

THE PRESBYTERIAN AND REFORMED REVIEW

No. 42—April, 1900.

I.

AUTHORITY IN RELIGION.

AT the very beginning of the discussion of the question of Authority in Religion, it is necessary to observe with some care that there is really no essential difference between religious knowledge and any other kind of knowledge. The conditions of knowledge, the laws of cognition, are not contingent upon the nature of the truth apprehended or upon the region of thought involved. The variable elements in the problem pertain rather to the accessibility or inaccessibility of the truth in contemplation, the mediateness or immediateness with which it presents itself to the mind, the readiness or inability of the perceiving faculty to respond, and the rational consequences that follow the perceiving act.

At the bottom of our inquiry lies the question whether we can properly be said to believe more than we know. To the question, thus put, no unqualified answer can be given. Everything must wait upon our definition of terms. And we no sooner attempt to define these well-worn words than we find that we are assuming certain whole systems of philosophy to be true and rejecting certain others as false. This being so, we must content ourselves with what we find to be the best prevailing usage and with adhering as far as possible to that. Augustine says, "Credere nihil aliud est quam cum assensione cogitare." It will be noted that this conception is entirely general, and not merely theological. Kant makes belief to occupy a sort of middle ground between guessing, on the one side, in which we are conscious that the evidence is not convincing either to ourselves or to others, and

knowing, on the other side, in which we are assuredly confident that the evidence is strong enough to convince others as well as ourselves.* At this half-way point we may be said to believe, recognizing that, though the evidence is convincing to ourselves, it may not be so to others. According to this view, opinion, faith, knowledge, are of the same category, psychologically, with a difference due wholly to the varying force of the evidence presented. That prodigy of morbid introspection, Henri-Frederic Amiel, pronounced faith "a certitude without proofs."† This notion is widely prevalent but entirely wrong. It makes faith a synonym for the superstitions of ignorance, the lawless guesswork of a darkened mind. Indeed, it would be easy to show that, so far from faith standing apart from all evidence, faith invariably exacts it, and is bound to die when all evidence disappears. Faith is presupposed in knowledge. If I know that you stand beside me, it is because I have faith in the testimony of my eyes. To be sure, this is not the guarantee of absolute demonstration, but it comes as near to it as is possible. I may have seen you standing at my side last night, but this morning I find that it was only the "baseless fabric of a dream;" it is only because I have faith in something, that I do not regard myself as dreaming by day as well as by night. If you know to-day that the sum of the three angles of a triangle is equal to two right angles, it is because you believe that geometrical principles are the same now that they were when, as a freshman in college, you demonstrated that theorem once for all. If you accept the conclusions of a course of reasoning it is because you have faith in the soundness of the principles of logic by which that conclusion has been reached. All knowledge, whether by intuition or ratiocination, has in it an indispensable element of faith. *Credo ut intelligam.*

But, on the other hand, it is true that in the most audacious leaps of faith, its object must still be the object of knowledge. A rational mind cannot rest its faith on that of which it is entirely ignorant. The cognition of an object conditions any intelligent attitude of the mind toward that object. I ask my little boy of five if he wants chloride of sodium on his breakfast egg, and his face is a blank. You ask a Hottentot if he believes in the Correlation of Forces, and he can say neither yes nor no. You ask a new Chinese convert if he believes in the Theanthropic Christ, and he is struck dumb. It is wholly absurd to expect a man to believe what the Bible says, simply because the Bible says it and without any conception whatever of that thing which the

* *Critique of Pure Reason* (F. Max Muller's translation), p. 659.

† *The Journal Intime*, February 7, 1872.

Bible declares. If I am to believe that there is a God, I must have some conception, crude or correct, of what a God is. If I am to believe that that God is a spirit, I must cognize, that is to say, I must know, correctly or incorrectly, what a spirit is. In this sense, it is true, *Intelligo ut credam*.

