

FAITH



TRUTH IS TRUSTWORTHY

*A Classic Exposition of the Nature, Object,
and Exercises of Christian Faith*



CHARLES HODGE

Copyright ©Monergism Books

Faith

by Charles Hodge

Table of Contents

- [1. Preliminary Remarks.](#)
- [2. The Psychological Nature of Faith.](#)
- [3. Different Kinds of Faith.](#)
- [4. Faith and Knowledge.](#)
- [5. Faith and Feeling.](#)
- [6. Faith and Love.](#)
- [7. The Object of Saving Faith.](#)
- [8. Effects of Faith.](#)

§ 1. *Preliminary Remarks.*

The first conscious exercise of the renewed soul is faith, as the first conscious act of a man born blind whose eyes have been opened, is

seeing. The exercise of vision in such a man is indeed attended by so many new sensations and emotions that he cannot determine how much of this new experience comes through the eye, and how much from other sources. It is so with the believer. As soon as his eyes are opened by the renewing of the Holy Ghost he is in a new world. Old things have passed away, all things are become new. The apprehension of "the things of God" as true lies at the foundation of all the exercises of the renewed soul. The discussions on the question, Whether faith precedes repentance, or repentance faith, can have no place if the meaning of the words be agreed upon. Unless faith be limited to some of its special exercises there can be no question that in the order of nature it must precede repentance. Repentance is the turning of the soul from sin unto God, and unless this be produced by the believing apprehension of the truth it is not even a rational act. As so much prominence is assigned to faith in the Scriptures, as all the promises of God are addressed to believers, and as all the conscious exercises of spiritual life involve the exercise of faith, without which they are impossible, the importance of this grace cannot be overestimated. To the theologian and to the practical Christian it is indispensable that clear and correct ideas should be entertained on the subject. It is one of special difficulty. This difficulty arises partly from the nature of the subject; partly from the fact that usage has assigned the word faith so many different meanings; partly from the arbitrary definitions given of it by philosophers and theologians; and partly from the great diversity of aspects under which it is presented in the Word of God.

The question, What is Faith? is a very comprehensive one. In one view it is a metaphysical question. What is the psychological nature of the act or state of the mind which we designate faith, or belief? In

this aspect the discussion concerns the philosopher as much as the theologian. Secondly, faith may be viewed as to its exercise in the whole sphere of religion and morality. Thirdly, it may be considered as a Christian grace, the fruit of the Spirit; that is, those exercises of faith which are peculiar to the regenerated people of God. This is what is meant by saving faith. Fourthly, it may be viewed in its relation to justification, sanctification, and holy living, or, as to those special exercises of faith which are required as the necessary conditions of the sinner's acceptance with God, or as essential to holiness of heart and life.

§ 2. *The Psychological Nature of Faith.*

Faith in the widest sense of the word, is assent to the truth, or the persuasion of the mind that a thing is true. In ordinary popular language we are said to believe whatever we regard as true. The primary element of faith is trust. The Hebrew word *amān* means to sustain, to uphold. In the Niphal, to be firm, and, in a moral sense, to be trustworthy. In the Hiphil, to regard as firm, or trustworthy, to place trust or confidence in. In like manner the Greek *pisteuo* (from *peistō*, and that from *peithō*, to persuade), means to trust, i. e., to be persuaded that a person or thing is trustworthy. Hence the epithet *pistos* is applied to any one who is, and who shows himself to be, worthy of trust. In Latin *credere* (whence our word credit) has the same meaning. In mercantile matters it means to lend, to trust to; and then in general, to exercise trust in. "Crede mihi," trust me, rely on my word. *Fides* (from *fido*, and that from *peithō*), is also trust,

confidence exercised in regard to any person or thing; then the disposition, or virtue which excites confidence; then the promise, declaration, or pledge which is the outward ground of confidence. In the cognate words, *fidens*, *fidelis*, *fiducia*, the same idea is prominent. The German word "Glaube" has the same general meaning. It is defined by Heinsius (Worterbuch): "der Zustand des Gemuthes, da man eine Sache fur wahr halt und sich darauf verlasst," i. e., "that state of mind in which a man receives and relies upon a thing as true." The English word "faith" is said to be from the Anglo-Saxon "faegan" to covenant. It is that state of mind which a covenant requires or supposes; that is, it is confidence in a person or thing as trustworthy. "To believe," is defined by the Latin "credere, fidem dare sive habere." "The etymologists," says Richardson, "do not attempt to account for this important word: it is undoubtedly formed on the Dut. *Leven*; Ger. *Leben*; A.-S. *Lif-ian*, *Be-lif-ian*; Goth. *Liban*, vivere, to live, or be-live, to dwell. *Live* or *leve*, *be-* or *bi-live* or *leve*, are used indifferently by old writers, whether to denote *vivere* or *credere*. . . . To believe, then, is to live by or according to, to abide by; to guide, conduct, regulate, govern, or direct the *life* by; to take, accept, assume or adopt as a *rule of life*; and, consequently, to think, deem, or judge right; to be firmly persuaded of, to give credit to; to trust, or think trustworthy; to have or give faith or confidence; to confide, to think or deem faithful."

