

THEOLOGY IN
CHURCH AND STATE

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HODDER AND STOUGHTON

NEW YORK AND LONDON

MCMXV

CHAPTER I

DOGMA

REFERENCE has been made sometimes to the possibility of a Church of one article, and to the facilities offered by certain free forms of Church organization for leading the way to a federate Church on such a base. And it is a great theme, with a prospect one ripe day of a great catholic confession of the faith in its fullness, to meet the largest thought of the world. But that is far off. It could only come when the Churches are organized in the sole interest of the one Gospel from which they and their confession spring. And the present question is one rather of terms of communion than of the plerophory of belief, of the Church's dogma rather than its confession, of the dogma that makes it rather than the confession it makes. It is a question that concerns

some statement with a relation to the full mind of the Church similar to that which the Apostles' Creed holds to the Athanasian or a baptismal formula to a Church's symbol. The larger the confession, of course, the more revisable it should be in due time.

I know that no theological term rouses more irritation at the present moment than dogma. To multitudes of people religion is the region of the most unchartered freedom, the most way-ward subjectivity. The word liberty is dear to them, the word authority is hateful—by a fatal inversion of values. They resent like a personal insult the idea of any limitation in the spiritual sphere (where yet they are Christ's and not their own). And especially do they repel it coming from the past—where yet the source of Christianity is. In the present temper of the public mind on religion there is a possibility of a state of things in which the minister may preach anything religious if only he can fill his Church, and secure the public and the press. It is the hour of the tangential mind.

One of the most serious perversions in current Christianity is the idea that a Church is no more than a congenial brotherhood **or sympathetic group instead** of a house-

hold of faith ; that it can have a base humanely religious instead of religiously theological ; that it can be ideal without being positive, and rest on affinity rather than creation ; that it can be founded on what is called fellow-ship, and live on the sympathies, instead of being rooted and grounded on the creative and apostolic faith which stands in truth and blossoms in love. This means in practice a fatal transfer of the centre of gravity from an objective gospel to a subjective piety ; from a faith filled with God to a religion preoccupied with man ; from Evangelical Theism to a Christianized Humanism where no Church can live. No Church unity is possible on any subjective base, such as " the spirit of Christ," understood as a frame of mind instead of a new gift of indwelling life, and the incoming of a new power with a new creation. The only unity of a Church is in its objective, in the faith that lays hold of that, or rather is seized by it. Any-thing less than that gives us but a fraternity more or less friable. Church and Dogma are as inseparable as Church and Kingdom.

Is the aversion to dogma just ? Is dogma a spiritual curse or a divine boon ? Does it blast or create ? Is it a mere relic or is it a great jewel ?

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The first remark to be made in this connexion is that the prime necessity of dogma, whatever is meant by it, is not for the individual but for the Church. The connexion of the individual with dogma as such is indirect. Dogma belongs to a Church's existence and a world-redemption rather than to individual salvation. And thus our sense of the value of dogma will be according to our sense of the value of a Church for Christianity and for Humanity. The Church sense and the sense for dogma rise or fall together.

It is, therefore, irrelevant for individuals or groups to say that they can get on perfectly well without anything like dogma. And far more irrelevant is it from people who stand outside a Church altogether. No doubt they can get on in this destitution ; but is that quite the point ? Many citizens, some senators, can get on without either politics or economics. A great many, who claim to be Christians, can get on comfortably enough without a Bible, so far as its personal use goes ; some without private prayer ; some

others without definite personal religion at all. It might be asked what is meant by getting on in this religious connexion. There is only one sense in which the phrase fits Christian faith. It is not possible just to rub on in a religion like Christianity. Do such people get on toward God, grow nearer a saving God ? Does their communion with Him grow deeper, their repentance more searching, their life more humble, practicable, and beneficent ? With all their intelligent getting do they get rich toward God ? Does their intimacy with God grow at once more sure, more close, more ethical, more commanding, more subduing, more adoring ? Does their interest in the world grow more unworldly and yet more loving ? Is their life more and more hidden with Christ in God ? Do they grow into Christ and into God ? If not, does it matter what such people mean by dogma ?

We need not argue with those to whom theology is but clotted superstition or crystallized mythology. But, turning to those who take it more worthily, is it something thrown out by man about God, or something conveyed from God to man ? **Is** it a tentative scheme projected by man or a germinal, fer-

tile, yet final gift presented by God ? To which conception do they demur ? Is its essence for them the result of thought achieved or of revelation received, of intuition or inspiration, of hypothesis or authority, of man's discovery or God's donation ? **Is** it the summit of man's natural knowledge and spiritual science ; or is it God's basement of all supernatural certainty, spiritual security and mental command of things ? Is Christian dogma on the same footing as philosophic system ? **Is** it philosophy turned pious by being turned on God ? **Is** it the best reasoned account we can give of God ? Or is it the substantial account God gives of Himself, the " written reason " of His spiritual world ?

