

## Introduction

THROUGHOUT CHRISTENDOM the Bible is looked upon as the "word of God"—as the truth which God has revealed. All Christian denominations have made it an article of faith that the books of the Old and the New Testament of which the Bible is composed, were inspired by the "Holy Ghost." These creeds teach that the "Holy Ghost" not only impelled the authors of those books to write them, but imparted the contents to them in strict accordance with the truth, and also guarded the writers against any error in setting them down. Many churches even go so far as to maintain that not only the contents, but the very words themselves were inspired by the "Holy Ghost."

This doctrine is an expression of the belief that the truth can have only one source, namely God, and that hence only those things that are derived from a divine revelation can be true.

As for the truths which are taught by the Christian denominations, these are based chiefly upon the writings of the New Testament. Flawless and unassailable evidence must therefore be produced to prove that the contents of these texts were indeed revealed by God.

There are various ways in which God can manifest Himself. It may be that one of His spirits speaks to a human being, who then and there writes down the message word for word. Such were the messages from God that were received by Moses. He heard the voice of God's spirit speaking to him in the sacred tabernacle out of the cloud that overhung the ark of the covenant, and wrote down the words. Again, one of God's spirits may bring the message not in spoken words, but in the form of the letters of the alphabet. In such a case one letter after another is spelled out, and in this way words and sentences are formed. So it was with the messages that were sent by means of the high priest's breast-plate.—Again, one of God's spirits may make use of a mortal's vocal organs in order to speak, or his hand in order to write. This was often so with the prophets of the Old Testament.—Then, also, a spirit of God may so thoroughly imbue a man or a woman with thoughts to be expressed in speech or in writing, that this person's own thoughts are utterly eliminated, and he speaks or writes only as the spirit prompts. This is called "inspiration." Many of God's messages were delivered through the prophets of the Old Testament in this manner.

We distinguish between two kinds of "inspiration." In one case, only the thoughts are inspired in a person by a spirit of God, and these thoughts are written down in the person's own words and in his own human style of expression. In the case of the other kind of "inspiration" not only the thoughts are imparted, but the very words in which these thoughts are to be uttered. This is nothing more nor less than "dictation" on the part of God's spirit. "Inspiration" of this kind is known as "literal" or "verbal" inspiration.

There are in addition a great many other ways in which God may make His will known.

Nothing further is needed to prove that manifestations of God which are effected by one or another of the methods mentioned, contain the pure truth and must be accepted as "the word of God."

Into which group, now, do the writings of the New Testament fall?

All Christian churches teach that the narratives and epistles of the New Testament were imparted to their respective authors by the "Holy Ghost" through

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inspiration. Many churches even contend that it was through "verbal" inspiration, that is to say, by way of "dictation."

What proof have the churches for this doctrine?

There are only two ways in which it could be proved, one being an express statement on the part of the authors of the New Testament to the effect that the contents of their records and epistles had been imparted, or in fact dictated to them, by the Spirit of God. The only other proof that we could consider would be an express assertion, made at any time or in any place by the Spirit of God, to the effect that the books of the New Testament are "inspired" writings. No other possible method of proof exists.

Do the authors themselves say that their writings were imparted to them by the "Holy Ghost"? They, if any one, must have known whether they were writing the story of their personal experiences and observations freely and of their own accord, or whether they were only being employed as "instruments" by God's Spirit. If they wrote their accounts on their own impulse in a purely human style, they would, quite naturally, make no special mention of the fact. If, however, they acted merely as "instruments of God's Spirit," they were in duty bound to acknowledge the fact and give the credit to God. They were obliged to do what the writers of the Old Testament had done. Whenever these announced or recorded a revelation from God, they repeatedly emphasized the fact that it was a divine revelation. So often that it becomes almost wearisome, we read, "Thus says Jehovah," or "God spoke."

