

The Theory of Revelation

Part I

The Speculative Foundation of Revelation

Section 2

The Natural Knowability of Revelation

By

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For the Use of the Students
of St. Bernard's Seminary

The Seminary Press
Rochester, N. Y.

1933

Noti Obstat

Die XII Septembris, MCMXXXIII

WILFRIDUS T. CRAUGH
Censor Deputatus

Imprimatur

E Curia Roffensi die XVI Sept., MCMXXXIII

GULIELMUS M. HART
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The Seminary Press, P. O. Box 1004,
Rochester, N. Y.

Contents

Preface	i
Introduction	1
Immediate Revelation	11
Mediate Revelation	24
Credibility	29
Certitude	37
Chapter I. Concept and Kinds of Criteria	52
1. Internal (55-56) and External (56-57; 63-64)	58
a) Negative Internal	58-59
b) Positive Internal	60-63
a) Negative External	64-67
b) Positive External	67-72
2. Primary and Secondary	72-75
3. Objective and Subjective	75
a) Subjective Individual	75-77
b) Subjective Universal	77-79
Chapter II. Relative Value of Internal and External Criteria	79
Chapter III. The Subjective Criteria of Protestantism	93
a) Voluntarism	106
b) Emotional Religion	115
Chapter IV. The Criteria of Pragmatism and Modernism	156
Chapter V. The Criteria of the "New Apologetics"	164
Chapter VI. Concept and Kinds of Miracle	207
Chapter VII. False Concepts of Miracle	241
Protestantism	270
Chapter VIII. The Possibility of Miracles	277
Chapter IX. The Philosophical Knowability of Miracles	320
Borderlands	341
Miraculous Cures by the Power of Faith	346
Chapter X. The Historical Knowability of Miracles	355
David Hume and the Miracle	380
Chapter XI. The Evidential Value of Miracles	404

Chapter XII. The Concept and Possibility of Prophecy	424
Chapter XIII. The Knowability of Prophecy	447
Borderlands	456
The Transcendental Subject	457
The Magical Ego	466
The Transcendental Magical Powers of the Soul	471
Four Dimensional Space	476
Action at a Distance	477
Second Sight	484
Thought Reading	493
Hypnotism	501
Spiritism	511
Chapter XIV. The Evidential Value of Prophecy	523
Index of Names	533
Index of Subjects	539

ABBREVIATIONS

- AER. *American Ecclesiastical Review*. Philadelphia, Pa.
- CE. *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. N. Y. 1907f.
- DAFC. *Dictionnaire apologétique de la foi catholique*, ed. A. D'Alès. Paris, 1911f.
- DB. Denzinger-Bannwart, *Enchiridion symbolorum, definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum*. Friburgi Brisgoviae 1922 (14-15. ed.).
- DCD. *Dogmatic Canons and Decrees*. Authorized Translation of the Dogmatic Decrees of the Council of Trent etc. N. Y. 1912 (Devin-Adair Co.).
- ERE. *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, ed. James Hastings. N. Y. & Edinburgh. 1913f.
- RCK. Esser-Mausbach, *Religion, Christentum und Kirche*. Kempten. 1923 (5'ed.).
- SHERK. *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, ed. Samuel Macauley Jackson. N. Y. & London. 1911f.
- ST. St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica*. Also Literal Translation by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province. London & N. Y. 1911f.
- SCG. St. Thomas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*. Also Literal English Translation by the Dominican Fathers from the latest Leonine Edition. N. Y. 1924f.

PREFACE

As stated in the Foreword to the preceding volume of this series, our purpose is not to offer a text-book of apologetics. Rather our aim is to place at the student's disposal some of the rich treasures of scholarship amassed by representative modern Catholic apologists, particularly German and French, which are largely inaccessible to the average student whose linguistic knowledge is restricted to English and Latin. At the same time, we realize that in the crowded curriculum of our seminaries only a cursory treatment of many fundamental truths of the "Theory of Revelation" is possible. A more detailed exposition of these basic truths will help to deepen and clarify the knowledge obtained during the brief period of the formal lecture. Finally, the many volumes utilized, or alluded to, in the body of the text and in the foot-notes will offer ample opportunity for more profound study.

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ST. BERNARD'S SEMINARY,
Rochester, N. Y. 1933.

INTRODUCTION

In the preceding section we have inquired into supernatural Divine Revelation from a twofold viewpoint: we have examined it, first in itself and secondly, in its relation to the ends and purposes of Natural Religion. Our study has led to the conclusion that a supernatural self-disclosure of God to man is not only possible and desirable in itself, but also morally necessary for mankind in the interests of Natural Religion.

Retrospect.

It would indeed be a fallacy to conclude: Therefore, God has really revealed Himself to man in a supernatural manner. For the actuality of such a manifestation must be established on positive historical grounds. But this twofold consideration does offer strong presumptive evidence in favor of an immediate Divine intervention.

Antecedent probability of Revelation.

"One of the most important effects of Natural Religion on the mind, in preparation for Revealed", says *Cardinal Newman*, "is the anticipation which it creates that a Revelation will be given. The earnest desire of it, which religious minds cherish, leads the way to the expectation of it. Those who know nothing of the wounds of the soul, are not led to deal with the question, or to consider its circumstances; but when our attention is roused, then the more steadily we dwell upon it, the more probable does it seem that a Revelation has been or will be given to us. This presentiment is founded on our sense, on the one hand, of the infinite goodness of God, and, on the other, of our own extreme misery and need—two doctrines which are the primary constituents of Natural Religion. It is difficult to put a limit to the legitimate force of this antecedent probability. Some minds feel it to be so powerful, as to recognize in it almost a proof, without direct evidence, of the divinity of a religion claiming to be the true, supposing its history and doctrine are free from positive objection, and there be no rival religion with plausible claims of its own."¹

¹) *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent*. London, 1898 (New Impression), pp. 422, 423.

The history of religions shows "how congenial the notion of a Revelation is to the human mind, so that the expectation of it may truly be considered as an integral part of Natural Religion."² For the belief that an express Revelation, coming from above, has really been granted to man, has ever been a common heritage of all peoples.³ Among the various religions claiming to be divinely revealed, the Religion of Israel and the Religion of Jesus Christ tower high above all the rest, by reason of their own inherent merit, their beneficent effects upon the human race and the marvelous phenomena that have preceded and accompanied their advent upon the stage of history. The one is a preparation for the other; together they manifest a consistent and progressive religious and moral evolution unparalleled in the history of the world.

Purpose of
this Treatise.

In the light of this presumption and the belief of mankind the following question immediately presents itself to the inquiring mind: Has what is probable in anticipation, actually been granted to us? Did God, in point of fact, disclose Himself to us supernaturally, particularly in these two great historical religions? Before reason can decide this question of fact, logic demands that a previous speculative problem be solved, namely: *How can the human mind arrive at a certain knowledge of the reality or existence of a supernatural Divine Revelation? What norms must guide reason in its quest for such an intervention from above?* Thus, the subject matter of this second section, on the speculative groundwork of Revelation, is concerned with the natural knowability of supernatural Divine Revelation.

Religious In-
differentism.

It is necessary at the very outset of this treatise to warn against that mental attitude, which regards the answer to this problem as of little consequence. "Religious Indifferentism is a disease to which human na-

²) *Ibid.*, pp. 422, 423. ³) cf. Hettinger-Weber, *Lehrbuch der Fundamentalthologie oder Apologetik*. Freiburg i. B.; 1913 (3rd ed.), p. 134, for pertinent literature.

ture is very much predisposed."⁴ Applied to Revealed Religion it asserts that the *origin* of one's knowledge is a matter of secondary importance, its content alone is paramount; we accept the good no matter whence it comes. This temper of mind cannot be justified, because, in the problem under discussion, the origin is of essential significance. If Christianity, for instance, is a Divine Revelation, it contains within itself the guarantee of infinite wisdom. If, on the other hand, it is merely the work of man, it cannot be regarded as a binding norm for all times; for, in that case, it has no eternal value, rather it is subject, like all things human, to the vicissitudes of time; and since it is imperfect, later generations may legitimately place it in the crucible of criticism and pass beyond it.⁵

This special form of religious Indifferentism has received its poetic expression in Lessing's "*Nathan der Weise*" (Nathan the Wise). A father, so the story goes, commits his ring to his three sons. Each one receives a ring and believes that he is the happy possessor of the genuine heirloom. This belief renders to each one the same service as the actual possession of the genuine ring. This story, so the poet explains, symbolizes the equal value of the three great religions: Judaism, Christianity, Islamism.

Now, obviously this mental attitude is untenable; for surely no man would or could wish seriously to be, at the same time, an orthodox Jew, a good Christian, a Moham- medan believing in the Koran. A choice must be made and, therefore, it is necessary to test the claims of these respective religions. For to believe blindly is a terrible crime against one's own reason.⁶

Accordingly, if God reveals Himself to man and demands that all men embrace His word by faith, it is only reasonable to assume that He will endow His word with

Possibility of
Criteria.

⁴) B. J. Otten, S. J., *Does it matter much what I believe?* St. Louis, Mo. 1921 (9th ed.), p. 11. ⁵) Fr. Sawicki, *Die Wahrheit des Christentums*. Paderborn. 1920 (4th ed.), p. 337.

⁶) C. Gutberlet, *Lehrbuch der Apologetik*, vol. II: "*Von der geoffenbarten Religion*". Münster i. Westf. 1904 (3rd ed.), p. 91. The Church has frequently condemned religious Indifferentism; cf. *Syllabus of Pius IX*, in DB.n. 1715-1718; *Vatican Council*, III sess., 3rd chap., canon i, DB.n. 1810; DCD. p. 234.

such distinguishing marks or criteria, that all men of good will, even the unlettered, will be able to recognize it as His word.

Experience assures us that a person is able to communicate with an absent friend in such a way, that the latter can have no reasonable doubt as to the genuineness of the message. For the recipient of the letter can conclude as to who the writer is from the *contents*, the formation of the characters, the *seal* and the *signature* of the epistle. Now, surely what is possible for man cannot be said to be impossible for Divine omnipotence and wisdom.

Only by denying to human reason the faculty of knowing with certitude the supernatural, and particularly the Divine, as *Traditionalists* do, or by asserting with *Luther* that because of original sin reason has become thoroughly perverted in matters religious, can one affirm, with any plausibility, the impossibility of signs that will enable man to arrive at certitude regarding supernatural Divine Revelation. This mental attitude, however, really undermines faith and makes the very Revelation impossible, which it essays by that exaggeration to serve.

Furthermore, it is contrary to the inmost essence of the intellect to believe anything, without first having been assured of the credibility of that which is attested through criteria. Hence, if reason cannot know the supersensible, that is, religious truths; if a person cannot prove the credibility of Divine Revelation by means of criteria, human reason is likewise incapable of believing Revelation itself. Such a faith, at any rate, would be an unreasonable, uncertain faith, which could not possibly serve as a basis for all our religious knowledge and practice.⁷

In other words, the possibility of criteria is grounded on the truth that there can be no contradiction between the supernatural Revelation of God and human reason, since both Revelation and reason have their origin in God Himself. Now, there would be such a contradiction, if supernatural Divine Revelation completely excluded rational knowledge from the spiritual activity of man's spirit. Therefore, the possibility of distinguishing marks of God's Revelation to man cannot reasonably be called into question.⁸

⁷) Gutberlet, *ibid.*, II, pp. 91, 92.

⁸) Hettinger-Weber, *ibid.*, p. 167.

As Revelation is the voice of God to man, so Faith is the voice of man to God. If Faith is to be a morally free and reasonable act, as is demanded by the dignity of the human personality, man must be in a position to recognize Revelation with certainty as coming from God. Now, nearly all the great world religions ultimately appeal to Divine Revelation or to sacred books. It is evident, therefore, that there must be certain objective signs or criteria at hand, which will enable man to draw a clear distinction between Divine Revelation and all other inspirations.

Necessity of
Criteria.

"For at times", as *Dr. Schanz* says, "the human mind, wandering among odoriferous flowers of fancy, or giving play to invention, calls into being creations that seem and, in a sense, are Divine. Then, again, the mind is acted upon by influences which, though superhuman, are not Divine. The angel of darkness can clothe himself in a vesture of light. How is one to be distinguished from the other? How shall man distinguish the Revelation that comes from God, from superhuman impulses and the creations of fancy? No man has penetrated far enough into the inner shrine of his inmost self to be able to discern the nature of his thoughts, or to trace them to their source. And yet, such proof is absolutely necessary, because the gravest issues are at stake. The attitude that man adapts towards Revelation is big with consequences. It is a question in whose bosom lie buried eternal life and eternal death. On its right solution depends whether eternal weal or eternal woe shall be man's lot. Revelation has exerted a magic influence on the whole history of mankind. By Revelation Judaism prepared the way for Christ, and for eighteen centuries Christianity has scattered the blessings of Revelation over the face of the earth. Who could be so indifferent, or so senseless, as to scorn or to despise this most wonderful phenomenon in the history of mankind? . . . If, then, there be a Divine Revelation, there must also be certain, infallible tests for recognizing it as such. God's Revelation must bear God's stamp, so that man acting as a free, reasonable being, may, by its means, work out his salvation."⁹

⁹) P. Schanz, *A Christian Apology*. Translated by Michael Glancey and Victor J. Schobel. N. Y. (4th revised ed.), vol. II: "*God and Revelation*", pp. 288, 289. We shall always cite from this edition, unless otherwise stated.

Testimony of the
Bible and Tra-
dition.

The *Sacred Scriptures* challenge both the organs of Revelation and the believers "to try the spirits, if they be of God".¹⁰ Ecclesiasticus warns us against a careless and hasty faith.¹¹ The Evangelists, especially St. John, insist that the Lord appeals to His Miracles in confirmation of His teachings: "But I have a greater testimony than that of John. For the works which the Father hath given me to perfect: the works themselves, which I do, give testimony of me, that the Father hath sent me".¹² St. John narrates in detail the healing of the man born blind and the resuscitation of Lazarus, since both of these events were motives of faith for many.¹³ He also calls attention to the fact, that faith follows upon the Miracles wrought by the Lord.¹⁴

This clear teaching of the Bible is confirmed by *Christian Tradition*. To mention only a few of the many testimonies that might be cited. Justin Martyr points out to the pagans that the Christians do not adore the Crucified without good grounds (μη ἄλογον)¹⁵; he calls Miracles and Prophecies *μεγίστη καὶ ἀληθεστάτη ἀπόδειξις*.¹⁶ In the beginning of his *Apologeticum*, Tertullian pleads that the truth ought not to be condemned without a hearing: "Unum gestit interdum, ne ignorata damnetur". He appeals to the grounds of credibility for the Christian Faith: "Nihil interim credam, nisi nihil temere credendum; temere porro credi, quodcumque sine originis agnitione creditur".¹⁷ Theophilus sees an ἀπόδειξις in Prophecies;¹⁸ Origen likewise calls Prophecy and Miracle an ἀπόδειξις πνεύματος καὶ δυνάμεως.¹⁹ Clement of Alexandria shows how knowledge prepares for faith. "We do not say", he writes, "that there is no truth without philosophy, or that it is the cause of Christian knowledge, or, again, that it contains the matter of Revelation itself; but we hold that it is a preparation for

¹⁰) I John iv, 1.

¹¹) xix, 4.

¹²) v, 36; cf. also x, 25, 27, 38; xiv, 11, 12; xv, 24.

¹³) ix, xi.

¹⁴) ii, 11, 23; vii, 11sq; xii, 37; xx, 30, 31.

¹⁵) *Apologia*, I, 3.

¹⁶) *Ibid.*, c. 30.

¹⁷) *Adv. Marcionem*, 5, 1.

¹⁸) *Ad Autolyicum*, 1, 14.

¹⁹) *Contra Celsum*, 1, 2.

faith, and co-operates in its attainment".²⁰ St. Augustine, in various of his writings, describes clearly the function of reason in the assent to the motives of credibility. For instance, he writes: "Quis enim non videat prius esse cogitare quam credere? Nullus quippe credit aliquid, nisi prius cogitaverit esse credendum".²¹

Scholasticism seized upon this thought and made it its own. Thus, St. Thomas Aquinas observes: "For he (i.e., the believer) would not believe unless, on the evidence of signs, or of something similar, he saw that they ought to be believed;"²² "faith has not that research of natural reason which demonstrates what is believed, but a research into those things whereby a man is induced to believe, for instance, that such things have been uttered by God and confirmed by Miracles";²³ again, "the believer has sufficient motive for believing, for he is moved by the authority of divine teaching confirmed by Miracles".²⁴ Finally, Richard of St. Victor exclaims: "Lord if we are in error, by Thine own self we have been deceived; for these things have been confirmed by such signs and wonders in our midst, as could only have been done by Thee".²⁵

²⁰) *Paedagogo*, 1, 6. Ed. Potter, p. 115. In his *Stromata*, 1, VI, c. XV, he argues for the divine origin of Christianity and divine Sonship of Christ from the Prophecies of the Old Testament and the various testimonies and Miracles which are narrated in the New Testament, especially from the wonders wrought after Christ's Ascension and the marvelous diffusion of Christianity.

²¹) *De praedest. Sanctorum*, c. 2, 5; cf. also *De diversis quaest. ad Simplic.* i, l. q. 2, 21: "Quis potest credere, nisi aliqua vocatione, h. e., aliqua testificatione tangatur"; *Ep. 120 ad Consent.*; *De vera religione*, c. 24: "Neque auctoritatem ratio penitus deserit cum consideratur, cui sit credendum". For a more detailed account cf. P. Gardeil, O. P.; art. "Credibilité chez les Saints Pères", in DCT. col. 2239—2258.

²²) *ST.* II, II, q. 1, a. 4 ad 2.

²³) *Ibid.* q. 2, a. 1 ad 1.

²⁴) *Ibid.*, q. 2, a. 9 ad 3. The same thought runs through the entire sixth chapter of St. Thomas' *SCG.*

²⁵) *De Trinit.* 1, 2: "Si error est, quem credimus, a Te decepti sumus; iis enim signis doctrina haec confirmata est, quae nisi a Te fieri non potuerunt". cf. also Hugh of St. Victor, *Summa Sent.* 1, 1; Suarez, *De fide disp.* 4, 2; Lugo, *De fide disput.* 5; Gregory de Valentia, *Comment. theol.* III, disp. i, q. 1, p. 1.

Reason precedes
Faith.

Hence, it is the clear teaching of the Bible and of Christian Tradition that *in adults the assent of faith*, by which the believer enters into personal possession of God's supernatural message, *is preceded by an activity on the part of human reason*. Indeed the very nature of the human spirit and of morality demands that the Act of Faith be ethically grounded; for Faith is not merely a "blind impulse of the religious sense", rather it is essentially *an assent to truth based on the grounds of reason and of conscience*. Reason must lay the foundation of belief, otherwise the assent of Faith will be blind and arbitrary. Such has been the consistent teaching of historic Christianity, until the so-called Reformers of the sixteenth century rejected the rational groundwork of Revelation and Faith, as will be shown in detail below.

Apologetics and
the Criteria of
Revelation.

The history of converts to the Christian Catholic Faith opens up for us the records of the many and varied paths, by which individuals have arrived at a certain knowledge of God's supernatural Revelation. Oftentimes it is doubtless difficult to establish with precision the motives, rational and irrational, which co-operate in the conversion of individuals. Moreover, many of these motives are, in part, only *argumenta ad hominem*. However, when there is question of presenting a *scientific* defense of Divine Revelation, obviously it is necessary to stress primarily those signs or distinguishing marks (criteria) of God's revealed message, which possess *objective* and *universal validity* and cogency. Hence, it is the specific function of *apologetics* to offer a scientific vindication of these criteria or the grounds of belief (motives of credibility).²⁶

This proximate preparation of the Act of Faith renders Faith an *obsequium rationabile* (λατρεία λογική, Rom. xii, 1), and the believer becomes conscious of the

²⁶ J. Mausbach, *Grundzüge der katholischen Apologetik*. Münster i. W., 1921 (3rd-4th ed.), p. 21; cf. B. Guldner, art. "Conversion", in CE. IV, pp. 347 sq; Dr. J. Didiot, art. "Conversion", in DAFC. fasc. III, colls. 697 sq; G. K. Chesterton, *The Catholic Church and Conversion*. New York 1926.

grounds upon which his Faith rests. *Divine Revelation is, indeed, something new; something that transcends human reason. But it is not something absolutely foreign to reason* and devoid of all connecting links with reason. On the contrary, God's revealed message is for the thinking mind and, therefore, reason ought to strive to attain it by the exercise of its native powers. In other words, reason has a right to a critique of Divine Revelation (*examen fundamentale et externum*).²⁷ At the same time, however, it must not be forgotten that apologetics has neither the function nor the power of compelling the assent of the intellect to God's Revelation by reason of the scientific demonstration which it presents. Our science can, indeed, show with certainty the *evident credibility* of God's message, but it is powerless to compel the intellect to assent. *Faith is essentially a free assent*.

Before beginning this scientific demonstration, it is necessary to call attention to a problem of *terminology*.

Credibility
or Science?

The *end* or *aim* of this proximate preparation for the Act of Faith is not to make the *content* of Divine Revelation evident, in the sense that the truths of God's message become truths of reason; for that is tantamount to Rationalism. *Its purpose is rather to produce the firm conviction that a supernatural Divine Revelation is an actual Fact. Apologetics* essays to realize this end in a scientific manner.

However, *this is by no means the only way* in which this end may be attained. For *actual life* also leads to this conviction in many ways, and the clarity of vision thus acquired admits of varying degrees in accordance with the intellectual powers, the education and the personal efforts of the individual. However, both in the case of apologetics and of actual life the *necessary conclusion* is the *morally certain knowledge of the credibility* of supernatural Divine Revelation—the *morally certain judgment of conscience that we may and ought to believe* (credibile et credendum

²⁷ Hettinger-Weber, *ibid.*, p. 23; cf. Wm. Turner, *The Scholastic View of Faith and Reason*, in *The New Scholasticism*. Baltimore, Md. 1927, vol. I, pp. 24sq.

esse). A similar conviction must also lie at the basis of the Faith of a person who has been reared as a Catholic from birth.²⁸

Now, all the older theologians have demanded, as a first step to faith, only an *evidentia credibilitatis*, an indirect knowledge or certitude as regards the Fact of Divine Revelation. They did not exact an *evidentia testificationis* or a direct knowledge and certitude.

In marked contrast with this traditional terminology is the mode of expression used by a considerable number of the more modern apologists, who insist that a direct knowledge (*i. e.*, *science, scientia*) of God's existence and of the Fact that He has supernaturally revealed Himself to mankind must always precede the Act of Faith, as its preliminary condition.

These recent writers confuse the two distinct methods of preparing for the Act of Faith mentioned above, namely apologetics and actual life. In other words, that which is the *ideal* end or purpose of apologetics as a science they transfer to the *life* of the individual. St. Thomas Aquinas keeps these realms distinct. He teaches that the criteria of Revelation, like the proofs for God's existence, do not produce knowledge in the strict sense of that term (*science, scientia*) in the case of all believers. In his *Sent.* 3 dist. 24, q. 1, a. 3 he says: "Fidei substernitur naturalis cognitio, quam fides praesupponit et ratio probare potest, sicut Deum esse et Deum esse unum, incorporeum, intelligentem et alia hujusmodi; et ad hoc etiam sufficienter fides inclinatur, ut, qui rationem ad hoc habere non potest, fide eis assentiat." A pure and certain knowledge of God can be achieved by most men only *with difficulty* and, for that reason, Revelation is a necessity, as we have shown in the chapter on the Necessity of Revelation. St. Thomas consistently accommodates himself to the mode of expression used by St. Augustine. Speaking of the *content* of Faith, St. Augustine lays down the axiom: "Crede, ut intelligas" (*Sermo* 43, 9); but as regards the *genesis* of Faith he writes: "Nullus quippe credit aliquid, nisi prius cogitaverit esse credendum."²⁹ St. Thomas says: "Non enim crederet, nisi videret ea esse credenda"; that which is believed is known "sub communi ratione credibilis."³⁰ In like manner the later Scholastics assert only an "*evidentia credibilitatis*", not an

²⁸) J. Mausbach, *Katholische Moralthologie*. Münster i. W. 1921, II, p. 26; IDEM, *Grundzüge der katholischen Apologetik*, p. 155.

²⁹) *De praed. sanct.* 5, 3.

³⁰) *ST.* II, II, q. 1, a 4 ad 2.