Perhaps, however, we should avoid these sharp alternatives. It may be reasoned system on both sides. If it is reasoned on a positive, historic basis given by God it is not wholly evolved in a natural logic from the natural man and his religious psychology. For Christianity at least, dogma is no more philosophic at bottom than it is individualist. If it is not the affair of an individual but of a Church on the one hand, it is not on the other the affair of a philosophy developed by a

Church but of a revelation creating it. It consists of a statement (or a series) about a Self-given God and not about a seeking religion, a statement which conveys the know-ledge of His relation to us and expresses our relation to Him, a statement, therefore, which has its source in Him and not in us. What dogma is in its creative interior is not man's thought about God but God's treatment of man. It is preoccupied with the thing, the act, rather than the way of putting it. It states God's message and not man's construction of it, God's act and not man's surmise of what action would be like God. Its subject-matter is God's revelation, God's gift, of Him-self ; and its object is to state His purpose as summarily or as adequately as possible. It is not an account of the Christian consciousness but of God's revelation which creates that consciousness ; a revelation which, indeed, emerges in man's consciousness always, and in its terms, but is not identical with it, and does not arise from it.

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Dogma, simple or elaborate, something positive and final, is absolutely essential to a

Church, which cannot live in a viscous religiosity, a mere spirituality, any more than on a tentative belief, or an amateur and fancy faith. I am speaking, observe, of the idea of dogma and not of dogmas in particular. Certain dogmas of course have been mischievous, like certain views of the place of science in life. But something dogmatic is absolutely essential to a Church ; because it must always have some statement of the changeless act of God which created a Church on foundations that cannot be moved. You may say, if you like, that dogma or finality is otiose to Humanity. You can say that, but , since Humanity did not, like the Church, crystallize about a truth or person at its origin, you can only prove it by waiting to see. And you can see it only, too late perhaps, in the *debacle* of a Humanity without dogma. You can say it about Humanity, because Humanity was not created by a dogma ; but you cannot say it about a Church which was —which was created in the cult of a dogmatic Christ. For a dogma, a final expansive fact capable of a statement, did create the Church, and **is** its permanent foundation. The Church was made by the message, " Jesus, whom ye crucified, is risen to be Saviour, King, and

Lord God." The grasp and statement of its fundamental positive dogma is at least as necessary to a Church as its worship, its philanthropy, or its missions. But indeed all religion is dogmatic in its nature.

But it is more difficult now than ever it was to make such a conviction credible to the Churches, victimized as they are by the *-iroXu1rpayfco0uvq* of the hour tempered by mild mysticisms. In the most popular Churches Christianity as truth is not popular. Theology is not popular. What is popular is effect or impression. The Churches are pragmatist. They care most for what works, for what begins earning at once ; like parents who want wages from the children whatever happens to their education and to their future. Preachers themselves tend to read books of religion rather than to study theology, which reminds one of the familiar island, where they lived by taking in each other's washing. And we are all tempted by the democracy (or the dread of it), to be more concerned with the effect than with its source, with stirring interest than with founding conviction. But a Church that lives upon its sympathies (precious as they are), rather than its beliefs, upon sentiment rather than justification, has neither

power with God nor permanence with man. It is an evil time for two classes of people—for those whose theology is the heart of their religion, and for those who are more concerned about the future of the Great Church than engrossed in the bustle of particular communities.

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But it will here be asked whether I am not rousing a gratuitous antagonism by using a word so objectionable as dogma has come to be, when I really mean theology. Or (to speak the language of theology), am I not using dogma for dogmatics in a somewhat aggressive way?

I do not intend to do so. If we could be clear about the use of terms, it would spare us much trouble, and take the thunder from some denunciation. And the distinction here is clear to my own mind. I will try to put my meaning quite explicitly and pointedly thus,—distinguishing dogma, doctrine, and theology.

I. Dogma is final revelation in germinal statement. It is God's act put as truth. It is the expression of the original and super-natural *datum* of the purely given which creates

religion. It is truth about that in God which the Church stands upon. It is primary theology, or the Church's *footing*—as in John iii. 16.

II. Doctrine is truth about dogma, dogma expanded, and it stands on the Church. It is secondary theology, or the Church's *grasp*—as in the creeds.

III. Theology is doctrine in the making. It is tertiary and tentative theology or the Church's *reach*—as in 1 Peter i. 18, 19, 20.

