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I.

RECENT DISCUSSION IN MATERIALISM.

THERE are phases of contemporary materialism which have little in common with the doctrines of ancient and mediæval materialists, and which in point of subtlety and philosophical attractiveness are quite in accord with the advanced position of nineteenth century thought. The idealist of to-day flatters himself that he avoids the inconsistencies of Berkeley and Fichte, so the materialist smiles at the mention of Priestly, D'Alembert, and Holbach. But these growths respectively in idealistic and materialistic thought have not been parallel. Idealism has tended in the last thirty years to withdraw its gaze from the thought-ultimate as a monistic conception, to perception as a dualistic relation, that is from cosmic to psychological idealism; while materialism has tended in quite the opposite direction, *i. e.*, from the crude postulate of matter in bulk to the search for an ultimate materialistic principle, that is from psychological to cosmic materialism. Each has strengthened its flank and the battle is now joined between psychological idealism and metaphysical materialism.

Spiritualism has gained vastly by this change of base. As long as the ontology of spirit rested upon a dogmatic assertion of universal mind, there was no weapon at hand wherewith to attack the corresponding assertion of universal matter. I have as good right to assert an universal as you have and *chacun à son goût* is the rule of choice. But now that philosophy is learning to value a single fact more than a detailed system, and is sacrificing its systems to the vindication of facts, it is spiritualism and not materialism which is profiting by the advances of science. Materialism has appealed to the metaphysics of force, spiritualism has appealed to consciousness

V.

THE RELIGIOUS CONSCIOUSNESS VIEWED AS A HELP AND TEST IN BELIEF.

THE question respecting the real nature of what is broadly termed the Religious or Christian Consciousness, and the kindred question respecting the actual office and value of such Consciousness, both in supplying the material for belief and in testing such belief, have recently assumed in several ways an unusual degree of importance. The significance of these questions may be better seen through the medium of a familiar illustration.

The doctrine of the universal salvation of infants dying in infancy finds some measure of support in certain specific passages of Scripture, and is still further sustained by certain general teachings or suggestions of the divine Word, but is now very largely, if not mainly, justified as an article in current belief on the ground of the strong testimony in its favor furnished by the Christian consciousness. The doctrine of reprobation, or the condemnation of some portion of mankind by an eternal decree, finds at least some degree of warrant in particular texts and illustrations, and gathers considerable confirmation from what the Bible reveals in general concerning the complete foreknowledge, the just sovereignty and the eternal purpose of God; but still is questioned by many and rejected by some, on the specific ground that our religious consciousness strongly protests against it. It is just now proposed among us to introduce the first dogma into our creed, and to strike out or modify the second, not so much because the witness of Scripture, specific and general, clearly sustains the one and disproves the other, but specially because this inward arbiter of belief in one instance approves and in the other condemns and seeks to eliminate. And what makes the case the more remarkable, is the fact that less than two centuries ago the same inward arbiter accepted unhesitatingly the tenet of reprobation, even in its most rigid form, but refused to admit the suggestion that the dying children of any but believers are saved. What, we may well ask, is this peculiar authority which assumes with such imperativeness to plant and to pluck up, to build and to destroy, and which in another age plucks up what it had once planted, and builds what it had once condemned to destruction?

Another curious illustration of this sort of appeal shows itself in the affirmation of our Confession, that the divinity of the Bible is to be established not so much by the testimony of the Church, or by other external evidences, but by the inward witness, the spiritual conviction, whereby it doth abundantly evidence itself to be the Word of God. The arguments in the case are derived from the heavenliness of the matter, the moral efficacy of the doctrine, the majesty of the style, and other incomparable excellencies discovered by the believer within the Scripture itself, rather than from miracle or prophecy or any other form of extrinsic testimony. It is expressly said that while we may be moved and induced by the judgment of the Church to a high and reverend esteem for the Bible, yet, "our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority thereof, is from the inward work of the Spirit, bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts." The compilers of our Confession seem to have been willing to rest the authoritativeness of the divine Word on these almost purely subjective grounds alone. They probably did not realize that evidence of this class can have conclusive force with none but believers, and is of small service in convincing the world that the Bible has come from God. Neither did they appreciate the fact that a test so purely internal as this, and one so shifting and variable, since it must depend so largely on the historical developments of grace in the individual disciple and in the Church, cannot always and absolutely satisfy even the Christian himself. It was indispensable, therefore, as the history of the problem shows, that those who followed these excellent divines, should pronounce these subjective testimonies insufficient when taken alone, and should introduce that large mass of objective proofs and evidences by which, in this age, we seek to demonstrate the inspiration and divineness of the sacred Word. At this point, at least, it is now evident that, however clear may be the witness of the religious consciousness, however profound or strong or elevated our inward feeling as believers toward the Scriptures, we cannot even rest our own faith in them on such experiential certification alone, and still less can we in this way establish before an unbelieving world their claim to be received as divine.