The Primary Idea of Faith is Trust.

From all this it appears that the primary idea of faith is trust. The primary idea of truth is that which is trustworthy; that which sustains our expectations, which does not disappoint, because it really is what it is assumed or declared to be. It is opposed to the

deceitful, the false, the unreal, the empty, and the worthiess. To regard a thing as true, is to regard it as worthy of trust, as being what it purports to be. Faith, in the comprehensive and legitimate meaning of the word, therefore, is trust.

In accordance with this general idea of faith, Augustine¹ says, "Credere, nihil aliud est, quam cum assensione cogitare." Thus, also, Reid² says, "Belief admits of all degrees, from the slightest suspicion to the fullest assurance. . . . There are many operations of the mind in which we find belief to be an essential ingredient. . . . Belief is an ingredient in consciousness, in perception, and in remembrance. . . . We give the name of evidence to whatever is a ground of belief. . . . What this evidence is, is more easily felt than described. . . . The common occasions of life lead us to distinguish evidence into different kinds such as the evidence of sense, the evidence of memory, the evidence of consciousness, the evidence of testimony, the evidence of axioms, the evidence of reasoning. . . . They seem to me to agree only in this, that they are all fitted by nature to produce belief in the human mind."

The more limited Sense of the Word.

There is, however, in most cases a great difference between the general signification of a word and its special and characteristic meaning. Although, therefore, there is an element of belief in all our cognitions, there is an important difference between what is strictly and properly called faith, and those states or acts of the mind which we designate as sight or perception, intuition, opinions, conclusions, or apodictic judgments. What that characteristic difference is, is the point to be determined. There are modes of statement on this subject

current among a certain class of philosophers and theologians, which can hardly be regarded as definitions of faith. They take the word out of its ordinary and established meaning, or arbitrarily limit it to a special sphere of our mental operations. Thus Morell³ says, "Faith is the intuition of eternal verities." But eternal verities are not the only objects of faith; nor is intuition the only mode of apprehending truth which is of the nature of belief. The same objections bear against the assertion that "Faith is the organ for the supernatural and divine; "or, as Eschenmayer expresses it,⁴ "Ein vom Denken, Fuhlen und Wollen verschiedenes, eigenthumliches Organ fur das Ewige und Heilige; a special organ for the eternal and the holy." The supernatural and divine, however, are not the exclusive objects even of religious faith. It is by faith we know that the worlds were made by the word of God; it was by faith Noah prepared the ark, and Abraham, being called of God, went out not knowing whither he went. The objects of faith in these cases are not what is meant by "eternal verities." It is, moreover, an arbitrary assumption that faith is "a special organ," even when things supernatural and divine are its object. Our nature is adapted to the reception of all kinds of truth of which we can have any idea. But it is not necessary to assume a special organ for historical truths, a special organ for scientific truths, and another for the general truths of revelation, and still another for "the eternal and the holy." God has constituted us capable of belief, and the complex state of mind involved in the act of faith is of course different according to the nature of the truth believed, and the nature of the evidence on which our faith is founded. But this does not necessitate the assumption of a distinct organ for each kind of truth.

Faith not to be regarded as simply a Christian Grace.