I. To deal with the first.

Dogma is not religion, not faith ; nor does it by itself create faith ; it is the indispensable statement of that grace which does create faith, without which grace is dumb, not communicable, and therefore not grace. No statement as such, i.e. taken apart from the Gospel act it utters and the living power that utters it (the Spirit), can create faith. That can be done only by revelation, by truth as sacramental. It can be done by revelation only, if by revelation we understand that God reveals Himself, gives and conveys Himself, and not a truth about Himself. Nothing can create faith but God's actual coming in Son or Spirit, His actual contact and action in a

soul. Nothing else can be a final authority for faith. Personal faith, and then the Church (as faith corporate), were both created by the historic coming and action of God on man. But the action of God, as it came by the man Jesus Christ and comes in His Spirit, proceeds through men as agents. They become sacramental of God's grace. No man, I say, can create faith; only the grace can, which makes and uses men as elements in this sacramental way. But this grace, this Spirit of God, acts historically. What we have always to do with is the human consciousness, and what emerges there, and acts from there. Grace acts through human experience and human affairs ; it acts by man on man, by generation on generation, by a Church on a world. Otherwise it were magic. It acts, in one word, as a conveyed, declared, preached thing. All the action and theology of the Church is a confession made manifold of the God of grace. Now this action of man on man, this conveyance, this preaching, is impossible except by some statement,

some *recepta*. some dogma, intelligible (if not rational) but far other than tentative, of God's will and grace and act. No statement, no Gospel. It is Grace indeed, that

saves the soul, and creates the Church, but how ? How does it spread to do so ? Not by a mysterious infection in the air, as if it **were** a popular epidemic, but, as every-thing truly spiritual and intelligent must, by way of intelligible statement. The statement does not convert. It is the touch but not the thrill. It sets up contact for the virtue to pass. And it unites the healed. It ranges the cases, and it rallies the converts. It thus makes the Church, in a sense in which it does not create faith. We can never produce faith, or convert men by just stating God's case, and leaving it to the jury. It has to be winged, and forced into men by the Spirit working through men inspired, through men who know what and in whom they believe, dogmatic men. Faith is not faith unless it is also knowledge. Mystic elation, mystic reverie, is not faith. Faith has an intelligent content and expression, mystic though it must be with the mysticism of living person and answered act.

As an act meeting God's act faith is supernatural. Yet, miraculous as it is, it is not antirational. It is rational. A few words with the spiritual intelligence are worth

many mystic tongues to a Church. The apostle's ratio is five to ten thousand. " I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that I might teach others, than ten thousand words in mystic tongues. He that gabbleth in a tongue edifieth himself ; but he, that exhorteth, edifieth the Church." For a Church, intelligent statement is quite essential. That is to say, some statement is, if not the revelation, at least an integral part of it, " an essential means." And a Gospel can no more be detached from its truths than confused with them. An act, even an act of God, with-out an intelligent content and moral purpose would be but mystic magic. It would become, in worship, what it tended to become in the Corinthian Church till Paul took it in hand, religious gibberish, cabbala, and pious barbarism. Experience by all means. But experience which does not pass on to understand its object and express itself ceases to be experience ; it becomes mere sensation, mere temperament, mere religiosity. And for a faith like Christianity, which turns upon a life-regeneration, mere religiosity is no more valuable than mere assent, nor is mere fervour than mere orthodoxy.

Now the statement of the irreducible Gospel of our faith is its dogma. It is the Christian *Word* and positive content ; which it is the religious peril of the present hour to detach or dismiss from the Christian *Spirit*. It is the *Word*, traced in wire (so to say), which the cur-rent of the Holy Spirit makes to stand out, and glow, and speak volumes to us always. No Word, no Church. Without this intelligible Word the Church ceases to be social, and becomes a group of self-contained mystics ; or it is at the mercy of every individual reason with its atomic conception of things, its tentative theologies, its devout fancies, and its amateur intellectualisms.

One sometimes hears the insistence on dogma in the Church described as popery. And the vulgar comment on a preacher who declares from God a definite message whose truth is absolute, final and essential to the Church, is that he is in his way a pope. This has always seemed to me absurd as well as vulgar, because, such truth is just our base against popery. And it sometimes seems even grotesque, because it often comes from preachers who claim liberty to inflict on a silent and respectful congregation, without contradiction, the views of a mere

groping individual, who, as such, has no more right to demand reverent and silent attention to opinions of his than any intelligent person he addresses. To incorporate such a free lance address as part of the worship is popery in a bad kind. Such speech has a Church (if a Church) only in front of it, it has none behind it. If a man is uttering the message of God, or the condensed experience of it by the whole historic Church in a tremendous statement, which is sealed by a like experience of his own and his hearers, then he has some right to expect respectful attention, and even more. For it is God who speaks. But, if he offer only individual views, surmises, interpretations, or experiences, he has no claim beyond the civil right of free and open discussion, i.e. he speaks as a disputer of the world and not as an apostle of the Word. If we are to mention popery, that seems to me an egoistic popery which defies or destroys the collective voice and experience of the Church *under the conditions of preaching* created by the Church, and which asks silent and worshipful attention by others to mere subjective impressions and rationalisms as the staple of God's

¹ For to hear the Gospel is an act of worship.

word. No reflections, however scientific or sympathetic, *about* the Christian spirit, or the Christian consciousness, or the Christian experience, make the truth of faith, or the word of the Gospel. The trail of the subjective and ineffective is over them all.