It will thus appear how closely connected are these two functions of the mind. Knowledge may mean either preliminary cognition or exhaustive comprehension. The former stands at this end and the latter at the far end of the knowing process, and they differ only in degree and not in kind. If I am walking along the street in the dark and my head suddenly strikes a hard object, it is in the former sense that I know that object. I cognize it by the single sense of touch. The next morning I return to the spot and bring other senses to bear upon it, so that I know the object far more thoroughly—though not more really—than was possible the night before in the dark. But I cannot fully comprehend it even then. To comprehend one object of nature exhaustively is to comprehend all nature. Fully to know the poet's tiny flower in the cranny of the wall, is to know the whole macrocosm of which it is an organic part.

“Flower in the crannied wall,
I pluck you out of the crannies;
Hold you here, root and all, in my hand,
Little flower—but if I could understand
What you are, root and all, and all in all,
I should know what God and man is.”

But all this is true of the most general epistemological theory. We have as yet found no *differentia* in respect to religion. Is religious faith conditioned by religious knowledge? If by “knowledge” is now meant mere cognition, then we have already answered the question in the affirmative. It is not the saint, but the idiot that believes or disbelieves that of which he knows simply nothing. But if by “knowledge” is meant *complete comprehension*, then we must say no, for, as we have seen, such knowledge may persist in pressing its search until it reaches the goal of omniscience.

Faith is conviction based on testimony. It has nothing to do with the degree of subjective certitude. It is the antithesis of demonstration, not of knowledge. It is consistent with the highest degree of assurance. If knowledge is to correlate with demonstration and faith with authority, then the former cannot be stronger than the latter, seeing that the essential characteristic of faith enters into the use of the reasons which guarantee the validity of knowledge. The scientist takes his atom on faith. The astronomer takes his luminiferous ether on faith. The logi-

cian takes the canons of his logic on faith. The metaphysician takes the ultimate postulates of his philosophy on faith. The Christian takes the Word of God on faith. The Christian's faith is voluntary, in the sense that it is not involuntary; it is rational in the sense that it is not irrational; it is a πίστις because there is in it more than can be called γνῶσις. It is based on the testimony of authority—not that it is suspended in midair, without the props of relevant and adequate evidence, but that, in the nature of its object, and in the outreach of its implications, the human mind, especially in its present state, is incapacitated for thoroughly exploiting that object. I say, in its present state, because this incapacity is not only such as is structural in a spirit which is essentially finite; it is also and seriously due to the fact that man, as he is, is intellectually crippled and morally handicapped in his attempts to solve the pure problems of the spiritual and the divine. At the best he sees through a medium, "through a glass darkly," and that glass is soiled and shaded by what theology and the conscience alike call *sin*.

As to such limitation, there can be little controversy. The claim of omniscience in any man would be the final proof of his being either a fanatic or a fool. The more the wise man knows the more severely conscious he is of the limitations of his knowledge. And this is particularly true in matters of religion.

These limitations may be traced to the fact or to the faculty, though in the end it amounts to the same thing. The old skepticism assumed the former; the new, the latter. We need not take pains to disclaim any sort of sympathy with that utterly unphilosophical philosophy, called Agnosticism. It is the ill-disguised enemy of all sound thinking and religious faith. Mr. John Fiske sweeps away all foundations in his *Cosmic Philosophy*, and then gives us back dry crumbs in his two charming little essays, *The Idea of God* and *The Destiny of Man*; but he will be thanked for his inconsistent concessions only by those who can believe that an edifice of granite can stand on a foundation of shifting sand. Mr. Spencer takes away all place for rational religion, and then graciously permits us to think anything we choose about his Unknowable. But Plato gave us a sound and much-needed admonition long ago when he said in substance that there can be no ἔτι οἰδέειν without something of the ἄ οἰδέειν; for it is always true that we cannot cognize the existence of any object without perceiving somewhat of the attributes of that object.* Agnosticism is the abomination of desolation alike in philosophy and in theology.