Many other illustrations of this form of appeal to the religious consciousness might be found even within the circle of evangelical orthodoxy, and still more frequently within the area of what is termed liberal Christianity. The question how far our standard theological systems, our accepted exegeses of the divine Word, our interpretations of specific truth and duty, rest on this subjective basis, or are affected and colored by these religious feelings or tendencies, is one which penetrates to the very centre of much of our

practical belief. No small proportion, for example, of what we hold and teach concerning death and resurrection and judgment, concerning the eternal life in general, concerning heaven and hell, with their respective issues and experiences, seems to be sustained much less by any direct affirmations of the Scripture—for the Bible is profoundly reticent respecting many of the particular elements and phases of that immortality which it was sent to reveal as an ultimate and transcendent fact—than by the incitement of such holy sentiments as fear or hope, profoundly exercised towards the life to come. How often does the religious fancy seize at this point upon the vivid images and illustrations of the Bible, and transmute them into logical dogmas and clearly defined beliefs, which take hold of the soul as firmly as if they had been distinctly uttered in the ear by the very voice of God. And have we not before our own eyes the spectacle of several Christian denominations, existing and flourishing without a thoroughly formulated system of doctrines expressed exactly in a creed, but rather controlled largely by what may be called a sanctified instinct for the truth—the Christian consciousness becoming, on many points at least, the decisive test, both of belief and of spiritual experience and life?

We are all familiar with like illustrations apparent in those ecclesiastical circles where the objective authoritativeness of the Bible is less distinctly admitted, and where, under the guise of liberty, men claim the largest license of opinion and credence, even in antagonism with the written Word. The recent dogma of another probation for some or for all after death, for example, is one which rests on very scant biblical foundations, on obscure texts or references here or there, but which puts forth an almost imperious claim upon our credence, on the ground that such second probation ought to be and must be, in order to satisfy the demand of our religious nature. This is but one of many dogmas now announced and held by the various representatives of this general tendency in religious thought, not merely without plain warrant from the Bible, but quite apart from, and sometimes even in clear contradiction of its teachings, and on the ultimate ground of the religious consciousness alone. We cannot believe anything, it is said, which is contrary to the voice of this supreme arbiter: our consciousness has uttered its verdict, and there we rest, whatever be the dictum of Revelation.

There are two crystalized varieties of this appeal to consciousness as the final test of belief, which may claim special attention at this point. The first is the theory, best represented by the Society of Friends, which refers all questions of faith, not to the organized consciousness of the Church, but to the inward conviction and verdict of the individual believer. According to this theory, every true dis-

ciple is under the immediate nurture of the Holy Ghost, and is being progressively led by the Spirit into new views of truth as well as of duty. Under this nurture he may learn not only what is taught in the Word, but much more than the Bible teaches respecting divine things; and his belief is, and should be, just what and only what the Spirit has thus inwardly revealed to him. In other words, his great teacher is the religious consciousness, and whatever that consciousness inculcates, is for him the Gospel and the only Gospel. William Penn describes this consciousness as "the light of Christ within," and declares absolute faith in this inner light to be the fundamental law and principle of Christian living. Barclay, in the fifth and sixth propositions of his famous *Apology*, presents the theory more fully, and with an elaborate argument in its favor.* Everything rests ultimately, he affirms, on what the individual disciple feels to be true, when his sensibilities are under the direct impress of the Holy Ghost.