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It is a mistake, therefore, to approach a question like that of dogma from any but the ecclesiastical point of view. It is a corporate and not an individual thing. It belongs to a supernatural body. I mean especially that it should not be treated from the view point of speculative theology and its rational freedom. Christian theology cannot be adequately developed except in a Church, and by men supremely concerned for a Church. Atomic views of the Church produce an amateur and arbitrary theology, and therefore a false and feeble theology. For the miracle of grace is more sharply opposed to the arbitrary than to the natural. The freedom of theology in a Church must always be conditioned neither by the logic of a rational principle, nor the intuitions of a sympathetic heart, but by the central nature of the objective revelation of grace which creates the Church, and is stated posi-

tively, however briefly, as its dogma. Much of the opposition to the dogmatic idea arises from those whose interests are but theological (whether positive or negative, rational or sentimental), who have no dogma or standard, and whose place is in a university of unchartered research rather than in a Church of the final Word. The real ground of interest in dogma, whether the word or the thing, is its creative value for a Church. The practical concern is for the Church, its future, and its permanence. If we are not interested in the Church idea at all, if we are but interested in the University idea ; or if we are interested in certain associations, once Churches, that now cultivate but religious sentiment, humane philanthropy, or the aesthetic interests of religion, then the question of dogma falls to the ground—to be followed sooner or later by these associations themselves. But, if we are not amateurs of religion or pundits of theology (positive or negative), if we are real believers and members in a Church as a supernatural society of the Holy Ghost, we cannot but feel that the most challenging question of the vexed hour is, what is a Church ? And it is in answering that question that the question must arise

about the truth to which a Church owes its being, and which a Church is there to pro-claim, about the power which it confesses, which creates it and constitutes it, about the principle on which its whole existence and its mission turn. The prime interest of the Church is not theological in the ordinary sense (where theology is an inferential discipline with " Greek demonstration ") ; it is dogmatic (where the theology is simple, fundamental, revealed, and creative, with " the demonstration of the spirit and of power "). It does not concern the free development of a system, nor the criticism of previous systems. It concerns the invasion, the revelation, on which all Christian theology rests—God's pure gift of Himself, and His account of Himself and His purpose in the heart of all man's version of that account, distinct from it but inseparable. If God has given this account of Himself, it is dogma for a Church. The Church rests upon no opinion but upon a revelation, upon the Holy Ghost. " It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us "—FJo e. The founders of the Church were not working with a theology of views or opinions but with a dogma, not with a conjecture but a gift. And, if it be said that a

dogma is but that which *SoKEi*, the answer must be made, first, that it is a commonplace of scholarship that both in the New Testament and in the language round it (especially among the Stoics) *'oyF,ca* is not a mere seeming or opinion, but a fixed tenet which becomes a binding and corporate decree, a bond of union for that school, and its term of communion. And second it may be asked if the Holy Ghost has opinions.

If a Church differ from every other society or institution in resting on a final revelation and not on a tentative construction, like science, nor on an instinctive sympathy, like a fraternity, nor on a utilitarian purpose, like a State, then the statement of that base is its dogma. If a Church have no final fact, it can have no dogma ; but then also it is no Church. It has nothing to distinguish it from any other society for religious culture, research, or utility. But the Church is not simply a religious society for the promotion of philanthropy, righteousness, or religious knowledge. When we ask, there-fore, " What is the Church ? " and " Where is its unity ? " we ask, What is its dogma ? How do you describe its " revelation " ? What made it ? Upon what does it rally ?

With what fact does it go to the world ? What is its *K77pvyua* ? Church unity is finally a theological question, and it is the modern theologian or scholar, with his slow eirenic tendency, that is doing most for it. The unity of the Church is a question of its dogma. The Church has but one object in the world—to make believers in that gospel. But also dogma is a Church question. It has real value only for those supremely concerned for a Church and its unity. It concerns a Church as distinct from other religious societies on the one hand, and, on the other, from individual souls. Truly, the Gospel as a power, as a grace met by living faith, may flourish in many single souls who have never tried to formulate the revelation in the simplest way. But they were made by a corporate Church, it should not be forgotten. They heard an intelligible message. And, were the Church but a congeries of such spiritual atoms, a crowd with an attractive Jesus in the midst, a group round a mere magnetic pole, a mere concourse of souls with nothing more than an individual relation of personal ardour toward the same central individual ; if each formed a lone point somewhere in a private route and

radius from Him ; were Christ but our centre instead of our sphere ; were we but round Him and not in Him ; if the Church were but such a star-map, or rather star-dust; and, if union with Christ did not mean, in the same act, citizenship of a kingdom constituted by the act of its King, and entry on a real society and body of **His** spirit with an organization *inter se* in Him—then also dogma, or a common statement of the creative grace wherein they stood, would not be called for ; and Christian truth would be no more than what every Christian man troweth in his amateur and tentative way. And the world would rejoice ; for there would be nothing to challenge or arrest it.

