Excerpt from P.T. Forsyth, "Theological Liberalism vs. Liberal Theology," The British Weekly, Feb. 17, 1910, p. 557, as reprinted in Robert McAfee Brown, P.T. Forsyth: Prophet for Today (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1952), pp. 55-57.

"It may be found disappointing by some [he says] to be told that it is impossible to prove supernatural truth except to a supernatural and superrational experience. It may be a hard saying, for instance, that it is impossible to prove the Godhead of Christ except to those whom Christ has saved so that they worship him. It will at once be objected that this is settling inquiry in advance by dogma, settling the Godhead of Christ by the dogma of salvation or even atonement. I need hardly point out that it is not a question of dogma, but experience.

"And I might go on to ask, How then do *you* propose to settle it? You tell me you proceed by the canons of reason. You will go by those methods which a long and sifted experience has shown to be fruitful in the religion of research, and especially research historical and philosophical. . . . You pursue your inquiry, then, on such positive principles. These canons are settled for you before you embark on your search. You will be told that your results will be worthless unless you start from them and follow them. Well, what objec-

tion do you have to describe these as dogmas given you in advance of your inquiry, and made obligatory in the Church of science? Who would listen to science from a man who abjured the inductive methods of observation and experiment, who discarded these dogmas? You reply that these principles, these formulas, are practical, and are founded on experiences long and corrected. Yes, but so are the dogmas about the supernatural with which we approach supernatural truth. It was to explain a tremendous experience that they arose. . . .

"Now if I took those supernatural principles, and compelled you to admit them before I allowed you to enter on physical research, you might well complain. You might say I was taking the principles of one kind of experience and forcing them on a quite different kind; that I was treating by the laws of one nature objects which have a very different nature — as if one should test music by mathematics, or poetry by logic, or seek life's secret with a lamp and a lancet. And you would remind me that the true fact of science is to treat each object according to its own nature, to adjust our method to the difference, say, between a mineral and an animal, a fact and a tone. . . . The psychologist does not examine a soul as the biologist does a jellyfish. You would be quite right if you spoke to me like that.

"You will not wonder, then, if I want to apply your principle all round. The experience of nature (human or other) can never take the place of the experience of religion (or more correctly of God). You will be prepared now to hear me protest against the dogmatism with which you want to impose on my experience of the living God doctrines which you drew from the treatment of sensible nature. . . . You want to subject the person of Christ entirely to methods which are very useful when you are testing natural processes, or historic documents or their normal characters. But when you propose to apply rational principles as final to the incarnation, you are begging a great question. You are taking it for granted, without more ado, that the incarnation was, above all things, a rational process. Whereas it was in the nature of an act, and, an act being an exercise of will and personality, it is beyond the rationality which explains a process. It was experience of God's and therefore only to be met and owned by an experience of ours, i.e., not by a conviction or a conclusion, but by religion. The only real belief in the incarnation is not assent, but living faith. If you propose to subject it to a human test, or reduce it to a philosophic process, you are as dogmatic as any Christian. You are worse, because you want to apply to my experience of faith principles and

dogmas which you gathered in a different region outside faith. You are doing to religion what you fiercely resent that religion should do to art or science. You are limiting its freedom by a foreign dogma."