

bounds. Such a phenomenon may be a fact of nature containing within itself something mysterious; or it may be a man, whose character, actions and words cannot, apparently, be reconciled with the ordinary laws of history. Then faith, attracted by the *Unknowable* which is united with the phenomenon, possesses itself of the whole phenomenon, and, as it were, permeates it with its own life. From this two things follow. The first is a sort of *transfiguration* of the phenomenon; by its elevation above its own true conditions, by which it becomes more adapted to that form of the divine which faith will infuse into it. The second is a kind of *disfigurement*, which springs from the fact that faith, which has made the phenomenon independent of the circumstances of place and time, attributes to it qualities which it has not; and this is true particularly of the phenomena of the past, and the older they are, the truer it is. From these two principles the Modernists deduce two laws, which, when united with a third which they have already got from agnosticism, constitute the foundation of historical criticism. We will take an illustration from the Person of Christ. In the person of Christ, they say, science and history encounter nothing that is not human. Therefore, in virtue of the first canon deduced from agnosticism, whatever there is in His history suggestive of the divine, must be rejected. Then, according to the second canon, the historical person of Christ was *transfigured* by faith; therefore everything that raises it above historical conditions must be removed. Lastly, the third canon, which lays down that the person of Christ has been *disfigured* by faith, requires that everything should be excluded, deeds and words and all else that is not in keeping with His character, circumstances and education, and with the place and time in which He lived. A strange style of reasoning, truly; but it is Modernist criticism.

Therefore the *religious sentiment*, which through the agency of *vital immanence* emerges from the lurking-places of the subconsciousness, is the germ of all religion, and the explanation of everything that has been or ever will be in any religion. This *sentiment*, which was at first only rudimentary and almost formless, gradually matured, under the influence of that mysterious principle from which it originated, with the progress of human life, of which, as has been said, it is a form. This, then, is the origin of all religion, even supernatural religion; it is only a development of this *religious sentiment*. Nor is the Catholic religion an exception; it is quite on a level with the rest; for it was engendered, by the process of *vital immanence*, in the consciousness of Christ, who was a man of the choicest nature, whose like has never been, nor will be.—Those who hear these audacious, these sacrilegious assertions, are simply shocked! And yet, Venerable Brethren, these are not merely the foolish babblings of infidels. There are many Catholics, yea, and priests too, who say these things openly; and they boast that they are going to reform the Church by these ravings! There is no question now of the old error, by which a sort of right to the supernatural order was claimed for the human nature. We have gone far beyond that: we have reached the point when it is affirmed that our most holy religion, in the man Christ as in us, emanated from nature spontaneously and entirely. Than this there is surely nothing more destructive of the whole supernatural order. Wherefore the Vatican Council most justly decreed: "If anyone says that man cannot be raised by God to a knowledge and perfection which surpasses nature, but that he can and should, by his own efforts and by a constant development, attain finally to the possession of all truth and good, let him be anathema" (*De Revel.*, can. 3).

THE ORIGIN OF DOGMAS.

So far, Venerable Brethren, there has been no mention of the intellect. Still it also, according to the teaching of the Modernists, has its part in the act of faith. And it is of importance to see how.—In that sentiment of which we have frequently spoken, since sentiment is not knowledge, God indeed presents Himself to man, but

in a manner so confused and indistinct that He can hardly be perceived by the believer. It is therefore necessary that a ray of light should be cast upon this sentiment, so that God may be clearly distinguished and set apart from it. This is the task of the intellect, whose office it is to reflect and to analyse, and by means of which man first transforms into mental pictures the vital phenomena which arise within him, and then expresses them in words. Hence the common saying of Modernists: that the religious man must *ponder* his faith.—The intellect, then, encountering this sentiment directs itself upon it, and produces in it a work resembling that of a painter who restores and gives new life to a picture that has perished with age. The simile is that of one of the leaders of Modernism. The operation of the intellect in this work is a double one: first, by a natural and spontaneous act it expresses its concept in a simple, ordinary statement; then, on reflection and deeper consideration, or, as they say, *by elaborating its thought*, it expresses the idea in *secondary* propositions, which are derived from the first, but are more perfect and distinct. These *secondary* propositions, if they finally receive the approval of the supreme *magisterium* of the Church, constitute dogma.

Thus we have reached one of the principal points in the Modernists' system, namely, the origin and the nature of dogma. For they place the origin of dogma in those primitive and simple formulæ, which, under a certain aspect, are necessary to faith; for revelation, to be truly such, requires the clear manifestation of God in the consciousness. But dogma itself, they apparently hold, is contained in the *secondary* formulæ.

To ascertain the nature of dogma, we must first find the relation which exists between the *religious formulas* and the *religious sentiment*. This will be readily perceived by him who realises that these formulas have no other purpose than to furnish the believer with a means of giving an account of his faith to himself. These formulas therefore stand midway between the believer and his faith; in their relation to the faith, they are the inadequate expression of its object, and are usually called *symbols*; in their relation to the believer, they are mere *instruments*.

ITS EVOLUTION.

Hence it is quite impossible to maintain that they express absolute truth: for, in so far as they are *symbols*, they are the images of truth, and so must be adapted to the religious sentiment in its relation to man; and as *instruments*, they are the vehicles of truth, and must therefore in their turn be adapted to man in his relation to the religious sentiment. But the object of the *religious sentiment*, since it embraces the *absolute*, possesses an infinite variety of aspects, of which now one, now another, may present itself. In like manner, he who believes may pass through different phases. Consequently, the formulæ too, which we call dogmas, must be subject to these vicissitudes, and are, therefore, liable to change. Thus the way is open to the intrinsic *evolution* of dogma. An immense collection of sophisms this, that ruins and destroys all religion. Dogma is not only-able, but ought to evolve and to be changed. This is strongly affirmed by the Modernists, and as clearly flows from their principles. For amongst the chief points of their teaching is this which they deduce from the principle of *vital immanence*; that religious formulas, to be really religious and not merely theological speculations, ought to be living and to live the life of the religious sentiment. This is not to be understood in the sense that these formulas, especially if merely imaginative, were to be made for the religious sentiment; it has no more to do with their origin than with number or quality; what is necessary is that the religious sentiment, when needful, introduced some modification, should vitally assimilate them. In other words, it is necessary that the primitive formula be accepted and sanctioned by the heart; and similarly the subsequent work from which spring the secondary formulas must proceed under the guidance of the heart. Hence it comes that these formulas, to be living, should be, and