Of the books of the New Testament, only one, *The Revelation of John*, was communicated by an angel. What is more, John stresses this fact in the very opening sentence of his book. The authors of all the other books of the New Testament say nothing about the operation of any supernatural influence upon the writing of their reports. Luke, on the contrary, expressly states in the first few lines of his gospel that he has compiled his story in quite the ordinary human way. He writes: "Many before me have undertaken to write the story of the well-established events that happened among us. Their accounts agree with what we are told by those who were eyewitnesses from the beginning, and who appeared in public to proclaim the truth. Having looked carefully into all of the facts from the very outset, I have also decided to write them down in historical order and to send my account to you, most noble Theophilus, in order that you may convince yourself of the truth of that which you have learned by word of mouth." His account, therefore, contains the things that were told to him by eyewitnesses, and not those that were imparted to him by the "Holy Ghost." He tells the same story that many others before him had written down. He is familiar with their writings. He re-examines these one by one and arranges everything in its chronological order, having looked carefully into all of the facts from the very outset; only then does he write his own account. He is therefore doing merely what any conscientious historian would do. If, on the other hand, he had been engaged only in setting down the knowledge imparted to him by the "Holy Ghost," what need would there have been for any painstaking research or for arrangement in chronological sequence or for a careful investigation of all of the facts from the very outset? In that case he would have been spared the duty of making any personal investigation. The same is true of his *Acts of the Apostles*. It would be foolish to speak of these two writings of Luke as "inspired" by the "Holy Ghost."

Again, the apostle John declares that he himself witnessed the events that he relates, and that for this reason his story is authentic. In the introduction to his *First Epistle* he writes: "I am writing to you to tell you of him who is the Word of

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Life; of the events in his career from the beginning; of that which we ourselves heard from him; of that which we saw with our own eyes; of that which we observed in him, and which was so close to us that we could touch it with our hands. In this way we learned beyond a doubt that in him the true life was made manifest. We saw it before our eyes and therefore can bear witness to it." He also denies any kind of "inspiration" by the "Holy Ghost" in connection with his gospel and his epistles.

The same thing is true of the gospels of Matthew and Mark, and of the various epistles. All of these epistles deal with contemporary matters, and were occasioned by inquiries and reports that were sent in by Christian congregations. The teachings, explanations, exhortations, and warnings contained in these epistles are such as would be addressed by any pastor to distant flocks.

The foregoing implies no denial of the fact that a spirit from God carried to the apostles those Christian truths that appear here and there in their epistles. But there is nothing to prove that these truths were withheld from them until they were actually engaged in committing their epistles to writing. On the contrary, the members of the Christian congregations are expressly reminded in some of these passages that these truths have already been proclaimed to them in the past by word of mouth. At all events, the apostles do not say that their epistles were inspired by the Holy Ghost.

It is therefore obvious to every honest student of the Bible that the authors of the books of the New Testament say nothing about having received their writings through "inspiration by the Holy Ghost," with the exception of John in *The Revelation*. As for the gospels and epistles of Luke and John, the proof that they were written without any supernatural aid or intervention is their own statement to that effect.

It follows that the Christian churches cannot produce from the New Testament itself any proof of their doctrine of inspiration.

Neither has God's Spirit at any time declared the books of the New Testament to be "inspired writing." The only two ways by which the New Testament could possibly be proved to be inspired, are therefore eliminated from consideration.

Hence only this fact remains: The authors of the New Testament writings wrote of their own choice and on the basis of their purely human knowledge, with the exception of *The Revelation of John*. Some wrote as eye- and ear-witnesses of that which they describe; others had made careful investigation among such as had been eye- and ear-witnesses of the facts that they report.

Their accounts therefore justly laid claim to trustworthiness as long as the reports of their own hands were extant. They contained the truth. Whether a truth is obtained by purely human ways or by inspiration of God's Spirit does not in any way affect the truth; for truth remains truth, regardless of the manner by which it comes to us.