"*evidentia testificationis*"; they call the grounds of our assent to the Fact of Revelation the "*motiva credibilitatis*."³¹ The Vatican Council employs the same terminology.³²

Despite this difference of terminology as used by the traditional apologists and these more recent writers, there is really no essential discrepancy; for these modern apologists use the term knowledge (*scientia*) only in the sense of "moral certitude". Nevertheless, for various reasons the older mode of expression is the more felicitous and we will adhere to it in this treatise.³³

In the first section of the "Theory of Revelation" we have shown that God's self-disclosure to man may be either immediate or mediate. Hence the apologist must establish the rational knowability (1) of *immediate* and (2) of *mediate* supernatural Divine Revelation.

IMMEDIATE REVELATION

The immediate recipients of Divine Revelation (*e.g.*, the prophets of the Old Testament) were imbued with a *certitude* of their divine enlightenment and vocation, which nothing could shake. This firm conviction is one of the clearest facts of history. Let us listen to some of their typical utterances.

Prophetic
Conviction.

"I am not a Prophet, nor am I the son of a Prophet: but I am a herdsman plucking wild figs. And the Lord took me when I followed the flock, and the Lord said to me: Go, prophesy to my people Israel. And now hear thou the word of the Lord".³⁴ Thus Amos replied to Amasias, when the latter wished to prevent him from prophesying at Bethel. That is to say, the role of Prophet was imposed upon Amos by God Himself, when he was least thinking of it; he was not free to renounce it.

Isaias describes the vision which inaugurated his prophetic ministry. He saw Jahve seated on a throne of glory. After a seraph had purified his lips, the prophet heard the

³¹) J. Mausbach, *Grundzüge* etc., p. 155, 153; IDEM, *Katholische Moralthologie*, II, p. 26.

³²) *DB.* n. 1794; 1812; DCD, pp. 226, 235, 236.

³³) Mausbach, *Grundzüge* etc., p. 155.

³⁴) Amos, vii, 14-16.

command: "Go!" and he received the mission of announcing to the people the terrible judgments of the Lord.³⁵

Jeremias also heard the irresistible command of Jahve: "Thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee: and whatsoever I shall command thee, thou shalt speak".³⁶ God revealed to him the message that He had consecrated him from his mother's womb and appointed him prophet of the nations. Jahve touched his lips as a token that He had made him His instrument to proclaim His just and merciful judgments,³⁷ a duty so painful, that *Jeremias* endeavored to be excused and to conceal the oracles committed to him. He could not, however; for his heart was consumed by a flame which forced from him that touching complaint: "Thou hast deceived me, O Lord, and I am deceived: Thou hast been stronger than I, and Thou hast prevailed".³⁸

Ezekiel sees the glory of God borne on a fiery chariot drawn by celestial beings. He hears a voice commanding him to go and find the children of Israel, that rebellious nation, with hardened heart and brazen face, and without prevarication to deliver to them Jahve's warnings.³⁹

Zacharias speaks thus: "You shall know that the Lord of hosts sent me".⁴⁰

Although the other prophets are silent on the subject of their vocation, doubtless, they also received it as clearly and irresistibly, so that there could be no mistake.⁴¹ The same is true of the New Testament prophets, particularly of the Apostles. St. Peter sums up the traditional faith of the Old and New Testament believers in the words: "Prophecy came not of the will of man at any time: but the holy men of God spoke, inspired by the Holy Ghost".⁴²

This compelling certitude is demanded by the very nature of the case. For revelations, which are granted to private persons, generally attain their end without such an irresistible conviction; but the promulgators of a public message of salvation must be dominated by an explicit and most certain conviction of their divine mission, in order that they may be able to demand Faith on the part of their hearers and reject pseudo-prophets.⁴³

35) vii, 14sq., cf. iii, 8.

36) vi.

37) i, 10.

38) xx, 7; cf. xxiii, 9-29.

39) ii, 2-5.

40) ii, 9.

41) cf. Jean Calès, art. "Prophecy, Prophet, and Prophetess", in CE. II, p. 479.

42) II Petr. i, 21.

43) Mausbach, *Grundzüge* etc., p. 20.

It is certain, therefore, that the prophets did not regard themselves merely as *providential* men, such as have appeared at definite times among the various peoples of antiquity,—religious reformers, sages, geniuses, like Confucius, Buddha, Zoroaster, Plato and the rest. On the contrary, they were firmly convinced of the fact, that their vocation to the prophetic office was *supernatural*. We employ the term "supernatural" according to its strict theological connotation, namely, to signify that which transcends the powers and exigencies of nature. The prophets were dominated by the intensely personal and certain conviction that they were *sent by God Himself* in an extraordinary manner; that they were not merely exceptions as compared with the mass of humanity, but that they were raised up by a *direct, miraculous* intervention on the part of God, apart from the laws of ordinary Divine Providence.⁴⁴

Now, what is the value of this conviction? Are these testimonies of the prophets really credible? The answer to this question is obviously of supreme importance; for if the prophets are only "providential" men, without a supernatural mission in the strict sense, the entire economy of the Old Testament crumbles at the base. The mission of the Messiah, the Religion of the New Testament, likewise rests upon the Prophecies; for, our Blessed Saviour and the Apostles appeal to them. If the mission of the prophets is only natural, these Prophecies are merely the previsions of certain men of genius, the religious hopes of certain holy souls, the aspirations towards an approaching ideal, if you will; in a word, pure conjectures whose realization only shows the perspicuity of their human authors. If, on the other hand, the Prophecies are really *divine testimonies*, as apostolic doctrine and Catholic tradition teach, we must recognize in them the very clear and unmistakable word of God Himself speaking through the human convictions of

Value of this Conviction.

44) A. Condamin, S. J., art. "Prophetisme Israélite", in DAFC. fasc. XX, col. 395.

the prophets; we must proclaim with St. Paul that the people of Israel were indeed favored with divine communications of a very special kind, which were "Revelations" in the strict sense of that term. "What advantage then hath the Jew (over the Gentile)?" The Apostle of the Gentiles answers: "Much every way. *First indeed because the words of God were committed to them.*"⁴⁵

Rationalistic Interpretations.

Rationalists question the supernatural mission of the prophets. They continue, indeed, to employ the terms "Revelation", "supernatural", "Miracles", but they give to them a totally different meaning. For them, the "supernatural" is only the "natural", as we have pointed out before.⁴⁶ The naturalistic viewpoint may be summarized under the following three headings:

Fraud Theory.

a) The prophets, so it is claimed, openly and solemnly affirmed that they had a supernatural mission. But in point of fact they never received a direct vocation from on high; that is to say, they were *impostors*. Such is the opinion of the physician Paul Garnault,⁴⁷ who accuses the prophets of having fraudulently substituted their own voice for the voice of Jahve. Renan⁴⁸ writes that the great moral blemish attaching to the Jewish prophets is their claim to a supernatural mission advanced without proofs, or with only quack proofs.

It is not necessary to delay long on this theory, which nowadays even Rationalists quite generally discredit. It finds its advocates chiefly among romancers, like the physician mentioned above, who are enlisted in the cause of gross Materialism, or among litterateurs of the stamp of Renan. One has only to read a chapter or two of Renan's "*Histoire du peuple d'Israel*", in conjunction with the writings of Israel's prophets, in order to see at once which of these two classes of writings is characterized by insincerity and charlatanism. Tainted in its very source by hateful partiality, this fraud theory flippantly contradicts the most

⁴⁵) Rom. iii, 1, 2; cf. Condamin, S. J., *ibid.*, col. 396.

⁴⁶) cf. J. J. Baierl., *The Theory of Revelation*, Rochester, N. Y. 1927, Part I, Sect. I, pp. 40-43, 49, 50, 57, 58.

⁴⁷) *Ventriloquie, nécromancie, divination*, in *Revue scientifique*, May 26, 1900.

⁴⁸) *Histoire du peuple d'Israel*, 5 vols. Paris 1887-1894, II, pp. 484, 485; III, p. 159. English translation, "*History of the People of Israel*", by J. H. Allen & Mrs. E. W. Lattimer (Roberts Bros., Boston, Mass. 1888-1896). cf. Jean Calès, *Recherches de Science Religieuse*. 1922, pp. 96-101.

certain testimonies in regard to the personal holiness, the *unimpeachable sincerity of mind and language*, the disinterestedness even unto martyrdom, of the great prophets of Israel and of Christianity.⁴⁹

b) A second naturalistic interpretation freely admits that the prophets were in good faith; but their *zeal, their supersensitive imagination*, so it is urged, led them to *transform a desire into a reality*: they believed that they had received direct commands from God, but in this they were *deceived by their own hallucinations*.⁵⁰

Hallucination Theory.

This theory is without the least vestige of probability in the case of Isaias and Jeremias, whose ministry extended over forty years. Their writings, their actions, their whole life, bear witness to a sane temperament, a perfect equilibrium, a reasoned and persistent conviction, which do not betray the least signs of a morbid enthusiasm. This naturalistic conception is powerless to explain the prophetic clairvoyance of these alleged visionaries, and the "signs" by which they authenticated their mission. Finally, it cannot explain why, after Malachias, during the last centuries of Old Testament history, in analogous circumstances, in an age of ardent conflicts, such as obtained in the Machabean period, the same phenomena do not recur.⁵¹

c) The so-called *psychological* explanation asserts that *the prophets looked upon their mission as a duty only, which was imposed on them by the circumstances of the time, a role conformable to the divine plans, which they felt called upon to play and which permitted them to claim that they were "sent by God"*. However, this mission must be understood in a wide sense, merely as "providential", not as an immediate and direct divine vocation. Hence, the affirmation of the prophets: "God sends me; it is God Who speaks", simply means their *inmost conviction* that they were performing the work of God; that they were proclaiming the will of God. But this will is not made known to them through a personal Revelation by God. Their mission was only an interior impulse, whose origin is their *own consciousness, working in some hidden fashion in their inmost soul*.⁵²

Psychological Explanation.

⁴⁹) Condamin, S. J., *ibid.*, cols. 398, 399.

⁵⁰) cf. Marcel Dieulafoy, *Le Roi David*. Paris. 1897, p. 126.

⁵¹) Condamin, S. J., *ibid.*; col. 399; cf. P. Schanz, *A Christian Apology*, II, p. 290-292.

⁵²) Condamin, S. J., *ibid.*, col. 398.

This theory is elaborated in many specious Protestant and rationalistic publications.⁵³ Professor Kirsopp Lake⁵⁴ expresses it thus: "Does the experience of controlling force, which the prophet feels, really come from some external influence, or is it merely his own consciousness of ordinarily unknown depths of his own nature?" It is obvious that a theory of Prophecy could be made on lines rendered familiar by psychologists, by suggesting that what happens in a prophetic experience is the sudden 'coming up' of what is ordinarily subliminal". Wm. James of Harvard works out this conception in his "*Varieties of Religious Experience*". "Psychology and religion", so he writes, "are thus in perfect harmony on this point, since both admit that there are forces seemingly outside of the conscious individual that bring redemption to his life. Nevertheless psychology, defining these forces as 'subconscious', and speaking of their effects as due to 'incubation', or 'cerebration', implies that they do not transcend the individual's personality; and herein she diverges from Christian theology, which insists that they are direct supernatural operations of the Deity".⁵⁵ Hence, instead of a light through which some truth comes from above abruptly, suddenly, we have here "subconsciously maturing processes eventuating in results of which we suddenly grow conscious".⁵⁶ "It thus is 'scientific' to interpret all otherwise unaccountable invasive alterations of consciousness as results of the tension of subliminal memories reaching the bursting point". At the same time, however, James admits that "there are occasional bursts into consciousness of results of which it is not easy to demonstrate any prolonged subconscious incubation". Perhaps these "would have to be ascribed to a merely physiological nerve storm, a 'discharged lesion' like that of epilepsy; or, in case it were useful and rational . . . to some more mystical or theological hypothesis".⁵⁷ "It is one of the peculiarities of invasions from the subconscious region to take on objective appearances, and to suggest to the Subject an external control".⁵⁸

In James' opinion this theory of the subconscious accounts for "the visions, voices, rapt conditions, guiding im-

⁵³) For instance, Albert Réville, in *Revue des Deux Mondes*, June 15', 1867, pp. 826-832; Auguste Sabatier, *Esquisse d'une Philosophie de la Religion* (4^{ed.}), pp. 158, 159.

⁵⁴) *Landmarks of the Early Church*, N. Y. 1920, p. 43.

⁵⁵) *Varieties of Religious Experience*. A Study in Human Nature Being the Gifford Lectures on Natural Religion Delivered at Edinburgh in 1901-1902. N. Y. & London. 1925 (35' Impression), p. 211.

⁵⁶) *Ibid.*, p. 207.

⁵⁷) *Ibid.*, p. 236, foot-note.

⁵⁸) *Ibid.*, pp. 512, 513.

pressions and 'openings'", both as regards all the great reformers, the great saints, the heresiarchs, as well as the Hebrew prophets. Inspiration, "automatic or semi-automatic", appears to have been frequent or only occasional.⁵⁹ In a previous section of this same volume *automatism* is described as follows: "One's ordinary fields of consciousness are liable to incursions from it (that is, a strongly developed ultra-marginal life), of which the subject does not guess the source, and which, therefore, take for him the form of inaccountable impulses to act, or inhibitions of actions, of obsessive ideas, or even of hallucinations of sight or hearing. The impulses may take the direction of automatic speech or writing, the meaning of which the subject himself may not understand even while he utters it; and generalizing this phenomenon, Mr. Myers has given the name of *automatism*, sensory or motor, emotional or intellectual, to this whole sphere of effects, due to 'uprushes' into the ordinary consciousness of energies originating in the subliminal part of the mind".⁶⁰

Before showing how groundless this so-called psychological explanation of Prophecy is, two remarks must be borne in mind. a) In the first place, it is not a question of knowing *how* the divine communication can take place, whether by means of a voice which seems to come from without and strike the senses, or by a vision in a picture offered to the imagination, or by a word which is wholly interior and addressed only to the understanding. It is entirely irrelevant as to what form the manifestation assumes. The question is: Did God really speak? Did He speak in a *miraculous* manner, in a way that makes it impossible to attribute that word to the natural operation of the human faculties? And is it possible to know these things with certitude? b) The demonstration of the supernatural and miraculous character of the revelation does not rest merely upon expressions such as, for instance: "God has sent me"; "God has spoken to me". For such formulas do not, *of themselves*, necessarily imply a Revelation in the proper sense. A good thought, a sudden enlightenment, can be called the "voice of God" in a wide and non-literal sense; and when a person says: "God sends me to console you", he may be uttering only a probable interpretation of a providential design; he may not be laying claim to a divine mission in the proper meaning of that expression. Hence, it is necessary to inquire into what the

⁵⁹) *Ibid.*, pp. 478, 479.

⁶⁰) *Ibid.*, p. 234.

prophets really wished to assert when they claimed a divine mission.⁶¹

Criticism.

1. From the testimonies cited above,⁶² it is clear that the prophets themselves wished, at the outset, to protest against the rationalistic explanations based on the theory of the subconscious. This theory is in direct and formal contradiction with the persistent claim of authentic Prophecy. In the most energetic terms the prophets themselves declare that the "word of Jahve" does not proceed from their own thoughts" (*millibô*), "their own heart", that is, from their own spirit. On the contrary, genuine Prophecy knows exactly when this idea came to it; it is absolutely certain that it is due to a divine communication. This conviction asserts itself particularly in the struggle against the pseudo-prophets. Authentic Prophecy reproaches the false prophets with having usurped a ministry which they did not possess; with not being truly God's messengers; with having made their own words "the words of Jahve". Thus, Ezechiel protests against the prophets, who prophesy on their own authority (*millibâm*): "Woe to the foolish prophets that follow their own spirit! . . . saying: The Lord saith! whereas the Lord hath not sent them . . . And you say: The Lord saith! whereas I have not spoken".⁶³ Jeremias likewise denounces the imposters: "And Jeremias the prophet said to Hananias, the prophet: Hear now, Hananias: the Lord hath not sent thee, and thou hast made this people to trust in a lie. Therefore, thus saith the Lord: Behold I will send thee away from off the face of the earth: this year shalt thou die: for thou hast spoken against the Lord. And the prophet Hananias died in that year, in the seventh month".⁶⁴ In the twenty-third chapter (v. 16-22) Jeremias cautions the people: "Thus saith the Lord of hosts: Harken not to the words of prophets who prophesy to you, and deceive you: they speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the Lord! . . . I did not send the prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied! If they stood in my counsel, and made my words known to the people, I should have turned them from their evil way, and from their wicked doings".

Renan⁶⁵ seeks to exploit this latter passage in his own way. He claims that Jeremias is attacking his fellow prophets by way of irony. But they could meet his challenge with the retort: "*Et tu quoque!*" Therefore, so he

61) Condamin, S. J., *ibid.*, colls. 401, 402.

62) cf. above pp. 11, 12.

63) xiii, 3-7; cf. also xxii, 28.

64) xxviii, 15-17.

65) *Histoire du peuple d'Israel*. III, p. 161.

concludes, the prophet is guilty of a vicious circle from which there is no escape.—It seems strange that Renan did not understand that it is impossible to assume such an attitude as regards Isaias, Jeremias and Ezechiel. If these prophets possessed no other titles to credibility than the personages stigmatized as "false prophets", one could indeed raise the charge of a gross and revolting "vicious circle". For, in that case, their severe accusations against their "confrères" could easily have been turned against themselves. Moreover, the strongest proofs were necessary to enable the people to judge as to the authentic mission of the prophets, with their hard and threatening words, and to prevent them from turning to the optimistic predictions and the flattering language of the adversaries of the prophets.

Jeremias speaks and acts with *certitude* as regards his own mission; he is *certain* that Hananias is deceived and is deceiving the people in assuming the role which God did not confide to him.⁶⁶ The only possible explanation of such a certitude is that a supernatural Revelation has disclosed to Jeremias the infallible truth of the divine designs. Whatever, therefore, is affirmed by the others in a contrary sense is⁶⁷ rightly called a "lie" by him.⁶⁷ If one holds with Kuenen⁶⁸ to a purely "providential" order, one remains within the confines of mere similitude, of pure probabilities, where Hananias would have the same right as Jeremias to ascribe to himself a divine mission.⁶⁹

2. Another decisive objection to the psychological explanation, as proposed by Wm. James and similar writers, is the fact, that the subconscious "*incubation*" of which they speak *does not exist in the prophets*. The clear and strong idea, whose sudden apparition is able to produce the illusion of an influence imposing itself from without, must be prepared slowly and secretly. This phase of unconscious labor and of latent maturation always precedes sudden intuitions, and from these generally spring scientific discoveries. Henri Poincaré⁷⁰ has given us a very good description of this phenomenon based on his own personal experience. He tells us that the sudden and immediately certain inspirations in reference to certain mathematical problems, which he experienced, were produced only after several

66) cf. Jeremias, xxviii. 67) xxiii, 25-32.

68) *The Prophets and Prophecy in Israel. An Historical and Critical Inquiry*. (English transl.). London, 1877.

69) Condamin, S. J., *ibid.*, col. 403; cf. Geo. Parks Fisher, *The Grounds of Theistic and Christian Belief*. N. Y. 1922 (Revised edition), Appendix, pp. 456-459, for a discussion of Kuenen's deistic viewpoint.

70) *Science et Méthode*. Paris, 1909, pp. 51-54, 60.

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days of voluntary efforts. A period of conscious preliminary labor always preceded all unconscious fruitful efforts. Now, it is possible to establish the fact, that, in the history of Israel's prophets, the sudden illuminations of the prophets were not preceded by a more or less lengthy incubation of an idea in the subliminal consciousness. Balaam, called upon by Balac, king of Moab, to utter maledictions against the people of Israel, pronounces benedictions instead. After five repetitions, despite all the efforts of Balac, Balaam declares that he is incapable of saying anything save what Jahve wills;⁷¹ "I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to utter anything of my own heart" (*mil-libi*).⁷²—David dreams of building a temple to the Lord. "He said to Nathan, the prophet: Dost thou see that I dwell in a house of cedar and the ark of God is lodged within skins? And Nathan said to the king: Go, do all that is in thy heart: because the Lord is with thee. But *it came to pass that night* that the word of the Lord came to Nathan" to correct his answer.⁷³—Micheas, the son of Jemla, consulted unexpectedly in regard to a prospective expedition of the kings, Achab and Josaphat, manifests the firm intention of announcing whatever the Lord will say to them. He predicts the defeat of the kings and is sent to prison.⁷⁴—Ezechias was suffering from a mortal malady. Isaias went to him and said: "Thus saith the Lord God: Give charge concerning thy house, for thou shalt die, and not live". Ezechias turned his face to the wall and prayed to the Lord with much weeping, and before Isaias was gone out of the middle of the court, the word of the Lord came to him to utter an oracle directly contrary to the first, saying: "I have heard thy prayer, and I have seen thy tears: and behold I have healed thee".⁷⁵

Wm. James himself recognizes that his theory does not explain everything, but that some results would have to be ascribed to some "more mystical or theological hypothesis".⁷⁶ Now, it is precisely this "more mystical or theological hypothesis" which ought to be invoked on behalf of the prophets, particularly since they were convinced that their struggles were in vain; it was impossible to escape from the Divine commands. "Prophecy", says St. Peter (II, i, 21), "came not by the will of man at any time: but the holy men of God spoke, *inspired by the Holy Ghost*". Chosen to lead the Israelites into the Promised Land, Moses

⁷¹) Numbers, xxiii, 8, 12, 20, 26.

⁷²) xxiv, 13.

⁷³) II Kings, vii.

⁷⁴) III Kings, xxii.

* ⁷⁵) IV Kings, xx, 1-5; Condamin, S. J., *ibid.*, col. 404.

⁷⁶) cf. above, note 57.

seeks to evade that mission, saying: "Send whom thou wilt send" (that is, anyone save me).⁷⁷ Eliseus and Amos were taken by the Lord to be His ministers without any preparation. Isaias, called in a vision, is at first dismayed by the majesty and sanctity of Jahve.⁷⁸ Jeremias alleges his own weakness: "I am a child".⁷⁹ Later on, he complains in vehement terms of the derision and threats which the spirit of Prophecy brought upon him and which he was powerless to resist.⁸⁰ "Woe to me" says Baruch, "wretch that I am, for the Lord hath added sorrow to my sorrow: I am wearied with my groans, and I find no rest".⁸¹ The conditions under which Ezechiel was sent were not more attractive and congenial.⁸²

It is evident, therefore, that we are far removed from that phase of conscious and free effort, which, as H. P. Poincaré maintains, always precedes unconscious effort or labor. Hence, the theory of the subconscious is really a *deus ex machina*. It is infinitely more probable that the prophetic message, with its intense individuality and its obvious elements of novelty, "was a 'downrush from the superconsciousness'—the voice of the Spirit of God, as the prophets themselves so imperiously insist".⁸³ Difficult as it may be for the modern mind to acknowledge that the prophets were influenced by some mysterious force, lying behind the veil of ordinary phenomena, "there seems to be no other way of doing justice to the historical facts".⁸⁴

This compelling certitude, which the prophets and apostles enjoyed with respect to their divine enlightenment and mission, could be imparted to them by God in a twofold way: a) *immediately*, namely, by virtue of the so-called lumen propheticum,⁸⁵ just as He immediately communicated to them the content itself of the divine message, or b) *mediately*, that is, by means of definite criteria, which would assure the prophets of the higher origin of the divine self-disclosure beyond the possibility of error. Instances of such criteria are the marvelously

⁷⁷) Exodus, iv, 13.

⁷⁸) i, 6.

⁸⁰) xx, 7-9.

⁷⁹) vi.

⁸²) ii, 4-8; iii, 6-7 sq.

⁸¹) Jeremias, xlv, 3.

⁸³) Chas. Gore, *The Reconstruction of Belief*, Part I: "Belief in God". N. Y. 1926 (New edition in one volume), p. 106.

⁸⁴) E. König, art. "Prophecy (Hebrew)", in ERE, X, p. 392, cf. also, C. von Orelli art. "Prophecy and Prophetic Office", in SHERK, IX, p. 275.

⁸⁵) cf. J. J. Baierl, *The Theory of Revelation*, Part I, Sec. 1, pp. 27-39.

new and exalted character of the intellectual content of the message, Miracles and Visions, which accompanied the vocation to the prophetic office and its execution.⁸⁶

However, this compelling insight into the *origin* of the divine message does not exclude the possibility, on the part of the organs of Revelation, of embracing by a free act of Faith the *doctrinal content* of the message, especially if it be supernatural and mysterious. A logical conclusion, an indirect proof, as to the truth of the doctrine would indeed be possible. But the God-fearing recipient of the Revelation could and would be obliged to prescind from this cold, logical deduction and, in a spirit of willing obedience, to accept the doctrine because of the divine veracity and majesty.⁸⁷

Certitude of
the Prophets.