Coleridge seems to set forth the same view, in the notable dictum, so often quoted from his *Letters on Inspiration*: "In the Bible there is more that finds me than I have experienced in all other books put together; the words of the Bible find me at greater depths of my being, and whatever thus finds me, brings with it an irresistible evidence that it proceeded from the Holy Spirit." In the *Boston Lectures*, for 1870, there is a similar statement by Prof. Smyth, of Andover, in an instructive address entitled "From Lessing to Schleiermacher," to the effect that the final and conclusive test of the Christ of history is the Christ within us. Schleiermacher indeed planted his *Christian Dogmatics* on this subjective foundation: starting with the conception of religion as an inward feeling, and organizing its objective truths around this inner feeling, as the regulative principle. Just as we rest all our beliefs within the various fields of ordinary knowledge on the ultimate test of the consciousness that we know what we know, so he rested all theology on the same consciousness, when vitalized and spiritualized by the divine Spirit. On this theory, in whatever form, the foundations of our faith and of our spiritual living are to be laid, not on what the Word of God as an objective revelation certifies to, but rather on what, in the phrase of Coleridge, finds us at the greatest depths of our spiritual being—the Word within us, revealed through the action of the Holy Ghost.

Far to the other extreme from this individualistic theory, we see the dogma of Romanism on which ultimately the prescript of papal

* Robert Barclay, *Apology for the True Christian Divinity. Being an Explanation and Vindication of the Principles and Doctrines of the People called Quakers.* Amer. ed., pp. 136-188. See Schaff's *Creeeds of Christendom*, iii, p. 789 *et seq.*

infallibility rests—the dogma of an organic or generic consciousness developed historically within the Church as the living and enduring body of Christ. *Placuit Spiritui Sancto et Nobis* (*Visum est*, Vulgate: Acts xv. 28) is the authoritative phrase with which the papacy introduces its ecclesiastical canons and decrees. Stated formally, the doctrine underlying that famous phrase is that the Holy Ghost was in and with the Church even before the Scriptures were written; that this divine Teacher has always dwelt in the Church, and has always been engaged in teaching it to know sacred things more fully; that His teachings are communicated chiefly to the priesthood, to the whole body of the clergy, to bishops and cardinals and councils, and eminently to the popes as the appointed representatives of Christ before His organized people. Hence, whenever the Holy Spirit thus guides the flock of God experientially into any truth, and that truth at last finds verbal expression through the decision of a council or by the voice of a pope, that truth is henceforth to be implicitly believed, even if the Bible says nothing whatever concerning it. The Holy Ghost has taught it directly to the Church, and the faith of the Church, when thus authoritatively expressed, becomes infallible, and must be believed on its authority alone. For example, the Scriptures do not teach us that the mother of our Lord was born free from the taint of original sin, as Christ Himself was. But the Holy Ghost has been leading the Church to believe that, as the vehicle of a divine incarnation, she was spared from this common taint of our humanity—was from her infancy immaculate. On His authority, therefore, though this fact is nowhere suggested in the Bible, the Church, through her supreme head, has made it known authoritatively to the faithful, and in this way it has become an article of belief, to be held and cherished as profoundly as anything taught us directly in the inspired Word. Hence, the exaltation of Mary to the left hand of God; hence, the propriety of paying her special homage; hence, her peculiar office as still the welcome agent in presenting the prayers of the saints before the throne. The organic consciousness of the one and only true household of faith, speaking with an infallibility which the direct ministration of the Spirit ensures, holds and declares her to be immaculate, and the mother of God.

No less a man than Cardinal Newman has elaborated this species of reasoning, in his *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, and also in his remarkable *Apologia pro Sua Vita* (Part vii), so as to include, not this dogma only, but that entire group of Romish beliefs which we as Protestants reject on the ground that they are neither directly contained in Scripture, nor are by good and necessary consequence deducible therefrom. The devout

Catholic, resting on the notion of an organized rather than individual consciousness, accepts and cherishes these beliefs as legitimate parts of that sacred deposit of truth to which the Church and her children must ever cling. While he would reject as wholly unreliable and dangerous the Quaker doctrine of the inner light, and all kindred conceptions of a spiritual guidance of the individual disciple over and beyond what the written Word affirms, he would find in this organic ministry of the Holy Ghost within the Church as a society, full and abundant warrant for putting faith in whatever that Church may impose upon him, even though the thing imposed were far outside of the range of biblically revealed truth. The answer of Protestantism may be found in the masterly *Letters* of William Archer Butler, and in his lectures on the *Development of Christian Doctrine*; or in the interesting volume of Principal Rainy on the *Delivery and Development of the Christian Doctrine*. The careful reader of these treatises will not fail to realize in some fresh way how vital this problem of the religious consciousness is, or how large a place and influence it has and must always have in Christian thought.