No less unsatisfactory are those descriptions of faith which regard it only in its character as a Christian and saving grace. Delitzsch, for example,⁵ describes faith as the most central act of our being; the return to God, the going out of our inner life to Him. "This longing after God's free, merciful love, as his own Word declares it, a longing, reaching forth, and grasping it; this naked, unselfish craving, feeling itself satisfied with nothing else than God's promised grace; this eagerness, absorbing every ray of light that proceeds from God's reconciled love; this convinced and safety-craving appropriation and clinging to the word of grace; this is faith. According to its nature, it is the pure receptive correlative of the word of promise; a means of approaching again to God, which, as the word itself, is appointed through the distance of God in consequence of sin; for faith has to confide in the word, in spite of all want of comprehension, want of sight, want of experience. No experimental *actus reflexi* belong to the nature of faith. It is, according to its nature, *actia directa*, to wit, *fiducia supplex*." All this is doubtless true of the believer. He does thus long after God, and appropriate the assurance of his love, and cling to his promises of grace; but faith has a wider range than this. There are exercises of faith not included in this description, recorded in Scripture, and especially in the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

Erdmann⁶ says that religious faith, the faith on which the Scriptures lay so much stress, is, "Bewusstseyn der Versohnung mit Gott, consciousness of reconciliation with God." He insists that faith cannot be separated from its contents. It is not the man who holds this or that to be true, who is a believer; but the man who is convinced of a specific truth, namely, that he is reconciled with God. Calling faith a consciousness is not a definition of its nature. And

limiting it to a consciousness of reconciliation with God is contrary to the usage of Scripture and of theology.

Definitions of Faith founded on its Subjective Nature.

The more common and generally received definitions of faith, may perhaps be reduced to three classes, all of which include the general idea of persuasion of the truth. But some seek the distinguishing character of faith in its subjective nature, others, in the nature of its object; others, in the nature of the evidence, or ground on which it rests.

Faith as distinguished from Opinion and Knowledge.

To the first of these classes belong the following definitions: Faith or belief is said to be a persuasion of the truth stronger than opinion, and weaker than knowledge. Metaphysicians divide the objects of our cognitions into the possible, the real, and the necessary. With regard to the merely possible we can form only conjectures, or opinions, more or less plausible or probable. With regard to things which the mind with greater or less confidence views as certain, although it cannot justify that confidence to itself or others, i. e., cannot demonstrate the certainty of the object, it is said to believe. What it is perfectly assured of, and can demonstrate to be true so as to coerce conviction, it is said to know. Thus Locke defines faith to be the assent of the mind to propositions which are probably, but not certainly true. Bailey⁷ says, "I propose to confine it [belief or faith] first, to the effect on the mind of the premises in what is termed probable reasoning, or what I have named contingent reasoning -- in a word the premises in all reasoning, but that which is demonstrative; and secondly, to the state of holding true when that

state, far from being the effect of any premises discerned by the mind, is dissociated from all evidence." To believe is to admit a thing as true, according to Kant, on grounds sufficient subjectively, insufficient objectively. Or, as more fully stated, "Holding for true, or the subjective validity of a judgment in relation to conviction (which is, at the same time, objectively valid) has the three following degrees: opinion, belief, and knowledge. Opinion is a consciously insufficient judgment, subjectively as well as objectively. Belief is subjectively sufficient, but is recognized as being objectively insufficient. Knowledge is both subjectively and objectively sufficient. Subjective sufficiency is termed conviction (for myself); objective sufficiency is termed certainty (for all)." [8](#) Erdmann [9](#) says, "Man versteht unter Glauben eine jede Gewissheit, die geringer ist als das Wissen, und etwa starker ist als ein blosses Meinen oder Vermutlichhalten (z. B. ich glaube, dass es heute regnen wird)." "By faith is understood any persuasion which is weaker than knowledge, but somewhat stronger than a mere deeming possible or probable, as, e. g., I believe it will rain to-day." This he gives as the commonly accepted meaning of the word, although he utterly repudiates it as a definition of religious faith.

It is urged in support of this definition of faith that with regard to everything of which we are not absolutely sure, and yet are persuaded or convinced of its truth, we say we believe. Thus with respect to things remembered; if the recollection is indistinct and uncertain, we say we think, e. g., we think we saw a certain person at a given time and place; we are not sure, but such is our impression. If our persuasion of the fact be stronger, we say we believe it. If we have, and can have, no doubt about it, we say we know it. In like manner the testimony of our senses may be so weak as to produce

only a probability that the thing is as it appears; if clearer, it produces a belief more or less decided; if so clear as to preclude all doubt, the effect is knowledge. If we see a person at a distance, and we are entirely uncertain who it is, we can only say we think it is some one whom we know. If that persuasion becomes stronger, we say, we believe it is he. If perfectly sure, we say, we know it. In all these cases the only difference between opinion, belief, and knowledge, is their relative strength. The objects are the same, their relation to the mind is the same, and the ground or evidence on which they severally rest is of the same kind. It is said that it would be incorrect to say, "We believe that we slept in our house last night;" if perfectly sure of the fact. If a witness in a court of justice simply says, "I believe I was at a certain place at a given time," his testimony would be of no value. He must be able to say that he is sure of the fact -- that he knows it.