One very weighty reason for believing that the books of the New Testament, as we have them to-day, do not owe their existence to any divine inspiration, is found in the following fact: If, as the Christian churches contend, the New Testament as an inspired work were the source of the divine truth, that same source would naturally contain all of the truths that Christ wished to reveal to mankind. The fact is, however, that Christ while he was on earth had many important truths which he could not reveal to his disciples because they were unable to bear them. Had he disclosed them, his disciples would have lost faith in him; but it was his intention that the spirits of truth, whom he meant to send to them later, should initiate them into all these truths. If, then, it was the "Holy Ghost" who, as the spirit of truth promised by Christ to his disciples,



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inspired the authors of the New Testament, he would also have revealed to them those important truths which at an earlier date had been beyond the apostles' strength to bear. For according to what is taught by all denominations except the Catholic, there are no sources other than the New Testament from which we can learn those truths that Christ promised.

But does the New Testament contain a single one of those mighty truths that Christ never revealed because they were too weighty to be borne? Not one. And yet, according to Christ, many such truths existed. As for the four gospels, the truths not revealed by Christ cannot be found there, if only for the reason that these gospels deal merely with the things that Christ did and taught while he was on earth.

Let us for a moment admit as a fact the unproved and unprovable "inspired nature of the New Testament"—a statement which could apply only to the text as originally written down. But we no longer possess a single such original manuscript of the New Testament. What we have to-day consists of about three thousand incomplete copies and fragments of copies, no two of which agree. In fact, each individual manuscript can be read in more ways than one, many of its words having been altered by marks subsequently superimposed on them. Often one and the same word has been repeatedly changed. Consequently, no one can say what part of the copies agrees with the original manuscripts of the authors of the New Testament.

It is an actual fact that no other book on earth has undergone so many changes and falsifications at the hands of the copyists as has the Bible, both the Old Testament and the New. With respect to falsifications of the Old Testament, God Himself announces through the prophet Jeremiah: "You think yourselves wise and believe that you are in possession of the truth. Yes, but the pen of the falsifying copyists has turned the truth into a lie."

The same thing can be said of the text of the New Testament. Even the well versed scholar cannot say for certain, with reference to those three thousand copies, which are the words, sentences, or chapters that have been intentionally or accidentally left out, overlooked, misread, misinterpreted, capriciously altered, or deliberately falsified by the copyists. Furthermore, not one of the scribes who made the copies that we have to-day had access to the original text, but only to copies of still earlier copies.

The discrepancies in the documents available to us are not by any means confined to trifles, but in many cases touch the very foundations of the various Christian denominations of to-day. There are many passages, moreover, in which the gospels contradict each other even when reporting the same facts.

As though it were not enough that the old copies available to us conflict in matters of the greatest importance to the doctrines held by the creeds of to-day, the situation is made worse by the translations of the text into our modern languages. Often the translators have failed to understand the Greek text and have assigned to its words, sentences, or phrases a meaning which they either do not have at all, or at least not in their context. Faulty translation is responsible, for instance, for the doctrine of eternal damnation, for the term "the Holy Ghost" as a divine personage, and for the whole doctrine of a Trinity.

Dr. Eugene Huehn is therefore right when he says in his *Hilfsbuch zum Verstaendnis der Bibel* (*Guide to the Interpretation of the Bible*): "Those of us who are acquainted only with our standardized New Testament would never suspect that there are many thousand different versions in existence. Competent judges estimate that the number of discrepancies exceeds the number of words in

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the New Testament. Under the circumstances, the church of to-day would be not a little embarrassed if called upon to uphold the doctrine of 'inspiration'."

Any unprejudiced observer of the situation must ask with Pilate, "What is the truth?" For if the copies of the New Testament in our possession essentially differ from each other in matters of the utmost importance to the creed of the Christian church, and if in addition they have been incorrectly translated into modern speech, no dogma remains in support of which we could refer to the Bible with a feeling of certainty.

