judge concerning the articles of faith according to God's Word; else it ceases to be regenerate." (See *Lehre u. Wehre*, 26, p. 260; 21, p. 35.)

Putting the tag "enlightened" on reason may hide, but does not change, the situation. These men are rationalists pure and simple. One who presumes to make the cogitations, ruminations, and dictates of his own mind equally authoritative with the teachings of Scripture, pleading that these cogitations are inspired by the Holy Spirit, and actually changes the Scripture teaching to suit these cogitations, has fallen a prey to the same pride of carnal reason as dominates Roehr and Fosdick. As Dr. Pieper says: "When modern theologians make the 'regenerate ego' the principle of Christian knowledge and at the same time refuse to accept Scripture as the Word of God and the sole source and norm of theology, they are in reality placing the *natural* ego of man, the flesh, upon the seat of authority in the Church. It is plain, common *rationalism* masquerading as Christianity." (*Chr. Dog.*, I, p. 242.) Dr. Stoeckhardt: "The theology of F. H. R. Frank, which takes up the cudgels against the rationalism of Ritschl, is itself nothing but a new form and edition of rationalism, rationalism in a churchly dress. It is the *natural* reason, which in the systems of Frank pulls the Christian truths to pieces after its own particular fashion, dissects them, and fashions them together again, harmonizes them." (*Lehre u. Wehre*, 42, p. 74.) And Dr. De Witt agrees whole-heartedly with Pieper and Stoeckhardt. We heard him say: Brethren, let us admit it! When we use our spiritual faculties, enlightened by the Word and spirit of Jesus, in arriving at the true doctrine of inspiration, we are—and we say it proudly—rationalists.

This form of rationalism is a wicked, monstrous thing, just as is the common kind. It amounts to an insult of the new man, the good Christian, to expect of him to set his cogitations on a par with the teachings of Scripture. What a satanic presumption it is



to assume the right to amend and change and improve what the Holy Spirit has set down in Scripture once for all! But do these men really reject plain teachings of Scripture in the name and by authority of their illuminated reason? De Witt, having pillowed his head on the Master's bosom, finds that he cannot accept the doctrine of the verbal, plenary inspiration of Scripture. His soul recoils from the moral incongruities and monstrosities of the Old Testament. And his is no exceptional case. Dr. H. C. Alleman feels the same way. He says: "When we read Old Testament stories of doubtful ethics and *lex talionis* reprisals, with their cruelty and vengefulness, their polygamy and adultery, it is difficult for us to sympathize with the theory of verbal inspiration." (*Luth. Church Quarterly*, 1936, p. 24.) In fact, all theologians who operate with "enlightened" reason, have discarded this doctrine. They feel compelled to separate the gold from the dross (De Witt's phrase), the kernel from the husk (Alleman's phrase). And this is not the only doctrine with which "enlightened" reason is out of sympathy. It feels and acts just like carnal reason. Give the reign to "enlightened reason," and it will ride rough-shod over all Christian doctrines. "It is a fatal aberration," said Walther, to make enlightened reason the source and norm of Christian teaching. — We shall revert to this later on.

Other aliases are *Christian consciousness*, *Christian experience*, *faith*, *spirit*. These terms are synonyms of "enlightened reason," and we are discussing them separately only because they are used more frequently. "Christian experience" — that is the one great authority for modern theologians. "Out of the stuff of human life, theology is born." We all are acquainted with the classic dictum of Hofmann, the Lutheran: "Ich, der Christ, bin mir, dem Theologen, der Stoff meiner Wissenschaft."<sup>2</sup> Edwin E. Aubrey, of the

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2) Just now *Churches and Sects of Christendom*, by J. L. Neve, came to hand. We read on page 242: "But was Schleiermacher right in his very attractive suggestion of developing the substance of dogmatics out of the religious experience of the theologian? Agreement on this point was expressed by F. H. R. Frank, leading systematician of the Erlangen school. In the defense of this position Frank made use of a thought in the Hegelian realm of philosophy (Fichte). He discussed the matter of his *System of Christian Certainty*. Following Fichte's distinction between the 'I' and the 'Non-I,' he established himself upon the principle: I, the theologian, have as the object of my reflection the inner consciousness of myself as a Christian. In other words, the dogmatician will not describe objectively what he finds in Scripture (as was done in the dogmatics of the *Loci*), but practically he will describe subjectively the contents of his own inner experience of the Christian truth. Hofmann was in partial agreement with Frank. Some of the Erlangen school have steered more to the right from this principle. . . . R. Seeberg led further to the left by making the reflecting dogmatician, on the basis of his own findings, the criterion of truth." In a footnote Neve adds: "See C. E. Luthardt, *Die christliche Glaubenslehre*, pp. 90 ff., and cf. F. Pieper's sharp critique of Frank in his *Dogmatik*, Vol. I."