But the barriers of human knowledge are of two kinds. They

* See Jowett's *Plato*, third edition, Vol. i, p. 5.

are incidental, cosmical, objective. We do not know whether Mars is inhabited, but who will say that, for reasons inherent in the human mind, we cannot know? The advance of the race has been measured largely by the growth of human knowledge in such regions as are not, *per se*, inscrutable to man. But there are other barriers which grow out of the very nature of the human mind. They are transcendental, insuperable. Our faculties are unequal to the feat of surmounting them. No man is able to know exhaustively the modes of activity of the Absolute Being, the nature of the concursus of the divine and the human in psychical phenomena, or the ante-natal and *post-mortem* phases of his own life. We are finite beings, and the full knowledge of what is infinite overtaxes us. No man knows God thoroughly. He who claims wholly to understand God either has too large a conception of himself or too small a conception of God, or both. The tri-personal unity is of the nature of a mystery to man. Coleridge distinguished between the incomprehensible and the contradictory. The latter can never be the object of a sound faith; but the former, refusing to dissolve under the tests of human knowledge, crystallizes into a mystery, and, so long as it is thus unyielding, we may intelligently perceive and regard it as such.

Nor can it be said that all these transcendental questions are matters of mere idle speculation. On the other hand, some of them have ever been the quest of sincere and aspiring spirits. They bear with overwhelming force upon the dearest interests of humanity. The soul that knows itself to be out of harmony with God and longs to be at peace with Him, soon finds itself blinded in the fogs of its own ignorance and guilt. It is not only the unholy that longs to be holy, it is also the guilty that longs to be just; and the atonements of human philosophy are impotent alike to cleanse and to justify. The human spirit breathes its own prophecy of immortality, but it must sit in never-lifting shadows if it is to stop with its own flickering and unsteady light. The voice of metaphysics falters and science has no oracles of the unseen and the eternal. The determinative relations of the present upon the future, the hinging of eternal issues upon the decisions of to-day, the conditions upon which helpless and sinking spirits may avail themselves of priceless inheritances—these, and such as these, are questions of profoundest moment upon which human thought in all the ages has sought a secure standing-ground; and it is not too much to say that, for whatever reason, whether from the constitutional incapacities of the human mind or from the darkening of its peerless powers by sin, the search has always been unsatisfying and largely unfruitful. Or,

forsooth, if there be those who will argue that some elect spirits have succeeded in unraveling the mystery, even they must agree that the race has failed. Plato must not stand for all of Greece nor Seneca for all of Rome. Rationalism is eminently esoteric, aristocratic. The people have lacked, and many of them have longed for, the light, but the people are not speculative philosophers and the gospel of a Plato or of a Seneca has not satisfied the yearnings of the people's hearts.

All this being so, it follows that in a world which is ruled by a God who is benevolent and good there is a presumption in favor of the coming from above of an answer that would guide and satisfy the wandering race. If the need is an argument for its fulfillment, then here is an *à priori* argument for a divine revelation.

And this brings us to consider what is meant by a Revelation. We must distinguish between a General and a Special Revelation. All knowable truth is the revelation of God. "There is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding."* The first chapter of Romans is clear in referring all ethical light among the Gentiles to what Turretin calls "Natural Revelation." The Logos "lighteth every man that cometh into the world."

Distinguishable from this General Revelation is a special one, special in its nature, its purpose and its content. It is supplementary, harmonious, interpretative, and, in view of men's fallacious propensities, corrective and remedial. There can be no contradiction between the two. A recent rich writer well says, "God effects an *auxiliary* revelation for our human race, which from a *special* principle of its own and under the necessary conditions, places a knowledge of God within the reach of the sinner which is suited to his condition."† It reached its climax in the person of the Incarnate Logos, and, whatever we may believe concerning the metaphysical necessity of the Incarnation, we do believe that it was aimed at the redemption of mankind, and that it was wholly voluntary on the part of the redeeming Revealer.

The very idea of a revelation at all involves a plurality of persons, a social relation between them and a certain content of what is revealed. These persons are God, on the one hand, and men, on the other. Materialism denies God; Pantheism denies man *as* man. The social relation is denied by Deism, in that God holds Himself aloof from men, and by Agnosticism, in that men cannot know God.

* Job xxxii. 8.

† *Encyclopedia of Sacred Theology*, Dr. Abraham Kuyper, p. 361. Italics his.