This view is confirmed by no less an authority than St. Jerome. About the year 370 A.D. he translated the whole Bible into Latin. Damasus, who was Pope at that time, had asked him to make this translation, and Jerome, in a letter to Damasus, reports on his work in connection with the new version. He writes that it would be a dangerous presumption to attempt to issue a Bible which would reproduce the correct text, since the existing copies of the original documents were scattered all over the world and no two of them were alike. He was now called upon to judge between them. If he were to produce a Bible at this time, it would be unlike any of the others that had preceded it. As a result he would be called an irreverent forger for having altered words and sentences, or having omitted something here, inserted something there, or tried to improve on the original elsewhere. And then he adds a remark that strikes a fatal blow at all who hold the Bible as we have it to-day to be the unadulterated word of God. He says: "Even those who condemn me as an impious forger must admit that we can no longer speak of such a thing as 'truth' where there are variations in that which is said to be true. (*Verum non esse quod variat etiam maledicorum testimonio conprobatur.*)" What he means to say is this: If the writings which are supposed to contain the truth contradict one another as to the truth, no one can call me a "perverter of the truth;" for in my case one can no longer speak of "truth," nor, therefore, of any "perversion" of it.

In his letter Jerome goes on to state how the many discrepancies between the copies of the original text can be explained. Some copyists, he says, were deliberate, criminal forgers. Others were conceited enough to attempt to improve on the text, but in their inexperience merely succeeded in impairing it. Still others dozed while they copied, and so left out, misread, or misplaced words and passages.

But what Jerome says of copying in general, and of copyists, is quite as true of his own version of the Bible; for he himself did exactly what all other translators and copyists had done before him. He too, following his own personal opinion, added material in his new Bible, altered passages and words, and made omissions, as he himself admits. And we may be sure that such changes as he made were not unfavorable to the doctrines then being taught by the papacy. Subsequently, still further changes were introduced into Jerome's translation, which is known as the "Vulgate;" and then, by decree of the Council of Trent, it was declared that the Vulgate contained "the inspired word of God." We are not told to whom the inspiration of the Vulgate with all of its additions, omissions, and subsequent alterations was vouchsafed, whether to Jerome himself, or to some one else. Thus, for example, Jerome's Vulgate does not contain the passage which is of such importance to the Catholic Trinitarian doctrine and which appears in the first Epistle of John: "There are three in heaven to bear witness—", for not a single manuscript to which he had access contained this passage. Nevertheless, it was inserted in the Vulgate that was examined by the Council of Trent, and consequently this spurious matter is held to be inspired, even though it does not occur in a single manuscript that antedates the fifteenth century. Since

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even Catholic theologians regarded the passage as spurious, the Index Congregation on January 15th, 1897, at the instance of the Pope expressly declared that it constituted an "integral part" of the New Testament and that in consequence it was to be considered as having been inspired by the "Holy Ghost."—There was evidently no intention of surrendering this falsified proof for the doctrine of the union of "three persons in one Godhead," seeing that no other evidence for it is to be found in the Bible.

The opinion is often expressed by people in general that God was obliged to preserve the original documents of the New Testament unaltered and to protect them against falsification. The fact that God did not do so has been established above. As a matter of fact, God does not forcibly intervene in any course of action upon which men, even forgers, may decide to embark. He did not prevent the gross falsification of the writings of the Old Testament, and He likewise left those of the New Testament to their fate at the hands of mankind.

We shall now go a step further and assert that it was not Christ's intention that his teachings should be written down at all, or that documents of any sort should be looked upon as the source of the truth. Had he intended his teachings to be recorded in writing he would have clearly said so. A written record of this kind, according to the belief of most of our denominations, would have been of supreme importance to all succeeding generations as the sole source of the truth. Are we asked to believe that Christ remained silent concerning a matter on which the diffusion of his gospel would depend for all time to come? The truth is that he did not say one word about setting down his doctrines in writing, neither in his sermons nor in his talks with his disciples. He sends them forth to teach, to heal the sick, to drive out evil spirits—but not to write books.

Moreover, he would certainly not have entrusted the task of recording his teachings to his disciples, but would have performed it himself. Besides, it would have been an easy matter for him to dictate his doctrine in full to a scribe, for in his day there were many men who made their living by writing; and even in those times shorthand writing for taking down dictation had been invented.