University of Chicago, put it into good English: "Out of the stuff of human life, theology is born" and then goes on to tell us what he and Hofmann and the rest of the experientialists mean: "The early Christian records are themselves built out of Christian experience. . . . Ever new insights born of Christian experiences enlarge the system [of Christian theology] and give it greater relevance to all men's lives. . . . It is the contribution of church-fellowship to theology that it infuses the Christian system with the personal experience of its members." (*Living the Christian Faith*, pp. 36, 72, 74.) Scripture alone does not suffice for the establishment of the Christian religion and the maintenance of Christian theology. Christian experience must contribute its part. R. Jelke tells us: "In establishing the truth of the Christian religion, theology needs factors which are not at the disposal of the philosophy of religion. These factors lie in the own personal experience of the Christian subject. And to take account of the individual personal experience of the Christian, of that experience which made him a Christian, and to utilize it for the establishing of the truth of Christianity, that is the peculiar business of the theologian. He must point out on what foundation faith rests." (*Die Grunddogmen des Christentums*, p. 2.)<sup>3)</sup> Another pertinent statement, from the *Lutheran Church Review* (General Council): "The Missouri position . . . mistakes the Scripture, which is the only rule of faith, as the only source of religion. . . . The Word has always been before, and in small part at least, outside of and beyond the Scriptures. Where, then, has this small part at least been lodged? In regenerate human consciousness. Where has it manifested itself? In regenerate human experience, which God does not despise, as much as some of His representatives have. . . . Scripture itself shows that 'the answer to God's Word in human consciousness is a part of God's revelation to the world.' This is a fact in spite of what the Missouri writer says about Peter, Paul, and John receiving the message, doctrine, and words direct from the Holy Ghost." (See *Theol. Quarterly*, I, p. 371 f.) The Christian-experience theology does indeed place the Christian consciousness beside Scripture as a coordinate authority and establishes it as a legitimate source and norm of the Christian doctrine. H. Wheeler Robinson speaks in the name of all experientialists when he states "that religious experience is to be taken as the starting-point of theological reconstruction." (*The Chr. Experience of the Holy Spirit*, p. VII.)

"Theological reconstruction," yes, and even the Bible needs to

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3) Compare this with the statement of Jelke quoted above and try to harmonize it.



be reconstructed. You cannot base theology on the Scriptures as they lie before you. How much of the Bible is true? What parts of it are God's Word? Your Christian consciousness must tell you that. W. B. Berkenmeyer: "We must judge Scripture by Christ. . . . Spirit and life cannot be preserved or handed down in words—only in lives." (*The Luth. Church Quarterly*, 1938, p. 69.) "Christ," "spirit," Christian consciousness, will tell you what portions of the Bible must be deleted. G. T. Ladd: "It belongs to the Church, in every age, to examine the sacred writings by the light both of tradition and of its own spiritually illumined self-consciousness. By the light of tradition each age discovers what the previous ages have considered to be canonical Scriptures; by the light of its own spiritually illumined consciousness it discovers the Word of God within those Scriptures. . . . The Church has the right of rejecting from this Word whatever does not satisfy the demands of its ethico-religious consciousness. . . . The New Testament is in *nearly* all its extent the vehicle of the divine Word of salvation." The Old Testament "contains many divine words"; nevertheless it "contains also *many* statements of fact and doctrine which are not thus established, confirmed, and approbated." (See B. Mauly, *The Bible Doctrine of Inspiration*, p. 50 f.) And the Lutheran theologian E. Schaefer (in Breslau) agrees with this: "The Spirit-wrought faith applies a sifting process to the Bible-word. Through this sifting process it gets the Word of God, the Word of Christ, to which it pneumatically adheres." (*Theozentrische Theologie*, II, page 69.)

The Christian self-consciousness reconstructs the Bible, and what is left of the Bible you believe not because Scripture assures you of it, but because your experience says so. Some experientialists have left the doctrine of the Virgin Birth intact. But how do we know that Jesus was indeed born of the Virgin? R. Jelke assures us that "the chief faith-experience (*das zentrale Glaubenserlebnis*) of the Christian, which leads us to see the uniqueness of the Savior, compels us by the same inner necessity to accept the dogma that Jesus was born, by the power of the Holy Spirit, of the Virgin; in other words, the innermost heart of our faith can and does make us certain not only of the *realitas incarnationis* but also of a specific *modus incarnationis*." (*Grunddogmen*, p. 108.)

Furthermore, this reconstructed Bible is not up to date. Certain doctrines have not yet been fully revealed. We sort of talk about them, but Christian experience has not yet spoken the final word. A. F. C. Vilmar, another Lutheran, conservative, too, after stating that, "while the objective source of dogmatics is the revelation of God in Christ, the subjective source is experience, the personal participation in those divine facts," goes on to declare that "the



further experiences that lie before us have to do with the *essence of the Church* and with the Last Things, with *Eschatology*. . . . This doctrine is one of those which must yet be experienced, and we are living in the age in which this experience is to come to pass." (*Dogmatik*, I, pp. 4, 7; II, p. 181.) This means, of course, that what we have been teaching on the subjects of the Church and of the Last Things before 1874 was guesswork.—Christian experience is indeed made a source and the norm of Christian teaching.