Where does the Church rally ? is then a larger question than that of individual faith. And it means little to the purpose now to say that we concentrate on Christ. A Christocentric Christianity was the ideal of the late nineteenth century, but it is already out of date. It **is** too vague for the purposes of a Church in such a world, to say nothing of the records of its origin. Men are very willing to gather about Christ as their brother and cap-

tain but not as their salvation, not as absolute King. But we must not empty the Gospel in order quickly to fill the Church. *Non multos qucerimus sed multum*. The question is, on what Christ are we to concentrate ? We rally not aesthetically on Christ's character but morally on what Christ means and does, not on a figure prime in our moral aesthetic, but on a person final for the conscience, and creative for divine communion. We rally not on the excellence, the perfection of Christ, but on His redemption, not on His figure but on His work, not on His felt harmony and beauty but on His trusted re-conciliation by grace. At the 1910 World Congress of Liberal Christianity in Berlin, they concentrated very reverently on Christ, but in such a way that certain Jewish representatives asked why they did not all return to an enlightened and deritualized Judaism. The question is just and unanswerable. The badge of this theological Liberalism is what is called lay-religion, the excision of the distinctive thing in Christianity—the act final for time: and eternity—the Pauline, that **is**, the Apostolic, the mediatorial, Gospel ; or it is the treatment of it as an outgrown

stage. Yet it is upon that very apostolism that the historic Church has really lived. Paul's Gospel was indeed " the Lord the Spirit " ; but only because within that it was the Lord our righteousness. The Cross of the manifestation of God and His re-established righteousness is the fountain of the Spirit. It is to that element that the Church rallies in all its great crises and most vital forms. Its Augustines, its Luthers, its Wesleys are all Paulinists. If they were wrong, if their Paul was wrong about Jesus, then the Church is not Christ's Church but the Church of Paul. But, if they were right, the one dogma of the Church is the compressed statement of that Gospel act of Christ on which it rests, the act which reveals in power the righteousness of God unto salvation, as the chief apostle defines it. The character of Christ rests on His person ; and His person has universal and eternal value for us only as it takes effect, condensed but entire, in His act of death and rising as God's final and endless act of holy redeeming love. That is the spearhead, all that went before is shaft. All Christ's words and works before that were propaedeutic for that, and often, as propaedeutic, very meagre, too meagre to

(like the Athanasian), or it must be a gift of God's

found a Church. About that act He was Himself very silent, for it was done chiefly to God. His closing prayers were not for man's redemption but for God's glory in His own obedience. He was not anthropocentric. Moreover He did not theologise. His left hand did not know what His right hand did. But the Church, with an instinct which was really His own inspiration, seized on that Act as its true centre of gravity and its Evangelists wrote all their words to that tune. They have little or nothing to say of Christ's teaching. The Church found the ground of its existence in the Reconciliation, with its hallowing of God in order to sanctify man. The statement of that vital, eternal matter is the mystic dogma of a standing or falling Church, because it is what created it. The form such a statement may take is not fixed and final like the act it sets forth, if only it give brief, simple and true effect to the saving Gospel concerned. And the more brief it is the more it approaches an illimitable finality.

We may prefer to put such a statement in Scriptural form. A dogma cannot be made by a dictator or a committee. Either it must grow from the history of a Church

inspiration to the Church's experience in some classic soul (like an Apostle's). It cannot be a manufactured article, it must be a fruit, or an

inspiration. And, if we have to choose, we are perhaps safest with it as an apostolic inspiration. In that case we might take for the dogma of the Church, " God so loved the World that He gave His only-begotten Son to be a propitiation for us that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish but have everlasting life." Or perhaps still better, because still more intimate and yet cosmic, would be Paul's words at the end of 2 Corinthians v.: " God hath given us the ministry of reconciliation, which is that God was in Christ, reconciling the world, not imputing their trespasses unto them. For [to meet the conscience that resents its easy forgiveness] He hath made Him to be sin for us Who knew no sin that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." Or we might take Romans i. 16, 7. Or, if we went to the Synoptics, we should find their centre of gravity condensed in the passages in which Jesus says that all truth is committed to Him by the Father on the ground that no one knoweth the

Son but the Father, nor any the Father but the Son, and He to whom the Son willeth to reveal Him, in a ministry in which He gives his life a ransom for many.

But, whether you take these statements or another, some dynamic statement there must be, on the scale of grace, on the one hand, and on the scale of the race on the other, and of the Church that confronts the race. Some statement by the Church of the grace and gospel in which it stands is necessary, were it only to inform the world why the Church claims room to live, work, and serve, and in its own way, to command.