Objections to this Definition.

Of this definition of faith, it may be remarked, --

1. That the meaning which it assigns to the word is certainly legitimate, sustained by established usage. The states of mind expressed by the words, I think a thing to be true; I believe it; I know it, are distinguished from each other simply by the different degrees of certainty which enter into them respectively. The probable ground of this use of the word to believe, is, that there is more of the element of trust (or a voluntarily giving to evidence a greater influence on the mind than of necessity belongs to it), manifest in our consciousness, than is expressed by saying we think, or, we know. However this may

be, it cannot be denied that the word belief often expresses a degree of conviction greater than opinion and less than knowledge.

2. But this is not the distinguishing characteristic of faith, or its *differentia*. There are exercises of faith into which this uncertainty does not enter. Some of the strongest convictions of which the mind is capable are beliefs. Even our assurance of the veracity of consciousness, the foundation of all other convictions, is of the nature of faith. So the primary truths which are, and must be assumed in all our researches and arguments, are beliefs. They are taken on trust. They cannot be proved. If any man denies them, there is nothing more to be said. He cannot be convinced. Sir William Hamilton¹⁰ says, "St. Austin accurately says, 'We know what rests upon reason; we believe what rests upon authority.' But reason itself must at last rest upon authority; for the original data of reason do not rest on reason, but are necessarily accepted by reason on the authority of what is beyond itself. These data are, therefore, in rigid propriety, beliefs or trusts. Thus it is that, in the last resort, we must, perforce, philosophically admit, that belief is the primary condition of reason, and not reason the ultimate ground of belief. We are compelled to surrender the proud *Intellige ut credas* of Abelard, to content ourselves with the humble *Crede ut intelligas* of Anselm."

The same is true in other spheres. The effect on the mind produced by human testimony is universally recognized as faith. If that testimony is inadequate it does not preclude doubt; but it may be so strong as to make all doubt impossible. No sane man can doubt the existence of such cities as London and Paris. But to most men that existence is not a matter of knowledge either intuitive or discursive. It is something taken on trust, on the authority of others; which

taking on trust is admitted by philosophers, theologians, and the mass of men, to be a form of faith. Again, in some moral states of mind a man's conviction of the reality of a future state of reward and punishment is as strong as his belief in his own existence, and much stronger than his confidence in the testimony of his senses. And yet a future state of existence is not a matter of knowledge. It is an object of faith, or a thing believed. We accordingly find that the Scriptures teach that there is a full assurance of faith; a faith which precludes the possibility of doubt. Paul says, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." (2 Tim. i. 12.) As Job had said ages before, "I know that my Redeemer liveth." The Apostle declares, Hebrews xi. 1, faith to be an *u`po,stasij* and *e;legcoj*, than which no stronger terms could be selected to express assured conviction. The power, also, which the Bible attributes to faith as the controlling principle of life, as overcoming the world, subduing kingdoms, stopping the mouths of lions, quenching the violence of fire, turning to flight the armies of the aliens, is proof enough that it is no weak persuasion of the truth. That definition, therefore, which makes the characteristic of faith to be a measure of confidence greater than opinion, but less than knowledge, cannot be deemed satisfactory.

Faith not a Voluntary Conviction.

A second definition of faith, founded on its nature, is that which makes it "a voluntary conviction or persuasion of the truth." This is a very old view of the matter. According to Theodoret, [11](#) *pi,stij evsti.n e`kou,sioj th/j yuch/j sugkata,qesij*, i. e., "a voluntary assent of the mind." And Thomas Aquinas says, [12](#) "Credere est actus intellectus assentientis veritati divinae ex imperio voluntatis a Deo motae per

gratiam."**13** He distinguishes between knowledge and faith by representing the former as the conviction produced by the object itself seen intuitively or discursively ("sicut patet in principiis primis, . . . vel sicut patet de conclusionibus") to be true; whereas in the latter the mind is not sufficiently moved to assent "ab objecto proprio, sed per quandam electionem, voluntarie declinans in unam partem magis quam in alteram. Et siquidem haec sit cum dubitatione et formidine alterius partis, erit opinio. Si autem sit cum certitudine absque tali formidine, erit fides."