And that is rationalism. "Christian consciousness" is a reality, a blessed reality, and it speaks out with a loud voice, but in the role it is made to play by the experientialists it is simply a synonym for reason. When it is made to sit in judgment on Scripture, it is simply a dummy, uttering the speech of reason. When Ladd and Schaeder apply their sifting process to Scripture, rejecting certain statements and doctrines as unacceptable, it is not the Christian consciousness which is directing them,—for the conscience and mind of the Christian, created by the Holy Spirit, cannot reject anything spoken by the Holy Spirit,—but their carnal, proud reason. What else can dominate their thoughts? They will not say that the Holy Ghost is giving them new revelations. They do not want to write themselves down as Quakers and Muenzerites. Nor will they want to say that their cogitations and demonstrations are disordered dreaming and empty babbling. No, no, when a man refuses to accept a teaching of the Bible, it is because something makes him say: It *cannot* be true; it *must* be something different. And that is the voice of reason. The same applies to the theory of the further development of doctrine or the discovery of new doctrines.

H. Sasse puts these men in their place: "Who is the judge that will tell me in cases of doubt where Christ and where only Scripture speaks? Have I not, then, made my reason, which speaks through my ethico-religious feeling, the *norma normans* of Christian teaching?" (See *Allg. Ev.-Luth. Kirchenz.*, Feb. 18, 1938.) The Baptist A. H. Strong comes to the same conclusion; his diagnosis of the situation is unanswerable: "The illumination theory holds, not that the Bible is, but that it contains, the Word of God. . . . An inspiration of this sort still leaves us destitute of any authoritative standard of truth and duty. An additional revelation would, upon this theory, still be needed to tell us what parts are true and binding. Since no such additional revelation is given us, the individual *reason* must determine what parts of Scripture it is to receive and what to reject. The theory in effect makes reason, and not the Scriptures, the ultimate authority in morals and religion." (*Syst. Theol.*, p. 99 f.) Dr. Craig, writing in



the *Presbyterian*, October 11, 1928, passes the same judgment: "By Christian consciousness is meant that we cannot be under obligation to accept anything in religion that is not real to this high tribunal, before which all cases in question must be brought. . . . Those who insist that the Christian consciousness, which is another phrase for the human reason, is the final court, do not seem to see that this is veneered Rationalism, pure and simple, and so must ultimately lead to the same goal." Dr. Walther said the same thing. "It is absolutely necessary that we maintain the doctrine of inspiration as taught by our orthodox dogmatists. If the possibility that Scripture contained the least error were admitted, it would become the business of *man* to sift the truth from the error. That places man over Scripture. Scripture is no longer the source and norm of faith. Human reason is made the *norma* of the truth, and Scripture is degraded to the position of a *norma normata*. The least deviation from the old inspiration doctrine introduces a *rationalistic* germ into theology and infects the whole body of doctrine." (*Lehre u. Wehre*, 1888, p. 196.)<sup>4</sup>

"It ultimately leads to the same goal." Experientialism deals with the Christian doctrine exactly as rationalism has dealt with it. It does away with the doctrine of inspiration, as we have seen, and so destroys all certainty, objective and subjective certainty. And it does away with other doctrines, as we shall point out in a moment.

A third alias is "*scientific theology*." This alias, however, does not cover up much; for when those who operate with the "enlightened reason," the "Christian self-consciousness," etc., describe their theology as a science and then tell us what they mean by this term, they identify themselves quite plainly as rationalists. Scientific theology aims to elevate faith to knowledge. "Modern theologians want to *prove* as absolute truth what the common people merely *believe*." (Walther, *Law and Gospel*, p. 235.) They set out to vindicate the teachings of Christianity before the scientific mind, which, as we know, will not take anything on trust. Further, theology must be made into a system, where everything is deduced from a central truth and all parts form a harmonious whole. Reason has decided that the Bible contains contradictory teachings; so it is the business of the scientific theologian to construct a well-ordered system in which the various doctrines fit into each other. "Since the modern theologians conceive of theology as the science

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4) When men, adding to the Bible "supplementary sources and norms of Christian belief," name as such "natural reason and Christian experience" (see page 324, current volume of *C.T.M.*), they are committing tautology. They should say: Natural reason, speaking in its own name, or natural reason speaking in the name of Christian experience.



of Christianity, they would have the Christian doctrines form a whole such as reason demands." (*Lehre u. Wehre*, 34, p. 327.) And, finally, the central truth, the truth which seems best fitted to meet all requirements, is the experience of the Christian, the initial experience, which is faith, and whatever other experiences flow from faith and express themselves in the Christian consciousness. Scientific theology makes the Christian experience a source of Christian knowledge and the norm according to which the Bible-teachings are to be evaluated, judged, modified, and harmonized.