If a more theological statement is preferred, so far as the Church is at its heart evangelical no better single doctrine can be found as its dogma than that which expresses the power of justification by faith. This doctrine is the truth of that moral element which is latent but inseparable in Christian faith, and which distinguishes it from mere religion at mystic depths. In mystic religion revelation and religion are constantly flowing over into each other ; but for Christian faith positive revelation is the fundamental, prior and creative thing. Faith is,

indeed, an act of will and not of thought ; its assent is surrender and not mere homologation. But it is not mere instinctive will or Godward volition. It is will charged with a positive and pregnant act to which it consents and surrenders, will answering the will and embracing the purpose of God. The knowledge in such faith is as real as the moral life it produces. The statement is not indeed the saving act, but it is a part, and an integral part, of it.

But why prefer a statement of an apostle to one of Christ as I seemed to do in the selections above ? The difficulty is that we have nothing from Christ at first hand. The whole of the New Testament is statement about Christ, or report of Christ. It is not statement by Christ in the sense in which it is statement by Paul. It is confession by disciples rather than the Master's autograph prescription or injunction. And, if we must select among the witnesses to Christ and His work in the New Testament, nothing is so central as the passage I quoted from

Corinthians or Romans. Nothing, at least, is so central for the Epistles (where the Church's centre of gravity lies). The corresponding passage in the Gospels would be Matt. xi. 25-27, as I have said. But, as a report of Christ at certain removes, that comes less directly from Christ than the Pauline passage comes from the completion, triumph and inspiration of His work. It comes to Paul directly from the Lord the Spirit. The Epistles are more inspired than the Gospels. We are in more direct contact with Christ. We are at one remove only. We hear the man who had Christ's own interpretation of His work. And we are less at the mercy of oral tradition, or the weakness of the reporters, or their editors. The Gospels, with their unspeakable value, are yet but propaedeutic to the Epistles ; and most of the higher pains and troubles of the Church to-day arise from the displacement of its centre of gravity to the Gospels. The hegemony of the Gospels means the decay of the Church—whatever hopes we might retain of a Churchless Christianity. In the Gospels Jesus is in contact but with timid disciples and not with triumphant

apostles and martyrs and confessors. He is not yet in contact with the Church ; which was only founded in the Pentecostal act. (What Christ founded was the New Covenant, the New Creation, the New Humanity.) He is the centre of a group of brethren who did not yet owe their souls to Him in the final way which, for instance, differentiated the Peter of Acts and of the Epistles from Peter the denier. We may even go so far as to say that the relation in which Jesus stood to His disciples during His life was not saving faith ; which means and moves to communion with Him, and not mere intercourse. It was in principle Old Testament, as Christ was prophet ; and it so remained till Pentecost, after which the disciples never looked back ; and they forthwith turned Christianity from a conventicular group to a bold, public, and universal Church, whose King was not its prophet but its high priest.

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For a number of years now, convinced that the unity of the Church is a matter of its belief and not of its sentiment or even work, of its theology rather than its philan-

thropy, of its faith more even than its good feeling, I have tried to promote the idea of a Church of one germinal article as the only condition of Church union and survival, and especially as the protection of its theological development and freedom. For a Church of faith must have a limit in the interest of its freedom—though a university of mere research can have none. And I was greatly relieved and cheered to find Dr. Denney taking the same position in his great book on Jesus and the Gospels. But by one article on such a subject is not necessarily meant one statement, one proposition. That might be bare and poor enough. I mean one living, and therefore composite article, whose ruling feature should be not its brevity (brief though it should be) but its germinal fullness—such an article as the passage from 2 Corinthians v. would form. It is not the statement of a principle from which the whole system of Christian knowledge is educed by a logical necessity. It is not the major premiss of a syllogism. And it is not there as the limit of compass but as the centre of power, and its norm ; not to purge the Church of some but to enhance the faith of all, not for bondage

but benediction. It is the condensed account of God's re-creative act of grace for the race in Christ, given in a function of that act by Christ Himself in the apostolic intelligence. It is the Gospel's own account of itself. The Church's Gospel here stated is at once its permanent ground, its normal principle, and its final goal. The one article, or dogma, of a standing or falling Church is the statement, but not the exposition, of God's act of justifying grace in Christ and Him crucified.

§

It will hardly be urged, upon reflection, that the rallying of the Church as a corporate body on such a truth would restore the Intellectualism which in Scholasticism broke Catholicism, and in Orthodoxy came near to wrecking the Reformation. To say nothing of the brevity, centrality and dynamic tenseness of the statement suggested, an intelligent Gospel is not an intellectualist. Intellectualism only comes when revelation is conceived primarily as truth, or when the truth passes from being categorical and simple to being scientific and elaborate, when it is divorced from the soul's life, and domineers

it. That is impossible when we treat the statement of the revelation, its expression, but as an integral element of it, an essential means, but not its very nature and power. To treat the statement as itself the revelation is just what a non-psychological view of inspiration was apt to do. And then we had had the intellectualism of orthodoxy.