Somewhere between these two antithetic theories—the Quaker theory of the individual consciousness, and the papal theory of the churchly consciousness, as a contributor to divine truth and an authoritative test of belief—we as Protestants have taken our position, though with very marked signs both of variation and of uncertainty in our opinion. Where do we really stand? What do we agree in holding as to this issue? What do we mean by the current phrase, religious consciousness? How far do we feel warranted in accepting truth for ourselves on this species of authority? And how far are we authorized in imposing truth received in this way on other minds, or on the Church at large, as a matter of imperative belief?

It is a very difficult task to define this popular phrase—a difficulty kindred to that which confronts the philosopher in his efforts to describe that natural consciousness which has been poetically defined as “the light of all our seeing.” It is much easier to say what the natural consciousness does in the way of certifying authoritatively to those great primary truths, such as personal identity, on which all our further reasonings depend, than to tell us what this mystic power at the bottom of all our knowing really is. Hamilton defines consciousness in general as “the recognition by the mind, or *ego*, of its own acts or affections,” and elsewhere he describes it simply as “a self-affirmation”—that is, an affirmation made by the soul to itself both that it is and knows, and what as conscious being it knows. For example, I see in the crystal lake of consciousness,

that I am myself and not another person, and that this self in me perceives itself to be capable of thinking and testifies to itself what it is thinking. But these are vague statements at the best; and the vagueness in the case is immeasurably increased, if I attempt to conceive of the introduction into the sphere of this natural consciousness of a superhuman power which energizes, enlightens, teaches, transforms that consciousness so that I am enabled to see in this interior crystal lake of my being what I could never have discerned there if left to myself.* A divine light now shines down into the relative darkness of my nature, so that I behold God, Christ, truth, duty, eternity, holiness, as otherwise I could never have beheld them. But how mysterious such an experience is! And how much more mysterious it becomes when we begin to think of such a supernatural process as going on in the intellect and heart of the Church, and as making manifest by such immediate methods to the whole household of faith at once the deep things, the great things of God!

The action of such a spiritualized consciousness must certainly be something deeper and broader than any mere play of moral or

*“What is the regenerate or Christianized, in distinction from the natural consciousness? The latter obviously exists in two forms, the spontaneous and the philosophic. The first is that instant and immediate capacity of knowing which we recognize as a primary endowment of the mind, the light of all our seeing, and the basis of all intelligence—possessed alike by all men, and constituting in each and all the fundamental ground and evidence of whatever is known. The second is that higher form of the same capacity, consequent upon the training and development of the mental powers, through which the mind is enabled to see truth in broader ranges and in more abstract and commanding forms—the power to behold and to know things more distinctly in their principles and their fundamental relationships. In the phrase of Coleridge, this philosophic consciousness, thus developed only in an elect class, stands behind the spontaneous consciousness found in all classes, and is its trained guide, its more intelligent interpreter.”

“But both are alike natural, and as such are limited to such knowledge and such truth as the natural man unvitalized by grace is capable of discerning. Obviously, there is a higher sphere and mode of knowledge to which, by the nature of the case, neither can ever rise. . . . But in connection with the experience of saving grace, there comes into the soul an enlarged capacity to apprehend, a new form of spiritual discernment, a measure of intellectual insight and experience, which may properly be called a Christian, as distinguished from even the philosophic variety of the merely natural, consciousness. For grace not only renews the will in man, changes the order and range of his purposes, quickens his higher while it represses his lower sensibilities, and revolutionizes the entire domain of feeling as well as action; it also induces a corresponding transformation through all the mental life, expands the rational powers while it supplies new fields for thought and reveals larger objects of knowledge, and so enables the soul to behold or to know what apart from grace it would never have discerned. True faith is more than a process of feeling or of choice—it is also a new vision and a new disclosure” (*Salvation After Death*, pp. 204–206).

religious sensibility. Eliminating all feelings that are merely natural, and directing our attention only to those sentiments which belong immediately to man as a spiritual being, we at once perceive that the latter class of sentiments, however active at specific times or in specific directions, do not, cannot, constitute what we may properly term a religious consciousness. The appeal to the humane feeling, or to the spontaneous sense of justice, or to the sentiment of hope, for example, may be strong in the impression it makes upon our belief, but nothing is clearer than that it is not safe to base our belief on such emotional foundations. These sentiments are too evanescent, too variable, too diversified and conflicting also, to answer such a purpose. The term, consciousness, certainly implies much more than any such play of feeling, however beautiful, fitting like sunshine and shadow upon the surface of the soul; it implies the regulation of all mere emotion by some action of the judgment; it implies a permanent condition or state rather than a casual experience, born of the sensibility alone.