Let the scientific theologians speak for themselves. Canon B. I. Bell speaks, as usual, plain language. "Theology is an attempt by philosophers to systematize and interpret the results of revelation and of religious experimentation." (*The Living Church*, Sept. 12, 1936.) In *A History of the Doctrine of the Works of Christ* R. S. Franks refuses to quote any but those who made an effort "to reduce the doctrine to systematic unity," and that is, says the *Theol. Monthly* (I, p. 154), what our age calls "scientific method." Luthardt, the Lutheran, also defines theology as "the churchly science of Christianity" and demands that "theology must genetically develop the whole of Christian doctrine from a fundamental unit." In Luthardt-Jelke's *Kompendium der Dogmatik* we read: "While it is the business of the Church simply to proclaim to mankind the gracious revelation of God, theology is required to justify the message of the Church scientifically." (11th edition, p. 5.) And in his *Die Grunddogmen des Christentums*, p. 84, Jelke speaks of "the naive way in which the New Testament presents, side by side, the deity and the humanity of Jesus," goes on to say that theology must be more than "a reproduction of New Testament thoughts," and then states blandly: "At this point the work of the dogmatician begins. He must show how the statements concerning the person of Christ must be formulated if they are to stand before the judgment of the modern scientific consciousness." (Compare this with his statement quoted a few pages back.) S. Goebel, Reformed, treats the doctrine of inspiration exactly as Jelke wants to have the doctrine of the person of Christ treated. He rejects the doctrine of verbal inspiration, for such a doctrine "is in direct conflict with the living facts which lie before us in the past and present experience of the Church and are ever being authenticated in the consciousness of the believing Church. Such a doctrine stubbornly ignores the realities and is thus in opposition to a fundamental requirement of true science. . . . The divine authority of Scripture does not cover such records and regulations as are not at all or not closely related to God's self-revelation in Christ." (*Allg. Ev.-Luth. Kz.*, 1926, No. 39, 43.) The article en-



titled "The Place of Scientific Method in Theology," published in the *Lutheran Church Quarterly* of April, 1939, after stating that "all the principal theological formulations of the Christian churches have been wrought out in an age or in ages that were prescientific in their conscious interests, ideals, and methods," that "the Loci of John Gerhard necessarily retained in many parts the serious limitations of a prescientific heritage both in method and conclusions," mentioning in this connection "the old atomistic method of proof-texts," makes the following declarations: "Schleiermacher's greatest contribution was the restoration to theology of the *religious consciousness as a controlling principle*." (Italics ours.) "His defect was his insufficient appreciation of revelation and his underrating of the objective side of faith. But his zeal for science gave rise to phenomenal progress in the utilization by all branches of theology of scientific method." "The day for compartmentalizing and isolating theology from the rest of human thinking and knowing has long passed. . . . The business of theology has always been to define what is of faith and what is contrary to faith. But such definitions cannot come to rest in isolation from the total existing body of human knowledge." "What the Christian Church and especially the Lutheran Church has done more or less consciously from the beginning, shaping her theology ever anew upon the anvil of divinely given Fact, . . . she may now do with awakened and alert scientific consciousness, reverencing every God-made fact, whether in the deposit of her faith or in the constitution of the world." You will notice that the scientific theologians deal little with the Scriptures. They deal with Facts! And the controlling principle is not the "It is written" but the religious consciousness. The *Lutheran Church Quarterly* is following in the footsteps of the *Lutheran Church Review*. The statements quoted above: "The Scriptures are not the only source. . . . The Word is, in small part at least, outside of the Scriptures," which Word is "lodged in regenerate human consciousness," developed the theme: "Theology is the science of a saving faith." Reviewing this article, the *Theological Quarterly* (I, p. 369) quotes Frank, a leader of the scientific-theology school: "It is our right to demand that nothing which is itself an object of cognition and lies without the cognizing subject be pointed out to us as a principle of cognition." He denies that Scripture is the source of *Christian ethics*, saying: "It is equally manifest that in this question as to the principle of cognition we can adduce nothing which is objectively given us, for example, the Holy Scriptures or the decrees of the Church, but solely that moral self-consciousness. . . . The *Quarterly* comments: "This is scientific theology in the modern sense of the term."—The theological scientist does not bother much with the Bible,



much less with isolated proof-texts, but he sits down and studies Facts. He finds within himself and within others a great Fact: he believes in Christ, he focuses his mind, his reason, on this phenomenon, studies its reaction to other Facts and to the doctrines of the Bible, and what he thus observes—or imagines that he observes—he presents to the Church as the assured results of the science of theology, as God's truth.