This definition admits of different explanations. The word "voluntary," if its meaning be determined by the wide sense of the word "will," includes every operation of the mind not purely intellectual. And therefore to say that faith is a voluntary assent is to say that faith is not merely a speculative assent, an act of the judgment pronouncing a thing to be true, but includes feeling. Nitsch, therefore, defines faith to be a "gefühlsmässiges Erkennen." "Die Einheit des Gefühls und der Erkenntniss;**14** a knowledge or persuasion of truth combined with feeling, -- the unity of feeling and knowledge." But if the word "will" be taken in the sense of the power of self-determination, then nothing is voluntary which does not involve the exercise of that power. If in this sense faith be voluntary, then we must have the power to believe or disbelieve at pleasure. If we believe the truth, it is because we choose or determine ourselves to receive it; if we reject it, it is because we will to disbelieve it. The decision is determined neither by the nature of the object nor by the nature or degree of the evidence. Sometimes both of these meanings of the word voluntary seem to be combined by those who define faith to be a voluntary assent of the mind, or an assent of the intellect determined by the will. This appears from what Aquinas, for

example, says when he discusses the question whether faith is a virtue. He argues that if faith be a virtue, which he admits it to be, it must include love, because love is the form or principle of all the virtues; and it must be self-determined because there could be no virtue in faith if it were the inevitable effect of the evidence or testimony. If a virtue, it must include an act of self-determination; we must decide to do what we have the power not to do.

Remarks on this Definition of Faith.

This definition of faith contains many elements of truth. In the first place: it is true that faith and feeling are often inseparable. They together constitute that state of mind to which the name faith is given. The perception of beauty is of necessity connected with the feeling of delight. Assent to moral truth involves the feeling of moral approbation. In like manner spiritual discernment (faith when the fruit of the Spirit) includes delight in the things of the Spirit, not only as true, but as beautiful and good. This is the difference between a living and dead faith. This is the portion of truth involved in the Romish doctrine of a formed and unformed faith. Faith (assent to the truth) connected with love is the *fides formata*; faith without love is *fides informis*. While, however, it is true that faith is often necessarily connected with feeling, and, therefore, in one sense of the term, is a voluntary assent, yet this is not always the case. Whether feeling attends and enters into the exercise of faith, depends upon its object (or the thing believed) and the evidence on which it is founded. When the object of faith is speculative truth, or some historical event past or future; or when the evidence or testimony on which faith is founded is addressed only to the understanding and not to the conscience or to our emotional or religious nature, then

faith does not involve feeling. We believe the great mass of historical facts to which we assent as true, simply on historical testimony, and without any feeling entering into, or necessarily connected with it. The same is true with regard to a large part of the contents of the Bible. They, to a great extent, are historical, or the predictions of historical events. When we believe what the Scriptures record concerning the creation, the deluge, the calling of Abraham, the overthrow of the cities of the plain, the history of Joseph, and the like, our faith does not include feeling. It is not an exercise of the will in either sense of that word. It is simply a rational conviction founded on sufficient evidence. It may be said, as Aquinas does say, that it is love or reverence towards God which inclines the will to believe such facts on the authority of his Word. But wicked men believe them, and cannot help believing them. A man can hardly be found who does not believe that the Israelites dwelt in Egypt, escaped from bondage, and took possession of the land of Canaan.

In the second place, it is true not only that faith is in many cases inseparable from feeling, but also that feeling has much influence in determining our faith. This is especially true when moral and religious truths are the objects of faith. Want of congeniality with the truth produces insensibility to the evidence by which it is supported. Our Lord said to the Jews, "Ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep." (John x. 26.) And in another place, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God." (vii. 17.) And the Apostle says of those that are lost, "The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." (2 Cor. iv. 4.) The truth was present, attended by appropriate and abundant evidence, but there was no susceptibility.