But he thought it to no purpose to record his doctrine in writing, for he knew the vicissitudes to which all writings are subject. He, too, recognized the force of the eternally true saying: *Habent sua fata libelli*—"Written matter is the sport of fate." It may be destroyed or falsified, and later generations will be in no position to judge whether that which they have before them is the original text of a manuscript, or a forgery. Moreover, writings on behalf of a good cause may be falsified to serve an evil one, and untruths can be circulated under the guise of truth. If, according to God's own word, truth was turned into lies in the Old Testament by the pen of the falsifying copyists, is it not certain that the same fate would have befallen Christ's writings? Have we not seen what was done with the text of the New Testament in the course of the centuries? It has become a book in which every one seeks and finds evidence to support his own particular doctrine. As many as two hundred and six different Christian sects have been counted, each differing from the rest in one tenet or another, yet each of them citing the New Testament to prove that its own creed is the true one. Could an all-knowing God have willed that a book in which every man can find substantiation for his erroneous views, should serve as the source of unalloyed truth? The very thought is sacrilege, implying, as it does, that God gave to mankind, starving for the truth, a stone instead of bread.

Where, then, can we find the unsullied fountain of truth, from which no error can flow?



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It has been plainly indicated by Christ. The words in which he directs us to that source are the same in all the manuscripts of the New Testament. They are the words that Christ spoke a few hours before he departed from this earth: "And I will pray to the Father, and He will give you another helper to be with you for ever—the spirits of the truth; and they will teach you all things."

God's spirits of truth as the sole source of the truth—that is the legacy that Jesus bequeathed to us in his last hours.

In speaking as he did, Jesus proclaimed no new doctrine. His doctrine is as old as mankind. As long as man has been on earth, God's spirit-messengers have been the only bearers of the truth. Such messengers spoke with Cain, Abel, and Enoch. Abraham constantly communicated with them. Three of them, materialized as human beings, came to him with messages from God. They went into Lot's house, and saved Lot and his family. The people of Israel used to inquire of God, Who answered them through His messengers by methods perceptible to the human senses. God's messenger spoke to Moses out of the burning bush, led him to Egypt, and through the desert. It was this messenger's voice that Moses heard coming from the cloud that travelled before the people, and later, from the cloud that gathered over the ark in the tabernacle. Of Moses we are told that he announced to the people only the things that had been said to him by this voice, which spoke to him "as one friend speaks to another." On Mount Sinai it was God's voice that resounded as He gave the people His laws. Later there were a great number of so-called "prophets" through whom God transmitted His messages.

At the threshold of the New Testament we again find God's messengers. An angel from God appears to Zacharias, to Mary, and to Joseph, and delivers God's messages to them. John the Baptist is commanded by one of God's envoys to administer baptism. The same messenger tells him of the sign by which he may recognize the Messiah. While Christ is being baptized in the Jordan, the Spirit of God speaks to him. The same Spirit leads him into the desert, where angels of God visit him and attend him after he has passed his test.

Christ's life on earth is an unbroken communion with God's world of spirits. With the aid of a spirit sent by God, Jesus exorcizes evil spirits and heals the sick. Through his contact with God's messengers he learns from his Father the doctrines that he must preach to the people.

Again and again he confesses that he is not speaking on his own authority, but is proclaiming only that which was imparted to him by his Father. As far as there was need, his Father instructed him through spirit-messengers who were constantly descending and rising above the Son of man. "You will see God's messengers ascending and descending above the Son of man."—"The things that I have heard from Him, I speak to all the world."

It was his wish that all who preached the gospel should draw anew from the same source from which he himself had drawn. First and foremost, his apostles. They were not merely to repeat their own conception of what they had heard from Christ, for people are prone to be inaccurate when repeating the words of others. For that reason even the apostles were to be instructed anew by the spirits of truth concerning the things which they had learned from the human discourse of Christ, in order that they might be guarded against errors arising from misunderstanding. Through God's spirits they were to receive confirmation of the gospel that Christ had preached, and also to be taught the new truths that Christ had been constrained to withhold because the apostles were not yet ready to receive them.

The correctness of this conclusion we find confirmed by Christ's own words: "And I will pray to the Father, and He will give you another helper to be with

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you for ever—the spirits of the truth.”—“I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. But when these spirits of truth come, they will guide you into all the truth.”—“But the helpers, the holy spirits whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.”