In God's name, why don't they call themselves plain rationalists and be done with it? Theirs is the rationalistic principle, theirs the pride of carnal reason; and they do not fall far short of the rationalists in the havoc they create among the Christian doctrines. Their principle is the same as that of rationalism. They refuse to say: *Credo, quia scriptum est*. They say: *Credo, quia intelligo*, or, *Credo, ut intelligam*. They do not use the term "reason," but saying that their Christian self-consciousness *understands* these things and understands them so well that it can put the truth in better shape than Scripture has left it, is saying that the human mind rules Scripture—and that was the principle of *rationalismus vulgaris*.<sup>5)</sup>

Theirs is the pride of reason. The true Christian consciousness willingly *submits* to Scripture. It is wicked pride to make "the Christian self-consciousness" the "controlling principle" of theology and Scripture. The theologian has lost his Christian balance who feels that it is beneath him simply to "*reproduce* New Testament thoughts," simply to repeat what God says in Scripture. We need not point out that it requires quite a lot of conceit for the theologians to say that they have a better grasp of the Christian truth than the common Christians. We shall have to point out to them that in this respect they are on the same level with the laymen. The common Christian grasps the truths of Scripture with exactly the same faith as the Christian theologian. (And if the theologian insists that he has a better grasp because he is better trained in logic and philosophy, we tell him: That is it exactly; you are a rationalist.)—Dr. Pieper says on this head: "This attempt to elevate faith into knowledge springs from the idea that the 'theologian,' in contradistinction to the rest of the Christians, may

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5) Dr. Bente: "Theologians of the Middle Ages said: *Credo, quia intelligo*. But one who will only believe what he can comprehend and know as truth through his reason is a rationalist, like our Liberals. Others said: *Credo, ut intelligam*. But like every Christian, so also the theologian is bound to the authoritative word of Scripture—*Credo, quia scriptum est*—which he can receive and know as true only by faith. Theologians therefore who have the notion that they can grasp the simple Christian faith with their reason and thus elevate faith to knowledge are headed towards rationalism. This is the course pursued also by the conservative scientific theologians, particularly of Germany." (*Lehre u. Wehre*, 70, p. 247.)



possess a knowledge of the Christian religion which exceeds faith in God's revelation in the Word. Christ and Paul stamp this notion as false; Christ, who will have all knowledge of religious truth mediated by faith in His Word; and Paul, who characterizes every man, especially the *teacher* in the Church, who does not consent to the words of Christ as a conceited ignoramus (τετύφωται, μη ἐπιστάμενος), 1 Tim. 6:3 ff." (*Chr. Dogmatik*, I, p. 18.)

And now, how does the Christian doctrine fare at the hands of the theologians who operate with the enlightened reason, the Christian experience, in their scientific theology? It is not safe with them, as little as with the old rationalists. The old rationalists indeed made a clean sweep of it. The scientific theologians, the enlightened-reason men, have not cast everything overboard. But that is not due to their system. It is owing to the grace of God. Dr. Stoeckhardt, having unmasked Frank's theology as rationalistic, goes on to say: "It is indeed a miracle that Frank's mill of reason did not grind *all* Christian dogmas to pieces, that Frank retains certain elements of the Christian truth. But for that his system is not responsible. It is due to an inconsistency." (*Lehre u. Wehre*, 42, p. 74.) The mysteries of the Christian faith are just as repulsive to the "enlightened" reason as the natural reason. If the "Christian consciousness" of the scientific theologian had its way, it would do away with all Christian doctrines. As it is, it has gone very far. Jelke has retained the doctrine of the Virgin Birth in spite of his scientific method; but, applying his scientific method, he cuts the heart out of the doctrine of the vicarious satisfaction: "Man darf die Versoehnung nicht mit einer aeusserlich-juridischen Strafsatisfaktion gleichstellen, bei der Gottes Gerechtigkeit durch Uebertragung von Schuld und Strafe auf den Unschuldigen befriedigt sein soll. Die Gottheit Christi kann recht eigentlich auch gar nicht als das *immense pretium* in Betracht kommen, das Gott geboten wird." (*Op. cit.*, pp. 53, 62.) Hofmann, permitting his Christian self-consciousness to control Scripture, denied original sin. And he denied the vicarious satisfaction. The scientific theologians are unanimous in the repudiation and denunciation of the doctrine of verbal, plenary inspiration. In short, as the German theologian Muenkel declared in 1862 (quoted by Dr. Walther in *Lehre u. Wehre*, 21, p. 71): "Hardly a single doctrine is left which has not suffered modification, alteration, addition, and amputation." "Whither has this theology drifted? An inspiration which is not the inspiration of the Bible; a word of God, which is not the *word* of God nor the word of *God*; a God, who is not the God of His word; a Trinity which is not a unity; a Son who is not the Son, begotten of the Father from eternity, very God of very God; a Christ, who is not *the* Christ, the Son of God made of a woman;



a redemption which cannot redeem for want of a Redeemer, God in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself; a salvation by grace which is not by grace—such are some of the achievements of scientific theology.” (A. Graebner, in the *Theological Quarterly*, I, p. 5.) Long ago Luther raised the warning cry: “*Ratio inimica fidei*.” (IX:157.) Experience has shown that the “enlightened” reason of the scientific theologian is capable of the same crimes as the natural reason of Roehr and Semler. Listen to Luther: “If you would philosophize in Aristotle without harm, you must first have become a fool, a whole fool, in Christ.” (XVIII:39.) Unless you are willing to take your reason captive, the scientific method of Aristotle will make fools of you, unable to study Scripture. And if you will not listen to Luther, listen to what one of your own men, Edwin Aubrey, is telling you: “When revelation is made plausible by reason, not much remains of the authority of revelation.” (*Op. cit.*, p. 70.)