§

There is this advantage in falling back for our dogma upon an apostolic formula like Paul's (which is also substantially the faith of the whole apostolate). The nature of the revelation is better expressed in the Bible, where the answering religion is most direct and classic, than in any statement of later dogmatic. An apostle is worth more for the Church's one dogma than all the theologians and councils of the Church. And we have this advantage in particular. We give to dogma a psychological and experimental base. We give it the psychological base demanded by an age like our own, in which theology is being more and more closely coupled up with the soul's experience.

The public animus against dogma is not

wonderful, however fearful—however impatient and uninformed. Theology altogether has become for the public dry and abstract both because it has travelled too far from religious experience (especially from the con-science), and also because in spite of that it has been made to determine individual salvation. It has thus been made an austere test instead of a glorious confession. It has become the victim of an intellectualism (orthodox or heretical) more abstract than that of science itself ; and yet in that form it has been forced upon a public which has little or nothing but experience to go upon. But we should not overlook the equally real passion and need of dogma in another section of the public. And we should note also that theology is now well advanced in a change which does not abolish it (like the popular rebellion), but moves it from a speculative to a psycho-logical foundation. A doctrine like the Trinity, for instance, is no longer founded upon a metaphysic of far transcendental movements of thought which receives a popular form in Athanasianism ; but it is felt that, if it is to be preserved at all, it must be as a foundation, condition, or corollary, of the

peculiar quality of the Christian experience, the Christian certainty of holy love, grace, and salvation direct from God. So also the only satisfactory approach to the doctrine of Christ's person is through an experimental doctrine of His work—the true theology arriving through the saving faith. The teaching of Jesus in like manner is seen to be minted in His own experience, and is to be read as reflected autobiography. He Himself, for instance, was constantly selling all He had for the pearl of great price.

From this point of view, therefore, the Pauline form which I have quoted has much to recommend it. ' It did arise out of an experience so exalted, direct, and classic that we are driven to postulate for it some real and authoritative inspiration. And I speak of inspiration in the modern form, by which inspiration must be construed as the inspiration of a whole man's soul and not of a faculty of it, the inspiration not of thought as thought, nor of a book. The writer was inspired before his Epistles were. Paul was more inspired than Romans. By his own account Paul's life had given place to the life of Christ proceeding in him. Not as if his individuality had been replaced by a

vague elation of featureless spirituality, but by a life so marked and specific as that of Christ condensed and pointed into His Cross. Paul was no mere penman, but the minister or organ of such a supernatural Christ. And this with a completeness and purity which made him, on the central matter of the creative Gospel,¹ utter the mind or word of Christ not in a trance but by a real moral experience, which was in as much psychological *rapport* with the great religious experience of the race as with its Saviour. If we are to have a dogma at all which meets the conditions of modern faith, it seems more fitting to seek its expression in an experient of genius like Paul than in the decrees of councils intellectualized by the philosophic fashion of a later age, and determined by a majority which expressed the inferior psychology of a crowd rather than that of a saint or apostle. We are learning at last that the prime object of the Christian revelation is not to exhibit to us the exuberant wealth of God's thought, but to carry home to us the riches of His grace and the reality

¹ Such matter as the Sacraments or eschatology requires separate treatment.

of His gift in the Saviour's act and deed which grows in the Church from age to age.

§

There was a crude way of conceiving the dogmatic inspiration of an apostle like Paul to which I have already alluded, and which proceeded in this wise. We had the fact of Christ's life, death, and resurrection in the Gospels. But this fact was not the saving act. It was only preliminary to salvation, which came by a theology of it, by pure doctrine, by a scheme of it clothed with divine authority. Such an interpretation was provided by a second act of God—and an act, this time, of the Spirit instead of the Son. The Spirit provided the Apostle, by dictation or other-wise over his head, with the authoritative theology of Christ's work ; and this dogma we had no choice but to receive and extend *ab extra*. Christ was of no saving value to us till we did. That is to say, the real and effective thing for us was the intellectualist element in revelation, the addition that came by way of statement from the Holy Ghost, like a hard light or a sharp mould from the outside cast on Christ and His deed.