The whole question falls out then, for a twofold treatment, psychological and historical. The first brings us face to face with the objections of Deism, and the second, with those of Rationalism. As to the first, it might be enough to say that Deism is an exploded error. If God cannot have access to human spirits, then the most prevalent and most sacred beliefs of mankind, pagan and Christian, have been conceived and held in error. If God is helpless to move upon the hearts of men, prayer is a delusion, grace is a fiction, and providence is a farce. There is no more difficulty in believing in intercourse between God and man than in intercourse between man and man. There is no kind of argument against social commerce in the one case that does not bear with equal force in the other. The objection, therefore, makes it impossible for spiritual beings to be social beings at all, and regards God and men as so many individualistic hermits "cribbed, cabined and confined," each in his own speechless, rayless night. I am not arguing now for any one particular form of theophany or communication. Kuyper truly says: "Fundamentally it is one and the same conception, whether I speak of theopneusty in the prophets and apostles, of an internal light in the mysticism of the emotions, or of a papal infallibility."*

Dr. James Martineau is perhaps the most illustrious recent champion of Intuitionism, and yet he is equally well known as denying the Christian doctrine of revelation. Some intuitionists regard the rational faculty in man as the Divine Logos residing within the man—a theory which easily grades up into Pantheism—while others regard man as a distinct personal being, in his own right, and suppose that God immediately communicates his impulse or revelation to this *alter ego*. Dr. Martineau belongs distinctly to the latter class. He tells us that the strivings of the wise and good in every age have culminated in this: "The word of Conscience is the voice of God."† He speaks of conscience as inseparably "blended" with the Holy Spirit, and says that, in the analysis of ethical law, "the veil falls from the shadowed face of moral authority and the directing love of the all-holy God shines forth."‡ If we want something more explicit, we find it in these words: "In order, then, to save the *personal* power in man, and to leave him any real partnership in history, we must concede to him a mental constitution of his own—a trust of both intellectual faculty and moral will; and must limit the divine part to the intuitive *data*, from which every activity of our inner nature must

* *Encyclopedia of Sacred Theology*, pp. 349, 350. See also p. 552.

† *Seat of Authority in Religion*, p. 71.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

start.”* His exclusive intuitionism is seen in these words, thoroughly characteristic of his whole teaching, namely: “As many minds as there are that know Him at first hand, so many revealing acts have there been; and as many as know Him only at second hand are strangers to revelation.”†

Now, we venture to affirm that if such an intuitional communication as Dr. Martineau believes in is possible, then there is no psychological impossibility in the way of such a special revelation as he rejects. This special revelation includes both a *φανερωσις*, a making plain, and an *αποκάλυψις*, an unveiling, a revelation proper.‡ Certainly if either of these is impossible, both are; while if either is possible, both are. To its apocalyptic character, however, Dr. Martineau vigorously objects. Even if God could make such a revelation, he denies that man could receive it. He argues against “a proper apocalypse—*i. e.*, an immediate disclosure of eternal facts and realities, which lie beyond the compass of our faculties or our opportunities.”§ But if man’s intuitive apprehension is to be limited to the restricted measure of his own resources, it is hard to see why God should be regarded as active in the intuitive process at all. Is it only a figure of speech when he calls the conscience “the voice of God?” If God cannot convey to man anything beyond the normal bounds of his own thinking and knowing, why not credit all that he thinks and knows to his own inherent powers—why not eliminate the divine altogether? || It must be said, too, that there is a begging of the question in the objection that man cannot receive anything “beyond the compass of his faculties.” It is at best surprising that one who has such an exalted conception of the powers of man, both rational and moral, should object that though God might wish to convey ultramundane knowledge to man, man could not receive it. Thus do Intuitionism and Agnosticism, strangely enough, seem to meet.

Nevertheless, it cannot be made too clear that the content of

* *Seat of Authority in Religion*, p. 116.

† *Ibid.*, p. 307.

‡ (a) John ix. 3; Rom. i. 19, iii. 21, etc. (b) Rom. xvi. 25; 1 Cor. ii. 10, etc.