A final question remains to be discussed, namely: *What kind of certitude did the prophets enjoy?*

The answer to this question will largely depend on general theories of the genesis of faith and of natural cognition.⁸⁸ At any rate, there is question here of an *objective experimental fact*; hence, the evidence connected with that fact may be qualified as *intrinsic*.⁸⁹ However, since the fact is *not* grounded on any natural law, but rests on the *supernatural* intervention of God Himself, the corresponding *certitude must be termed supernatural*. But this supernatural certitude cannot be called metaphysical, physical, or moral, for, it does not rest on natural laws at all. Nevertheless, since it is certitude as regards an *experimental fact*, it is most akin to *physical certitude*; therefore, it may be so designated by *analogy*. The evidence of the fact of supernatural Divine Revelation, like every kind of evidence, is a *compelling* evidence; otherwise it could not generate *certitude* in the mind of the recipient.

⁸⁶ Mausbach, *Grundzüge* etc., pp. 20, 21.

⁸⁷ Mausbach, *Die Religion und das moderne Seelenleben*, in RCK, I, p. 121.

⁸⁸ cf. P. Schanz, *A Christian Apology*, vol. II: "God and Revelation", N. Y. 4th ed., pp. 293, 294; Al. v. Schmid, *Wissenschaftliche Richtungen auf dem Gebiete des Katholizismus*. Munich, 1862, pp. 98, 270.

⁸⁹ The student is referred to any good text-book for a discussion of the concepts and kinds of "evidence" and "certitude"; e. g., P. Coffey, *Epistemology*. London & N. Y. vol. II, p. 262 sq.

Strictly speaking, God could indeed disclose Himself *immediately* to each individual soul, if He so chose. In fact, the early Protestant Reformers maintained that God does reveal Himself immediately to each man, without the intervention of an agent. Hence, while reading the Bible, so they insist, the individual receives the immediate inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Who discloses to him the right meaning of the divine message. Therefore, each man becomes his own prophet and apostle.⁹⁰

Immediate Revelation not granted to all men.

That this viewpoint is *erroneous* is shown *ex professo* in the third part of apologetics, namely, the Theory of the Church. Moreover, experience confirms the conviction that the private interpretation of the Bible is really not the work of the *one* Spirit of truth, but rather that each one is simply following the impulse of his own spirit. For, all the countless sects of Protestantism, as well as the still greater divergencies of opinion within each sect, owe their origin precisely to the private interpretation of the Bible.⁹¹

The Bible itself plainly asserts that God does *not* reveal Himself immediately to each human soul.⁹² The ordinary way to faith is through the office of *oral preaching*, to which the Lord sent His Apostles and their lawful successors.⁹³ When the legitimate teaching office preaches the revealed message of God, Christ Himself is present with His grace, which enlightens and moves interiorly and produces faith.⁹⁴ This illumination and inspiration are necessary, in order that the intellect and will of the hearers may be able to perform the Act of Faith. But this interior and mystical ele-

Mediate Revelation the ordinary way to faith.

⁹⁰ cf. J. J. Baiertl, *The Theory of Revelation*. Part I, sect. 1, pp. 48-50, 78.

⁹¹ C. Gutberlet, *Lehrbuch der Apologetik*, vol. III: "Von der katholischen Religion", Münster i. W. 1910 (3rd ed), p. 57.

⁹² cf. Exodus xiv, 31; Hebrews i, 1; John i, 7; Rom. x, 14-17.

⁹³ Mark xvi, 15, 16; Matt. xxviii, 20. *St. Thomas Aquinas* says that "to some, as to the Apostles and Prophets, they (i. e., the things which pertain to faith) are revealed immediately by God; to others, they are proposed by God through the ministry of His preachers, according to the saying of the Apostle: 'How shall they preach, unless they be sent?'" (ST. II, II, q. 6, a. 1).

⁹⁴ Matt. xviii, 20. The *Council of Trent* (VI sess., canon 3, de justificatione) teaches: "If anyone saith that without the preventent inspiration of the Holy Ghost and His help man can believe . . . as he ought . . . let him be anathema" (DB. n. 813; DCD, p. 49); cf. *Augustine, Tract 3 in Joan.* ii-13; also his warning (*de doctrina christ. Proleg. 5*): "Ne . . . decepti . . . nolumus ire in Ecclesias et . . . praedicantem hominem audire et expectemus . . . rapi in tertium coelum . . . et ibi audire Dominum Jesum et ab illo potius quam ab hominibus audire Evangelium"; cf. also Karl Adam, *Das Wesen des Katholizismus*. Düsseldorf, 1927, pp. 56-73; English transl., "The Spirit of Catholicism", by Dom Justin McCann, O. S. B. N. Y. 1929.

ment does not usurp the place of oral teaching, for, God has linked the genesis of faith with this oral preaching as a necessary factor. Therefore, oral preaching is the ordinary way to faith. Only specially selected persons, like St. Paul, can say: "For neither did I receive it (*i. e.*, the Gospel) of man, nor did I learn it; but by the Revelation of Jesus Christ" (Gal. i, 12; cf. also, I Cor. xi, 23). Texts, such as John vi, 45 and I John ii, 26, obviously presuppose this primary factor, that is, the oral preaching of God's messengers, which, together with the interior grace of Christ, is truly a *divine instruction*. That is the true meaning of the words of I John ii, 26; Eph. vi, 11 and II Tim. iv, 2.⁹⁵

Therefore, the question arises: *How can the faithful, to whom God has not immediately disclosed Himself, arrive at a certain knowledge of supernatural Divine Revelation?* What are the *signs* or *criteria*, which authenticate a mediate self-disclosure of God and make the word of God's legate rationally *credible* for their hearers and for mankind generally?

MEDIATE REVELATION

Before beginning the apology of the motives of credibility, or the criteria of a mediate supernatural Divine Revelation, we shall present a brief outline and explanation of the teaching of the Catholic Church with respect to this proximate preparation for the Act of Faith. The purpose of this summary is not to refute adversaries, but rather to furnish the student with a handy survey of the Catholic position. The divergent views of non-Catholics will be treated in detail in the body of this volume.

Catholic Doctrine on the Credibility of Mediate Divine Revelation.

The authentic Catholic teaching in regard to the credibility of mediate supernatural Divine Revelation may be summarized under the following heads:

W.B.
a) *(Objectively)*. *The mysteries of faith are rationally credible, inasmuch as the divine origin of the Christian Religion can rightly be proved by most certain signs.*

⁹⁵) Hettinger-Weber, *ibid.*, p. 167.

The Vatican Council teaches that "if anyone shall say that *Divine Revelation cannot be made credible by outward signs* and that, therefore, men ought to be moved to faith solely by the internal experience of each, or by private inspiration; let him be anathema"; likewise, "if anyone shall say that *Miracles are impossible*, and, therefore, that all the accounts regarding them, even those contained in Holy Scripture, are to be dismissed as fabulous or mythical; or that *Miracles can never be known with certainty, or that the divine origin of Christianity is not rightly proved by them*; let him be anathema".⁹⁶

This teaching is more fully developed in the corresponding chapters of the Council. For, even though Faith is above reason, "nevertheless, in order that the *obedience of our Faith might be in harmony with reason*, God willed that to the interior help of the Holy Spirit, there should be joined exterior *proofs (argumenta)* of His Revelation, to wit, divine facts and especially Miracles and Prophecies, which, as they manifestly display the omnipotence and wisdom of God, are *most certain proofs of His Divine Revelation adapted to the intelligence of all men*".⁹⁷ Furthermore, "to the Catholic Church alone belong all those many and admirable tokens which have been divinely established for the *evident credibility* of the Christian Faith. Nay more, *the Church itself*, by reason of its marvelous extension, its eminent holiness, and its inexhaustible fruitfulness in every good thing, its Catholic unity and its invincible authority, is a great and perpetual motive of credibility, and an irrefutable witness of its own divine mission".⁹⁸

b) *(Subjectively)*. *Before accepting the Faith human reason can know with certitude the rational credibility of the mysteries of Faith, or the divine origin of Christianity.*

This is evident from the definitions just cited, inasmuch as the most certain signs of Revelation are said to be "adapted to the intelligence of all men".⁹⁹ The Church in-

⁹⁶) *Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith* (III Sess., 3' and 4' canons attached to chapter 3, in DB. n. 1812, 1813; DCD. pp. 235, 236. ⁹⁷) *Ibid.*, DB. n. 1790; DCD. p. 224.

⁹⁸) *Ibid.*, DB. n. 1794; DCD. p. 226; cf. also the *Syllabus of Pope Pius IX*, DB. n. 1707; DCD. p. 188; likewise the oath against Modernism, DB. n. 2145: "Profiteor . . . secundo: externa revelationis argumenta, hoc est facta divina, in primisque miracula et prophetias admitto et agnosco tamquam signa certissima divinitus ortae christianae religionis, eademque teneo aetatum omnium atque hominum, etiam hujus temporis, intelligentiae esse maxime accomodata".

⁹⁹) *Ibid.*, DB. n. 1790; DCD. p. 224.

sists against Fideism, that these signs can be known with certitude by human reason before it embraces the Faith.¹⁰⁰ Pope Pius XI affirmed the same teaching against the followers of Hermes.¹⁰¹

c) *A scientific demonstration of credibility is not required for each and every believer.*

The Vatican Council stressed this doctrine, when it condemned those who maintained that "Catholics may have a just cause for doubting, with suspended assent, the faith which they have already received under the teaching (magisterium) of the Church, until they shall have obtained a scientific demonstration of the credibility and truth of their Faith".¹⁰² We shall show below that the certitude of common sense, or moral certitude, suffices.

d) *However, only a probable knowledge, a mere subjective knowledge, or only an internal experience, or a private inspiration, is not sufficient.*

This is clear from the Church's condemnation of the doctrine of certain probabilists, who assert that "the assent of supernatural Faith . . . is consistent with a merely probable knowledge of Revelation".¹⁰³ It is likewise evident from the rejection by the Church of the twenty-fifth proposition of the Modernists, who claim that "the assent of Faith rests ultimately on an accumulation of probabilities".¹⁰⁴ It follows also from the censure imposed by eccle-

¹⁰⁰) DB. n. 1622-1627.

¹⁰¹) DB. n. 1637.

¹⁰²) DB. n. 1815; DCD. p. 236; cf. also DB. n. 1794; DCD. pp. 226 sq.

¹⁰³) DB. n. 1171: "Assensus fidei supernaturalis et utilis ad salutem stet cum notitia solum probabili revelationis, imo cum formidine, qua quis formidet, ne non sit locutus Deus".

¹⁰⁴) DB. n. 2025: "Assensus fidei innititur in congerie probabilitatum"; cf. also Encyclical of Pius X, "Pascendi dominici gregis", DB. n. 2072 sq.—This thesis, however, has nothing in common with the theory of the "accumulation of probabilities" in Cardinal Newman's system of thought (cf. "An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent", London & N. Y. (New Impression), 1898, p. 288). For the latter has in mind the method of reasoning in concrete matters, "from things to things, from concrete to concrete, from wholes to wholes", as contrasted with the logical form of inference. Newman is dealing with cases, in which from the individual characteristics of an historical fact, a certain "mental comprehension of the whole case" (*Ibid.*, p. 291) is obtained by intuition. At any rate, he demands ultimately a certain judgment of conscience (cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 105 sq; 389 sq., J. Mausbach, *Religion und das moderne Seelenleben* in RCK. I, p. 125; P. Coffey, *Epistemology*, II, p. 278, foot-note; S. P. Jeurgens, S. M., "What is Newman's deepest message?" in AER. vol. LXXVIII, No. 2, Feb. 1928, pp. 142-151; IDEM, *Newman on the Psychology of Faith in the Individual*. N. Y. 1928.)

siastical authority on the teaching of certain pseudo-mystics, who defend a merely subjective knowledge of credibility,¹⁰⁵ and of Protestants, who appeal to the internal experience of the believer alone, or to the private inspiration of the Holy Spirit.¹⁰⁶ The Church demands a certain knowledge of the divine origin of Revelation.¹⁰⁷

Thus, according to the Catholic viewpoint, before assenting to an alleged Revelation by Faith, we must be certain of its divine supernatural origin; this certitude must be grounded primarily, although not exclusively, upon rational evidence. Non-intellectual grounds of certitude, which do not appeal directly to the intellect, but rather to the whole complex nature of man, such, for instance, as arise from the will, the temperament or mentality, the inclinations, likes and dislikes, passions, feelings, emotions, etc., doubtless help us to discover the truth; but, of themselves alone, they are insufficient to beget certitude. For "they have no direct bearing on the truth of any judgment to which we assent, and do not help us to discern or decide its truth—except in so far as we may consider them, on reflection, to have perhaps a certain legitimate weight as tests or guides to the truth of the judgment to which they incline us to assent". The intellect or reason is "the ultimate court of appeal for deciding between truth and error".¹⁰⁸ Therefore, the Catholic Church recognizes the inherent dignity of man as a rational being, when she demands that the believer base his judgment as to the divine supernatural origin of Christianity primarily upon the grounds of reason.

Now, a twofold method of arriving at certitude in regard to the divine provenience of mediate supernatural Revelation presents itself to the inquirer on the basis of rational evidence. The one is direct, the other is indirect. In the first place, the inquirer may reflect on the inmost essence or the content of the revealed message itself

¹⁰⁵) DB. n. 1273.

¹⁰⁶) DB. n. 1812; DCD. pp. 235, 236.

¹⁰⁷) P. Fr. Reg. Garrigou-Lagrange, O. P., *Theologia fundamentalis secundum S. Thomae doctrinam*. Romae et Parisiis. 1918, vol. I, pp. 516-518; (3rd ed. 1925), pp. 267, 268.

¹⁰⁸) P. Coffey, *Epistemology*, II, pp. 257, 260.

Catholic Church recognizes inherent dignity of man as rational being

Evidence—intrinsic and extrinsic.

(*intrinsic evidence*); or secondly, he may weigh the reasons which proclaim that a given Revelation proceeds from God, as its Author, and is guaranteed by His authority or testimony (*extrinsic evidence* or *evidence of credibility*).

The former method, as will be shown later, is not applicable to Christianity with which we are immediately concerned; for the Christian Revelation is, on its own allegation, essentially *supernatural*; it contains mysteries in the strict sense and is, therefore, inaccessible to human reason. The latter method, on the other hand, is certainly feasible. For, the inquirer may examine, in the light of philosophy and history, the evidence which shows that a certain message is really witnessed to and guaranteed by God Himself, essential truth and goodness, Who vouches for the truth and goodness of that message by most certain signs. Thus, that message appears *evidently credible* to human reason.¹⁰⁹

In order to obtain this evidence of credibility, it suffices that the inquirer be able to judge with certitude that, here and now, there are sufficient grounds for believing that something has really been revealed by God in a supernatural manner. It is not necessary that the inquirer should perceive either the revealed object, or the divine utterance itself.¹¹⁰ For, credibility does not consist in the object proposed or in the divine testimony, but rather in that quality in a person or thing, which renders that person or thing worthy of belief. This evidence of credibility arises from a simple narration of the signs which confirm a supernatural Divine Revelation. The certitude resulting therefrom is moral certitude based on the testimony of men. Hence, *the credibility of the mysteries of faith signifies their aptitude*

¹⁰⁹ A. Gisler, *Der Modernismus*. Einsiedeln, 1913 (4^{ed.}), p. 225; cf. also Hettinger-Bowden, *Revealed Religion*, N. Y. (2^{ed.}), pp. 1-25.

¹¹⁰ This kind of evidence (*evidentia revelationis seu evidentia in attestante*) is of a higher order than the evidence of credibility and is rare, being peculiar to the immediate recipients of God's message "sub lumine prophetico" (cf. *ST.* II, II, q. 17, a. 5).

for belief, inasmuch as most certain signs make it evident to human reason that they have been revealed in a supernatural manner by God.¹¹¹

CREDIBILITY N. B. E.

Owing to the fundamental position, which the *concept of credibility* occupies in the problem of the natural knowability of mediate supernatural Divine Revelation, it is of the greatest importance that the student should possess clear ideas in this respect. It will be helpful, therefore, to enter somewhat more deeply into the significance of this basic concept. This may perhaps best be done by comparing the Catholic definition of credibility, as applied to Divine Revelation, with the concept of credibility required in *human faith*.

There are two ways or means by which we may arrive at knowledge: *science* and *faith*. "I may know a fact because I have seen it with my own eyes; but I may know it also because some one has told me. I may have performed an experiment in chemistry or proved for myself a theorem in geometry; but I may have just as much certitude about it on the word of another. Both ways of knowing are natural, both are reasonable".¹¹² Through *science* I have my own knowledge, my own ideas, the truth seen by me personally. Such *direct* or *personal* knowledge is doubtless more perfect than faith. On the other hand, by *faith* "I unite my mind to the mind of those who know and thus appropriate their knowledge. They have searched, they have observed, they have thought, they have found. If I am willing to believe them, their researches, their observations, their reflections, will become mine".¹¹³ Thus, besides *direct knowledge* (*science*) there is also an "*indirect knowledge gained by appropriating the knowledge of others. This is Faith*".¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ Garrigou-Lagrange, O. P., *ibid.*, I, pp. 520, 521; (3^{ed.}), pp. 271, 272.—*Rational* and *external credibility* must be carefully distinguished from *supernatural* and *intrinsic credibility*. The former is known by reason and is the remote aptitude of the mysteries of faith for belief; the latter is known by faith and is the proximate aptitude of these mysteries for belief, accordingly as they actually exist under the supernatural light of Divine Revelation to which we adhere in a supernatural manner. Cf. P. Gardeil, O. P., art "*Crédibilité*", in DCT. col. 2202).

¹¹² J. V. Bainvel, S. J., *Faith and the Act of Faith*. Authorized Translation from the third French edition by Leo C. Sterck, St. Louis, Mo. 1926, p. 6.

¹¹³ Bainvel, S. J., *ibid.*, p. 7. ¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 8, 9. Italics inserted.

More detailed explanation of Credibility.

Science and Faith.

Notion of Credibility.

Motive of faith - authority
 "Credibility - scientific verification"

Motives of Credibility.

This indirect knowledge is based on the evidence of the truth, appearing, not in itself, but in the authorized word of the witness, or upon the evidence of testimony or credibility. The character and competency of the witness are the evidence for the truth of the statement which I accept by faith. These two conditions: the *knowledge* and the *trustworthiness* (*scientia et veracitas*) of the witness guarantee the truth of the judgment on which I rely, and ground my firm assent thereto. "It is obvious that we should be induced to distrust the most natural and plausible statement when made by a person whom we suspected of a wish to deceive, or of relating facts which he had no sufficient means of knowing".¹¹⁵

Before assenting to the judgment of the witness, I ought first to be certain of these two other judgments: "The authority in question is not deceived, but well-informed", and "The authority is not deceiving me, but is trustworthy". Now, these grounds of belief, these reasons which incline or move the intellect of the believer to assent firmly to the judgment, namely, that the testimony of the witness is true, are called the *motives of credibility*. Since, at the same time, they are also the tests of the truth of the judgment, they are sometimes termed *criteria*.

But they must not be confounded with the *motive of faith*. For, the motive or formal object of faith is the authority of the witness, that is, his knowledge and trustworthiness. We believe because of the authority of the witness who makes the statement. The motives of credibility, on the other hand, make it plain to me that the witness is really competent and honest, that he has authority and that, therefore, his statement is worthy of belief (*credible*).

The evidence, which the motives of credibility present, is never absolutely cogent. It does not beget a certitude and a conviction which is irresistible, like the immediate judgments of experience, such as "I am writing"; or the self-evident axioms of mathematics, such as "the whole is greater than its part", and the conclusions derived by pure deductive reasoning from such axioms. For, the evidence of testimony or credibility is not intrinsic but extrinsic to the judgment, — that is to say, I assent to the judgment of the witness not because I see the intrinsic grounds of its truth, but because I accept it on authority. Reflecting on the grounds and motives on account of which I hold a judgment as certain, I am conscious that those grounds and

115) John Henry Cardinal Newman, *Two Essays on Biblical and Ecclesiastical Miracles*. London & N. Y. 1897 (11^{ed.}), p. 72.

motives have effectively excluded from my mind all prudent fear of error, and so I adhere to it with that steady, firm, unwavering mental grasp which constitutes conviction or certitude. There can be no doubt in my mind as to the credibility of the judgment of the witness on whom I rely, that is, about the *reasonableness* of holding it firmly, or with conviction, as true.

But I am also conscious that, with these grounds and motives still before my mind, I could loosen my mental grasp on the judgment and allow myself seriously to question it. I feel that I should be acting rashly and unreasonably, and possibly also against the clear dictate of my conscience, in doing so, but nevertheless that I am free to do so, that though it would be unreasonable and reprehensible it is not impossible.¹¹⁶ As long as I continue to entertain (what is really) an imprudent fear of error, the intellect remains undetermined. An act of the will is required to determine and fix the mental assent as a conviction. Thus, this reasonable and prudent act of assenting firmly is performed by my intellect *freely*, i. e., under the command of a free act of my will.¹¹⁷

In the case of ordinary facts, it is "needless, as indeed it would be endless, to inquire rigidly into the credibility of the testimony by which they are conveyed to us, because they in a manner speak for themselves. When, however, the information is unexpected, or extraordinary, or improbable, our only means of determining its truth is by considering the credit due to the witnesses; and then, of course, we exercise that right of scrutiny which we before indeed possessed, but did not think it worth while to claim".¹¹⁸ In other words, it is possible to make the assent of faith strictly *scientific by verifying the testimony*. "By means, which in their last analysis are synonymous with science, I can ascertain that under given circumstances the witness is *trustworthy*; that he *knows* and that he *tells* the truth. It is after, or more exactly on account of and under the influence of, this verification that I give my assent. My adhesion to his statement is measured by the results of my verification. In one case, I will adhere completely, because it is clear to me that the author has spoken the truth; in the other, I will assent, but reservedly, because to me it is only probable that he has spoken the truth; or again, I suspend my judgment, or simply refuse to accept his testimony, according as his word may seem to me without foundation or clearly false".¹¹⁹

Verification of testimony renders faith scientific.

116) P. Coffey, *ibid.*, II, p. 49.
 118) Newman, *ibid.*, pp. 72. 73.

117) *Ibid.*, pp. 50 sq.
 119) Bainvel, S. J., *ibid.*, p. 14.

Extrinsic evidence not absolutely cogent. Function of the Will.
 I am not of faith the will moves the intellect to assent. Faith is present.

Faith is discursive.

It is plain, therefore, that "faith is essentially '*discursive*', as the Schoolmen say. It reminds me of a discourse,¹²⁰ which may be simply implicit, bordering on the boundaries of the unconscious, hardly noticeable to the psychological analysis of faith. But on closer investigation one finds it at the bottom of all assent of scientific faith. As is often the case in other easy reasoning processes, the mind glides, so to speak, over the self-evident premises. However, the premises have not been entirely forgotten; attentive reflection shows that the conclusion was reached only with the help of those premises. However rapid the process of reasoning may be and however direct it may seem, the assent of scientific faith is based upon a *syllogism*, which runs somewhat in this fashion: 'A man tells me such and such a thing under such and such circumstances. Now, a thing said under these circumstances is a thing which I may hold as true. Consequently, I can hold as true what this person has said. Therefore, I believe it'. Or, in a simpler form: 'A statement that is duly guaranteed is a true statement. Now, this statement is duly guaranteed; therefore, it is true and I believe' ".¹²¹ Thus, scientific faith is reducible to this formula: "I believe because (I see that) you speak the truth".

Faith of simple authority.

For the sake of completeness, it might be well to add that there is another kind of faith, which may be termed the *faith of simple authority*, since it rests solely upon the authority of the witness, upon his word alone, "logically unsupported by the perception of the nexus between the testimony and the truth". It is more trusting than the faith of science, for it says: "I believe because you say it". However, this faith, like scientific faith, *to be reasonable*, supposes the implicit or explicit judgment: "What the witness tells me is true".¹²² It may be transformed into scientific faith by the verification of the testimony.

Summary.