Now, orthodoxy of this kind was intellectualist (I say was, for it is not easy to find now), because the interpretation is detached from the organic and psychological action of the revelatory fact itself on the soul. It is right in so far as this, that the valuable thing is not the empirical or even the aesthetic fact of Christ, not Christ as merely historic or impressive, but His divine action and meaning, His revelatory function and meaning, His value for God, His value as doing justice to God, as God's self-justification. His value as God (since God alone can do justice to God). "Jesus Christ is worth all that God is worth," says Goodwin. The valuable thing is the interpretation of the historic fact or person, of Jesus as the divine act of grace. As the Old Testament is not the history of Israel but of redemption in Israel, so the new is not simply the history of a personality but of the Son of God, of a personality not merely sacramental but mediatorial. And, as a step farther, the apostolic interpretation of Christ's act as God's act is an integral part of the whole divine revelation. The expression is organic to the reality. So far good. But

the old orthodox view is wrong in thinking of the interpretation as a second divine act, and in thinking of it as formal. Paul was specially and divinely illuminated as the interpreter of Christ's act ; *but it was by the effect of that act itself upon him, by that act (condensing the whole personality of Christ) living itself into His personal experience, and expressing itself ineffably there.* When Paul realized that Christ's death was not the martyrdom of a prophet but the consummation of the World-Redeemer's Person and vocation, he was not the vehicle of a brilliant gloss upon Christ, nor the author of a suggestive memorandum ; he was the organ of that Christ living in him, dying in him, and rising in him with a life more intimate than his own. With such an experience (Gal. ii. **20**) it was impossible but that his interpretation of the central thing at great moments should be Christ's own version of Himself and His crucial significance in the history both of God and man. Paul did not know it, but Christ knew it in him. Paul was not present at the Cross but the Spirit was that lived in him and He revealed its inwardness in him. In 2 Corinthians v. 19 Paul is not analysing

or speculating : he is preaching. And it is not Paul that speaks but Christ (" as though God did beseech you by us—we pray you in Christ's stead ")—unless Paul was under an illusion in speaking of his experience of Christ, and talking extravagance here in an ecstasy of peroration. The Spirit was the Lord the Spirit. It was Christ submerging Paul but not stupefying him, Christ bearing witness of Himself with all His work now behind Him. It was Christ transcending Paul, but in no trance, and teaching about His death as He could teach only when it had been died—just as He could only expound his parables after they had been spoken. There is nothing intellectualist in this, unless every expository or illuminative statement is such. Two things destroy intellectualism here, one psychological, one moral. First, the creation of the statement by the experience it interprets. And, second, the supreme quality of that experience as an act and not a mood nor a mere gleam, person meeting person in reciprocal life action. We have the modern principle of the primacy of the will in the spiritual whole. Paul's dogma is not intellectualist, first, because it is the transcript of a real and central experience, which, by

Christ in it, has creative power to reproduce itself in others ; and, second, because that experience was experience of an act by an act. It was Paul's act of faith experiencing Christ's act of grace. It was the act of Christ which prolonged itself, or " functioned," within Paul's act of faith, and became its own expositor there. Symbol and significate coalesce in a shining point. In a time like the present, when a sounder voluntarism is displacing the old intellectualism, it is easy to discredit any positive statement about religion by calling it intellectualist. But it should be well understood what intellectualism is. It is not positivity ; it is the identification of religion, of living faith, with pure doctrine. It is the idea of dogma as being identical with religion, instead of merely inseparable from it in a church. It is the treatment of faith as the assent to a form of truth which neither condenses a personal experience in its first vehicle, nor requires a personal experience for our appropriation of it. It is the demand for assent to scientific statements either divinely guaranteed (by their miraculous communication) or proved by the usual logical methods, or imposed by a categorical authority with-

out psychological mediation. Intellectualism makes faith the mere acceptance of rational knowledge, miraculously conveyed and guaranteed, and, first and last, out of relation to the thing most personal in the soul. It is the identification of the revelation with its presentation ; and it is the polar extreme to the mysticism which separates these. In the New Testament the inspiration, the *truth* of the reality is integral to the revelation which is the reality, but it is secondary. It is the temperature and the form created by the revelation. It is reality minted for currency. It is secondary to the manifestation itself, to the fact and value of the revelation from God to man, which is the *act and power* of God unto salvation ; though it is primary in social function, primary to its transmission from man to man, and therefore primary to the empirical existence of a Church. When we say dogma is essential to a Church, we do not mean that as dogma it creates a Church, but that a Church created by the grace which dogma expresses cannot pass through history without it. Dogma becomes intellectualist only in cases like Haeckel or other rationalists, where the principle is that certainty is only possible

by the way of theoretic knowledge, by a science more or less elaborate, by a knowledge independent of personal experience, and severed from the corporate consciousness of a society. But human conviction and contact with reality is not limited by scientific and noetic knowledge. There is a saving knowledge in faith, or the soul's direct relation to God, which is at least equally real and intelligible. The dogma of it is certainly more than opinion. It underlies and carries the progressive opinion of the Church. And it is not intellectualist when it is the central expression of the living experience of an eternal act in a universal apostle or a universal Church. The dangerous dogmatism is illimitable and omnipotent science, not positive, intelligent faith.