§ *Seat of Authority in Religion*, p. 320.

|| Indeed, this is precisely what is done by a recent brilliant French writer in his defense of Mysticism, a cult which, after all, has not a little in common with Rationalism of the Martineau type. This writer admonishes us that we cannot distinguish Inspiration “essentially from the Reason of which we are humanly conscious;” again, that beyond the development of symbols which have dawned in the souls of the great Mystics, there can be “no more direct relation between our mind and the Absolute,” and, again, “In us, the culminating fact is our personality. It is all we have of the ‘divine.’” Cf. *Essay on the Bases of the Mystical Knowledge*, by E. Récéjac, trans. ed., pp. 86, 137, 118.

every revelation to man must somehow take on the moulds of human consciousness and conform to the categories of human thinking. Whatever enters into the sphere of man's perception must yield to the conditions according to which it is possible that man should perceive. The divinest truth man ever knew must, *ipso facto*, take form as a moment of human knowledge. If man is to know God at all, it must be as such a God as man can know. To know is to be conscious of, and to be conscious of anything is for that thing to square with the norms which the human consciousness exacts. This is true of all cognition and, whether or not we may agree with Kant's theory in the matter, there can be no dispute about the truth itself. Accordingly, Prof. Ladd is entirely correct when, in arguing for the supremacy of the ethico-religious faculty, he says: "Nothing else can be so near to man; nothing else can command him to abjure its authority. No word of God can come to him otherwise than through this faculty."* If any truth of God is too deep or broad for that faculty to receive and hold, then that truth is to man no truth at all, and he can neither believe nor disbelieve it. Goethe well may say that man can never know how anthropomorphic he is. *Nolens volens*, he is bound to anthropomorphize everything he knows. Doubtless man's faculties are severely taxed to grasp the truths which Infinite Wisdom would reveal. What wonder! Would it not be more wonderful if it were not so? A revelation from God to man is God's highest compliment to the reason which is in man. He makes no such revelation to trees or beasts, but to men only. And if it be true that right reason is the same in God and man, if it be true that there is, potentially, if not in developed fact, a rational likeness and a moral kinship among intelligent beings of every class and kind, then we may well believe that man can receive from the hands of the Ever-living Father conceptions, adequate, yet not exhaustive, not exact and full, and yet accurate and true, conceptions which otherwise his noblest powers would never have compassed or caught.

As to the historical aspects of the question, it should be remembered that the special revelation in which we believe is not such as embraces a multiplicity of individual revelations, *disjecta membra*—as in Mysticism—but is rather one comprehensive organic revelation to the human race. The perspective of history is needed for its complete unity. There is a historic and progressive development. The end is latent in the beginning and the beginning is patent in the end. It is "first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear." The revelation at every stage conforms to

* *The Doctrine of Sacred Scripture*, Vol. ii, p. 531.

moral and psychological conditions induced by antecedent stages. The fullness of time presupposes preparatory chronological eras.

This organic, racial character of special revelation involves, of necessity, the factor of tradition. The *Homo* has a longevity that covers millenniums, while the *Vir* lives but for a moment of humanity's day. Here, again, Dr. Martineau finds grave difficulty. Really, however, the question of tradition is, at bottom, identical with that of reception. Any new truth, he tells us, committed to the soul, falls into "fallible custody." "You cannot receive the light on a refracting surface, yet expect it to pursue its way still straight and colorless."* His whole objection is based on his distrust of the fidelity or rather of the capacity, of the faculties in man. But inasmuch as philology is but a subdepartment of psychology, and seeing that language is a necessary factor in the organic thought of mankind, it follows that the historical question is but another phase of the psychological and, therefore, that the transmission of the content of revelation is an element in the completeness of such a revelation in fact.

There is no *à priori* necessity that this special revelation should take permanent form in a Written Word. There are other conceivable means of preservation and transmission. Indeed, the marvelous capacity of Oriental minds for oral tradition has figured very largely in the sacred and classical histories of the past. Still, there are obvious reasons why written language would best serve the purpose. Van Oosterzee says, "Man thinks, speaks and preserves the word of his lip in writing. It is not otherwise with God; He has thoughts of redemption, utters them, and now also provides for their being preserved in writing. . . . While the revelation itself, indeed, is possible without the vehicle of Scripture, its communication and preservation in a trustworthy form through a prolonged course of time is impossible."† Dr. Kuyper names these characteristics of superiority in the *written* as against the spoken word, namely, durability, catholicity, fixedness and purity.‡

It will doubtless be readily granted, however, that the questions, delicate and important, relating to the fitness and actual efficacy of the Written Word as a vehicle of revelation lie outside of the thesis proposed for this paper. Indeed, a glance at the subjects discussed at the other meetings of this Theological Society will show that those questions have been allotted to other and abler writers; and, particularly, that the specific claims of Holy

* *Seat of Authority in Religion*, p. 289.