There is another variety of theology which belongs to our first group, to that group which carries on its rationalistic business under an alias. That is the theology of Rome. In its official declarations Rome refrains from naming reason as one of its sources of supply. It names four sources: Holy Scripture, tradition, the Church or the councils, the Pope.<sup>6)</sup> Nothing said about reason. And Catholic theologians insist that reason has no voice in their theology. Cardinal Gibbons tells us: “Is, then, the power and mercy of God to be measured by the narrow rule of human understanding? Is the Almighty not permitted to do anything except what we can sanction by our reason? Is a thing declared to be impossible because we cannot see its possibility? . . . You tell me

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6) Four sources, according to the official count. In reality there is but one principle of cognition in Romish theology. Just as the rationalists and the rationalizing theologians name two authorities, Scripture and reason, or Scripture and the Christian experience, but subordinate Scripture to reason and experience and thus operate with the *sola ratio*, so the Romanists, in spite of counting four authorities and putting Scripture at the head, rely on only one authority, one chief and final judge. Who is that? Sometimes they say it is the Church. A recent publication, “The Truth about Catholics,” says: “Has God given us the means to know what He has taught? ‘Yes,’ say all Protestants, ‘He has.’ And so say the Catholics. ‘The Bible,’ say our Protestant friends, ‘and nothing but the Bible.’ But we Catholics say, ‘No; not the Bible but the Church of God.’” (P. 2.) According to this authority, which carries the episcopal imprimatur, the Church is the real authority. If you should ask the Pope, he would say: “No, I am the real source of Christian teaching.” “I am the tradition,” said Pius IX. And not only since 1870 but from the very beginning “the Pope boasts that all rights exist in the shrine of his heart, and whatever he decides and commands with[in] his Church is spirit and right.” (Smalc. Art. Trigl., p. 495.) *The Truth about Catholics* would, if pressed, soon say: That is what our statement really means.—The Catholics have but one authority in religion, and that is—reason, as will appear in a moment.



it is a mystery above your comprehension. A mystery indeed. A religion that rejects a revealed truth because it is incomprehensible contains in itself the seed of dissolution and will end in rationalism. . . . I understand why rationalists, who admit nothing above their reason, reject the Real Presence; but that Bible Christians should reject it is to me incomprehensible." (*The Faith of Our Fathers*, ch. XXI.) *America*, February 25, 1939, declares: "The Catholic Church seems to be above reason. It always admits that there is a place for reason in ordinary matters, but that beyond them no human mind can hope to know the answers. The priest need not rely upon his own authority, his own ingenuity. The answers to all questions have been accumulating for two thousand years, and he knows where to find them." He will find them in those three additional storehouses — tradition, Church, Pope. But, we ask, where does the Pope find that additional religious truth which the Bible does not furnish? There is nothing left but reason. The Pope may not like that word. Others of like mind do not like it, as we have seen. They call it enlightened reason or Christian experience. And the Pope may, in addition, speak of a special illumination, special revelations, a special kind of inspiration. But all that the Pope offers us when he goes beyond and against Scripture is the wisdom of carnal reason. His theology is that of *rationalismus vulgaris*.

We mean exactly that. The cardinal doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church is exactly the same as that which the crass rationalists taught. It is the doctrine of salvation through man's own efforts, conversion through exercising the powers of free will, justification by works. And the source of this doctrine is reason. "Human reason naturally admires these" (good works), "and because it sees only works and does not understand or consider faith, 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.) "Human wisdom gazes at the Law and seeks in it justification. Accordingly, also the scholastic doctors, great and talented men, proclaim this as the highest work of the Law, and ascribe to this work justification." (*Op. cit.*, p. 183.) Carnal reason can teach nothing but salvation through man's own contrivance; and whoever teaches that has no other teacher but carnal reason. There is no essential difference between the Pope and the crass rationalists: both are faithful disciples of Pelagius. Oh, yes, there are Pelagians and Semi-Pelagians. But both, the old rationalists (Pelagians) and the Catholic theologians (Semi-Pelagians), are one in praising the powers of free will. It matters not that one class of Pelagians describes these powers as unweakened and undiminished and the others as attenuated. Both



make these powers decisive for salvation. The Synod of Trent "declares that free will, attenuated as it was in its powers and bent down, was by no means extinguished in them," the children of fallen Adam, and: "If any one saith that, since Adam's sin the free will of man is lost and extinguished or that it is a thing with only a name, yea, a name without a reality, a figment, in fine, introduced into the Church by Satan, let him be anathema." And: "Man's free will disposes and prepares itself for obtaining the grace of justification." (Sessio VI.) Rome learned that from Pelagius, and Pelagius learned it from reason, "Pelagius, the venerable defender of reason against unreason." It is against reason, derogatory of the worth of man, to teach justification by faith. So said Pelagius and the rationalists; so says Rome. Characterizing rationalism, Dr. Pieper says: "The theological work of the rationalists centered and consisted in this: to show that pure Scripture, that is, Scripture interpreted by reason, is nothing but a lofty teaching of morality, as exemplified by Jesus." (*Chr. Dog.*, I, p. 323.) And what is the center and the aim of the Pope's theological work? To show that man, assisted by Jesus, can achieve his salvation through good works. Pure Catholicism is rationalism, pure and simple.<sup>7)</sup>