To sum up: A statement is said to be rationally credible by *human faith*, inasmuch as it is guaranteed by witnesses

¹²⁰) The term "*discourse*" is used because it comes closest to the Latin "*discursus*" and expresses better the idea of the "process" or "progress" of thought (Bainvel, S. J., *ibid.*, p. 15, foot-note).

¹²¹) Bainvel, S. J., *ibid.*, pp. 15, 16. Italics inserted. Sometimes this syllogistic assent of faith is mistaken for the assent of "mediate" science and is regarded as the evident conclusion from two evident premises. However, the conclusion, "Therefore this saying is true", is not yet an act of faith, which is not a judgment upon the *truth of a statement*, but an affirmation of the thing stated. To affirm that this statement: "God has become man" is true, is quite different from affirming that "God became man". (*Ibid.*, p. 16, foot-note).

¹²²) *Ibid.*, p. 17.

worthy of credence, that is to say, because the witnesses are reputed 1) to *know* what they affirm, 2) to be *truthful*, and 3) because they really *affirm* the statement in question. Hence, "the credibility or incredibility of a statement has nothing to do with its intrinsic probability or improbability; it depends solely upon the credentials of the authority who makes the statement".¹²³

In the same way a statement is said to be rationally credible by *Divine Faith*, inasmuch as it is vouched for by the testimony of God Himself, Who can neither deceive nor be deceived. The credibility of a *divine* statement is correlative with and proportionate to the credentials of the divine testimony. "Now the credentials of God are indubitable, for the very idea of God involves that of omniscience and of Supreme Truth. Hence, what God says is supremely credible, though not necessarily intelligible to us". Therefore, the question at issue regarding the divine authority is not "as to the credentials of God (namely, His knowledge and veracity), or the credibility of what He says, but as to the credibility of the statement that God has spoken".¹²⁴ Accordingly, the problem resolves itself into this: Is the *Fact* that God has spoken, or that He has disclosed Himself, evidently credible? Is the miraculous intervention of God in the mind of the prophet evidently worthy of belief? If that *Fact*, which is supernatural as regards the manner of its production (*supernaturale quoad modum*), can be made known to human reason through certain signs (namely, the criteria of Revelation, the motives of credibility), that *Fact* is said to be rationally credible by Divine Faith.¹²⁵

This concept of credibility is necessarily involved in the Catholic concept of Revelation and Faith. For, according to Catholic teaching supernatural Divine Revelation proceeds, not indeed from man's subconsciousness, but from God Who is essentially distinct from the world and from man's own soul. On the other hand, the Act of

¹²³) Hugh Pope, O. P., art. "*Faith*", in CE. V, p. 754.

¹²⁴) Hugh Pope, O. P., *ibid.*, p. 754.

¹²⁵) Garrigou-Lagrange, O. P., *ibid.*, I, p. 521; (3^{ed.}), p. 271.

Credibility and Divine Faith.

Divine Faith is not a mere religious experience, but an assent of the intellect to truth upon the authority of God revealing.¹²⁶ Obviously, therefore, a statement cannot be said to be credible by Divine Faith, save in so far as it appears to our reason as revealed by God.

Every other definition of credibility is inadequate, as will be shown in detail below, when we shall discuss the various definitions of credibility proposed by Rationalists, Protestants, Pragmatists, Modernists, etc. But even now, it is already evident that a certain statement cannot be said to be credible by Divine Faith, for instance, simply because it appears to be conformable with our aspirations. For, such a statement would indeed be worthy of our affections; it would be only probable, the object of a consoling opinion. Credibility, therefore, ought to be proportionate to the exigencies of Divine Faith, not merely to the exigencies of reason, or sentiment, or religious experience, or practical needs.¹²⁷ It must appear worthy of belief, inasmuch as certain signs demonstrate beyond every reasonable doubt, that it has really been uttered by God Himself, Who can neither deceive nor be deceived. God Himself must authenticate that statement.

Properties of
Credibility.

Reflecting on the concept of credibility, as explained above, the student can easily discern its chief *properties*. For convenience sake we shall group them together under the following heads.

a) *Credibility is something that is common to all revealed truths.*

St. Thomas' Aquinas says: "The things which come under Faith may be considered in two ways: First, in particular; and thus they cannot be seen and believed at the same time. Secondly, in general, that is, under the common aspect of credibility (*'sub communi ratione credibilis'*); and in this way they are seen by the believer. For, he would not believe unless, on the evidence of signs, or of something

¹²⁶ cf. J. J. Baiertl, *The Theory of Revelation*, Part I, Sect. 1, pp. 20-62; Vatican Council, III Sess., chap. 3, DB. n. 1789; DCD. pp. 223, 224.

¹²⁷ Garrigou-Lagrange, O. P., *ibid.*, I, p. 521; (3'ed.), p. 271.

similar, he saw that they ought to be believed".¹²⁸ Thus, credibility belongs indiscriminately to all revealed truths, inasmuch as human reason views them all in their relation to the signs which show that they have been revealed by God.

b) *The evidence of credibility is extrinsic to the things believed.*

It is obvious that the evidence of the credibility of the mysteries of faith is not intrinsic to the mysteries themselves; for their inmost essence remains obscure, even after the fact of their existence has been made manifest to us by Divine Revelation. They are evidently credible, accordingly as certain signs, extrinsic to the mysteries themselves, make it plain to our reason that they have been Divinely disclosed. This extrinsic evidence interferes in no way with the freedom and the supernatural character of the Act of Faith, and Faith remains obscure, "the evidence of things that appear not", as the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews says (xi, 1).

c) *Credibility is both a speculative and a practical truth.*

It is not merely speculative, because it looks to the positing of an act, namely, the act of faith. Credibility makes a statement appear worthy of belief. At the same time, however, this aptitude for belief is not evident, unless the Fact of Divine Revelation is speculatively certain, at least with moral certitude, just like any other historical fact. For, moral certitude can be not only practical, but also speculative, if it has reference not merely to the positing of an act, but also to an existing fact.

d) *Evident credibility is a conditio sine qua non of the act of faith.*

This holds true both in regard to faith in general and to Divine Faith in particular.

1) *Faith in general.* Nothing is rationally credible, unless it be evidently credible. For, nothing is knowable by a determinate judgment without some kind of evidence.¹²⁹ For, whatever is absolutely obscure, is also absolutely unknowable. Hence, just as nothing is knowable without the evidence of knowability, and just as nothing can be said to be an opinion which has not the evidence of probability,

¹²⁸ ST. II, II, q. 1, a. 4 ad. 2.

¹²⁹ cf. Aloysius Rother, S. J., *Certitude. A Study in Philosophy*. St. Louis, Mo. 1911, pp. 30 sq.

so, too, nothing is credible without the evidence of credibility. Therefore, in order that a statement may be said to be credible to reason, *it is not sufficient that it be only probably credible*. For, in that case, *faith would not be distinguished from a mere opinion*. An opinion, which implies the fear of error, supposes the evidence of probability or of mere likelihood; and as long as this evidence persists, the opinion is probable and not imprudent, but only as an opinion without the firm adhesion of the intellect.¹³⁰

But faith in general is without the fear of error; for, we firmly believe what is seriously affirmed to us, for instance, by our parents or by a friend. This firmness of adhesion to the statement in question does not proceed from the evidence of the object affirmed, but rather from a special motion of the will, which determines the intellect to assent, to believe. Now, this motion of the will would be *imprudent*, if there were only the probability of credibility at hand; that is, if the will, without sufficient reason, were to move the intellect to hold not only as an opinion, but to believe firmly. Such a faith would be irrational, light credulity. It is obvious, therefore, that faith in general demands not merely probability, but the evidence of credibility.¹³¹

2) *Divine Faith*. The same principles hold for Divine Faith. Hence, nothing is rationally credible by Divine Faith, unless it be evidently credible. However, this *evident credibility must be proportionate* to the firmness and immutability of this Faith. Obviously, there is an infinite abyss between these two judgments: "This is credible by human faith, because some man, for instance, Aristotle, affirms it" and "This is credible, because it is witnessed to by God Himself". Divine Faith differs essentially from merely human faith as regards the firmness by which the intellect adheres to the truth. For human faith, even though prudent, does not rest upon infallible testimony. Divine Faith, on the contrary, is grounded upon infallible testimony. Therefore, it can never legitimately be called into question; in fact, we ought to be ready to undergo martyrdom rather than to deny the Faith or deliberately to doubt concerning it.¹³²

This firmness and irrevocability of Divine Faith, which objectively is grounded upon the infallible testimony of God, proceeds subjectively from the will under the "illumination and inspiration of the Holy Ghost".¹³³ But the will,

130) *Ibid.*, pp. 30 sq.

131) Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P. *ibid.*, I, p. 525; (3rd ed.), pp. 275, 276.

132) Garrigou-Lagrange, O. P., *ibid.*, I, p. 525; (3rd ed.), p. 267; cf. Vatican Council, DB. n. 1815; DCD. pp. 236, 237.

133) DB. n. 1791. n. 1794; DCD. p. 225.

even under the influence of grace, *cannot rationally and irrevocably move the intellect to believe firmly and immutably, unless there be at hand a sufficient and legitimate reason for that impulse*; for, nothing is willed unless it is first known, and this sufficient reason can only be *evident credibility*. In other words, nothing is rationally credible by divine and immutable faith, unless it appears to our reason as evidently credible by this same immutable faith.¹³⁴

Certain signs (the motives of credibility, or the criteria), which are extrinsic to Divine Revelation itself, make the Fact of Divine Revelation, inasmuch as it is supernaturally produced (*supernaturale quoad modum productionis suae*)—a miraculous intervention of God in the mind of the prophet—appear credible to human reason.

But reason alone cannot know Divine Revelation, inasmuch as it is substantially supernatural (*supernaturalis quoad substantiam*), namely, as proceeding from God as the Author of grace and glory; for, under this higher and more intimate aspect, Divine Revelation is known only by Divine Faith and is the formal motive of infused Faith. In this sense it is called in Sacred Scripture "the voice of the heavenly Father", or "the voice of the Son", or "the testimony of the Holy Spirit".¹³⁵

CERTITUDE

We shall now present a more detailed explanation of the Catholic position regarding the nature of the certitude, which the recipients of mediate Revelation may acquire concerning the Fact of God's revealed message and secondly, in reference to the various ways in which they may arrive at certitude.

Strictly speaking, a scientific demonstration of the Fact of Divine Revelation is not, per se, necessary for each and every believer. For, in the first place, such a proof is *not possible* for all men. This is quite evident in the case of children and the unlettered, who are incapable of reducing the motives of credibility to the first principles of reason in a distinct and scientific manner,

Scientific Certitude not strictly necessary for all believers.

134) Garrigou-Lagrange, O. P.; *ibid.*, I, pp. 525, 526; (3rd ed.), pp. 276, 277.

135) *Ibid.*, pp. 458-514; (3rd ed.), pp. 249-265.

or of arriving at a knowledge of their existence through the application of the rules of historical criticism, and by solving the objections advanced by Rationalists. The certitude of common sense or of natural reason suffices, such as men generally possess in regard to the existence of God, the supreme lawgiver, and the existence of free will. Even without scientific training, the average man of good will can know with certitude the evidential value of the chief signs of the divine origin of Christianity by the light of natural reason, especially when assisted by actual grace. Secondly, *neither is physical certitude regarding the Fact of Divine Revelation possible for all men.* The immediate witnesses of evident Miracles, wrought in confirmation of Divine Revelation, enjoyed this kind of certitude. Thus, for instance, the persons who saw the resurrection of Lazarus from the tomb were physically certain of Christ's divine mission by reason of this most evident sensible sign.¹³⁶ However, St. Thomas¹³⁷ teaches that this kind of certitude is extremely rare, and this has remained the dominant conviction of all the great theologians ever since.

Scientific Certitude most fitting for the Collective Faith of the Church.

But a *scientific demonstration* of credibility, grounded on philosophy and history, a scientific proof of the divine origin of Christianity, is *most fitting for the faith of the Church as a whole.* For, as St. Thomas says: "Men of higher degree, whose business it is to teach others, are under obligation to have a fuller knowledge of matters of faith, and to believe them explicitly."¹³⁸ Hence, the apologist ought to possess a scientific knowledge of the motives by which Divine Faith is rationally defended.¹³⁹ Then too, the faithful in general appeal to the science of the Doctors, who are supposed to possess a scientific knowledge of the motives of credibility and to be able to solve the objections advanced by adversaries, in the name of philosophy and history.

¹³⁶) Garrigou-Lagrange, O. P., *ibid.*, I, pp. 528, 529; (3rd ed.), pp. 278, 279.

¹³⁷) ST. II, II, q. 5, a. 2.

¹³⁸) ST. II, II, q. 2, a. 6.

¹³⁹) cf. II Peter, iii, 5.

What are some of the ways by which man arrives at a certain knowledge of the Fact of a Divine Revelation? In the first place, experience teaches that most men arrive at that certitude through *history.* In general, this testimony does not approximate to: the certitude, which rests upon the laws of nature (physical certitude), nor the certitude with which self-evident necessary truths are known, or necessary truth demonstrated from self-evident truth (metaphysical certitude).¹⁴⁰ Its sources are monuments and documents of various kinds, but especially the accounts of credible witnesses. Hence, some deny to history the character of a science properly so-called or regard it, at most, as a science of "faith". However, at times, the testimonies may be so numerous and cogent, that a doubt would be unreasonable; moreover, certain psychological combinations, moral and economic laws, the nature of man and his dispositions, may be such that free "belief" gives place to scientific "insight". But the instances in which the certitude is compelling are, after all, very rare; and if they do obtain, they touch only the exterior and the surface, not the inner kernel of the historical occurrence. In general, therefore, historical certitude pertains to moral certitude, in which doubt, while indeed possible, is unwarranted. There are a great many questions, which from the viewpoint of science are regarded as settled, but which from the practical standpoint are never at rest; facts, which experts admit and which, nevertheless, continue to be disputed for partisan, national or sectarian reasons. Pertinent examples in the religious realm are, for instance, the historical existence of Christ, the existence of the primacy in Patristic times, the falsity of the alleged rule of the Jesuits that "the end justifies the means". In point of fact, not every intervention or intermingling of the will and the feelings is necessarily excluded from certain historical knowledge. If the matter in question touches the interests of our will

Historical Certitude.

¹⁴⁰) cf. M. J. Ryan, art. "Certitude", in CE. III, pp. 539-sq.

and emotions; if, because of its sublimity, grandeur and manysidedness the problem demands a special sublimation and concentration of the soul's faculties, often enough the proper kind of knowledge, even though logically demanded, is not actually forthcoming, because of the lack of the corresponding psychological adjustment of the whole man to the circumstances of the case. The history of Christianity offers us many instances of knowledge, which objectively is indeed reliable, but which, for volitional and emotional reasons, continues to be controverted. The systematic combination and vindication of this kind of knowledge is the special task of apologetics.¹⁴¹

Certitude of
Human Faith.

Another path leading to the judgment of credibility is *human faith (fides humana)*. It is not necessary to enlarge upon the general significance of faith and trust, as representatives of and substitutes for science, in the ordinary affairs of life. How little of our knowledge of the earth and its history, of our scientific and political education, have we acquired by our own independent investigation!¹⁴² In the religious life, too, tradition and education, the reputation of human teachers and witnesses, occupy a prominent position. So also in Revealed Religion the way to Faith in God's word often enough passes over the testimony of human authorities. The Saviour reprimands Thomas and others because of their scepticism and hardness of heart: "because they did *not believe them* who had seen Him after He was risen again" (Mark xvi, 14). The first heralds of the Gospel were to influence men, not only by the fact that they authenticated themselves as God's messengers through their Miracles; but they were likewise to convince their hearers, as human, historical "witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus" (Acts i, 32). The moral reputation of such a legate may be so great, that it is capable of gaining converts to the Faith, even without Miracles; just as

¹⁴¹) J. Mausbach, *Die Religion und das moderne Seelenleben*, in RCK. I, pp. 122, 123.

¹⁴²) cf. *Ibid.*, I, pp. 100-107.

we know of no Miracles wrought by St. John the Baptist. In modern times we put such a great emphasis upon the self-assertiveness of Jesus, in respect of His dignity, precisely because Miracles are called into question by so many adversaries. Whoever recognizes the purely ethical grandeur of Christ, cannot but be overwhelmed by the sublimity and power of this testimony and be moved to accept His divine mission and dignity. St. Thomas says expressly that Christ moved men to Faith by His teachings, His Miracles, the intrinsic charm of His personality, His mercy; "and even though He had worked no visible Miracles, these other means would have remained, to move to faith; and *men would have been obliged to obey them*"¹⁴³ So, too, in our own day, within the bosom of Christianity the oral testimony of parents and educators, the unanimous tradition of the Christian communities, the testimony of the Church, as a natural society, venerable for her age, wisdom and marvelous expansion, are mighty factors for producing apologetic certitude.¹⁴⁴

Thus, *the paths of knowledge are manifold and diversified* according to the various conditions and degrees of education of individuals; but they all lead to the *one end*, namely, to the certitude of the credibility of Divine Revelation.

The evidence of credibility, which the Catholic Church demands, as an absolute postulate for the Act of Faith, is the clear and *morally certain judgment of conscience, that a person may reasonably and honestly accept God's Revelation in Christianity.* It is the same kind of certitude as is required, to enable a person to act morally in cases, *in which grave issues of the natural order are involved. Divine Faith does not demand a higher than moral certitude.* For, the judgment of credibility is not the formal motive upon which Divine Faith is intrinsically grounded. It is only the necessary prerequisite for

Moral Certitude
suffices.

¹⁴³) Quodl. 2, a. 6. ¹⁴⁴) J. Mausbach, *Die Religion und das moderne Seelenleben*, in RCK. I, pp. 124, 125.

the assent of Faith, the *conditio sine qua non*, for making the Act of Divine Faith a prudent act. Hence, it is extrinsic to Divine Faith, its function being simply to enable a person to act with the prudence that is demanded, when grave matters in the natural order are at stake. However, as noted above,¹⁴⁵ this moral certitude is not merely practical, as *Hermes* would have it.¹⁴⁶ It is not concerned only with the rectitude of an act to be performed here and now, such as, for example, an act of mercy toward the poor, or an act of humility. It is also a speculative act that looks to an existing or a past fact.¹⁴⁷

A difficulty
met.

The following difficulty might be raised against this theory of grounding the Faith. What about the natural grounds of belief of so many *ill-instructed Christians*, or of those who have been led to the Church by purely personal *experiences*? How often has not the painful struggle of a martyr, the word and example of a herald of the Gospel, brought about the sudden transformation of a pagan into a believer! Then too, how imperfect and far from conclusive is oftentimes the proof from reason and authority, which a poorly instructed Catholic offers to justify his convictions! How can our theory be reconciled with these facts?

We answer that such events present a difficulty only for those theologians, who absolutely insist that for the natural grounding of the Faith a *direct knowledge (scientia)*, even though only in popular form, of the historical Fact of Divine Revelation is necessary. They cannot evade this difficulty by appealing to the grace of God, which is supposed to supply for the deficiencies and the lacunae in the evidence. For an inner, mystical help of grace—apart from Miracles—cannot offset the lacunae and weaknesses of an objective historical grounding of the Faith. The events referred to in the difficulty fit far more easily into our conception of conversion. For, what we have demanded, as an absolutely necessary postulate for the assent of Divine Faith, is a clear and *morally certain* judgment of conscience, that a person may reasonably and honestly embrace God's Revelation in Christianity.¹⁴⁸ Like all judgments of conscience this, too, is not purely abstract; rather it is a moral judgment which

¹⁴⁵ cf. p. 35.

¹⁴⁶ cf. Vacant, *Etudes sur Conc. Vat.*, I, pp. 125-126.

¹⁴⁷ Garrigou-Lagrange, O. P., *ibid.*, I, pp. 530-532; (3'ed.), pp. 281, 282.

¹⁴⁸ cf. above, pp. 10, 11.

touches one's personality and conduct. Therefore, in this judgment due consideration may be given to the degree of education that obtains among individuals—not all are obliged to make the same thorough examination. Hence, grace, which governs all ethical action, may also make itself felt, to perfect and complete the process.¹⁴⁹ For instance, grace can *direct one's attention* to the motives of credibility which are being preached in the mysteries of Divine Faith; it can also *correct one's intention*, so as to be able to judge rightly and not according to the inordinate inclinations of egotism or pride.¹⁵⁰ Moreover, let us remember that *human faith and trust* play a very important and far-reaching part in human affairs. How remarkably strong, how incalculable and withal how genuinely ethical, is oftentimes this trust of man in a religious leader! Finally, let us not forget that there is also a grain of truth in the religious "experiences", which Protestants and modern apologists stress in such a one-sided manner! A stirring vital experience has for many a convert been a decisive factor; the purely inner need of escaping from the emptiness of soul and despair has led many modern souls, through an impulse of the will, to embrace a belief in Christ and in God! Thus, even these rarer forms of preparation fit easily and naturally into our theory.¹⁵¹

In the light of these principles it is clear, that the evidence of the credibility of Divine Revelation is not restricted to those who devote themselves to scientific apologetics.

Moral Certitude
Possible For All.

a) It is possible also for *children* and the *unlettered* (the so-called "*rudes*" of the theologians), so that they, too, can arrive at the certitude of Faith. For, evidence admits of different degrees according to the diversified educational status of the person to whom something is evident.¹⁵² They can know, with full clarity, that they are guilty of sin, if they refuse to believe their parents, teachers and pastors, who attest the credibility of Revelation. Of course, this grounding of the Faith would not suffice for an educated understanding; for, such an understanding realizes all too

¹⁴⁹ J. Mausbach, *Die Religion und das moderne Seelenleben*, in RCK, I, pp. 125, 126.

¹⁵⁰ Garrigou-Lagrange, O. P., *ibid.*, I, pp. 535, 536; (3'ed.), pp. 281, 282.

¹⁵¹ J. Mausbach, *ibid.*, I, p. 126; cf. Gardeil, *La crédibilité et l'apologétique*. Paris. 1908, pp. 98 sq.; De Smedt, *Notre vie surnaturelle*. 1910, pp. 188 sq.

¹⁵² cf. A. Rother, S. J., *Certitude*, pp. 81 sq.

clearly the possibility of its being deceived by parents and teachers in religious matters. However, for the undeveloped intellect of children and the unlettered this difficulty, like so many others, does not present itself. Hence, it can be convinced, with all firmness, of the truth of Christianity upon the word of parents and educators.¹⁵³

It is true that *children, who have been educated in heresy and infidelity*, have the same motives of certitude, inasmuch as they also confide in the authority of their parents and teachers. But one may not, therefore, conclude that sufficient motives of credibility are not offered by the authority of educators. The children of heretics are really *obliged* to believe the heresy upon the authority of their parents, as long as they have not arrived at a better insight. They cannot indeed perform an act of genuine Faith, for the *lumen fidei* cannot be given as the co-operating factor for the production of an erroneous conviction.

The motive of authority is unquestionably sufficient for a low degree of education. But something *more is required for the later spiritual development of the child*; that is to say, the parents and teachers must also make it more or less evident to the child, that their teaching rests upon a solid ground. To do this, they have only to point to the existence of the Church, to her perpetuity and expansion, to her Saints. The wonderful life and activity of our Lord are presented to every Christian with such perspicuity by means of the Church year, that every child can readily recognize that there are sufficient grounds for believing the statements of its teachers. Thus, even for the uneducated, there is no dearth of motives for believing, and particularly for the evident judgment that they are obliged to believe.¹⁵⁴

b) *For Catholics, who have received a good catechetical training*, the rational grounds of belief, despite their unscientific form, are incomparably more certain and tenable than is the case in regard to the believers of other denominations and tendencies. For, in the first place, the Church's teaching presents in simple, but objectively true form, the most important doctrinal and historical grounds of Faith. Then, too, the immediate *organs* of this teaching, the pastors and catechists, appear credible, not indeed by reason of the accidental accomplishments of person or position, but because of their dogmatic agreement with and their subordination to the Bishop, and ultimately, to the Pope, the successor of St. Peter. That of itself is an imposing link of

¹⁵³) Gutberlet, *Lehrbuch der Apologetik*, II. p. 490.