† *Dogmatics*, Vol. i, pp. 163, 169.

‡ *Encyclopedia of Sacred Theology*, p. 405, *et seq.*

Scripture as an authority in religion are to be discussed in the closing paper of the course by the esteemed president of the society, Prof. Foster.*

We have now spoken of the parties to the revelation, that is to say, the persons revealing and receiving, and of the necessary social relation between them. The content of the revelation has as yet been unmentioned. Of this, it is aside from our purpose to speak in detail. It is enough to say that, in its last analysis, all revelation from God is revelation *of* God. Divine revelation is divine self-revelation. The devout student of nature looks "from nature up to nature's God;" the Written Word discloses His attributes by declaring His will and way; and the living Word is, preëminently, "the effulgence of the Father's glory, the very image of his substance," so that "the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father," hath so declared Him as to be able to say, "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father." In the special revelation, all theophanies, prophecies, miracles, have their place as an integral part of the age-long palingenesis of the moral order of mankind. The supernatural event in history loses the element of the incredible when it is thus seen to be a part of a vast organic plan, born of a worthy purpose, embracing ages in its scope, and ever maturing more and more toward its ultimate beneficent realization.

Nor is it inconsistent with a truly rational conception of this special revelation that it should reach a final historic stage in the course of its organic development. This climax will find its most fitting expression in the immediate and personal manifestation of the very God Himself. The eternal Logos must make the nearest possible approach to men, not in cosmical harmonies only, not in abstract truth only, not in moral maxims only, but in the common, closer, sympathetic relations of a human brotherhood. Accordingly, we are told, that "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us." Lower than this, the divine can never descend; nearer than this, the Word of God can never come. Above and beyond all individualistic subjective approaches to men stands the historic figure of this Incarnate Deity, as the supreme objective revelation of God to the human race. It is distinctively characteristic of the faith of Christians the world over that they regard the historical character of Jesus of Nazareth, conforming to the categories of recorded fact, and yet transcending the categories of merely human development or achievement, as the final and complete

* This paper was originally prepared upon the invitation of the Theological Society of the Pacific Theological Seminary (Congregational) and read as one of a series.

culmination of this gradual, racial revelation of the Eternal and Infinite God.

But, as we have seen, if the revelation thus culminating is to be preserved and perpetuated to subsequent ages, some means and method of transmission must be called in. Principal Fairbairn insists that the consciousness of Christ is the source of our religious knowledge; but the condition making possible the Christ-consciousness in men, centuries after the historical career of Jesus of Nazareth was closed, is that, in order that they shall know Him, they must know *of* Him; and it will hardly be disputed that, ordinarily at least, this condition is realized in an objective body of historical testimony. Prof. Ladd may well say, therefore: "The superiority of the Bible over the consciousness of believers, and the power of the former to subordinate the latter, consist in this: that the Bible brings us, Scripturally fixed, the objective, final, and infallible Word of God, in the Redeemer Jesus Christ. To suppose that the Christian consciousness should consciously refuse to subordinate itself to this word, involves a manifest absurdity. This consciousness begins and develops only in a complete subordination to this word."*

We are not now called upon to balance the contending claims urged by the champions of the various forms which the deposit of this special revelation is alleged to have assumed. The Reason, the Church and the Bible, each has its advocates, while, again, there are those who would make out a case of threefold strength by coördinating all three as the channel of God's truth to man.

"These are the three great chords of might,
And he whose ear is tuned aright
Will hear no discord in the three,
But the most perfect harmony."

Roman Catholics exalt a corporate Church with its continuous revelation; Protestants revere the Scriptures as the sacred oracles; while so-called Rationalists make the Reason in man the source of his knowledge of religious things. For the purposes of this paper, only the last fall to be considered; for, if the purely Rationalistic position can be sustained, then a special revelation is superfluous and absurd.