Defining this religious consciousness in the best sense, we may say that, as to its source, it is never a natural quality merely, but also a gift of God, produced within the soul through the Holy Ghost; that, as to its sphere, it is concerned not with natural but with religious and specifically with saving truth; that, as to its quality, it is both intellectual and affectional, the regenerate heart being as truly a factor in it as the clarified reason, the light it sheds flowing directly from what the person has become as a believer; that as to its movement, the divine and the human are vitally conjoined in the testimony it bears, and its affirmations possess an authoritativeness such as cannot inhere in any human judgment or conviction merely. In other words, it is a holy illumination which God, by His Spirit, grants to the true disciple, and by which the disciple may discern, in the sphere of saving truth, what the natural man, be he ever so profound or pure a philosopher, can never know. It is in some sense the certification of the Spirit to the reliableness and value of our religious beliefs. Still it is not inspiration, and at least in the individual believer never becomes, as Fox or Barclay would affirm, an infallible guide or guarantee in belief. It is not inspiration, and therefore the Church, under its influence, can never claim to be infallible, as Newman avers the Church of Rome to be.

But no sooner do we begin to describe this religious consciousness in such strong language, than we become impressed at once with the necessity of guarding ourselves against the various perils involved in such a conception. May we not plunge into errors, numerous and perhaps fatal, as we make our pilgrimage through this dim and undefined territory, where we cannot be absolutely certain whether

a divine Hand is guiding us in our meditations on heavenly things, or whether we are wandering on alone and with no other light than that which our own nature sheds upon our path? How may we insure ourselves against the superstitions, the spiritual corruptions, the awful mischiefs, that have flowed in upon the Church from this source at various stages in her career? By what rules, what tests, what safeguards, can we best protect ourselves, our brethren, the whole Church of God, at this dangerous point? How can this doctrine, this blessed fact of the spiritualized consciousness be so used as to secure the large blessing which it seems to contain, while we are safely shielded from the manifold evils which, as the records of our common Christianity show, have so often accompanied the fact and the doctrine in the experience of the household of faith?

Fidelity to the Inspired Word must be regarded as the first essential rule and safeguard here. The absolute perfection and sufficiency of the written Scripture are affirmed in our Confession in the strongest possible terms. "The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture; unto which nothing is at any time to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men." Not only are these sacred writings said to be sufficient as to their contents—a full and adequate guide to the soul in all its inquiries respecting divine things; they are said also to be self-explanatory to such an extent that the thoughtful and candid mind cannot fail, with diligent use of the Word, to learn sufficiently what God has sought to reveal to men. While it is admitted that all things in the Word are not alike plain in themselves, or as readily apprehended by one person as by another, "yet those things which are necessary to be known, believed and observed for salvation, are so clearly propounded in some place or other, that not only the learned but the unlearned, in a due use of the ordinary means, may attain unto a sufficient understanding of them." And while this divine Word is set up as a supreme judge and arbiter, by which all controversies, decrees, opinions and doctrines of men, are to be examined and tested, it is further said that the rule of interpretation is always to be found, not in human authorities, but in the Word itself: "When there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture, it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly."

What is the relation of the spiritualized consciousness to this sufficient, self-explanatory, supreme Book, in which—as our Standards affirm—God has made known all that is essential either to His

own glory, or to the belief or living or salvation of man? It is certainly true that the believer, animated by such a consciousness, may constantly be discovering some new phase or aspect of truth, may be seeing the doctrines of grace in fresh lights and in forms more winning or impressive, may be enabled to make wider inferences, broader deductions, from what he has learned from the Word, and may thus be constantly growing in knowledge, and in a kind of knowledge which, when he has thus possessed himself of it, will have to him an authoritativeness equal to that of the most direct and explicit teachings of the inspired record. There is also an illuminated text of the Scripture which the disciple is privileged to read, whenever he is bowed before God in secret prayer, or as he unites with others in the worship of the sanctuary, or is engaged in the discharge of some special religious duty in the name of Christ. In such experiences, the precious assurance that he that doeth the divine will, shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God, is fully verified; the broad fact being that no one so truly knows what the Bible contains, as he who, under the nurture of the Holy Ghost, reads and appropriates it in this spiritual way. His religious consciousness becomes a light in which he sees the truth of God more clearly, and the response of his sanctified soul to the Word becomes to him a fresh certification that the Word is divine.