¹⁵⁴) *Ibid.*, II. p. 490.

world-wide significance, which makes itself felt even in the smallest village. Moreover, the monuments and objects of worship, the Saints and sacred relics, the constitution and liturgy of the Church, give evidence, in popular and perspicuous form, that the Church of today reaches back, in point of time, into the Middle Ages and Christian Antiquity. Finally, the life and sufferings of the Saviour, the perpetual adoration paid to Christ throughout all the Christian centuries, the immensely conservative steadfastness of the Church in faith and piety, her institutions of charity and of social benedictions—all these things unite to form a judgment of credibility, of which the average Christian is perhaps unconscious, but which, nevertheless, is essentially sound and satisfying.¹⁵⁵

c) In regard to *adults who are invincibly ignorant of the Church's preaching*, it is of faith that such persons receive sufficient grace, at least remotely, to find the path to salvation; hence, if they do what in them lies, they also can arrive at a sufficient certitude of credibility "by the operating power of the divine light and grace".¹⁵⁶ For, if they are heretics, they can know at least some of the principal mysteries of Faith and sufficient motives of credibility through the preaching of their own sect, which often enough retains certain truths of Faith mixed with errors. Thus, while embracing the errors by human opinion, they can, at the same time, believe some of the mysteries of Faith by Divine Faith.

d) But if a person has been reared entirely outside of the pale of Christianity ("*si aliquis nutritus in silvis*") and is, therefore, invincibly ignorant of all Christian preaching, how can such a one obtain the certitude of credibility? If such a person follows the guidance of natural reason in his desire for the good and his aversion of evil, so St. Thomas teaches,¹⁵⁷ God will reveal to him the truths necessary for Faith through an internal inspiration, or will direct some preacher of the Faith to such a one, even as He sent Peter to Cornelius (Acts x).

It is, therefore, certain that all men can arrive at moral certitude concerning the Fact of Divine Revelation, at least with the assistance of internal grace. Still, it would be

Grace Not Absolutely Necessary for the Judgment of Credibility.

¹⁵⁵) Mausbach, *ibid.*, I, p. 126; cf. Karl Adam, *Das Wesen des Katholizismus*. Düsseldorf. 1927, pp. 67-73.

¹⁵⁶) Encyclical "*Quanto conficiamur moerore*", Aug. 10', 1863, DB. n. 1677.

¹⁵⁷) *De Veritate*, q. 14, a. 11 ad 1.

erroneous to assert that internal grace is absolutely necessary for a certain judgment of credibility. For, as will be shown below, the motives of this judgment, for instance, Miracles, are divine signs, which are naturally knowable. Hence, theologians commonly teach that the evident judgment of credibility can be arrived at without internal grace; nay more, it is possible to retain that judgment despite a pertinacious resistance to grace.¹⁵⁸ Thus, many Pharisees saw the Miracles of Christ and yet they rejected the grace of God, which might have disposed them for the Act of Faith.¹⁵⁹ In the same way, many adversaries of the Catholic Church often acknowledge the more than human life of the Church and still persist in attacking her. Even the demons, so theologians teach, can know with certitude the Fact of Divine Revelation without the assistance of internal grace.¹⁶⁰

Summary.

To sum up: It is not necessary, neither does the Church demand that every believer should, *by his own personal investigation*, arrive at a rational conviction of the truths, 1) that God exists and, 2) that He has disclosed Himself to man supernaturally. The individual can accept both of these truths of reason by natural faith from others (the Church) and thus advance to supernatural Faith. Such indeed is always the case as regards children and the unlettered; nay more, also in regard to most believers, when there is question of these two truths, which really are united intrinsically, since the second depends upon the first. For, in matters of conviction relative to natural truths, faith in authority generally takes the place of personal investigation. Therefore, the principle may be stated thus: No one can believe, before *he knows in some way* that he may and must believe. The Church does not demand a direct knowledge (*scientia*) from every convert, as a preliminary step to Faith. She contents herself with the acceptance of both facts (namely, God's existence and Divine Revelation) by the believer together with the Faith based thereon. However, she holds in principle to the *possibility* of a

¹⁵⁸) cf. P. Hugon, *Hors de l'Eglise point de salut*. Paris. 1914 (2^eed.), chap. 4: "Le Salut des Paiens", p. 105.

¹⁵⁹) Acts iv, 16; John xv, 24.

¹⁶⁰) Garrigou-Lagrange, O. P., *ibid.*, I, p. 537; (3^eed.), p. 283.

rational proof for all men, even though she allows *reality* to pursue its own course. Hence, it suffices, if the simple believer finds his support, or the grounds of his Faith, in the conviction of catechists, teachers and the aggregate Church.¹⁶¹

We shall next consider the problem of *scientific certitude* more in detail. The Church's position in regard to the *possibility* of a scientific demonstration of the credibility, or the divine origin, of the Christian Religion has been indicated above.¹⁶² We now propose to present a rational defense of this position.

Even though reason can discern with certitude the primary criterion of Divine Revelation, namely, a Miracle as a Miracle, and its organic connection with the doctrine which it is said to confirm, still, so it might be objected, a scientific demonstration of credibility is impossible; for, a scientific demonstration is either *a priori* or *a posteriori*. Now, the Fact of Divine Revelation cannot be known either *a priori*, that is, from its own proper cause, since this is supernatural, or *a posteriori*, that is, from its own proper effects, for they, too, are supernatural, just as grace which transcends human reason. Therefore, the Fact of Divine Revelation cannot be proved scientifically.

To answer this objection, it is necessary to distinguish between a *twofold kind of scientific demonstration*, namely, *direct* and *indirect*.

a) A *direct* or ostensive proof is either causal or a proof of fact. A *causal proof* is one by which we know something through a knowledge of its causes, and of the way in which it is produced by its causes. A *proof of fact* gives us certitude *that a thing is so, without explaining why it is so*. "A causal proof is called '*a priori*', because it proceeds from what is naturally or really prior, to that which is naturally or really posterior. And since the effect

¹⁶¹) B. Bartmann, *Lehrbuch der Dogmatik*. Freiburg i. B. 1920 (4^eed.), I, p. 49.

¹⁶²) cf. p. 24 sq.

Scientific Certitude Possible.

Kinds of Scientific Demonstration.

is naturally or really posterior to the cause, an argument which proceeds from effect to cause, is called 'a posteriori' ".¹⁶³

b) Where it is impossible to prove the truth directly, "it may be possible to show *indirectly* that a judgment is true, by showing that if it were false and its contradictory true, something impossible, absurd, or self-contradictory would follow. This method of establishing the truth by disproving its contradictory, is obviously less satisfactory and less scientific than direct proof; for it does not give the mind any insight into the positive, intrinsic causes or reasons why the established proposition is really true. Nevertheless, it is of great importance as a path to certain knowledge, and is used extensively in every department of research . . . It is by this process of *indirect* proof we know that inductively verified laws are *de facto* true, or show why they are true".¹⁶⁴

Now, which of these two methods of scientific demonstration may be employed, to establish the evident credibility of the Divine origin of Revelation?

Direct Proof
Not Possible.
Rationalism.

The attempt has, indeed, been made by certain Catholics to justify the contents of Christian teaching on *intrinsic* grounds, so that the appeal to a positive supernatural Divine Revelation would appear to be superfluous. Thus, Baader, Günther and others, have claimed that all Christian dogmas can be shown to be rationally necessary. Now, it is, of course, possible to show that all dogmas are in harmony with sound reason; but it is not possible to present a real rational demonstration of all the Christian mysteries. Take, for instance, the dogma of original sin. No one is able to demonstrate that the sin of Adam *must necessarily* have become such an awful catastrophe for the human race. For, here it is a question of a free design of God, Who made Adam the representative of his race. We believe in the fact of original sin only because Divine Revelation guarantees it. Moreover, it is possible to show that all the attempts of *Rationalism*

¹⁶³) P. Coffey, *Science and Logic*. London & N. Y. 1912, vol. II, pp. 232, 233.

¹⁶⁴) *Ibid.*, II, pp. 233, 234.

to construct a purely rational system of Revelation have failed. Therefore, when there is question of "mysteries" in the rationalistic interpretation, either the proofs presented are not cogent, or else, to make a mystery appear capable of demonstration, a different sense is substituted for the mystery, which degrades it from the realm of the supernatural into that of the purely natural.¹⁶⁵ Hence, a *strictly scientific* demonstration, a direct or ostensive proof, of Divine Revelation cannot be used. When Catholic theologians assert that we cannot have the *certitude of science* as regards the Fact of Divine Revelation,¹⁶⁶ obviously they are employing the term "science" in the sense of "knowledge of a thing through its cause", that is, knowledge that enables us to see that *the thing cannot be otherwise than it is*.

Such a proof, however, is not necessary. A scientific demonstration in the broad sense, an *indirect proof*, suffices. Such a proof is based on an *extrinsic sign divinely produced in confirmation of Revelation*.¹⁶⁷ A Miracle, for instance, as will be shown in detail below, is such a sign; for it directly demonstrates the intervention of the divine omnipotence, and indirectly the divine origin of the doctrine which it confirms. This kind of demonstration, *per absurdum* (*reductio ad impossibile*), does not, indeed, offer intrinsic evidence of the thing in question, but it does exclude the fear of error by reason of the absurd consequences. It concludes that a thing is so, by showing that if it were false and its contradictory true, something impossible, absurd, or self-contradictory,

Indirect Proof
Possible.

¹⁶⁵) Fr. Sawicki, *Die Wahrheit des Christentums*. Paderborn. 1920 (4^{ed.}), p. 338.

¹⁶⁶) Thus, Cajetan commenting on St. Thomas' *ST.* III, q. 55, a. 6 concerning the sufficiency of the signs, which guarantee Christ's Resurrection, says: "Intellige sufficientiam ad causandam certitudinem fidei, non certitudinem scientiae".

¹⁶⁷) cf. *ST.* III, q. 55, a. 5; P. Gardeil, O. P., *La Crédibilité et l'apologétique*. Paris. 1912 (2^{ed.}). La Démonstration rigoureuse de la Crédibilité, pp. 78-126; IDEM, art. "Crédibilité", in DCT coll. 2215-2220.

would follow. In the present instance, the absurd conclusion is that God, the Author of a Miracle,¹⁶⁸ would be witness to a falsehood.

As will be shown below, the Fact of Divine Revelation is also manifest from certain effects, for example, from the marvelous life of the Church, inasmuch as this life, visible in its external marks, obviously transcends the natural powers of humanity. But this argument, derived from these marks in so far as they are naturally knowable, is always an argument from signs.¹⁶⁹

Function of
the Judgment
of Credibility
in the Genesis
of Faith.

Before concluding these introductory remarks, it might be well to recall briefly the function of the judgment of credibility in the genesis of the Act of Faith.

There is a twofold judgment concerning the credibility of Divine Revelation, which the student must carefully bear in mind.

a) In the first place, this judgment may be the proximate motive of Faith; for, I cannot believe without the support of some motive or ground, and the will itself cannot command the intellect to believe, unless there be a sufficient ground of knowledge at hand.¹⁷⁰ For the believer this proximate motive is the authority of God, Who speaks to us, or the credibility of Divine Revelation. Hence, a judgment of credibility must precede Faith, as the motive in which Faith finds its support. However, this judgment is not evident, at least not in the sense that it compels us to believe, otherwise Faith itself would be necessary. This judgment asserts the supernatural credibility of the mysteries of Faith, or what amounts to the same thing, the truth of the articles of Faith.¹⁷¹ It is due to the light of Divine Faith, inasmuch as the authority of God revealing is, as theologians express it, both "*id quo et quod supernaturaliter creditur*".¹⁷² We are not concerned here with this judgment of credibility. It is treated *ex professo* in the tractate on Divine Faith.

¹⁶⁸) cf. St. Thomas, *Quodl.* II, a. 6 ad 4; *ST.* II, II, q. 5, a. 2; III, q. 43, a. 1, 3; *in II Thess.*, c. 2. lect. 2; *SCG.* 1, III, c. 155; 1. I, c. 8; *in Joan.* c. 9, lect. 3, n. 8.

¹⁶⁹) Garrigou-Lagrange, O. P., *ibid.*, I, pp. 552, 553; (3rd ed.), pp. 290, 291.

¹⁷⁰) cf. above, p. 29 sq.

¹⁷¹) C. Gutberlet, *Lehrbuch der Apologetik*, II, p. 488.

¹⁷²) cf. Garrigou-Lagrange, O. P., *ibid.*, I, pp. 458-511; (3rd ed.), pp. 249-265.

b) The judgment of credibility, in which we are directly interested, has reference to the activity of reason before the Act of Faith. It is the remote motive of Faith, and its object is the moral goodness, the reasonableness, or also the obligation, of believing. In the latter respect it is called more definitely the *judicium creditatis*. Now moral goodness, reasonableness, and obligation, can move only the will, whose object they are, not the intellect. They can work upon the intellect only through the medium of the will; and since the will is not coerced by moral goodness and obligation, the intellect, the proximate subject of Faith, can even less be determined by its influence. Hence, the judgment of credibility and credendity, even when perfectly evident, cannot render Faith necessary.

The judgment, with which this treatise on the natural knowability of Divine Revelation deals, asserts the natural credibility of the mysteries of Faith. Hence, the Act of Faith is not the conclusion of an apologetic syllogism, rather this syllogism ends in the judgment of credibility. It runs somewhat in this fashion: Whatever God reveals is rationally credible; now, God has revealed the mysteries of the Christian Faith, as is evident from the signs by which they have been confirmed; therefore, the mysteries of the Christian Faith are rationally credible.¹⁷⁴

The importance of this tractate is, therefore, obvious. If the apologist is to lay a solid foundation for Faith, in the objective and the subjective sense, he must defend the motives of credibility, or the criteria of Divine Revelation, in a scientific manner.

This we now propose to do in the following order: first, we shall establish the genuine concept and the kinds of criteria (Chap. I); secondly, we shall show the relative value of the internal and the external criteria

Division of
Subject-matter.

¹⁷³) C. Gutberlet, *ibid.*, II, pp. 488, 489.

¹⁷⁴) Garrigou-Lagrange, O. P., *ibid.*, I, p. 541; (3rd ed.), p. 287.

(Chap. II); next we shall treat of the criteria of Protestantism (Chap. III), Pragmatism and Modernism (Chap. IV), and of the so-called "New Apologetics" (Chap. V); finally, in the remaining chapters we intend to defend the value of external criteria, Miracles and Prophecies.

Chapter I.

CONCEPT AND KINDS OF CRITERIA

Generic
Concept of
Criteria.

If God has conferred a Revelation on men, it stands to reason that He must have attached to it plain and evident signs that will enable all men, even the unlettered, to recognize His message for what it is, and to distinguish it from all false claimants. For, a divine supernatural self-disclosure, that would be unknowable as such, would be useless and, therefore, irreconcilable with divine wisdom.

The means, which enable human reason to arrive at a knowledge of the Fact, or the divine origin, of Revelation, and to distinguish the genuine from all pseudo-revelations, are called its *notes (notae)* or *criteria* (κρίτηρια from *κρίνειν*, to separate, to sift) by reason of their proximate end or purpose. They are also termed the *motives of credibility (motiva credibilitatis)* because of their ultimate purpose, which is to make the Fact of Divine Revelation rationally credible.¹ These motives offer to man's intellect the reasons for regarding the revealer as worthy of belief, and his message as credible. The judgment of credibility (*judicium credibilitatis*), which these motives enable the mediate recipient of Divine Revelation to form, is directed in the first place to the promulgators, or the human witnesses, of God's revealed message. For, it is through their mediation that the Fact of God's self-disclosure and, at the same time, the content of His communication appear credible to their hearers. Hence, the motives of credibility have reference

¹) H. Felder, O. M. Cap., *Apologetica*. Paderbornae. 1920, I, p. 55.

primarily to the *first* announcement of the message; for once the Fact of the divine origin of Revelation has been established with certainty, this proof suffices for all time.²

Theological Rationalism blundered not because it turned the search-light of human reason upon the credibility of the organs of Revelation, but rather because, after their credibility had been established, and despite that fact, it insisted upon subjecting the *content* of Revelation to criticism after its own standards, and was disposed to accept that content only in so far as it judged proper. For, once the Fact of Divine Revelation has been demonstrated, the credibility of the content of the divine message is, *eo ipso*, also guaranteed, because God, Supreme Truth, can neither deceive nor be deceived.³

"As Divine Revelation itself (assuming it to exist), and its eventual human agent, so, too, the selection of definite criteria by which revealed truths may be known with certainty, depends upon God's free choice. *Per se* men would be obliged to believe any human witness who claimed to have received a communication from God, as soon as his natural credibility was well established. Therefore, it is only from revealed documents (the historical authenticity of which will be demonstrated presently) that we can ascertain which criteria were provided by God. In other words, the criteria of Revelation, like the concept of Revelation itself, must be sought for in the Bible. Reason is able to suggest only the properties which every general criterion must possess, and which consequently must be found also in the criteria of supernatural Revelation."⁴

General Properties
of Criteria.

Human reason is able to enumerate the following general properties of criteria:

a) *Criteria must be connected somehow with Revelation itself.* This lies in the very nature of things; for, we

²) J. Brunsmann, S. V. D., *Lehrbuch der Apologetik*. St. Gabriel bei Wien. 1920, I: "Religion und Offenbarung", p. 145. English adaptation by Arthur Preuss, "A Handbook of Fundamental Theology", St. Louis, Mo. & London. 1929, II, pp. 61, 62.

³) J. Pohle, *Natur und Übernatur*, in RCK. I, p. 469.

⁴) J. Brunsmann, *ibid.*, I, p. 146; Brunsmann-Preuss, *ibid.*, II, pp. 62, 63.

are to arrive at a knowledge of the divine origin of Revelation *by means* of the criteria. Obviously, this would not be possible, unless these signs were connected in some way with the doctrine that claims to be divinely revealed.

b) *Criteria must be objective.* For, a purely subjective factor, such as emotion, taste, pleasure, etc., is an unreliable guide. Many things may indeed satisfy one's sentiments, but they may likewise be wholly at variance with the content of Divine Revelation. Hence, the criteria must be so constituted, that they can easily establish the Fact of Revelation by reason of their own intrinsic force.

c) *Criteria must possess universal validity.* For, they are designed to be the means, enabling *all men* to arrive at a certain knowledge of Divine Revelation. Consequently, they must be so clear and easy of comprehension, that every man of sound understanding can readily grasp their significance. This does not mean, of course, that *all the criteria* must be so clear, that every individual is able to discern their proving force; for the power of human judgment varies according to the talents and knowledge of the individual mind. But at least *some* of the criteria must be of such a nature, that any person honestly searching for the truth can, through their help, arrive at certitude as regards the divine origin of Revelation. That is to say, all the criteria together (*collective criteria*) must possess such clarity and intelligibility, that they suffice, absolutely speaking, for even the most learned. If some of these signs presuppose a deeper knowledge as regards their proper application, the rest, at least, must be sufficiently clear, so that even the least educated and talented among men may be able, by their assistance, to arrive at certitude relative to the divine origin of Revelation.⁵

d) Finally, *criteria must be certain.* They must be so constituted, that they offer *full* certitude, that is, certitude, which excludes every prudent doubt as to the Fact of Revelation. In the concrete order of things, it is not necessary that each and every individual should be *absolutely* certain of that Fact. In view of the great diversity among men, *relative* certitude must be deemed sufficient. Thus, a boy acts reasonably, when he assents to the simple authority of his parents or teachers; an unlearned person relies upon the testimony of reliable witnesses; but the learned, and particularly sceptics, are scarcely convinced even by the

⁵ J. Brunsmann, S. V. D., *ibid.*, I, p. 146; Brunsmann-Preuss, *ibid.*, II, p. 64; cf. Schill-Straubinger, *Theologische Prinzipienlehre*. Paderborn. 1923 (5th ed.), p. 195.

strongest reasons. Since, however, criteria ought to be adapted to all men, it is obvious that all the criteria taken together ought to possess not merely relative, but absolute certainty.⁶ One may not, of course, look for metaphysical or physical certitude; for the question at issue concerns mainly *historical facts*. Hence, in most cases one will have to be content with *moral certitude*, which excludes all reasonable doubt as regards the Fact of Divine Revelation, as noted above.⁷

In the light of these considerations, the criteria of Divine Revelation may be defined as "*the sum-total of those objective and generally valid and certain notes or signs, which exclude every reasonable doubt as to the Fact of Divine Revelation*".⁸

Criteria are of various *kinds*.

I. In the first place, we distinguish between *internal* and *external* criteria. They are so designated by reason of the source whence they emanate.

a) A Revelation may disclose its divine supernatural origin by the sublimity of its content, and by its value for life. These attributes of its essence are termed *internal* or *intrinsic* criteria,⁹ because they are derived from the *content* of the divine communication, that is, from its thoughts, doctrine, laws and rites of worship.¹⁰ If God speaks to us, the content of His message must be worthy of Himself in every respect. His word must be characterized by superhuman *wisdom* and *holiness*, for He is wisdom and holiness itself. Superhuman wisdom and holiness must diffuse over human reason a supermundane light, and impart to the human will a supermundane power, so that man may be led to his final end, which consists in likeness to God and in communion with

⁶ H. Felder, O. M. Cap., *ibid.*, I, p. 55; cf. A. Rother, S. J., *Certitude. A Study in Philosophy*. St. Louis, Mo. 1911, pp. 81 sq., for an explanation of the various grades of certitude.

⁷ J. Brunsmann, S. V. D., *ibid.*, I, p. 147; cf. Introduction above, pp. 37-46.

⁸ J. Pohle, *Natur und Übernatur*, in RCK. I, p. 470.

⁹ Fr. Sawicki, *Die Wahrheit des Christentums*. Paderborn. 1920 (4th ed.), p. 341.

¹⁰ J. Mausbach, *Grundzüge der katholischen Apologetik*. Münster i. W. 1921 (3rd-4th ed.), p. 22.

Specific
Concept of
Criteria.

N.F.

Division of
Criteria.

Internal
Criteria.

Him.¹¹ Or, as *Dr. Schell* puts it, a supernatural divine Revelation must, in harmony with its essence, communicate to the final end of Religion a supernatural transcendence. It must exalt man to a perfect vital communion with God, the origin and end of all existence. Hence, Divine Revelation must manifest itself, a) as a higher communication of truth, which is distinguished by the criterion of divine *wisdom* and the power to beget conviction; b) as a law of higher morality, of supernatural finality, with really supernatural motives, tasks and aids, for the redemption and salvation of all men; that is to say, it must possess the distinguishing mark of *sanctity*. Both these criteria are evidence that Revelation is a supernatural communion of the soul with God, inasmuch as He is truth for the intellect and holiness for the will; therefore, the kingdom of God for the soul. They show that the kingdom of God is interior, and hence they are termed *internal criteria*.¹²

External
Criteria.

b) The divine origin of Revelation may also be guaranteed by *certain sensible signs or facts, which accompany its entrance into the world, or bear witness to it as after-effects*.¹³ These tokens are called *external or extrinsic criteria*; for, they are historical facts, really distinct from the content of the revealed message, although *externally* associated with the Fact of Divine Revelation, and either go hand in hand with, or follow upon, its promulgation.¹⁴ For instance, a divine legate must be duly accredited. God's power must be with him, which is called omnipotence or the power of *Miracles*; God's knowledge must be with him, namely, omniscience, which looks into the future as *Prophecy*, in which the fulfilment of God's plans are visioned with such absolute certainty, as though all were lightsome, present and clear as the noon-day sun.¹⁵ In other words, the kingdom of God or

¹¹) I. Klug, *Der katholische Glaubensinhalt*. Paderborn. 1915, p. 47.

¹²) H. Schell, *Apologie des Christentums*. Paderborn. 1907 (3rd ed.), I: "Religion und Offenbarung", p. 266.

¹³) J. Mausbach, *Grundzüge* etc., p. 21.

¹⁴) J. Brunsman, S. V. D., *ibid.*, I, p. 147.

¹⁵) I. Klug, *Apologetische Abhandlungen*. Paderborn. 1913, II: "Gottes Wort und Gottes Sohn", p. 14.

supernatural Revelation will manifest its internal essence and divine origin also *outwardly* in the evolution of the world; for, whatever is internal acts outwardly, and must prove itself in the world of external reality. a) The divine origin of Revelation will, therefore, show itself by the successful realization of the kingdom of God in the world, by the victorious domination of all wicked powers, of all the forces of corporeal and spiritual corruption, whether in Nature or in the world of the spirit. Hence, Revelation itself is a *Miracle* of divine power and, therefore, also authenticated in detail by miraculous deeds and miraculous effects. b) If the kingdom of God proceeds from God, its historical realization will manifest itself as a purposive and conscious progressive fulfilment of a definite plan of salvation, that is, as a *prophetic prediction* in general and in particular. Thus, the external criteria, Miracles and Prophecies, appear as supernatural power and certainty for the realization of supernatural perfection.¹⁶

Dr. Klug expresses the same thought perhaps in clearer language. By *Prophecy*, he writes,¹⁷ the future consummation or perfection of the world and of humanity is anticipated in thought, in order that the recipients of Revelation may be able even now, to a certain extent, to direct their vision towards what *will take place* one day, despite all the difficulties and obstacles, which at present oppose the realization of a moral world order. By a *Miracle* we have most certain evidence that a supernatural divine power, of a personal kind, is able to conquer all these difficulties and, in spite of them, to bring about that blessed condition of moral perfection, in which the world of matter and the world of the spirit is made subservient to the eternal God, and thus finds its permanent rest.