According to these words the spirits of truth had a twofold task to perform. First they were to keep the faithful in mind of that which Christ had taught them and to confirm their belief in the same. After that, however, their duty was to continue the instruction begun by Christ and to reveal those things which, for the reasons already given, he had withheld from his disciples. Moreover, God's spirits were to remain with them for all time, since the danger of error was a constant menace because of the powers of evil and human weakness. In short, it was not Christ's wish that later generations should be dependent on the religious traditions handed down to them by their forbears; for such traditions, after having passed through human agencies, could not be warranted as true. There could be no way of knowing what part of them came from the divine fountain of truth, and what part from human error.

Thus, true to the promise of Christ, God's messengers were constantly coming as spirits of truth after his earthly death. It is they whom the apostles invoke again and again when they call upon men to believe their teachings. In Paul's writings especially we continually find references to these bearers of the truth. “The things that I said and preached I did not lay before you in fascinating words of human wisdom, but it was *God's spirits* and God's power that spoke through me. For your faith was not to be based on human wisdom, but on a divine power.”—“But to us God has revealed them through *His spirit-world*.”—“Now we have not received one of the evil spirits that rule the world, but *a spirit that comes from God*.”—“We preached about this, not with words taught by human wisdom, but in such words as *a spirit of God* teaches us; thus we deliver the spirit's message in the same words in which the spirit gave it to us. True, a worldly-minded man does not accept what comes from a spirit of God, for he looks upon communication with God's spirit-world as madness.”—“You are an epistle of Christ, written not with ink but *with a spirit of the living God*.”—“For I make known to you, brothers, as touching the gospel which was preached by me, that it is not the work of man. I neither received it from man nor was it taught to me by man, but it came to me *through a revelation of Jesus Christ*.”

It was not only the apostles who were taught by God's spirits, but also the early Christian communities as well, inasmuch as messengers from God spoke to them through so-called “prophets.” The word “prophet” means the same as an “instrument” of God. Such instruments were to be found in all of the Christian congregations of early times. Hence Paul writes that the “mysteries of Christ have now been revealed to his holy apostles and to the prophets, *by a spirit of God*.”

Through these “mediums” or instruments of the good spirits the faithful could at all times ascertain whether a doctrine were true and how it was to be interpreted. For this reason Paul writes to the Philippians: “And if in any matter you are of a different opinion, God will make it clear to you.” They were free to inquire of God when they were gathered for worship, and they received their answer from God's spirits who spoke through mediums.

Again, such prophets or mediums are frequently mentioned in the *Acts of the Apostles* as transmitting messages from God brought by His spirits.

In the Old Testament God calls upon men to come to *Him* in their search for the truth: “Inquire of Me,” He said, and through His spirit-messengers He revealed



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the truth. By his own admission, Christ, as a mortal, learned the truth from God's spirits. He promises his apostles to initiate them into the whole truth through spirits of truth. The apostles bear witness that this promise was fulfilled in their case and in that of the Christian congregations; therefore that they received their doctrine from God's spirits.

But from what source does Christianity of to-day draw the truth? Can the Christian divines of the various sects say of themselves that a spirit of God is speaking through them? Can they like Paul contend that they did not learn their doctrine from men and acquire it by human instruction, but by a revelation of Christ? They cannot. They are in the employ of their respective churches. They have learned the creed of those churches through human instruction in schools, seminaries, and universities. What they have absorbed is human wisdom, professional wisdom, together with all of its errors, and this is what they teach their congregations. Of spirits as envoys of God and as bearers of the truth they know nothing. They too think it foolishness, as Paul says, to believe that in this day any doctrine should be taught by a spirit of God,—when there are so many learned theologians, doctors, and professors. It is as though Christ had said, "I will send you high priests, popes, bishops, clergymen, professors, and doctors of divinity." A man like Moses had to communicate with God's world of spirits and to "inquire of God" in order to find the truth. The same was true of the great prophets and even of Christ, as well as of the apostles and the Christians of the early centuries of the era. But to-day such a thing is considered antiquated and outmoded.