Viewed in this light, the relation of such consciousness to the Scripture becomes one of exceeding interest; and the inward thought and life of the disciple, as thus illuminated, expanded, glorified by the indoctrination which the Scripture affords, become exceedingly attractive. But is it not implied in this relation, that the Word is always to be regarded as sufficient and supreme; that the believer is never to go beyond the circumference of the Word in his search for truth; that he is to hold nothing as authoritative, except what he finds himself able to verify from the inspired page? Is it not certain that whenever he wanders beyond the clear boundary lines of Revelation, he can have no guarantee whatever that he is not passing over into some domain of delusion or of error? Is it not clear that, so often as he seeks to draw out from the resources of his own consciousness what has not first come into his conviction from faithful study of the written Word, he is engaging in a process which cannot increase the sum of saving knowledge in his soul, but which may the rather blind his vision to what the Word itself really reveals? It is at this point that peril begins. It is here that the Quaker and the Romanist make their mistake; namely, in according a species of authoritativeness which cannot be justified by the objective Word, to the dicta either of the individual consciousness, or of the organic consciousness resident in the whole

Church. It is here that the modern restorationist, on the ground that he feels his singular dogma to be true, or that it ought on some abstract principle of equity to be true, affirms as a fundamental article of belief what he cannot verify from the written Word, but is determined to hold even though the Word should seem to condemn it.

A hundred similar illustrations will at once suggest themselves to the careful student of the theological tendencies of our time. Certainly, our only protection against such errors must lie in the most implicit acceptance of the written Scriptures as containing all that we need to know in order to our salvation, and as so clear and explicit in their teaching at all vital points as to need no subjective expositions or expansions at the hands of man. The true Christian consciousness, we may be assured, will never wander beyond the circumference of the inspired Word; it will find somewhere within that Word all that it desires to know or cares to believe concerning divine things; it will ever hold itself tributary to that Word, and loyal to it, as the true and the only source of illumination and wisdom, of life and peace—a light shining for all men everywhere, and of which the light shining within any of our breasts is at the best only an earthly reflection, often refracted and often obscure.*

Fidelity to the Holy Spirit is another primal rule and safeguard here. The Church has yet much to learn respecting the teaching function of that person in the blessed Trinity, whom our Saviour promises to His disciples as a substitute for Himself as the living Word, who was to take of the things of Christ and show them unto men, who was to be the guide of believers unto all saving truth, and who was even to convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. The action of this divine agent on the sensibilities, on the conscience, on the will and life, is much more fully

* The illustration suggested at the outset in regard to an eternal preterition on the one hand and the universal salvation of dying infants on the other, may profitably be recalled at this point. Is it not obvious that the supreme test must be the same in both cases—the test of the inspired and authoritative Word? Whatever the Bible teaches, even respecting the condemnation of the wicked from all eternity, is to be received by us with implicit faith. Whatever the Bible does not teach either directly or by good and necessary consequence, even respecting the salvation of that large proportion of the race who die in infancy, cannot properly be made an article of the faith, though all may agree in holding it. On both sides the perfection and sufficiency of the Scriptures, the clearness and fullness of their teaching on all points necessary to salvation, and the obligation to submit all dicta of consciousness as well as all “traditions of men” to their final arbitration, must be honestly and cordially recognized. No other rule is consistent with loyalty to the Bible as the very Word of God; no other rule can save us from those multiplied errors which at this point have so often disturbed the Christian Church.

appreciated than that antecedent influence upon the intellect whereby we are first made to know the truth and to believe what the prophets and apostles, and eminently the living Christ, have revealed. In a true and just sense He is "the light of Christ within," and it is only in His light, through His training and nurture, that we see light, even in the revealing and the luminous Word. What we style common grace—the development of interest, of thoughtfulness, of conviction and a certain measure of faith, antecedent to conversion—is traceable to Him alone. Conversion itself, as the outcome of His regenerating touch, with all those vast changes in thought and knowledge and belief that accompany genuine conversion, is one feature of that wonderful office of spiritual instruction which in the economy of the Trinity He was appointed to fill. The Christian consciousness itself, in all its varieties and grades, is His gift; and whatever that consciousness, vitalized by His grace, may reveal to us as a legitimate object of belief, must in some deep sense have come from Him.