Miracles exert their influence, in the first place, upon their contemporaries, *Prophecies* upon subsequent generations. The *after-effects* of Divine Revelation constitute moral Miracles or show the fulfilment of Prophecies.

¹⁶) H. Schell, *ibid.*, I, p. 266.

¹⁷) I. Klug, *Der katholische Glaubensinhalt*, p. 48; IDEM, *Ein Sonntagsbuch*. Paderborn. 1914, pp. 12-15.

The external criteria, or *testimonies of fact*, are in accord with the character of Revelation; for, the latter is itself a *fact*, a *free act* of God. They also coincide with the end or purpose of Revelation, which aims at leading mankind to *Faith*; for Faith does not postulate insight, but is grounded on the *fact*, that God, Truth itself, has spoken.

There is also an *intimate connection between the internal and external criteria*. For, Prophecy includes wisdom, while Miracles are raised far above meaningless artifices. Moreover, the beneficent results of Religion are not only facts, but also a practical exposition of its doctrine.¹⁸

II. Looking at criteria from the viewpoint of the end or purpose for which they are used, we distinguish between *negative* and *positive* criteria.¹⁹

Negative
Criteria.

a) *Negative* criteria enable us to know that there is no *obstacle* in the way of accepting the divine origin of a doctrine. That is to say, they are evidence that the divine origin of an alleged revelation is *possible*. Their absence from a given doctrine is proof that it is not divine.

Positive
Criteria.

b) *Positive* criteria, on the other hand, show, at least in their *ensemble*, that the doctrine in question, is *really* from God.²⁰

Both internal and external criteria may be *negative* and *positive*. This distinction is important and requires a detailed explanation.

Negative Internal
Criteria.

A. *Negative internal (philosophical)* criteria consist in the immunity of an alleged revelation from any teaching, speculative or moral, which is manifestly erroneous, or self-contradictory, or in the absence of all fraud and immorality.

By *immunity from manifest error* is meant the absence of evident opposition, on the part of an alleged revelation,

¹⁸) J. Mausbach, *Grundzüge* etc., p. 22.

¹⁹) H. Felder, O. M. Cap., *ibid.*, I, p. 56.

²⁰) J. Brunsmann, S. V. D., *ibid.*, I, p. 147; Brunsmann-Preuss, *ibid.*, II, p. 68.

to natural truths already known with certainty. For, revealed truths can indeed be above reason, but not contrary to reason, although, of course, they may be at variance with philosophical systems, such as pantheistic evolutionism, which have never been validly demonstrated.

Immunity from contradiction consists in the harmony and logical consistency of the truths, which are proposed as divinely revealed.

Immunity from fraud and immorality signifies: a) the absence of all deception on the part of those who deliver the supposed revelation to the world and b) the absence of all immoral effects that flow from a doctrine claiming to be of divine origin.²¹

The evident presupposition, lying at the basis of these criteria, is that Divine Revelation *cannot* contradict human reason, since both Revelation and Reason come from the same Divine Author. Surely, nothing irrational or unholy can emanate from God, Who is truth and holiness itself. The standard of judgment is a truth already known with certainty.²²

1. *Negative internal criteria manifest the possibility that a doctrine distinguished by these signs is of divine origin.*

Evidential
Value.

They are of great assistance in the task of discerning and refuting *spurious revelations*, but they are of less value, when there is question of arriving at a positive knowledge regarding genuine Divine Revelation. For doctrines, which lack these notes are *eo ipso*, that is, without further inquiry, proven to be pseudo-revelations. But it is not, therefore, immediately evident that a doctrine, which possesses them is, for that reason alone, of divine origin. Hence, human reason must make a further inquiry with the help of positive criteria, either internal or external.²³

2. *The simultaneous presence of these criteria in a given doctrine, gives rise to a probable presumption as to the divine origin of that doctrine.* For it is practically impossible for man, without some special help from God, to teach speculative and moral religious truths without

²¹) Garrigou-Lagrange, O. P., *ibid.*, II, pp. 13, 14; (3rd ed.), p. 306.

²²) J. Mausbach, *Grundzüge* etc., p. 21; Gutberlet, *Lehrbuch der Apologetik*, II, p. 93; J. Pohle, *ibid.*, I, p. 471.

²³) H. Felder, O. M. Cap., *ibid.*, I, p. 57; cf. Al. v. Schmid, *Apologetik als spekulative Grundlegung der Theologie*. Freiburg i. B. 1900, pp. 167 sq.

the admixture of error, as we have shown in the chapter on the Necessity of Divine Revelation.²⁴

Positive Internal Criteria.

B. The intellectual content of an alleged revelation may be a *positive* criterion of its divine origin, inasmuch as it transcends the purely human measure of religious wisdom by reason of its special fulness, its purity and grandeur, and especially because of its new and original thoughts, or its vital and systematic conception, when viewed in its totality.²⁵ Such is the case, for instance, if a doctrine marvelously unites the *highest* and the *lowest*, things supernatural and things natural, the riches of the divine *mercy* and the misery of mankind, without impairing the rights of divine *justice*; if a doctrine, at the same time, addresses itself to all men of all nations and times, thus uniting the *oldest* and the *newest*; if it proposes mysteries, which, despite their obscurity, appear most *perfectly united with one another and with man's final end*. This union of things, so diverse and far removed from one another, which, at first sight, seems impossible, appears truly miraculous to human reason, and even calls forth tears from the earnest inquirer. Such harmony and sublimity is as miraculous, in the intellectual and moral order, as a Miracle is, in the sensible order.²⁶ Thus, the critical norm is the positive reasonableness, truth and sublimity of an alleged revelation.²⁷

Evidential Value.

Positive internal criteria show, with more or less probability; nay more, under certain circumstances, even with moral certitude, that a given doctrine is of divine origin. This probability increases in direct proportion to the harmony, logical sequence, holiness, wisdom and sublimity of the alleged revelation and according to the degree, in which it offers a loving response to the needs of the human intellect and heart, or incites to high moral perfection, or presents motives which are known to be psychologically efficacious.²⁸ Fenelon rightly remarks

24) cf. J. J. Baierl, *The Theory of Revelation*, I, sect. I, pp. 123 sq.

25) J. Mausbach, *Grundzüge* etc., p. 21

26) Garrigou-Lagrange, O. P., *ibid.*, II, pp. 16, 17; (3rd ed.), p. 308.

27) J. Pohle, *ibid.*, I, p. 471.

28) Gutherlet, *ibid.*, II, p. 94.

"If men had made Religion, how different would they not have made it!" No less a person than Christ Himself reminded the Jews: "My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man will do the will of him; he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself".²⁹

The relative value of these criteria will appear more clearly, if one reflects upon the following considerations.

More Detailed Explanation.

I. Positive internal criteria may manifest, with *more or less probability*, the divine origin of a doctrine said to be revealed, first, in regard to the truths of *Natural Religion* which it contains and secondly, relative to the *supernatural mysteries* which are superadded to Natural Religion.

1. A doctrine is *very probably* of divine origin, which teaches perfectly all the truths of *Natural Religion and morality*, namely, truths concerning God's existence, nature, attributes, providence, creation, concerning man's origin, nature and final end, concerning moral precepts and counsels, so that the knowledge, thus imparted, amply suffices for the right ordering of human life and answers perfectly all of man's legitimate aspirations; or if it far surpasses all the systems of philosophers and of other religions, inasmuch as it proposes nothing which reason knows to be false.³⁰ For, in the chapter on the Necessity of Divine Revelation, we have demonstrated that mankind is morally incapable of arriving at a relatively perfect knowledge of Natural Religion and morality, without a special divine help. But these criteria do *not prove with certainty* the divine origin of such a doctrine, since, strictly speaking, it is (physically) possible for men of genius and industry to acquire such a knowledge, even though history does not testify to the actual existence of such exceptional personalities.³¹

2. A doctrine which contains, besides natural truths, also *supernatural mysteries*, that is, theoretical dogmas and practical precepts, which, despite their obscurity and inaccessible sublimity, appear to be in marvelous harmony with the attributes of God knowable by natural reason and with the aspirations of human nature, while, at the same time, they demand the mortification of our evil inclinations,

29) John VII, 16-17; J. Pohle, *ibid.*, I, p. 471.

30) Garrigou-Lagrange, O. P., *ibid.*, II, p. 16; (3rd ed.), p. 309; cf. ST., I, II, q. 98, a. 1.

31) H. Felder, O. M. Cap., *ibid.*, I, p. 57.

especially sensuality and pride,³² is *most probably* of divine origin. For it is scarcely possible for human reason, by its native powers alone, to discover such an excellent doctrinal content, particularly in the light of human infirmity, such as history depicts it. We say "scarcely possible", not "absolutely impossible"; for, human reason cannot strictly demonstrate the absolute impotency of human nature in this respect. Hence, the argument does *not* offer *peremptory* evidence as regards the superhuman origin of such mysteries.³³ The proving force of this argument increases, if these mysteries explain the misery of man and the nobility of his aspirations, while, at the same time, they offer the remedy for this misery, as *Pascal* has shown in detail.

II. *Under certain circumstances*, it is possible to arrive at *moral certitude* concerning the divine origin of an alleged revelation with the help of these positive internal criteria.

For, if a doctrine, such as we have described above, appears at a time, when it stands out, in absolutely clear contrast with, and in opposition to, the existing religious conceptions and moral conditions that obtain; at a time of gross religious degradation and helplessness, such as we have described in the chapter on the Necessity of Divine Revelation, it is *highly probable* that the doctrinal content in question, is not the result of merely human evolution, but rather the work of supernatural Divine Revelation. Moreover, if it is evident that the preachers of this doctrinal content, so sublime, holy and logical, were men without education, whereas their contemporaries were able to promote only individual fragments of a sound morality and a reasonable theodicy, there can *no longer be any reasonable doubt* as to the divine origin.³⁴ For, in the circumstances described, it is historically certain, that the doctrine in question has appeared *without human preparation*, that is, it was not produced by the human ingenuity of its teachers nor borrowed by way of eclecticism from other religions.³⁵ Thus, it is possible to establish the Fact of Divine Revelation with *moral certitude*.

Finally, by applying these criteria to *all* the known religions, it is possible *via exclusionis* to show that only *one*, that is to say, the Christian Religion, is worthy of God,

³² Garrigou-Lagrange, O. P., *ibid.*, II, p. 16; (3rd ed.), p. 309; cf. *SCG*, I, IV, Prooemium.

³³ H. Felder, O. M. Cap., *ibid.*, I, p. 57.

³⁴ Gutherlet, *ibid.*, II, p. 94.

³⁵ Garrigou-Lagrange, O. P., *ibid.*, II, p. 19; (3rd ed.), p. 310.

since it *transcends* all the others by reason of its intrinsic excellence.³⁶

The *external criteria* of Divine Revelation are also partly *negative*, partly *positive*. They are chiefly the following: 1) *the character of the witnesses*; 2) *the spread of the revealed doctrine*; 3) *its effects in the moral order*; 4) *Miracles and Prophecies*.³⁷

Before considering these external signs from the negative and positive viewpoint, we call the student's attention to *the Person of the divine legate*, which occupies a *special position* between the external and internal criteria. *Per se*, it pertains to the external criteria,—a Miracle, for instance, cannot be separated from the character of the thaumaturgist; on the other hand, since the prophet does not receive and preach Divine Revelation mechanically, but rather in a vital and spiritual way, his person is connected also with his doctrine and, therefore, with the internal criteria. This is especially true as regards the Person of Christ.

Since *Faith* comes by *hearing*, (Rom. x, 17), the hearers put their *trust* proximately *in the man*, for generally they learn the fact of immediate Revelation from his lips. Accordingly, the Person of the promulgator of an alleged divine message is of great significance from the apologetic viewpoint. Indeed, at times the moral impression of a prophetic personality is so great, that one can and ought to put faith in it, even without the added proof of Miracles. One has only to think of the preaching of John the Baptist and the impression, which the Person of Christ made upon Mary Magdalen and others.³⁸

As internal and external criteria join hands in the Person of the herald of Divine Revelation, so, too, a *permanent institution*, for instance, the *Church*, can bear witness to God's self-disclosure, inasmuch as it is the incorporation of a world of religious ideas (internal criteria) and a marvelous historical fact, a "memorial of God's Miracles" (external criteria). Such an institution is like the Person of the promulgator of Divine Revelation also for the reason, that it speaks to mankind in a living way, *commands Faith*, and thus imparts *to the arguments of fact a living and impressive force*.³⁹

³⁶ cf. Abbé De Broglie, *Problèmes et conclusions de l'histoire des religions*. (4th ed.); *Les Fondements intellectuels de la Foi chrétienne*. Paris. 1905.

³⁷ J. Brunsmann, S. V. D., *ibid.*, I, p. 148; Brunsmann-Preuss, *ibid.*, II, p. 68.

³⁸ J. Mausbach, *Grundzüge etc.*, p. 22.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

External
Criteria.

The Person of
the Divine
Legate.

The Church, a
Moral Person.

The supernatural character of Christ and of the Church is *not only* rationally deduced from the apologetic criteria; for the Church herself, by her own *testimony*, namely, as an authority, bears witness to the fact, that she has been founded by Christ and acts in His name: In like manner, Christ confirmed His divine origin not by His Miracles only; He also bore witness to His divine mission and dignity by His own *testimony*, and He commanded all men to accept that mighty testimony by faith.

Strictly speaking, even Christ's Miracles, of themselves *alone*, would not have demonstrated His vocation as an organ of Divine Revelation, if that testimony, which He bore unto Himself, had been lacking;—the Miracles narrated, for instance, in the lives of the Saints show that. In the same way, taking the Church as the starting-point in our argumentation, we could not prove her divine teaching authority simply from the moral Miracles of her perpetuity, holiness and social fruitfulness, unless she herself had told us that she is more than a moral and social entity, that she is also the infallible teacher of Divine Revelation.⁴⁰

Negative External Criteria.

A. 1. If the witness, that is, the *founder* or the *first herald* of an alleged revelation, is an upright, but, in other respects, merely an ordinary man, it is proper to conclude that the revelation in question *may possibly* be of divine origin.⁴¹ On the other hand, gross immorality, as well as spiritual coarseness and dulness of mind, are *irreconcilable* with the person of a divine legate, who is to establish or to develop an alleged divine message.⁴²

The reason is quite obvious. For it is deeply rooted in human nature, to be unwilling to admit that a person of that stamp should have been sent by God to found a religion or to reform morals. Unless evil passion obfuscates the judgment of sound reason, all men, even the unlettered, who have been informed as to the wicked life of an alleged legate, can judge correctly about the latter's mission. It may not be easy, especially in the beginning, to know the fact of the wicked life of a pseudo-ambassador and, therefore, deception is not impossible; however, in the long run this deception will be discovered.⁴³

⁴⁰) J. Mausbach, *Grundzüge* etc., pp. 154, 155.

⁴¹) J. Brunsmann, S. V. D., *ibid.*, I, p. 148; Brunsmann-Preuss, *ibid.*, II, p. 69.

⁴²) J. Mausbach, *ibid.*, p. 22.

⁴³) I. Ottiger, S. J., *Theologia fundamentalis*, Friburgi Brisgoviae. MDCCCXCVII, vol. I: "*De Revelatione supernaturali*", p. 167.

It is, of course, possible that God may employ in particular instances godless persons, such as Balaam (Num. xxii-xxiv) and Caiphas (John xi, 49-52), even against their will, to be the promulgators of certain *particular* revelations, to testify to the truth; for the truth and power of the doctrines are from God and, *per se*, do not depend upon the morals of the witness. Nevertheless, the inappropriateness of such a procedure seems obvious, when there is question of *founding* a Revealed Religion, or of bringing about a true *reformation* of divine doctrine. For, under these circumstances it seems absolutely incredible that God should employ, as His legates and representatives, persons of corrupt morals. For in that hypothesis God Himself would be choosing persons, who are His enemies, to discharge an honorable and extraordinary office of the greatest moment. Surely, a wise king never confers the office of legate extraordinary upon a subject, who is known to be hostile and infamous for his crimes. Neither may we, therefore, presume that God, infinitely wise and holy, would act differently. Moreover, nothing is stronger than virtue to captivate men's minds to the true Religion and morality, for the axiom holds true, that "*exempla trahunt, dum verba tantum movent*". Surely, then, it is scarcely reasonable to suppose that the all wise and holy God would commission a person for the office of promulgating His will, of interpreting His message and of reforming the human race, who is immoral, and who, by his wicked example, would rob his preaching of all moral power and, by his bad conduct, would bring discredit upon the great authority which he had received from God; a person, in brief, who would become not only useless as regards the attainment of the end intended by God, but also its greatest obstacle. Finally, men who are immoral lend color to the suspicion that the marvelous deeds which they perform, are really not genuine Miracles at all.⁴⁴

Absolutely speaking, it is not indeed necessary that all the ministers and heralds of a *Divine Revelation*, which has *already* been *established* and whose truth shines forth before all men, should be persons of the highest purity and holiness; for the vices of the few or of many, which are due to their own fault and not to the Religion which they preach, cannot blot out the knowledge of the truth from the minds of men, who judge rightly and sanely.⁴⁵ Therefore, godless *servants* of Religion, for instance, bad popes and bishops, who have only to preach a religion already estab-

⁴⁴) I. Ottiger, S. J., *ibid.*, I, p. 167.

⁴⁵) *Ibid.*, I, pp. 164, 165.

lished, do, indeed, inflict incalculable injury upon the good name of the Religion, which they preach both as regards their contemporaries and posterity. But they do not, on that account, present an argument against the truth of their preaching, since they do not act as the *immediate* commissioned instruments in the hand of God. Just as precious jewels do not lose any of their intrinsic value, by falling into soiled hands, so, too, God's word preserves its purity and power, even though it be preached by unworthy mouths. Nay more, unworthy priests offer involuntary testimony, by their very preaching, to the truth, which they trample under foot by their unworthy lives and examples.⁴⁶

2. It is evident, that a doctrine *cannot* be of divine origin, if it is *propagated by wicked or immoral means*, by falsehood, violence, fire and the sword, calumny, the servile adulation of princes, and especially by avarice and lust.⁴⁷

3. The *manifest effects* of an alleged revelation in the moral order, both as regards individuals and society in general, may constitute a negative test of its divine origin. For instance, if a doctrine that claims to be divinely revealed, *natura sua*, produces *evil effects*, for example, the dissolution of morals, pride, the neglect of good deeds, the contempt of lawful authority, the cupidity of earthly things and the forgetfulness of things eternal, such a doctrine, far from being divinely revealed, is rather a commentary of human perversity. The fact that it happens to enjoy a wide spread, by no means argues the truth of that teaching; on the contrary, this expansion simply manifests the credulity and corrupt nature of those who embrace it.

We say "*natura sua*"; for it may happen that many, who are blessed with a most excellent religious doctrine, live very wicked lives; but this is not the fault of the good doctrine itself, but is due rather to the wicked will of the men in question and, therefore, is no argument against the goodness of the pertinent doctrine. On the other hand, it may sometimes happen that a person, who has been reared in a doctrine that lays claim to a divine origin, but which is

⁴⁶) J. Pohle, *ibid.*, I, p. 474.

⁴⁷) I. Ottiger. S. J., *ibid.*, I, p. 168.

really thoroughly perverse, leads an honest life, free from serious sins and is better than the religion, which he professes, either because of the tacit, efficacious influence of Revealed Religion upon his will, or because of a certain hidden natural law and the grace of God. It is quite obvious that, in these circumstances, one may not conclude that the religion in question is of divine origin.⁴⁸

B. 1. The *positive* qualities of clarity and wisdom, of moral dignity and holiness, which distinguish the *person of a divine legate*, guarantee with *probability* the credibility of his claims.⁴⁹ This probability *increases* in direct proportion to the degree in which these qualities are realized in his person. They may prove his claims even with *moral certainty*, if they manifest themselves in an altogether *eminent* degree, so as to call forth the admiration of grave and prudent men, even as a Miracle does in the physical order.⁵⁰

It is self-evident that a person who claims to be the founder or the first herald of an alleged Revelation, ought to be properly qualified for his high office. He ought to appear before men clothed with legitimate *authority*. This implies, in the first place, that he be duly instructed in the doctrine which he proposes in God's name, and that he be truthful. Knowledge and trustworthiness are indispensable pre-requisites; for such a one seeks to persuade men to believe that what he preaches, is really of divine origin. Now surely, men would never be induced to put faith in the message of a putative legate, unless they were convinced that he was fully enlightened, and that his veracity was beyond all reproach and above all suspicion. Secondly, he ought to exhibit unmistakable signs of great piety towards God, of charity for all men, and of zeal for their eternal salvation. In a word, his *virtue* and *sanctity* must be above all question.⁵¹

Just as a person who lays claim to be sent as a legate by one ruler to another must present his credentials, so, too, no one can be regarded as a divine ambassador sent to establish a Revealed Religion or to be its first herald, who does not give evidence of his divine mission by reason of his mental and moral qualities (or authority). Strictly

⁴⁸) I. Ottiger. S. J., *ibid.*, I, p. 168.

⁴⁹) J. Mausbach, *Grundzüge etc.*, p. 22.

⁵⁰) I. Ottiger, S. J., *ibid.*, I, pp. 166, 167.

⁵¹) *Ibid.*, p. 164.

speaking, it is not necessary that the alleged legate possess these qualities in a way that transcends all purely human conditions. But if such is really the case, if these qualities are seen to be above the purely human measure of wisdom and sanctity, it is *morally* certain that his mission is of *divine origin*.⁵² For, in this hypothesis, his mission cannot be explained *save by a special divine intervention*.

Eminent
Sanctity.

Sanctity is a virtue which implies perfect purity from the attachment to worldly things and a most perfect union with God, directing the acts of all the virtues to God.⁵³ Ordinary holiness perfects a man in a human way, but *extraordinary* sanctity places a man above his fellows. It manifests itself in the *heroic* exercise of all the virtues. Pope Benedict XIV⁵⁴ teaches that four conditions are required for virtue in an heroic degree: namely, 1) that the subject-matter be *arduous*, that is, above the common and ordinary powers of man; 2) that the action be performed with uncommon *promptitude* and ease; 3) with *pleasure* and 4) that it take place not once only or rarely, but *frequently*, whenever the occasion presents itself. "An heroic virtue, then, is a habit of good conduct that has become a second nature, a new motive power stronger than all corresponding inborn inclinations, capable of rendering easy a series of acts each of which, for the ordinary man, would be beset with very great, if not insurmountable, difficulties".⁵⁵

Martyrdom.

"Of all virtuous acts *martyrdom* is the greatest proof of the perfection of charity: since a man's love for a thing is proved to be so much the greater, according as that which he chooses to suffer, for its sake, is more odious. But it is evident that of all the goods of the present life man loves *life itself* most, and on the other hand he hates death more than anything, especially when it is accompanied by the pains of *bodily torment*, from fear of which even dumb animals refrain from the greatest pleasure, as Augustine observes (QQ. LXXXIII, q. 36). And from this point of view it is clear that martyrdom is the most perfect of human acts in respect of its genus, as being the sign of the greatest charity, according to John XI, 13; 'Greater

⁵²) *Ibid.*, pp. 166, 167.

⁵³) ST. II, II, q. 81, a. 8, c. et ad 1; I, II, q. 109, a. 6; I, II, q. 65, a. 1 and 3.

⁵⁴) *De Servorum Dei beatificatione*, 1. III, c. XXI et sqq. *de Virtute heroica*. For further information cf. Garrigou-Lagrange, O. P., *ibid.*, II, pp. 22, 23; (3rd ed.), p. 313.