No greater mistake can be made than to regard the reason as snubbed and dishonored by such a revelation from God. Indeed, it at once addresses itself to that reason; it lays its evidences and presents its testimony before its court. It assumes that reason in man is identical with Reason in God, from whom the revelation

* *The Doctrine of Sacred Scripture*, Vol. ii, p. 537.

comes. It comes not crushing, but enlightening man's reason; not bruising, but assisting it. It is because man is unable to find out and grasp the mighty truth of God that God reveals to man the treasures of His Word. On this subject a few important points that are often overlooked are worthy of careful consideration. 1. The rational faculty in man is honored in that such a revelation is addressed to him. 2. The *judicium contradictionis*, the right to reject whatever is contradictory either in itself or to other known truth, is fully and freely accorded to man. 3. The reason in man is not the origin, but only the organ of the truth which he knows. As Prof. Ladd well says, it "is never a primary source of knowledge of ethical and religious truths; it is always only an organ for the reception, explication and application of such truths."* 4. The so-called truths of the reason are those for which it is indebted to revelation as their source; and, indeed—especially in Christian lands and ages, where admittedly the loftiest truths prevail—to this special revelation. If we have this in mind, it at once appears how Dr. Briggs, in arguing that Reason is a "fountain" of divine authority, fails to prove his point when he insists that "it was the *love of Jesus* in the heart of John that made him the apostle of love," and that "it was the light of the Enthroned Saviour *striking through* into the conscience, the religious nature and the reason of that man which gave birth to Paul and Paulinism."† 5. It is fully granted that the content of every revelation, in order that the design of it may be accomplished, must conform to the standards of right reason and must take its place under the categories of human knowledge. Dr. Kuyper well may say, "There is but one logic and not two."‡ The revelation-content must submit to psychological, logical, historical and ethical conditions, if not always in the fullest degree with those who are the immediate recipients of such content, still, certainly so in the complete fulfillment of the great plan of which it is a necessary and tributary part.

By this time, I trust, we are in a position to see how divine revelation figures fundamentally in the religious knowledge and faith of mankind. It was said at the outset that cognition conditions intelligent faith. Revelation addresses itself, in the first instance, to the cognitive faculties of man and then solicits his reverent assent. If we are to recognize a contrast between evidence and authority it must be simply in this, that authority gives evidence which is relevant though indirect. There is a sense in

* *The Doctrine of Sacred Scripture*, Vol. ii, p. 529.

† *The Bible, The Church and The Reason*, pp. 42, 43. Italics ours.

‡ *Encyclopædia of Sacred Theology*, p. 159.

which it is true that the testimony of authority is evidence at second hand. Personally, I am ignorant of spectroscopic discoveries in distant stars, but I am not ignorant of evidence that the distinguished director of the Lick Observatory is a thoroughly competent spectroscopist. The evidence upon which I accept his statements in astronomy bears not directly upon the truth or falsity of those statements, but indirectly. Accordingly, if I am able to understand his statements so as to make anything out of them, my acceptance of them may be perfectly reasonable and free. If I find, in scanning his teachings, that they contain anything, *prima facie*, or by implication, absurd or contradictory, then I shall decline his testimony and repudiate his authority. It is not argued that this accurately illustrates the relation of faith to knowledge in religion, but it is insisted that it does set forth the conditions upon which we may know many religious truths. If this be objected to, it will certainly be conceded that very much of what men regard themselves as knowing, they know precisely in this way and in no other. If our scientific knowledge is limited strictly to what we know at first hand, then we are ignoramuses indeed.

Dr. Martineau says, "If Revealed Religion is an immediate divine knowledge, it is strictly personal and individual, and must be born anew in every mind."* It is not argued that such a revelation as we have been speaking of is the necessary synonym for, or the invariable guarantee of, personal religion to him who knows its content. Our Lord taught the necessity of the new birth, and we believe that the teaching is of individual application. But to cognize the truth is not necessarily to accept it; knowledge is not all of religion. The Reformed Theology has ever regarded the immediate subjective testimony of the Holy Spirit as the indispensable condition upon which the individual, as himself personally a Christian, accepts the truth of the Word of God. But religious truth may be embodied in objective form and such objective form is subject to the very same laws of knowledge as any other truth in such form. The man who has seen a star may give testimony to the men who have not. The prophet or apostle who has seen the vision or heard the voice of God may give testimony to those who have not. The important question for them is not concerning the nature of the truth testified of, it is concerning the competency, the honesty and the opportunity of the testifier.