But this teaching function of the Spirit, manifested in and through the spiritualized consciousness, has its definite sphere and range; it clearly is limited to religious, and especially to saving truth, and to such truth as is taught in the divine Word. The claim that the Holy Ghost is "the executive of the Godhead" in general—that He is, in the phrase of Cyprian, *omnium viventium anima*, or "the immediate source of all life"—that He is particularly "the source of all intellectual life"—is one for which the Scripture furnishes no adequate warrant.* The remarkable declaration of our Lord, "He shall glorify *Me*, for He shall receive of *Mine* and show it unto you," is decisive here. The Word and the Spirit are thus vitally conjoined; and the recognition of this conjunction is indispensable to right and safe views of the office of the Holy Ghost within the Christian consciousness. It is the truth concerning Christ, and this truth only, which, in the great process of salvation, the Paraclete is set to make manifest; it is not only the truth concerning Christ, but such truth only respecting Him, as the Paraclete has himself put on record in the living Gospel. In other language, whatever the Spirit may be expected to reveal to our sanctified intelligence, must first have been written in the inspired Word. The horizon of the Scriptures may widen for us continually under His teaching; we may comprehend its doctrines more fully and appreciate them more highly through His ministrations to our intellect as well as our hearts; but we have no warrant for affirming

* Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. i, pp. 529, 530. See, for a juster statement, Vol. i, p. 98: "We have in the sacred Scriptures the things of the Spirit recorded in the words of the Spirit." See also Vol. i, pp. 531, 532, and Vol. iii, pp. 105 and 227-9, specially the paragraph on *the Inward Work of the Spirit*.

that He ever leads the disciple out beyond the circumference of Scripture, or feeds him with spiritual food which the green pastures of the Word do not supply.

Our Confession lays down the only safe rule at this point, in the declaration: "We acknowledge the inward illumination of the Spirit to be necessary for the saving understanding of *such things as are written in the Word*;" taken together with the kindred declaration already quoted: "Our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority thereof, is from the inward work of the Spirit bearing witness *by and with the Word* in our hearts." With this should be associated the limiting phrase, of special significance in this connection: "Unto which nothing is at any time to be added, whether *by new revelations of the Spirit* or traditions of men." Adhering to this rule, we are securely guarded against the liability of fancying ourselves under the teaching of the Holy Ghost, when in fact we are simply following the vain imaginings of our own hearts, or perchance furtively trying to secure some species of supernatural endorsement for errors which are at open variance with the authoritative Word. No subjective assurance is adequate here. There is no recognizable touch or thrill at the centres of our spiritual being, no subtle or tender breeze fanning the crystal lake of consciousness, by which we are certified that what we are thinking is not our own independent product, but is rather a divine result graciously induced within us. The Spirit may and does guide the Christian in a given sphere of duty by interior as well as by providential indications; we recognize this fact, for example, in our doctrine of a call to the ministry of the Word. He may and does touch the soul immediately, enduing it with fresh mental as well as moral life, thrilling it with further glimpses of heavenly things, leading it upwards into new and precious experiences, as the soul of every believer can testify. But does He ever lead the thoughts of the Christian out beyond the Bible, or show him what he could never have learned from the Bible, or set up within him some source or standard of truth which is independent of the Bible and may be accepted even against its solemn witness? Have we any warrant whatever for asserting that He is doing this, or for expecting that He will do this,—for setting up our religious consciousness, in other words, above the Scripture, as a teacher of infallible certainty and of supreme authority in the region of belief?

To propose these questions is to answer them. There is but one answer for those who hold that the Scriptures are themselves the product of the Holy Ghost, and that they contain so much of revelation as He has deemed essential to our proper enlightenment or to our final salvation. Having received the things of Christ, and having

made them known to men in the Book which He has inspired, and whose authorship He claims, it is not presumable that He will, from time to time, be adding in the case of the individual or even of the Church to what He has thus once for all made known in the volume which He graciously moved holy men of old to write for all men in all ages. We count it presumption in the Church of Rome to claim for herself such superadded disclosures of sacred truth ; but it would be greater presumption in an intelligent Protestantism to recognize such a claim, and still greater in any individual disciple to affirm for himself such supernatural interposition. The written Word tells us what the Spirit has deemed it desirable to reveal to men, and to that Word emanating directly from Him, there can be no authoritative addition ; its test of all that lies in our consciousness is sufficient and final.