⁵⁵) J. Wilhelm, art. "Heroic Virtue", in CE VII, p. 291; cf. ST. I, II, q. 61, a. 5, *de virtutibus purgati animi*.

love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends'".⁵⁶ Hence "a *martyr* is so-called as being a *witness to the Christian faith*, which teaches us to despise things visible for the sake of things invisible, as stated in Hebr. xi".⁵⁷

Therefore, the eminent and evident sanctity of the founder, of the first heralds and the martyrs of an alleged revealed religion, is a *morally certain* criterion of the divine origin of that religion.⁵⁸

The application of this criterion is not especially difficult. All that is required is that the person in question give evidence not merely once or twice, but constantly and for a long time, that he actually possesses the requisite knowledge for his office, that he is trustworthy, and is endowed with real and genuine virtues. It is, indeed, true that genuine virtue does not manifest itself so easily and openly as vice, and that the wicked will of men is able either to question or to obscure virtue more easily than vice. Hence, it is possible that the application of this criterion may not be altogether certain. From the objective viewpoint it is, of course, most certain; but it is possible that it cannot be known subjectively by all men, unless the sanctity of the alleged legate or herald manifests itself in an altogether *certain* and *eminent* manner. But when it does appear in that way, it renders the testimony of the legate or herald morally certain.⁵⁹

2. The *marvelous spread of a religion*, claiming to be divinely revealed, may be a positive sign of its super-human origin, if it is evident to reason that there is an *absolute disproportion* between this wonderful conversion of the world and natural causes. In order to be able to discern the evidential value of this argument, it is necessary to consider the *exalted character of the end obtained, the obstacles that lay in the way of the spread of that religion, and, finally, the natural infirmities of its first promulgators*. As St. Paul writes: "The weakness of God is stronger than men . . . The foolish things of the world hath God chosen, that He may confound the wise: the weak things of the world hath God chosen, that

⁵⁶) ST. II, II, q. 124, a. 3; St. Thomas, in *Matth.* c. V, at the beginning.

⁵⁷) ST. II, II, q. 124, a. 4; St. Thomas, in *Ep. ad Hebr.* XI.

⁵⁸) Garrigou-Lagrange, O. P., *ibid.*, II, pp. 20-23; (3rd ed.), pp. 311-313.

⁵⁹) I. Ottiger, S. J., *ibid.*, I, p. 167.

He may confound the strong: and the base things of the world and the things that are contemptible hath God chosen, and the things that are not, that He might bring to naught the things that are: that no flesh should glory in His sight".⁶⁰ Thus, the natural weakness in the instrument used by God persists throughout the process, that the supernatural character of the divine intervention may appear all the better. We can judge also, as to the proving force of this argument, by considering the *vitality* of an alleged Revelation, which, *instead of diminishing amidst persecutions, rather increases*. The spread of a religion, under these circumstances, manifests the divine origin of that religion with *moral certitude*, for it cannot be explained adequately save by a *special divine intervention*.⁶¹

The *invincible stability* of an alleged revealed religion furnishes a corroborative argument for its divine origin. For in the world all things are subject to change; the generation of one thing is the corruption of another, not merely in the physical order, but also in the social and political order. Nations appear and disappear, political forms, religious and philosophical systems, gradually increase, flourish for a time and then grow old, for "the fashion of this world passeth away" (I Cor. vii, 31). Hence, many now describe the history of religions as the history of their genesis, evolution and decay.

Now, if one religion remains always the same, indefectible, unconquerable in its steadfastness, *despite innumerable obstacles and causes that make for ruin*; if it is preserved without transformation in its dogmas, precepts and government; if, moreover, it *continues to live in that immutability, so that its youth is perpetually renewed*,—we have a most certain sign of its divine origin. For that invincible stability appears as an extraordinary participation in the immutability of God Himself, which is the unchangeableness, not of death, but of life. On the other hand, false religions and sects persist either in the immobility of death, without life, as Islamism, or are *perpetually changing* by continually accommodating themselves to the unjustifiable

⁶⁰) I Cor. i, 25, 27-29.

⁶¹) Garrigou-Lagrange, O. P., *ibid.*, II, p. 24; (3rd ed.), p. 314. St. Thomas develops this argument in his *SCG*. I. I. c. 6.

demands of the *ag e*, and tend to Naturalism or the denial of religion, as the history of Protestantism shows.⁶²

3. We can know with *moral certitude* the divine origin of an alleged Revelation also from its *inexhaustible fruitfulness in all good things*. For, just as an evil tree will not produce good fruits and a good tree evil fruits, so, too, a good or an evil doctrine will, *natura sua*,⁶³ beget good or evil fruits. Nay more, a perverse doctrine will manifest evil fruits all the more inevitably than a good doctrine, since men surrender themselves without difficulty to vices and acquire true and heroic virtues, only after a long and arduous practice of temperance and the contempt of things human and worldly.⁶⁴

These visible good fruits will appear, a) as regards the *individual*, inasmuch as his intellect is freed from errors in relation to God, the world and his soul, and his will is liberated from the moral corruption of paganism; b) in respect of the *family*, accordingly as the dignity of woman is restored, children are protected and educated, the rigors of slavery are mitigated and gradually extinguished; c) as regards *society in general*, in that the doctrine in question promotes legitimate authority grounded on God and, at the same time, liberty, charity and the rights of nations, as sound reason demands. Thus, tyranny and license, the confusion of Communism, are avoided and harmony is established between the individual and society. Finally, d) with regard to *all kinds of deeds of mercy and benevolence*, thus verifying the dictum of Christ: "Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father is merciful" (Luke vi, 36), and the words of St. Paul: "Who is weak and I am not weak?" (II Cor. xi, 29), and "put ye on, therefore, as the elect of God, the bowels of mercy (Col. iii, 12). Thus, these holy fruits plainly manifest the *end* of Religion (according as the end is first in intention and last in execution) and also the divine *cause* of Re-

⁶²) Garrigou-Lagrange, O. P., *ibid.*, II, p. 27; (3rd ed.), pp. 315, 316.

⁶³) cf. above, p. 68 sq. ⁶⁴) I. Ottiger, S. J., *ibid.*, I, p. 168.

ligion (in harmony with the axiom: "The order of agents must correspond to the order of ends").⁶⁵

4. The principal positive external criteria of Divine Revelation, those possessing the greatest evidential value, are *Miracles* and *Prophecies*.

For, first, since a genuine Revelation must necessarily have God, as its Author, the appropriate tokens of the Fact, that the doctrine in question actually proceeds from Him, are *works which are proper to God Himself*.⁶⁶ But these are Miracles and Prophecies, as we shall show in detail below. Secondly, they are morally necessary signs of a mediate Divine Revelation. For, on the one hand, in order that man may reasonably assent to a doctrine, which is not intrinsically evident, such as, for example, supernatural mysteries, a rational command of the will is necessary. But the will cannot reasonably command the intellect to assent to a non-evident truth, save on *external* grounds. On the other hand, man is so constituted that, as in civil matters, so, too, in religious affairs, he is led by social authority and *public* instruction. Therefore, in the hypothesis of a supernatural Faith and Providence, it is only reasonable to expect that there will be at hand such signs of a supernatural Divine Revelation as have also a *public* character, and are not subject merely to the private insight of individuals, such as, divine illuminations and inspirations, that is, purely internal aids. Accordingly, the tokens of true Religion ought to be public, social, common to all men.⁶⁷ Miracles, whether in the physical or moral order, are such tokens. Therefore, even though they are not necessary for each man, still they are required in respect of the *community, for without them few men would believe*.⁶⁸

Primary and
Secondary
Criteria.

III. In the light of the preceding explanations, it is evident that not all the signs of Divine Revelation are of equal value and importance. Hence, we distinguish between *primary* and *secondary* criteria. The former are such as exert their influence of themselves, independently

⁶⁵) Garrigou-Lagrange, O. P., *ibid.*, II, pp. 25, 26; (3rd ed.), pp. 314, 315.

⁶⁶) Suarez, *De Incarn.* II, disp. 31, sect. 1, n. 3.

⁶⁷) Van Weddingen, *De miraculo*. Dissert. theol. Lovanii, 1869, p. 205.

⁶⁸) Suarez, *De mysteriis vitae Christi*, disp. 31, sect. 1, n. 6; I Ottiger, S. J., *ibid.*, I, p. 169.

of other criteria. The latter, by their very nature or by reason of the human intellect, need the corroboration of other criteria; they rest, to a certain extent, upon the primary criteria.⁶⁹

The Primary Criteria of Divine Revelation are reducible to an action distinctly and properly divine, which is termed miraculous. Primary
Criteria-
Miracles.

By a *miraculous action* is meant an effect produced by God, beyond the course of nature, which manifests itself in some way, namely, either in the external nature of things or in man and his faculties. This manifestation takes place independently of Divine Revelation itself, and makes itself known to the mind by a distinct experience.

In the case of *immediate* Divine Revelation it is *not* necessary that the miraculous action, when viewed as a criterion of Revelation, should be *really* distinct from the divine act of revealing; for Divine Revelation itself is a Miracle. Hence, the divine action exercised upon the prophet's mind can be Revelation, inasmuch as it discloses the truth that God wishes to communicate; and, at the same time, it can appear as miraculous to the prophet, accordingly as it is a sign or argument of the divine utterance. In other words, the one self-same action by which God reveals Himself to the prophet may present a twofold aspect: on the one hand, it is the divine utterance itself (Revelation) manifesting truth to the prophet's mind; on the other hand, it is a miraculous action (criterion) wrought for the purpose of convincing the prophet that God is really the Author of that utterance.

We are not now concerned with immediate, but rather with *mediate* Divine Revelation. In this respect, we assert that the miraculous action, inasmuch as it is a criterion of Revelation, must manifest itself in a way that is distinct from revealed truth as such, and must be logically prior to it; for its purpose is to show to reason that a given doctrine has been revealed by God.⁷⁰

The fact that a certain person is the author of a statement can become evident to us in one of two ways: first, inasmuch as we see him speaking and this is, of course, the simplest way; secondly, if this is impossible, the only Proof.

⁶⁹) J. Langan, S. J., *Apologetica*. Chicago, Ill. 1921, I, p. 16; Aemil. Dorsch, S. J., *Institutiones theologiae fundamentalis*. Oeniponte. 1916, I, p. 362.

⁷⁰) Dorsch, S. J., *ibid.*, I, pp. 364, 365.

other way is *that the speaker add certain signs, distinct from the speech itself, which will manifest to us the origin of that utterance. Now we cannot perceive the truths communicated by God in Divine Revelation, inasmuch as they proceed from the mouth of God Himself; for God is a spirit.*⁷¹ Therefore, only the latter method is feasible, namely, *God Himself must add to the act of revealing as such, an effect really and logically distinct from it and proper to Himself, which will serve as a divine seal that guarantees the fact that He has really spoken.*

We do not see God's essence; hence, we must have recourse to some effect of God's activity. This cannot be some other divine utterance as such; for, in that case, the divine origin of that utterance would again have to be proven, and so *ad infinitum*. Consequently, *this sign must be some effect, which, first, is proper to God, inasmuch as it takes the place of His essence, as it were, and which, secondly, is so connected with His utterance that it discloses His plan to us, namely, His will to make known to us by that act, proper to Himself, that the utterance in question is really His own divine word.* Now, such an effect or sign can only be a *miraculous action*, as described above. For, if that effect were proper indeed to God, but took place merely according to the course of nature, for instance, the creation of the human soul in matter disposed to receive it by generation, the special divine intention would not thereby be made manifest to us; neither could we deduce therefrom any other intention on the part of God, than that He willed by that action to promote the ends or purposes of nature. Therefore, the special divine intention can be revealed to us only by means of some action proper to God, which is, at the same time, beyond or outside the course of nature, that is to say, by a *miraculous effect*. The history of the

⁷¹) Not even the first witnesses of Revelation, hence especially those who heard the divine doctrine immediately from the mouth of Christ, perceived, immediately from this doctrine, the fact that it was a divine self-disclosure; they also had to deduce this from certain signs which, at least in part, consisted of historical facts. (cf. Pesch, *Theol. Ztfrg.* IV, p. 33).

human race confirms this process of reasoning, as will appear below in the chapter on Miracles.⁷²

All other criteria are secondary. We have cited only a few examples of secondary criteria. Many more might be added; but these suffice for our purpose.⁷³

IV. Finally, criteria may be either *objective* or *subjective*.⁷⁴ The former division embraces such as are outside the consciousness of the person who believes or is searching for the truth. The latter category includes those signs, which are within the consciousness of the believer or inquirer.⁷⁵ When Protestants and certain modern writers speak of internal criteria, they generally mean subjective criteria.

Objective and Subjective Criteria.

The objective criteria have already been treated above.⁷⁶ We shall now turn our attention to the *subjective* signs, which consist in the fact that an alleged Divine Revelation fulfils, in a marvelous manner, the highest aspirations of human nature. They may be either *individual* or *universal*. The former manifest themselves in the experience of profound peace, joy, consolation etc., which an *individual* feels, while reading the Gospel or listening to the preaching of Revelation. For example, the disciples on the way to Emmaus experienced these signs, for they said to each other: "Was not our heart burning within us, whilst He spoke in the way, and opened to us the scriptures?" (Luke xxiv, 32). The latter category consists in the wonderful satisfaction which a given doctrine or religion offers to all the highest aspirations of *humanity*.

Subjective Criteria.

A. 1. The history of converts to the Faith tells us that when an unbeliever reads the Gospel or listens to

Subjective Individual Criteria.

⁷²) Aemil. Dorsch, S. J., *ibid.*, I, pp. 355, 356; cf. H. Van Laak, S. J., *Institutionum theologiae fundamentalis Repetitorium ad usum auditorum universitatis Gregorianaee*. Romae. 1921, pars prior, pp. 44, 45.

⁷³) cf. Dorsch, S. J., *ibid.*, I, pp. 449 sq.

⁷⁴) *Ibid.*, I, p. 360.

⁷⁵) Garrigou-Lagrange, O. P., *ibid.*, I, pp. 555, 556; (3rd ed.), 294.

⁷⁶) cf. above, pp. 55-74.

the preaching of Faith, he sometimes experiences within himself such a marvelous peace, that it seems to him to come from God Himself under the influence of actual grace. Thus, while reading the words in St. John xiv, 21: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, do I give unto you", his heart is filled with interior peace, such as the world cannot give, which seems to surpass the powers of nature. Likewise many of those who heard Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, could feel the force of this criterion, even before they saw the Miracles which He wrought; hence, we read in Matthew (vii, 28): "And it came to pass when Jesus had fully ended these words, the people were in admiration at His doctrine".

In the case of *righteous believers*, this experimental knowledge confirms the Faith and proceeds from the gifts of the Holy Spirit, which presuppose faith and charity. Thus, are verified the words of the thirty-third Psalm (v. 9): "O taste, and see that the Lord is sweet", and of St. Paul (Rom. viii, 16): "For the Spirit Himself giveth testimony to our spirit, that we are the sons of God".⁷⁷ Those who, under the influence of grace, are about to embrace the Faith, experience something similar, though less certain, from "the interior instinct of God's invitation", as St. Thomas remarks.⁷⁸

Evidential
Value.

2. Subjective individual criteria manifest, with *more or less probability*, the fact that the Gospel doctrine has been divinely revealed, not indeed because it is in conformity with our natural aspirations (for, in that case, it would be only natural), but because it is *so profoundly* in harmony with our higher aspirations and, at the same time, *so gratuitously given that it seems to proceed from God*, inasmuch as God alone can know and move the human heart so profoundly; He alone can unite, in such an intimate way, these two extremes, namely, the most perfect conformity of the Gospel doctrine with human

⁷⁷) Garrigou-Lagrange, O. P., *ibid.*, II, p. 5; (3'ed.), p. 299.

⁷⁸) ST. II, II, q. 2, a. 9 ad 3.

nature and the absolutely gratuitous character of that gift.⁷⁹

Ordinarily, however, these criteria are insufficient, of themselves, to produce certitude as regards the Fact of Divine Revelation.

For, on the basis of internal experience, we can *only surmise* that this internal effect of peace and joy is really *supernatural*, not merely natural. Indeed, a Christian might experience a certain internal peace and the satisfaction of his natural aspirations, even though Christianity were merely one of the more excellent forms of natural evolution or Natural Religion.⁸⁰ St. Thomas⁸¹ shows that without a special Revelation, man cannot judge with certainty as to whether he has grace according to I Cor. iv, 3:4: "But neither do I judge myself . . . but he that judgeth me is the Lord". Consequently, *per se*, this individual satisfaction of the aspirations of our heart is an insufficient criterion of Divine Revelation, an inadequate motive of credibility.⁸²

But, *per accidens and in extraordinary cases, they may suffice* even without the corroboration of other signs. For then, extraordinary grace acts as a substitute for external criteria, as when a prophet receives an immediate Revelation under the influence of the prophetic light, or in private revelations, or in the case of *miraculous conversions*, like that of St. Paul and of other privileged souls.⁸³ Obviously, these signs are of value only for those who experience them interiorly.

B. The simultaneous presence of subjective universal criteria offers moral certitude as regards the credibility of Divine Revelation.

Subjective Uni-
versal Criteria.

As already noted, these motives of credibility are derived from the marvelous satisfaction, which a given doctrine or religion produces, in respect of all the moral and religious

⁷⁹) Garrigou-Lagrange, O. P., *ibid.*, II, p. 5; (3'ed.), p. 299.

⁸⁰) *Ibid.*, II, p. 6; (3'ed.), p. 300.

⁸¹) ST. I, II, 112, 5.

⁸²) Garrigou-Lagrange, O. P., *ibid.*, II, pp. 7, 8; (3'ed.), pp. 299, 300.

⁸³) cf. St. Thomas, *Quodl.* II, a. 6 ad 1; Matth. ix, 9; Acts of Apostles, xvi, 14.

aspirations of *humanity*. They are said to be *universal*, inasmuch as they are found, at least confusedly, in all men and accordingly as this marvelous satisfaction of human aspirations appears, not merely in the experience of this or that individual, but in the common experience of society regenerated by Christianity. These aspirations within us are "the seeds of the natural virtues" in regard to our *ultimate end* and the *means* to attain it. That is to say, from the viewpoint of our ultimate end they are aspirations to know God, to hope in Him, to love Him above all things, to pay interior and exterior worship to Him; in respect of the means to attain that end, they are the inclinations to prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance. In this connection we must insist especially upon the desire of humanity for *eternal happiness*, and more properly upon the *conditional and inefficacious desire of seeing God intuitively*.

Secondly, to be of value, this argument, from the subjective universal criteria, must insist not merely upon the conformity of a given doctrine with our aspirations and needs, but also upon the fact that that doctrine or religion fulfills the legitimate aspirations of our nature *in such a marvelous way, that it seems to proceed from God alone*, inasmuch as this wondrous consonance *surpasses our natural powers and exigencies*, and thus constitutes a moral Miracle. These supernatural effects are *not* perceived by the common experience of mankind *formaliter*, that is to say, inasmuch as they are supernaturally produced by God; rather *their supernatural character appears only indirectly*, namely, from the moral incapacity of mankind, to arrive at such a doctrine and life by means of its native resources alone.

Finally, we must insist upon the fact that the doctrine or religion in question satisfies *all our aspirations simultaneously*; thereby it becomes evident to us, that only God can know and satisfy the human heart so profoundly and perfectly.

Proof. If all the legitimate and higher aspirations of our nature are satisfied in a marvelous manner, nay more, superabundantly satisfied, in a particular religion, we are morally certain that the religion in question is of divine origin. For men, by their natural powers alone, could not have discovered *such a great conformity and interior peace*, as is evident from what we have said in the chapter on the moral necessity of Divine Revelation. For in the present condition of the human race, it is

Fulfills
desires of
humanity
in a
wonderful
way
attributable
to God
alone
↓

morally impossible for mankind to know with facility, firm assurance and without any admixture of error, all the natural truths of religion and morality. Therefore, if any religion solves in a harmonious manner all the essential questions concerning God and the human soul, and satisfies in a marvelous way all the aspirations of our nature, nay more, superabundantly satisfies them, it is *morally certain* that such a religion proceeds from God. That is especially true, if in other religions and philosophical systems, one or the other legitimate aspiration is not satisfied or, at least, if all of them together are not satisfied.⁸⁴

However, as Cardinal Deschamps writes,⁸⁵ the *subjective universal criteria must not be separated from the objective signs*; when used together they constitute an incontestible proof of the divine origin of a given doctrine or religion.

Chapter II

RELATIVE VALUE OF INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL CRITERIA

In the foregoing chapter we have seen that, while there is a great variety of criteria, they are not all of the same value as evidences of Divine Revelation. Some of them point to the *possibility* that a given doctrine or religion is divine; others demonstrate the fact of the divine origin of an alleged revelation with *more or less probability*; finally, others manifest that fact with *moral certainty*.

Retrospect.

⁸⁴) Garrigou-Lagrange. O. P., *ibid.*, II, pp. 8-10; (3^{ed.}), pp. 301-313; cf. De Poulpique, O. P., *L'Objet intégral de l'Apologétique*, 2^e Partie: "Apologétique interne, sa nécessité, sa méthode, sa valeur", p. 324.

⁸⁵) *Démonstrations de la Foi. Premier Entretien*, p. 1 (ed. Des-sain): "Ecoute et regarde: il n'y a que deux faits à vérifier, l'un en vous, l'autre de vous; ils se recherchent pour s'embrasser, de tous les deux, le témoin c'est vous-même".

Prospect

Obviously, if the apologist is to apply these signs in a scientific manner, he must possess clear and exact ideas as regards the relative proving force of these tokens. Hence, we propose to examine more in detail the relative evidential value of these signs. In the first place, there is no special difficulty as regards the relative value of the *negative* and *positive* criteria, as is evident from the preceding chapter. But the same cannot be said of the other signs. For, on the one hand, some ascribe greater value to the *internal* as compared with the *external* signs; on the other hand, many give the preference to the *subjective* rather than the *objective* criteria. As a consequence, there is not a little divergence of opinion in reference to the relative position of the *primary* and *secondary* signs of Revelation. In the present chapter, we will investigate the relative evidential value of the internal and external signs, reserving for the next three chapters our inquiry into the relative proving force of the subjective criteria. Finally, in the chapters on Miracles and Prophecies, we shall deal in detail with the evidential value of the primary signs.

Catholic Doctrine.

The Vatican Council teaches that "God willed that, to the *interior* help of the Holy Ghost, there should be joined *exterior* proofs of His Revelation, to wit, divine facts, and especially Miracles and Prophecies, which, as they manifestly display the omnipotence and infinite wisdom of God, are most certain proofs of His Divine Revelation adapted to the intelligence of all men". In harmony with this teaching is the parallel canon attached to this same chapter: "If any one shall say that Divine Revelation cannot be made credible by outward signs, and, therefore, that men ought to be moved to faith solely by the interior experience of each, or by private judgment; let him be anathema".¹ Hence, while the Church neither despises nor undervalues the application of the internal criteria, which are derived from the truth and holiness of a given doctrine, she lays the chief emphasis

¹) *Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith*. III Sess; 3^d chap., DB. nn. 1790; 1812.

decidedly on the external tokens, especially on Miracles and Prophecies, as "the most certain proofs adapted to the intelligence of all men".

It is, indeed, true that for scientific apology, as well as for practical life the *internal criteria* are of the greatest significance, since they bring the essence and the intrinsic value of Divine Revelation close to man. However, in general, they do not give us full certitude; for, as indicated above, a doctrine characterized by truth and beauty and holiness may owe its origin to the extraordinary talent of men. Secondly, the internal tokens are seldom decisive in the initial step of conversion to the Faith. And, after all, the chief thing as regards the acceptance of Christianity is precisely this momentous transition from unbelief to belief. The density or blindness of the pagan mind withstood the sublime and kindly light of Christian doctrine; from the unenlightened viewpoint of the heathen and *unbeliever*, much in the Christian Religion continues to be "folly and a stumbling-block".² How easy is it for a person, who still cherishes prejudices against Divine Revelation or who, at least, does not enter upon the inquiry into its truth with a ready willingness, to assume that the mysteries of Faith contradict reason; that seeming antilogies are real contradictions; that what contradicts his natural inclinations and his worldly viewpoint is really unnatural! Then too, how can an uneducated person investigate the sum-total of the doctrinal content of an alleged revelation, in order to arrive at a knowledge of its intrinsic truth, reasonableness, logical consequence, and holiness? Likewise the educated, too, are indebted to Divine Revelation itself for their knowledge of what is reasonable in religious matters, of what is holy in morality, of what are the real needs of human nature which Divine Revelation is to satisfy.⁴ As the Apostle says, our faith should

External Criteria Indispensable.