Catholic theology has planted itself squarely upon the *articulus fundamentalissimus* of rationalism, salvation through the exercise of man's power, and it supports this article with rationalistic arguments. It employs the argument of reason: Since man brings about his perdition, it must also be man who achieves his salvation. And it makes copious use of the argument: Since Scripture commands man to turn to the Lord, it ascribes to him the power to bring about his conversion. Said Erasmus, the spokesman of the Pope: "If what is commanded be not in the power of every one, all the numberless exhortations in the Scriptures and also all the promises, threatenings, expostulations, reproofs, asseverations, benedictions, and maledictions, together with all the forms of precepts, must of necessity stand coldly useless." Unless Scripture recognizes free will in man, these imperative statements of the Bible would involve an absurdity. He kept harping on this, and Luther kept telling him: "At one time you fly to the interpretations of the Fathers; at another, to absurdities of reason." (Luther, XVIII:1796, 1887.) Trent made much of this argument of reason: "God commands

7) Read up in *Lehre und Wehre*, 49, p. 211 ff., on this point. Dr. Bente describes the rationalism of the Gnostics, the rationalism of the scholastics, the "orgies of the rationalism of the 18th century," and adds: "Rationalismus ist im Grunde auch der Papismus und Enthusiasmus." He points out that the Pope asserts that all spiritual truth is enclosed in *scrinio sui pectoris* (Smalc. Art., p. 495) and concludes: "Das ist grober Rationalismus."



not impossibilities" (Sessio VI, chap. XI), and the Catholics keep harping on it. *The Truth about Catholics* says: "Was Luther a man to be depended upon in the great concern of religion? If so, why did God permit him to fall into so many absurdities in point of doctrine? He says: 'Thou shalt not covet' is a commandment which proves us all to be sinners since it is not in any man's power not to covet; and the same is the drift of all the commandments, for they are all equally impossible to us.' (*De Lib. Chris.* Tom. 4, p. 2.) . . . Here is God represented as a merciless tyrant commanding things which we have it not in our power to perform." (P. 9.) Catholic theology insists that, if anything seems absurd to reason, it cannot be true. And it applies this rationalistic axiom to other doctrines. It denies the *communicatio naturarum* in Christ, for *finitum non est capax infiniti*. It operates with the principle that, if a thing is true in physics, it is true in theology. The human body contains blood, therefore the communicants who receive the true body of Christ have no need of receiving the cup (concomitance). Again, Mary must be conceived without sin because "God would not let a body in which His Son would dwell have a stain of sin, which would indeed have communicated itself in a way to the Son." (Wilmers, *Lehrbuch der Religion*, 2, p. 180.) *Popular Symbolics* lists these and other instances and says: "The theology of Rome is shot through and through with rationalism. Reasonableness is the claim she makes for her system of doctrine." (P. 157.)

She swears by Aristotle. Luther: "But perhaps they will say: 'From Aristotle we learn that in an affirmative proposition subject and predicate must be identical,' or, to set down the beast's own words, 'An affirmative proposition demands the agreement of subject and predicate,' etc." And thus they have established transubstantiation! Luther adds: "What shall we say when Aristotle and the doctrines of men are made to be arbiters of these lofty and divine things?" (XIX:28.) And they are riding the same beast today. Pohle-Preuss, *Series of Dogmatic Text-books*, IX, p. 109, is applying the same Aristotelian dialectics in presenting the teaching of Rome on this point: "In the Holy Eucharist we have a true conversion. What disappears is the substance of bread and wine, which constitutes the *terminus formalis a quo*. Nor can the *terminus totalis ad quem* be said to be newly created," etc. Read the whole dreary passage for yourself in *Conc. Theol. M.*, X, p. 804.