The defect was in the organ of vision, not in the want of light. The Scriptures uniformly refer the unbelief of those who reject the gospel to the state of their hearts. There can be no doubt that all the true children of God received Christ as their God and Saviour on the evidence which He gave of his divine character and mission, and that He was rejected only by the unrenowned and the wicked, and because of their wickedness. Hence unbelief is so great a sin. Men are condemned because they believe not on the only begotten Son of God. (John iii. 18.) All this is true. It is true of saving faith. But it is not true of all kinds of even religious faith; that is, of faith which has religious truth for its object. And, therefore, it cannot furnish the *differentia* or criterion to distinguish faith from other forms of assent to truth. There are states of mind not only popularly, but correctly called belief, of which it is not true that love, or congeniality, is an element. There is such a thing as dead faith, or orthodoxy. There is such a thing as speculative faith. Simon Magus believed. Even the devils believe. And if we turn to other than religious truths it is still more apparent that faith is not necessarily a voluntary assent of the mind. A man may hear of something most repugnant to his feelings, as, for example, of the triumph of a rival. He may at first refuse to believe it; but the testimony may become so strong as to force conviction. This conviction is, by common consent, faith or belief. It is not sight; it is not intuition; it is not a deduction; it is belief; a conviction founded on testimony. This subject, i. e., the connection between faith and feeling, will come up again in considering other definitions.

In the third place, if we take the word voluntary in the sense which implies volition or self-determination, it is still more evident that faith cannot be defined as voluntary assent. It is, indeed, a proverb

that a man convinced, against his will remains unconvinced. But this is only a popular way of expressing the truth just conceded, namely, that the feelings have, in many cases, great influence in determining our faith. But, as just remarked, a man may be constrained to believe against his will. He may struggle against conviction; he may determine he will not believe, and yet conviction may be forced upon him. Napoleon, at the battle of Waterloo, hears that Grouchy is approaching. He gladly believes it. Soon the report reaches him that the advancing columns are Prussians. This he will not believe. Soon, however, as courier after courier confirms the unwelcome fact, he is forced to believe it. It is not true, therefore, that in faith as faith there is always, as Aquinas says, an election "voluntarie declinans in unam partem magis quam in alteram." There is another frequent experience. We often hear men say they would give the world if they could believe. The dying Grotius said he would give all his learning for the simple faith of his unlettered servant. To tell a man he can believe if he will is to contradict his consciousness. He tries to believe. He earnestly prays for faith; but he cannot exercise it. It is true, as concerns the sinner in relation to the gospel, that this inability to believe arises from the state of his mind. But this state of the mind lies below the will. It cannot be determined or changed by the exercise of any voluntary power. On these grounds the definition of faith, whether as generic or religious, as a voluntary assent to truth, must be considered unsatisfactory.

Definitions founded on the Object of Faith.

The preceding definitions are all founded on the assumed subjective nature of faith. The next definition is of a different kind. It is founded on the nature of its object. Faith is said to be the

persuasion of the truth of things not seen. This is a very old and familiar definition. "Quid est fides," asks Augustine,¹⁵ "nisi credere quod non vides." And Lombard¹⁶ says, "Fides est virtus qua creduntur quae non videntur." Hence faith is said to be wallowed up in vision; and the one is contrasted with the other; as when the Apostle says, "We walk by faith, not by sight." And in Hebrews, eleventh chapter, all the objects of faith under the aspect in which it is considered in that chapter, are included under the categories of ta. evlpizo,mena and ta. ouv Blepo,mena, "things hoped for, and things not seen." The latter includes the former. "We hope," says the Apostle, "for that we see not." (Romans viii. 25.) The word sight, in this connection, may be taken in three senses. First, in its literal sense. We are not said to believe what we see with our eyes. What we see we know to be true. We believe that the planet Saturn is surrounded by a belt, and that Jupiter has four satellites, on the unanimous testimony of astronomers. But if we look through a telescope and see the belt of the one and the satellites of the other, our faith passes into knowledge. We believe there is such a city as Rome, and that it contains the Colosseum, Trajan's Arch, and other monuments of antiquity. If we visit that city and see these things for ourselves, our faith becomes knowledge. The conviction is no stronger in the one case than in the other. We are just as sure there is such a city before having seen it, as though we had been there a hundred times. But the conviction is of a different kind. Secondly, the mind is said to see when it perceives an object of thought to be true in its own light, or by its own radiance. This mental vision may be either immediate or mediate -- either intuitive or through a process of proof. A child may believe that the angles of a triangle are together equal to two right angles, on the authority of his teacher.