I go to the city of London an utter stranger and take lodging in a hotel to which a friend at home has directed me. In registering

* *Seat of Authority in Religion*, p. 307.

my name, the proprietor, with evident cordiality, welcomes me as his guest, remarking that our common friend has advised him in advance of my coming. I go off to my room for the night, tired and lonely. At midnight, I awake with alarming symptoms of a mortal disease to which I have known myself to be subject. I realize that I must have the most skillful surgical attention at once, or I must soon die. I summon my good landlord and explain to him the urgency of the situation. I beg him to send at once for the best surgeon in the metropolis. I know of no one myself and must trust it all to him. Soon the surgeon arrives, a man of kind face and reassuring manner. I had every reason to trust my landlord, and now I have reasons at first hand, such as they are, to trust the surgeon himself. On the strength of the two, I put my life into the hands of this entire stranger; indeed, it is all that I can do. With the evidence at hand, to do this is the most rational thing I can do; to refuse to do it, the most irrational. It may be said that of direct evidence of the surgeon's skill, I had none. It will not be said that I had no evidence whatever. I had all the evidence I could have—situated as I was. That evidence came to me, in the first instance, as the testimony of another concerning whose integrity I had satisfactory testimony from my friend at home. If I had rejected the testimony which I had, my course would have been foolish, irrational, suicidal.

It is to be remembered that this special revelation is a concession of grace to man in his present life and in his sinful state. The limitations of the finite, man can never throw off; for to us it is simply axiomatic that for the human to cease to be finite is for the human to cease to be human. But, on the other hand, the limitations which are due to sin are incidental, extra-constitutional and abnormal; they must pass away with the deliverance of the human spirit from sin. The Word of God is what it is largely because man is what he is, namely, a sinner needing guidance and light. The Bible is not for a world wholly unsoiled and unspoiled by sin. Sinless saints in a sinless heaven will doubtless behold in direct gaze and rapturous vision much truth that here and now is sluggishly perceived at best through the medium of the forms of a historic revelation. Of this, we are assured in this revelation itself when we read, "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known."* The woman to whom Jesus talked at the well of Samaria testified to her friends of One who had told her all the things that ever she did; her neighbors believed her testimony, and, accordingly,

* 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

“ they went out of the city and came unto him.”* John Baptist was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. To be sure, there are degrees of directness and convincing force in the testimony which faith contemplates. Many of the Samaritans believed, “ for the saying of the woman ;” and many more believed “ because of his own word.” But His own word was, not less than that of the woman who had first seen Him, of the essential nature of *testimony* ; for every external sign, whether voice or vision or symbol or book, stands in everlasting contrast with the subjective and intuitional process which alone, we are told, is the source, the fountain, the channel, of our religious knowledge.

If prophets and apostles, if holy men of God and seers of heavenly visions, testify to us of that which, otherwise, we should not know, it is for us to scrutinize their credentials, to examine their messages and to decide and act accordingly. If the sober dignity, the intellectual sublimity, the moral majesty of their testimony be such as befit so unique an office ; if the message harmonize with the truth as we know it from the cosmical sciences and as we hear it speaking in our moral nature within ; if instead of defying the criterions of human reason and violating the laws of human thought, it fits in with, illuminates and interprets the best and truest which the heart of man has felt or the mind of man has known ; if it develops into clearer fullness and more effulgent splendor as the ages come and go, and if the influence which it exerts upon the ethical elements of individual character as well as upon the moral perspective of the race be in keeping with the heavenliness of the sources whence the witnesses presume to speak ; if this whole historic and organic process come to its fruit and crown in the person of One who spoke as never man spake, who lived as never man lived and who died as never man died, then the listening ages and waiting nations do well to give their reverent heed and to yield their surrendering faith. Indeed, when the testimony itself is heard as to man’s condition of desperate need and as to God’s free deliverance in Jesus Christ, then, like the stricken stranger in a distant city, it were the folly of suicide not to accept the testimony of revelation upon the authority of God.

SAN FRANCISCO.

HENRY COLLIN MINTON.

* John iv. 1-42.