Is a theology of this sort rationalistic or not? Why, there are plenty of Catholic theologians who distinctly claim reasonableness for their system of doctrine, let Gibbons say what he will. According to the scholastic Richard of St. Victor it is the province of theology, "*quod tenemus ex fide, ratione apprehendere et demon-*



*strativa certitudinis attestazione firmare.*" And Quenstedt was right in saying: "*Theologia scholasticorum est mera mixtura theologiae et philosophiae.*" (See *Lehre u. Wehre*, 49, p. 209.) An article entitled "Why I Am a Catholic" states: "I am a Catholic because the Church is the divinely appointed means to attain the union of my soul with God, a union imperatively demanded by my reason as well as by the express will of my Creator. . . . This raises reason to secure supremacy over appetite, enlightens it with clear knowledge of its eternal destiny, and bestows a power of loving God and man altogether superhuman. . . . I have spoken simply as a Catholic, belonging to a religion in the highest possible sense rational, and which unites me to God in soul and body, and as a man of today looking always to the dictates of conscience for guidance and adherence to Christ." (*Why I Am what I Am*, p. 48 ff.)<sup>8)</sup> And in his *Symbolism* J. A. Moehler (Catholic) freely says: "In the Catholic system of doctrine two elements — the divine and the human, the natural and the supernatural, the mystical and the rational — move in uniform and harmonious combination." Some, the Antitrinitarians and others, followed a "one-sided rational principle"; they "gave to the rational principle a melancholy preponderance." The Catholic system preserves the right balance; it knows when to apply the mystical, divine, principle, and when to apply the rational principle. (P. 481 f. See also page XIX.) In Catholic theology reason has a voice, and since it is permitted to interpret Scripture, its voice speaks louder than Scripture. It is *sola ratio!*<sup>9)</sup>

8) How would a Bible Christian have expressed himself on this matter?

9) W. Walther: "Ebenso falsch urteilt der natuerliche Mensch und Rom ueber die natuerliche Vernunft. Das Goettliche soll ihr keineswegs zu hoch liegen; sie soll es nur nicht ganz erreichen koennen. . . . Wie dem suendigen Menschen die Willensfreiheit geblieben sein soll, so auch die Vernunft. Ihr blosses Licht soll 'den einen und wahren Gott, unsern Schoepfer und Herrn, sicher erkennen koennen. Einer Offenbarung bedarf es nur zur Erkenntnis der uebernaturlichen, der mit der *gratia* zusammenhaengenden Wahrheiten. . . . Und demgemaess ist noch heute das katholische System eine Zusammensetzung aus natuerlichem und geoffenbartem Wissen." (*Lehrbuch der Symbolik*, pp. 62, 165.) — This is how a Unitarian writer sizes up the situation: "I am a Unitarian because its principles and its beliefs commend themselves to me as the most rational that I am able to conceive. I know that there are those who will imagine that I thus confess a fatal error at the start — the making of reason, and not revelation, the basis of my belief. But in doing this frankly and openly, I only do what others are obliged to do secretly and clandestinely. . . . However it may have been in past times, it is certain that in our own the Roman Catholic and orthodox Protestant alike endeavor to establish the reasonableness not only of their general claim but of the contents of their revelation of the Church or Book. Cardinal Manning says that, when doctrines are approved by reason, they cease to be doctrines of revelation and that the first step toward infidelity is



**Ratio inimica fidei!** Give reason a voice in theology, and you will lose the truth of revelation. It is either reason or revelation. See what happened to Rome! Obsessed by the pride of reason, it has lost the chief teaching of Scripture, salvation by grace, justification by faith. Cardinal Gibbons says that Catholic theology does not give up any revealed truths on account of rationalistic considerations. It has retained indeed some revealed truths. But it has sacrificed important truths and the one all-important truth on the altar of carnal pride and reason. Speaking of the theology of Rome, Luther said that "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.)

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(To be continued)

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## Kleine Prophetenstudien

### Jona

#### 2

In dem vorangehenden Artikel über das Buch Jona sind schon einige Einwürfe gegen die Geschichtlichkeit des Buches und seiner Erzählungen und Angaben gesehen worden. Aber nun kommen wir zu dem Hauptanstoß, den der Unglaube an dem Buche nimmt, nämlich die Aussage, daß Jona von einem Walfisch verschlungen worden sei, drei Tage und drei Nächte im Bauche des Walfisches verweilt, dort einen Psalm gebetet habe und dann wieder ausgespien worden sei. Dazu sagt der moderne Unglaube: Das ist unmöglich. Und auf alle mögliche Weise wird darüber gespottet und gelacht. Schon der alte Spötter und Christenfeind Lucian von Samosata (geboren 120 nach Christo) sagt in seiner *Vera Historia*, um die Sache lächerlich zu machen, daß er und seine Gefährten und ihr Schiff von einem 800 Stadien (100 Meilen) großen Fisch verschlungen worden und in dessen Bauche achtzehn Monate lebendig geblieben seien. Der Kirchenvater Augustinus klagt darüber, daß die Heiden sich über diese Geschichte unnütz machen, und redet von der *irrisio paganorum*. Der bekannte vulgär rationalistische Ereget Hübner sagte: „Die ganze Erzählung ist wunder- und märchenhaft; allein bei Gott ist kein Ding unmöglich. Also lebt Jona

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to attempt to rationalize dogma. If this be so, then Cardinal Newman took many steps that way and did his best to deprive the doctrines of the Church of their character of revelation, because he did his best to win for them a reasonable appearance." (*Why I Am What I Am*, p. 86.)