When he understands the demonstration of that proposition, his faith becomes knowledge. He sees it to be true. The objects of sense-perception, the objects of intuition, and what we recognize as true on a process of proof, are not, according to this definition of the term, objects of faith. We know what we see to be true; we believe when we recognize as true what we do not see. It is true that the same thing may be an object of faith and an object of knowledge, but not at the same time. We may recognize as true the being of God, or the immortality of the soul, because the propositions, "God is," "the soul is immortal," are susceptible of proof. The arguments in support of those propositions may completely satisfy our minds. But they are truths of revelation to be believed on the authority of God. These states of mind which we call knowledge and faith, are not identical, neither are they strictly coexisting. The effect produced by the demonstration is one thing. The effect produced by the testimony of God's word, is another thing. Both include a persuasion of the truth. But that persuasion is in its nature different in the one case from what it is in the other, as it rests on different grounds. When the arguments are before the mind, the conviction which they produce is knowledge. When the testimony of God is before the mind, the conviction which it produces is faith. On this subject Thomas Aquinas says,¹⁷ *Necessarium est homini accipere per modum fidei non solum ea, quae sunt supra rationem: sed etiam ea, quae per rationem cognosci possunt. Et hoc propter tria, Primo quidem, ut citius homo ad veritatis divinae cognitionem perveniat. . . . Secundo, ut cognitio Dei sit communior. Multi enim in studio scientiae proficere non possunt. . . . Tertio modo propter certitudinem. Ratio enim humana in rebus divinis est multum deficiens.*"

Thirdly, under the "things not seen," some would include all things not present to the mind. A distinction is made between presentative and representative knowledge. In the former the object is present at the time; we perceive it, we are conscious of it. In representative knowledge there is an object now present, representing an absent object. Thus we have the conception of a person or thing. That conception is present, but the thing represented is absent. It is not before the mind. It belongs to the category of things not seen. The conception which is present is the object of knowledge; the thing represented is an object of faith. That is, we know we have the conception; we believe that the thing which it represents, does or did exist. If we visit a particular place while present to our senses we know that it exists; when we come away and form an idea or conception of it, that is, when we recall it by an effort of memory, then we believe in its existence. "Whenever we have passed beyond presentative knowledge, and are assured of the reality of an absent object, there faith has entered as an element."[18](#)

Sir William Hamilton[19](#) says, "Properly speaking, we know only the actual and the present, and all real knowledge is an immediate knowledge. What is said to be mediately known, is, in truth, not known to be, but only believed to be." This, it may be remarked in passing, would apply to all the propositions of Euclid. For they are "mediately known," i. e., seen to be true by means of a process of proof. Speaking of memory, Hamilton says, "It is not a knowledge of the past at all; but a knowledge of the present and a belief of the past." "We are said," according to Dr. McCosh, "to know ourselves, and the objects presented to the senses and the representations (always however as presentations) in the mind; but to believe in objects which we have seen in time past, but which are not now

present, and in objects which we have never seen, and very specially in objects which we can never fully know, such as an Infinite God." [20](#)

Objections to this Definition.

According to this view, we know what is present to the mind, and believe what is absent. The first objection to this representation is the ambiguity of the words present and absent as thus used. When is an object present? and when is it absent? It is easy to answer this question when the object is something material or an external event. Such objects are present ("praesensibus") when they affect the senses; and absent when they do not. A city or building is present when we actually see it; absent, when we leave the place where it is, and recall the image of it. But how is it with propositions? The Bible says all men are sinners. The truth thus announced is present to the mind. We do not know it. We cannot prove it. But we believe it upon the authority of God. The Scriptures teach that Christ died as a ransom for many. Here, not only the historical fact that He died is announced, but the purpose for which He died. Here again, we have a truth present to the mind, which is an object of faith.

The second objection is involved in the first. The terms present and absent are not only ambiguous in this connection, but it is not true, as just stated, that an object must be absent in order to be an object of faith. The *differentia*, in other words, between knowledge and faith, is not found in the presence or absence of their objects. We can know what is absent, and we can believe what is present.

The third objection is, that the conviction we have of the reality or truth of what we distinctly remember is knowledge, and not

distinctively faith, unless we choose to establish a new and arbitrary definition of the word knowledge. We know what is perceived by the senses; we know what the mind sees, either intuitively or discursively, is and must be true; and we know what we distinctly remember. The conviction is in all these cases of the same nature. In all it resolves itself into confidence in the veracity of consciousness. We are conscious that we perceive sensible objects. We are conscious that we cognize certain truths. We are conscious that we remember certain events. In all these cases this consciousness involves the conviction of the reality or truth of what is seen, mentally apprehended or remembered. This conviction is, or may be, as strong in any one of these cases as in either of the others; and it rests in all ultimately on the same ground. There is, therefore, no reason for calling one knowledge and the other belief. Memory is as much a knowledge of the past, as other forms of consciousness are a knowledge of the present.