As a matter of fact it was precisely the learned clergymen and the professors of "sacred theology" who introduced the doctrines against which Paul warns us when he says: "Let no man beguile you with the wisdom and the vain deceit that belongs to men and to the powers of the spirits of the world, but not to Christ."—"Some of the men have lost sight of this goal and are beating the air with their interpretations, wishing to be regarded as versed in the truth although they do not understand the meaning of the terms which they use or the things of which they speak with so much assurance."—"They are the men who cause divisions; worldly-minded men *who have not received a holy spirit.*"

For sixteen hundred years the world of God's spirits has been excluded from the Christian churches. The leaders of the churches have "extinguished the holy spirits." But wherever God's spirits are forced to give ground, others appear, the very ones of which Paul writes to Timothy: "God's spirits expressly declare that in times to come many will fall away from the faith and turn to spirits and doctrines of deceit."

Thus from the time at which communion with the world of God's spirits as the only road to the truth was abandoned, the most diverse and far-reaching errors crept into the Christian religion. Century by century matters grew worse. Truth after truth was tainted and rendered unpalatable by error. And what was the result? To-day we have a Christianity split asunder by countless sects, each preaching things that are not true, and each believing its own creed to be the one and only true gospel of Christ. And yet we wonder that a religion so adulterated and frayed should have ceased to exert any influence on mankind. Give back to the people the religion of the early Christians! Take from their shoulders the spiritual burdens that you have imposed by man-made teachings and the craving for power, and restore to them their freedom to commune with God's bearers of the truth. Then you will see how great an influence Christianity can exert on the people of to-day also. For it is only the truth, not falsehood, that creates power.

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The Catholic Church tries to explain the division into sects on the ground that all of the other Christian creeds seceded from her, whose faith alone was the true one. But it was precisely that church which drove God's spirit-world from the Christian faith. It was that church which, leagued with the temporal powers, destroyed all who believed otherwise than was prescribed by the authority of the pope. In the name of Catholic Christianity, the blood of hundreds of thousands has flowed.

It is true that the Catholic Church has succeeded in creating a human substitute for the divine spirits which were active in the early days of the Christian era. It has instituted an office vested with infallibility. That was the simplest way of solving the problem of providing an authentic source of the truth. Now Christ was spared the task of sending spirits of truth to groping humanity, as he had promised to do. Moreover, there was no longer any need of the fulfillment of his promise to be with the faithful always, "even to the end of the world." Was there not a pope, a "vicar of Christ" on earth? Where there is a vicar, he whom that vicar represents surely need not appear.

Thanks to the doctrine of an "infallible vicar of Christ on earth," the dispensation of the truth was placed wholly in the hands of erring, sinful men, to the exclusion of God's messengers of truth. Thus the gates were thrown open to human caprice and worldly ambition. True, the Catholic Church maintains that the "Holy Spirit" also acts through the papal office, but if we study the procedure of selecting the pope, and the history of the papacy, we shall soon realize that God's spirits can have little voice in the matter. Were not some of the popes instruments of hell rather than vicars of Christ in their deeds and in their whole manner of living?

To surmount this objection, however, a curious explanation has been devised. A distinction is drawn between the pope as a man and the pope as a vicar of Christ. It is maintained that even the worst of men, as soon as he becomes pope, may represent Christ and acquire infallibility. In other words, he might be an instrument of Satan and at the same time the vicar of Christ. Could man utter a greater blasphemy? Are we to believe that God entrusts His precious gifts, such as those on which salvation depends, to a servant of the evil one? Ordinary common sense should teach any one that this is unthinkable. God's spirits are sent only to the God-fearing, and remain with them only so long as they keep their faith. This is illustrated by the story of King Saul. As long as that king obeyed God, he was in daily communion with the world of God's spirits and could inquire of God whenever he wished to be enlightened on any matter. God always answered him through His spirits. But when Saul broke faith with God, further access to the world of God's spirits was denied him. Answers were no longer returned to the questions which he addressed to God, and instead of divine messengers, evil spirits took possession of Saul. The gifts with which he had been endowed were taken from him.