²) J. Mausbach, *Grundzüge der katholischen Apologetik*. Münster i. W. 1921 (3^d-4th ed.), p. 21.

³) C. Gutberlet, *Lehrbuch der Apologetik*. Münster i. W. 1904 (3^d ed.), II: "Von der geoffenbarten Religion", p. 95.

⁴) Mausbach, *ibid.*, p. 21.

not stand "on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God".⁵

But for the *believer* the case is somewhat different. A person already convinced of the divine origin of a given doctrine or religion, can easily realize that he is blessed with the pure truth of Divine Revelation. By a thoughtful pondering of the truth, the holiness and the beauty of Christian doctrine, such a person can be moved more strongly and be kept more easily in the Faith than through motives which are derived from Miracles and Prophecies.⁶

Consequently, while recognizing the significance and value of the internal criteria, the Church insists that the external signs of Divine Revelation are indispensable.

Certain *Catholics*, and *Rationalists* in general, question this evaluation, though for different reasons. We shall consider, first, the opinion of certain Catholic writers.

Suarez.

I. a) *Suarez* gives the primacy to the *internal* criteria. He writes: "Prima (condicio) est veritas sine admixtione alicujus falsitatis. Si doctrina sit omnino pura et quae non possit de aliqua falsitate convinci, magnum argumentum est, quod habeat Deum auctorem . . . Secunda condicio est sanctitas et puritas doctrinae, ad quam spectat, ut omnia, quae doceat, sint honesta, et nihil approbet, quod turpe sit, atque etiam ut omnia tradat, quae ad rectitudinem vitae necessaria sint et sufficient".⁷

We reply that it is not the satisfaction of the individual human will, but rather the fulfillment of the objectively demonstrable, religious and moral end which God has set for mankind, that decides as to the divine origin of Revelation; for, the will of man can and, in fact, only too often does strive falsely. Man needs very often not only what he desires and longs for, but still more what he is ignorant of or what he positively rejects. In many respects Divine Revelation itself must first teach us the truth about the

⁵ I Cor. ii, 5.

⁶ J. Pohle, "Natur und Übernatur", in RCK. I, pp. 475, 476.

⁷ *De Fide*, disp. 4, sect. 3, n. 2.

human will, the essence of man; God's own word must first awaken the true needs of the human soul and stifle those which are already at hand.⁸

b) According to *Hermann Schell* "all the individual criteria constitute a single collective criterion, in which is expressed the divine value and origin of Revelation. In this connection the higher value and the fundamental significance belong to the *internal criteria*".⁹ Apologetically Miracles are "not efficacious apart from their connection with the internal criteria, the intrinsic convincing power of religion or a philosophy of the world".¹⁰ Christ Himself announces the principle: "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they believe if one rise again from the dead" (Luke xvi, 31). By these words, so Schell insists, "Christ means the spiritual leaders of Israel: hence, not the acknowledgement of the authority of Revelation, but the internal understanding of its teachings and purposes! The Synedrium believed in Revelation according to the meaning of the letter: for that reason it rejected the doctrine and person of Jesus Christ despite Miracles".¹¹ Thus, from the apologetic viewpoint Schell puts Miracles in the second place, and makes them dependent upon "the internal criteria, the intrinsic convincing power of religion or a philosophy of the world".¹²

There can be no doubt about the fact, that Schell wished to remain faithful in principle to the objective foundation of Scholasticism, as he himself tells us;¹³ but, in point of fact, he frequently abandoned this objective basis and lapsed into subjectivism.¹⁴ For he was *irrenical to an exaggerated degree*. This attitude of mind exposed him to a certain weakness and confusion as regards the Catholic position, into the understanding of which he penetrated less

⁸ Hëttinger-Weber, *Lehrbuch der Fundamentaltheologie oder Apologetik*. Freiburg i. B. 1913, (3'ed.), p. 186.

⁹ *Apologie des Christentums*. Paderborn. 1907 (3'ed.), I: "Religion und Offenbarung", p. 280.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, I, p. 370.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 368, 370.

¹² A. Gisler, *Der Modernismus*. Einsiedeln. 1913 (4'ed.), p. 250.

¹³ *Apologie des Christentums*, I, pp. xiii sq.

¹⁴ Gisler, *ibid.*, p. 240.

Views of Certain Catholics.

Schell. *irrenical*

thoroughly and carefully than into that of its opponents.¹⁵ Misunderstanding the Pauline text: "The Jews require signs and the Greeks seek after wisdom" (I Cor. i, 22), he maintained that the signs of Divine Revelation are to be deduced primarily from the divine message itself, rather than from Miracles and Prophecies. Despite his eloquent defense of Miracles, he made concessions which essentially weakened the evidential value of these external criteria. The same stricture holds good as regards his solution of the difficulties which adversaries raised against the credibility of the Miracle accounts, the knowability of the boundary lines between natural and supernatural events, the possibility of demonstrating Divine Revelation from an individual historical fact; finally, his answer to the difficulties arising from the law of substance is weak and far from thorough.¹⁶

We agree with Schell that the internal criteria, from the viewpoint of their content, are of greater value and more intimately connected with the purpose of Divine Revelation than the external criteria; furthermore, that certain individuals may be able to arrive at Faith and to persevere therein with the help of the internal criteria. However, for apologetics the decisive question is: What proving force do the criteria possess of themselves in relation to the Fact of Divine Revelation? And in this respect the external criteria rank above the internal. These latter are derived from the content of Revelation, which is either natural or supernatural. In the former case the conclusion from the content of the doctrine to its divine origin is not stringent, as we have shown above.¹⁷ On the other hand, if the doctrine is supernatural, e. g. the Trinity, the very fact that it has been proposed at all to mankind, as well as its value for man's religious life, may indeed suggest the thought of its divine origin; however, the primary question after all is whether its content is true. And this question can be decided only after it has been shown that it actually does proceed from God.¹⁸

In other words, the basic thought of Schell's apologetics, namely, that one may deduce the supernatural character of Christianity from its unique power of truth, its incomparable value for life, is not true. No method of demonstra-

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 248; cf. A. Seitz, *Zur Apologie des Christentums von Hermann Schell*, in *Katholik*, Bd. VI, p. 164.

¹⁶ Gisler, *ibid.*, p. 249; Seitz, *ibid.*, pp. 168-175.

¹⁷ cf. above, pp. 59, 60.

¹⁸ Schill-Straubinger, *Theologische Prinzipienlehre*. Paderborn. 1923 (5^{ed.}), pp. 196, 197.

tion leads from what God is said to have spoken, to the fact that He has spoken. For there are many Christian truths, whose existence and content are in no way accessible to reason alone; for they are strict mysteries. On the other hand, there are Christian truths, whose content can be grasped only in part by mere reason; the human mind can traverse, as it were, only a small fringe of the coast, not the entire ocean of their content. Surely, a person who knows only the coast will hesitate to lay claim to more than a conditional and reserved knowledge regarding the wide open sea.—But even granting that reason alone can measure and weigh the whole range of Christian truth, the most that could be claimed for reason is that it could arrive at a merely personal, individualistic apologetics; for judgments regarding the beauty, sublimity and consoling power of religious truth, fluctuate and change often from age to age, from person to person.¹⁹

e) To show how perfectly the Christian Religion is in harmony with the deepest aspirations and affections of human nature, the learned Bishop of Laval, *E. Bougaud*,²⁰ utilizes what he terms the "*methode intime*", which gives the primacy to the internal criteria. In the first volume ("*La Religion et l'Irreligion*") of this masterly apologetics, he presents not a dry demonstration of the truth of religion and the fallacy of unbelief, but a scholarly and splendid exposition of the essence of religion, its beauty, its necessity for the individual, the family and society in general, and, at the same time, an annihilating critique of unbelief on the basis of the deplorable *havoc*, which irreligion has wrought in all the spheres of human life.

We may heartily agree with the learned author, when he asserts that the task of the present-day apologist consists in establishing the foundations of the truths of Natural Religion; for unbelief has already become so radical, that it questions not only revealed truths, but casts doubt even upon the existence of God Himself and the immortality of the soul. But it seems to us that Bougaud overshoots the mark in the emphasis which he puts upon the *internal cri-*

¹⁹ Gisler, *ibid.*, p. 251.

²⁰ *Le Christianisme et les temps présents*. Paris. 1917. (12^{ed.} 1923, from which we cite).

teria. It is, of course, true that he does not despise the proofs based on the external signs of Divine Revelation; but he does regard this method of demonstration as characteristic of the eighteenth century, and less convincing than the argument based on the beauty, sublimity and efficacy of the doctrinal content of religion.

As noted above, *we must make a distinction*. If there is question of leading some one to the Faith or of winning one back again to Faith, Bougaud's method seems to deserve the preference. To be sure, only he can call it the easier method who has at his command the power of language, the brilliant conception of religion, the deep knowledge of the world and of man, which one must admire so much in this apology. However, when there is question of arriving at the grounds of belief, proofs upon which rests the certitude of Faith, we cannot dispense with the motives of credibility drawn from Miracles and Prophecies. The chapters in Bougaud's apology, in which he describes, in unsurpassed beauty, the "marvelous effects of religion, particularly the divine treatment of sorrow",²¹ may indeed of themselves suffice to move many a broken heart to seek again its own comfort in religion. But if a person is to come into possession of an unshakable Faith and to preserve it, it is not sufficient that Faith be *comforting*, rather the decisive point is that it be *true*, and this can be established with moral certainty only with the aid of the external criteria.²²

Because of lack of space we cannot discuss the views of other Catholics who unduly stress the internal criteria.²³ These suffice to indicate the general trend of thought along this line. *St. Thomas Aquinas*²⁴ also appeals to the internal signs; but his purpose is not to demonstrate the divinity of Revelation by means of these criteria. It is rather to make it appear acceptable to human reason, by showing that it is in consonance with reason, by appealing to the analogy between Revelation and philosophical truth, etc.²⁵

Rationalism. II. The *enemies* of Divine Revelation place a far greater emphasis upon the *internal* criteria. By stressing the application of these signs, they desire to reject God's revealed message at the very outset; in fact, they are altogether unwilling to investigate the external

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 440 sq.

²² Gutberlet, *ibid.*, II, pp. 95, 96.

²³ For instance, Chateaubriand, *Le génie du Christianisme*. Paris. 1802; cf. G. Bertrin, art. "Chateaubriand", in CE. III, pp. 641 sq; also many of the French pulpit orators.

²⁴ cf. *Summa contra Gentiles*.

²⁵ J. V. Bainvel, S. J., *De vera religione et apologetica*. Paris. 1914, p. 168.

grounds of Faith. As indicated above, we do not oppose the provisional use of the internal criteria; on the contrary, we advise their utilization. For obviously, it is very much to the point to inquire more closely into the content of an alleged revelation for the purpose of rejecting it immediately, that is, without entering further upon the consideration of its external signs, if that revelation appears to be unreasonable and immoral, as in the case of Buddhism, Parsism and Mohammedanism. However, *Rationalism* assumes an altogether different attitude. It is willing to admit a given revelation only if it appears as the expression of the religion of reason, or of the natural moral law and, in consequence, it repudiates every revelation which contains so-called supernatural facts and doctrines. Thus, the rationalistic criterion of the *credibility of a given religion and ethics is its conformity with the dictates of natural human reason.* N. B.

That this method is untenable, we have already shown in the chapter on the Possibility of strict Mysteries;²⁶ we shall add further reasons when we come to deal with the possibility of Miracles and Prophecies.²⁷ As a matter of fact, the rejection of the external criteria and the strong attachment to the internal signs of Divine Revelation, in modern times, find their psychological explanation in the modern man's shyness of Miracles. For instance, *O. Pfeiderer* maintains that "the Miracle accounts" are "the most difficult adjunct of Faith and for not a few the rock on which their Christian Faith is shattered". However, it is really only at the price of surrendering Theism that the thinking man can question the possibility of Miracles and external Revelation.²⁸

Moreover, to demand, as Rationalists do, a thorough investigation into the content of an alleged revelation and a demonstration of the logical consistency of all of its propositions with rational knowledge, as prelimi-

²⁶ cf. J. J. Baierl, *The Theory of Revelation*. Rochester, N. Y. 1927, Part I, sect. 1, pp. 99, 100.

²⁷ cf. Gutberlet, *ibid.*, II, p. 96.

²⁸ J. Pohle, *ibid.*, I, p. 481.

naries to its acceptance, precludes the possibility of ever arriving at the end and of assenting to supernatural Revelation. For, prescind from mysteries, whose intrinsic harmony cannot be proved by a positive demonstration; and passing over also the unlettered who are quite incapable of entering upon such an investigation, we cannot even solve all the philosophical objections, which can be raised against a rational proposition of Revelation by every philosophical system. For, even though all the real objections, which may be proposed at a given period, be successfully answered, it will always be possible to surmise that new difficulties will be brought forward by a later system or by a more acute thinker, and in respect of a given mystery difficulties will be advanced, which are perhaps for the time being insoluble. Then again, the philosophical systems do not agree with one another. Which system is to serve as the criterion of the reasonableness of a proposition in an alleged revelation? Therefore, whoever is willing to believe only after he has examined into the reasonableness of a putative revelation must either reject it absolutely, since it does not accord with many systems, or he must first establish which one among all the religious and ethical systems really represents what is reasonable, and since this is morally impossible, without Divine Revelation, this rationalistic method necessarily results in the rejection of supernatural Revelation.²⁹

The most that one might logically conclude from the application of this criterion is that a doctrine, which is in harmony with human reason, is *true*, *not* that it has been *revealed* by God in a supernatural manner.³⁰

a) Rationalists³¹ erroneously object that our method of demonstration, by means of the external criteria, involves the fallacy of the *vicious circle*, since it seeks to demonstrate the supernatural (*i. e.*, doctrine) by means of the

²⁹) Gutberlet, *ibid.*, II, pp. 96, 97.

³⁰) Aemil. Dorsch, S. J., *Institutiones theologiae fundamentalis*. Oeniponte. 1916, I, p. 465.

³¹) For instance, Reimarus (*Lessing, Werke*, VI, p. 523); Wegscheider, *Institutiones theol. christ. dogm.* § 11; Daub, *Die dogmatische Theologie jetziger Zeit*. Heidelberg. 1883, 153.

supernatural (*i. e.*, Miracle). For, as naturally known facts and truths can serve as the medium for demonstrating naturally unknown facts and truths, for example, the royal seal authenticates the royal handwriting, so, too, supernatural (unknown) facts and truths can be attested by supernatural (known) facts and truths. This method is employed in every proof that is arranged according to the method of induction. Surely, one cannot be expected to demonstrate the supernatural by means of the natural! For instance, if an alleged apostle eats and drinks and takes life easy, that is no proof that he has a supernatural mission. But if he performs an act which God alone can do, as a sign of his claims, he offers a valid proof for his divine mission. Therefore, a supernatural doctrine and a supernatural mission are demonstrable by means of a supernatural criterion.

Of course, we learn about these miraculous deeds from the sacred writings. The believer, it is true, acknowledges these writings as divinely inspired; but they are not that only. They are likewise historical sources worthy of human credence, which have been composed by ocular and auricular witnesses. And, as such, apologetics regards their testimonies regarding the historical fact of Miracles. Therefore, it is not a vicious circle, if we appeal to the accounts of these witnesses, because we do not view them from the same coin of vantage. Moreover, the external criteria and Miracles themselves are attested not only by the sacred writings, but also by a series of non-inspired ecclesiastical and profane historians, nay more, by the very existence, history and perpetuity of Christianity itself.³²

b) The pseudo-reason advanced by *Hegel*,³³ namely, that "the spiritual and the necessary are not demonstrable by means of the temporal and the sensible", is just as fallacious as the analogous argument of *Lessing*,³⁴ that is to say, "accidental truths of history can never serve as proofs of the truths of reason". For, the external criteria of Revelation are not the immediate proofs of the *truth of the content of the revealed doctrine*, but rather of the *accidental fact*, that God has disclosed that content to us supernaturally. But if the truths revealed are really from God, it follows with absolute necessity that they are true. The rationalistic method of reasoning, lying at the basis of this objection, is precisely the same as in the following argumenta-

³²) Gutberlet, *ibid.*, II, p. 97; Hettinger-Weber, *ibid.*, p. 188.

³³) *Werke*, VI, 384.

³⁴) *Beweis des Geistes und der Kraft*, ed. Lachmann-Malzahn, X, 89.

tion: The binding authority of a law cannot be proved by means of the royal seal, for, in that case, the spiritual would be demonstrated by means of the sensible, the permanent by means of the accidental. What would a judge say to a criminal who offered such an excuse? The subterfuge of Rationalists is not a whit better.³⁵

In the matter under discussion, there is no question at all of rational *insight* into truth. Faith is a moral surrender of man to God, which, rests, to be sure, upon the rational truth that God is truthful. The immediate purpose of the historical truth of a Miracle is to confirm the historical truth of the divine mission of the apostle; hence, a sensible fact is to demonstrate a spiritual fact, a perfectly valid conclusion from the viewpoint of epistemology, as we have noted in the answer to the preceding objection.³⁶ Once the divine mission of the apostle has been authenticated, the "necessary" eternal truths are not deduced, but *believed* upon God's word.³⁶

Consequently, both *Hegel*, and *Lessing* have overlooked the fact, that apologetics employs the sensible, temporal and historical, simply as conceptual helps for the purpose of proving in turn the temporal and the historical, namely, the *historical fact*, that God has spoken. But apologetics does not deduce the conclusion that the *content* of Revelation is true from what history narrates, but rather from what reason itself knows about God. From the truth of reason, namely, that God can speak only the truth, apologetics concludes that likewise in Christ and His Apostles only truth has spoken.³⁷

The final and decisive reason that the *external*, and not the internal, criteria are the court of last appeal, is because the supernatural *fact* of Revelation can be authenticated only by the infallible historical testimony of God Himself. And in this respect the divine seal, impressed upon "the divine communication" are primarily Miracles and Prophecies.³⁸

c) According to *O. Pfeiderer*³⁹ most believers of the present time accept the Christian Faith *not because of Miracles, but rather in spite of them*; hence, for the modern man Miracles do not possess evidential value. The same is

³⁵) Gutberlet, *ibid.*, II, p. 98.

³⁶) J. Mausbach, *ibid.*, p. 24.

³⁷) Kleutgen, *Theologie der Vorzeit*, IV, 412.

³⁸) J. Pohle, *ibid.*, I, pp. 481, 482.

³⁹) *Die Religion, ihr Wesen und ihre Geschichte*, Leipzig: 1869, I, p. 396.

true, so *Pfeiderer* thinks, as regards the ocular witnesses of Jesus' Miracles, as is evident from Christ's own attitude in reference to Miracles. He did not wish to awaken Faith by performing Miracles. The reason is not difficult to understand; for Faith generated by such sensible signs would be only a sensible Faith; a Faith in a *Saviour from sensible evil*, not a Faith in a *Saviour from sin*. Such a Faith Christ was not disposed to generate or promote. Hence, His shyness to perform spectacular deeds and His unwillingness to allow the people to promulgate the news of authenticated Miracles.—We reply that this is a one-sided interpretation of Christ's Miracles. In the Gospel accounts the Miracles of Jesus appear as deeds of *power*, not as deeds of *benevolence*; as signs of divine power, they demonstrate the divine mission and veracity of the wonder-worker. What the purpose of this mission is, whether temporal or eternal, is told us by His word and teaching.⁴⁰ The judgment of *Möhler*⁴¹ is very much to the point in this connection. He writes: "What a whimsical—we cannot say wonderful—race are the idealists of our time! St. Paul, who had such a spiritual but at the same time ecclesiastical conception of all things, instituted so living a relation between his faith and the conviction of the Lord's resurrection, that he expressly declared, 'If Christ be not risen from the dead, then our faith is in vain'. And how was it otherwise possible, since in Christianity, which is a divine and positive Revelation, the abstract idea and the historical fact—the internal and the external truth are inseparably united? Our idealists and spiritualists have no need of Miracles for the confirmation of their faith! *Yes, truly, for that faith is one of their own making, and not the faith in Christ!*"—Nay more, if Christianity contains no Miracles, then *Christ Himself is no longer a Miracle*; then He entered into this temporal order, not as a higher manifestation sent by God, but only as the fruit that has grown on the tree of humanity itself. Then Christianity is not something absolutely new and supernatural, something absolutely and forever warranted, but merely something relatively valid, not our unsurpassed and unsurpassable ideal, but only a transitory condition. And the day will come, when mankind, having arrived at a higher degree of culture, will pass beyond Christ and look back upon the position of Christianity as vanquished and gone.⁴²

⁴⁰) Mausbach, *ibid.*, p. 24.

⁴¹) *Symbolik*, Regensburg, 1921 (10th ed. by F. X. Kiefl), p. 344; English transl. "*Symbolism*" by James Burton Robertson. London, 1906 (5th ed.), p. 268.

⁴²) *Hettinger-Weber, ibid.*; pp. 189, 190.

Summary. To sum up: *The external criteria of Divine Revelation are of greater apologetic value than the internal signs* for the following reasons.

1. They manifest the divine origin of an alleged revelation with greater certainty than the internal criteria.

As stated above, under certain circumstances, the positive internal criteria beget certitude; but they exert this influence only on those who, by reason of their greater intellectual powers, are able to examine the content of the doctrine in all its aspects and properly to evaluate it. On the other hand, there is always the danger that man's judgment of a given doctrine, especially as regards its sublimity and its capacity for satisfying the innermost needs of man, may be too subjective. The positive external criteria, on the contrary, can be appreciated by all, even the ignorant and unlettered, because they rest upon historical facts which are easy to ascertain. For the same reason (namely, because there is question of *objective* facts) the danger of deception is practically excluded.⁴³

2. They can be known also more easily.

In applying the external criteria it suffices to investigate a few historical facts, whereas the application of the internal criteria demands a careful analysis of the entire content of the doctrines said to be divinely revealed. It is obvious, however, that the more varied and comprehensive the subject-matter to be examined, the easier it is for error to creep in.

3. The fact of Divine Revelation can be known more quickly by means of the external criteria.

This is plain from the fact that, instead of the many truths which constitute the subject-matter of an alleged revelation, only one needs to be considered, that is, the question relative to the *Fact* of Divine Revelation. Once this has been proven with certainty by the application of the external signs, there can be no doubt as to the divine origin of the *content* of the Revelation. The whole inquiry is focused on the question of the credibility of the witness

⁴³) J. Brunsmann, S. V. D., *Lehrbuch der Apologetik*. St. Gabriel bei Wien. 1924, I; "*Religion und Offenbarung*", p. 149; English adaptation, "*A Handbook of Fundamental Theology*", by A. Preuss, St. Louis, Mo. 1929, II, p. 71.

of the alleged revelation, that is to say, the divine mission of the legate and the divine origin of his message.⁴³

At the same time, however, it must be admitted that the internal criteria, per se, are in many respects superior to the external signs.

They lead the inquirer into the essence of the subject in question, and are calculated to awaken a more joyful mood or attitude, since they demonstrate not only that Christianity is a Revealed Religion, but also open up its intrinsic value and its content of truth. Moreover, they are perhaps more congenial to the character and mentality of the "modern man", who is educated in the thought of natural science and for whom Miracles are, often enough, a difficulty and an obstacle rather than an aid to Faith. Nevertheless, despite these advantages the application of the external criteria may not be dispensed with. For their proving force is far more conclusive. The sublimity of the doctrine and the world renewing power of Christianity do not disclose its divine origin so palpably as Miracles do, since it is very difficult to establish the precise measure of achievement, which the power of man, relying on his native resources alone, can attain in spiritual and moral respects.

*Therefore, the proper method to be employed is that which seeks to combine the external and the internal criteria into a harmonious unity.*⁴⁴

Chapter III

THE SUBJECTIVE CRITERIA OF PROTESTANTISM

From the earliest Christian times to the present, there have been advocates of an *internal* proof "of spirit and power" for the truth of Christianity, based on a higher intuition and an experience of the heart. The *external* proof of fact—namely, Miracles and Prophecies—, so it has been said, ought either to be wholly abandoned or

Historical
Retrospect.

⁴³) Brunsmann, S. V. D; *ibid.*, I, p. 149; Brunsmann-Preuss, *ibid.*, II, pp. 71, 72.

⁴⁴) Fr. Sawicki, *Die Wahrheit des Christentums*. Paderborn. 1920 (4^{ed.}), p. 342; cf. Ad. Tanqueray, *Synopsis theologiae dogmaticae*. Romae, Tornaci, Parisiis. 1922 (19^{ed.}), I, pp. 134-137.