Fidelity to the Christian consciousness itself, as a grand prerogative of grace, must also be insisted upon as a primary duty in this relation. We cannot allow a spiritual fact of so much significance to be robbed of its true value, whether by confusing it with any fancies or notions of the natural man, or by consenting to its use in cases where private or local opinions, more or less religious, claim for themselves a standing such as belong to the recognized truths of sanctified consciousness alone. It is no railing accusation to say that much which gains currency in our time on the ground that it has its warrant in such consciousness, possesses hardly greater religious value than the communings of Socrates with his favorite *δαίμων*. Men sometimes make a religion out of their instincts, their feelings, even their passions. They aim to dignify with rational and even with supernatural authority, what in fact has its origin in their own inclinations or desires, or possibly in their unbelief.* If there be any real witness of consciousness in the case, it is that of a consciousness wholly natural rather than gracious, largely infected by the great primal impulse of self-hood, perchance dimmed and corrupted by personal sin. In such processes the soul is either seeking

*It is a quaint and touching illustration of this species of illusion which we find in the familiar story related by one of the greatest among English Deists, Lord Herbert of Cherbury. Filled with doubts as to the publication of his famous treatise against Christianity, he says : " I was on a bright summer day sitting in my room, my window to the south was open, the sun shone brightly, not a breeze was stirring. I took my book, ' On Truth,' into my hand, threw myself on my knees and prayed devoutly." After reciting his prayer, which was a petition that a sign from heaven might be given him if it was indeed the divine will that the book should be published, he adds: " I had scarcely finished, when a loud and yet at the same time a gentle sound came from heaven, not like any sound on earth. This comforted me in such a manner, and gave me such satisfaction, that I considered my prayer as having been heard."

to secure for its own notions a warrant higher than itself, or perhaps endeavoring to give dignity to its actual life, by claiming for that life a species of divine endorsement. We have had abundant occasion to note the result of all such illusions; in the presence of the Word of God, at the touch of the Spirit of God, they shrink away like spectres at the sunrise.

Again, the dicta of a religious consciousness, which is sporadic, occasional, speculative, must be carefully distinguished from those of a consciousness which has the opposite qualities—which is an endowment of the whole Church. The familiar test of Vincentius, *quod semper, quod ubique, et quod ob omnibus, creditur*, would be applicable here, if indeed there were any religious truth outside of the most fundamental doctrines of the written Scripture, which have gained any such universal verification. But certainly before any truth, claiming to be supported by the warrant of consciousness, can be justified in its claim, it must be subjected to tests approaching in thoroughness that proposed by Vincentius; it must be general rather than local or provincial; it must be permanent rather than casual or temporary; it must find acceptance, not with a certain class of mind or a certain school in philosophy merely, but among believers in general, and on the ground of an universal conviction in its favor. And to these tests there must of course be added the crucial inquiry whether the truth affirmed is, if not suggested by the Scripture, still in obvious harmony with the fundamental principles of the divine Word, and in harmony also with those great lessons which the Holy Spirit has been engaged from the beginning in teaching the Church.

It is needless to apply these determining tests to the multiplied dogmas which are now asking for acceptance on the ground that they are based on the religious consciousness, and must be received because the religious consciousness is endorsing them. We are familiar with their range, their style, their coloring. They relate to the nature and character of God, to His providential and His moral administration, to the contents and the claim of Scripture, to the person and mediation of Christ, to the existence and the ministrations of the Spirit, to the real nature of the Christian life, to conscience and duty, to the Church and her creeds and institutions, to the article of death, the state of the dead, future probation, a judgment to come, a final and retributive eternity. Men are everywhere testing these great verities of religion by their fears, their fancies, their hopes—by the dicta of their natural conscience, by the measurements of finite reason, by standards that are wholly subjective, individual, superficial, perverted through sin, rather than by the lines and measurements of the Word and the Spirit of God.

In many instances they set up their little local consciences against the consciousness of the whole Church—their temporary opinions against the enduring conviction of the household of faith living on through the ages. So far as the Bible seems by any obscure text or allusion to sustain their dogmas, they avail themselves of its support, while yet they are indifferent to those great voices of the Scripture which, like the sound of many waters heard in the Apocalypse, are sweeping their theories utterly away. Against the indulgence of such tendencies, however frequent or popular, the true Christian Consciousness is as utterly at variance as are the Spirit and the Word; they are little better than human imitations of a spiritual, a divine reality, and can therefore have no standing as either help or test in Christian belief.

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