No man who is evil, not even if he is the pope, can ever be the bearer of God's sacred gifts. Consequently, the evil popes, at least, never possessed the gift of infallibility; and so the whole dogma of papal infallibility collapses of its own weight.

Only God chooses those to whom He sends the spirits of truth. No human choice can make any man the channel through which the truth is conveyed. Not even Christ chose his apostles at his own discretion, for the *Acts of the Apostles* expressly states that he made his choice through a holy spirit. It follows that God would certainly not invest a human office, such as the papacy, with infallibility. God alone is infallible; even His spirits are not. They are infallible only when they bring a message from God.

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Whoever, then, seeks to know what is true and what is untrue in the Bible as we have it to-day, can find out only in the way in which all God-fearing people in the past have sought the truth, namely by communicating with God's spirit-world. He must accept the invitation which God extends to each one of us through the prophet Jeremiah: "Ask Me and I will answer you and show you great and mighty things, which you did not know before." God's answer will come through His spirits, for "God's spirits are His servants, sent to serve all who earnestly desire salvation." The assurance that God will send us His messengers in answer to our prayers was given to us by Christ when he said: "If you, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give a holy spirit to those who ask Him for it."

I myself was a Catholic priest, and until I was forty-eight years old had never so much as believed in the possibility of communicating with the world of God's spirits. The day came, however, when I involuntarily took my first step toward such communication, and experienced things that shook me to the depths of my soul. After I had taken the first step, I could not stop. I must go forward, I must have enlightenment. On I went, treading carefully, and bearing in mind the words of the apostle Paul: "Test all things, keep that which is good." It was only the good that I sought. I wanted the truth. I was ready to accept it, come what might. I knew that God does not desert an earnest, interested seeker, and that, in the words of Christ, He will not offer a humble suppliant a stone instead of bread. I also realized the grave consequences of my step. My position as a clergyman, my entire material existence, my whole future in the worldly sense were threatened with ruin if I proceeded further. I knew that I was bound to undergo abuse, ridicule, persecution, and suffering to excess. But the truth meant more to me. And on the path that I followed I found the truth.

My experiences are related in a book that has appeared in both German and English and bears the title, *Communication with the Spirit-World: Its Laws and Its Purpose*. (*Der Verkehr mit der Geisterwelt, seine Gesetze und sein Zweck*). Many of the readers of this book who have sought to communicate with God's spirit-world have had experiences similar to my own and found the same truths that I found.

I availed myself of this contact with the source of truth to seek enlightenment above all in regard to the text of the Bible as we know it to-day; for on the occasion of my first experience with the world of divine spirits my attention had been called to the fact that the books of both the Old and the New Testament contained a great deal of spurious matter which had given rise to the many erroneous ideas prevailing in the Christian churches of our day. Subsequently I learned about these falsifications in detail.

This led me to a close study of the manuscripts of the New Testament. I found that the text of *Codex D* (*Codex Bezae Cantabrigiensis*), which unfortunately has several gaps, most nearly approaches the truth. It was consequently the one that I used as the basis for my translation.

In the rare instances in which a text pronounced correct by the divine spirits can be found in none of the manuscripts available to-day, I have used the text as it was given to me by those spirits. But in my Explanation I have always been careful to indicate which passages are derived from this source.

In my German translation I made it my chief concern to reproduce the exact meaning of the Greek text in good but simple German, so that people of limited education may be able to understand every sentence without difficulty. The translation of the German original into English was made by a professional translator,



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corrected by a committee of American clergymen who are perfectly versed in both languages, and thoroughly revised by a teacher, so that not only the exact meaning of the German text is found in the English translation but also the same simplicity of language.

May this book of truth deliver many from the burden of error and guide them to the road that leads to God. Christ says, "The truth will make you free." It delivers us from everything in the way of man-made ordinances and human error that has crept into religion; it frees us from a man-made Christianity and takes us back to the true Christianity of Christ.

May God's spirits of truth enlighten the hearts of my readers and bestow on them the spiritual gifts promised by Christ to all who believe in him.

I dedicate this book with heartfelt love to the One who said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life."

Good Friday, 1937

JOHANNES GREBER.