The fourth objection is that to deny that memory gives us the knowledge of the past, is contrary to established usage. It is true we are said to believe that we remember such and such events, when we are uncertain about it. But this is because in one of the established meanings of the word, belief expresses a less degree of certainty than knowledge. But men never speak of believing past events in their experience concerning which they are absolutely certain. We know that we were alive yesterday. No man says he believes he has seen his father or mother or any intimate friend, whom he had known for years. Things distinctly remembered are known, and not merely believed.

The definition which makes faith to be the persuasion of the truth of things not seen, is, however, correct, if by "things not seen" are meant things which are neither objects of the senses, nor of intuition, nor of demonstrative proof. But it does not seem to be correct to include among the "things not seen," which are the special objects of faith, things remembered and not now present to mind. This definition of faith, while correct in limiting it as to its objects to things not seen, in the sense above stated, is nevertheless defective in not assigning the ground of our conviction of their truth. Why do we believe things to be true, which we have never seen and which we cannot prove? Different answers are given to that question; and, therefore, the definition which gives no answer to it, must be considered defective.

***Definitions founded on the Nature of the Evidence on
which Faith rests.***

Some of the definitions of faith, as we have seen, are founded on its subjective nature; others on its objects. Besides these there are others which seek its distinguishing characteristic in the ground on which the conviction which it includes, rests. The first of these is that which makes faith to be a conviction or persuasion of truth founded on feeling. This is by many regarded as the one most generally received. Hase^{[21](#)} says, "Every cultivated language has a word for that form of conviction which, in opposition to the self-evident and demonstrable, rests on moral and emotional grounds." That word in Greek is *πίστις*; in English "faith." In his "Hutterus Redivivus,"^{[22](#)} he says, "The common idea of faith is: unmittelbar Furwahrhalten, ohne Vermittelung eines Schlussbeweises, durch Neigung und Bedurfniss," i. e., "A persuasion of the truth, without the intervention

of argument, determined by inclination and inward necessity." He quotes the definition of faith by Twisten, as "a persuasion or conviction of truth produced by feeling;" and that of Nitzsch, given above, "the unity of knowledge and feeling." Strauss²³ says, "The way in which a man appropriates the contents of a revelation, the inward ascent which he yields to the contents of the Scriptures and the doctrine of the Church, not because of critical or philosophical research, but often in opposition to them overpowered by a feeling which the Evangelical Church calls the testimony of the Spirit, but which in fact is only the perception of the identity of his own religious life with that portrayed in the Scripture and prevailing in the Church, -- this assent determined by feeling in ecclesiastical language, is called Faith." Again,²⁴ he says, "The pious man receives religious truth because he feels its reality, and because it satisfies his religious wants," and, therefore, he adds, "No religion was ever propagated by means of arguments addressed to the understanding, or of historical or philosophical proofs, and this is undeniably true of Christianity." Every preacher of a new religion assumes in those to whom he presents it, an unsatisfied religious necessity, and all he has to do is to make them feel that such necessity is met by the religion which he proposes. Celsus, he tells us, made it a ground of reproach against the Christians that they believed blindly, that they could not justify the doctrines which they held at the bar of reason. To this Origen answered, that this was true only of the people; that with the educated, faith was elevated into knowledge, and Christianity transformed into a philosophy. The Church was divided between believers and knowers. The relation between faith and knowledge, between religion and philosophy, has been the subject of controversy from that day to this. Some took the ground of Origen and of the

Alexandrian school generally, that it is incumbent on educated Christians to justify their doctrines at the bar of reason, and prove them to be true of philosophical grounds. Others held that the truths of revelation were, at least in many cases, of a kind which did not admit of philosophical demonstration, although they were not on that account to be regarded as contrary to reason, but only as beyond its sphere. Others, again, taught that there is a direct conflict between faith and knowledge; that what the believing Christian holds to be true, can be shown by the philosopher to be false. This is Strauss's own doctrine, and, therefore, he concludes his long discussion of this point by saying, "The believer should let the knower go his own way in peace, just as the knower does the believer. We leave them their faith, let them leave us our philosophy. . . . There have been enough of false irenical attempts. Henceforth only separation of opposing principles can lead to any good."²⁵ On the same page he admits the great truth, "That human nature has one excellent characteristic: what any man feels is for him a spiritual necessity, he allows no man to take from him."

Remarks on this Definition.

With regard to the definition of faith which makes it a conviction founded on feeling, it may be remarked, --

First, That there are forms of faith of which this is not true. As remarked above, when treating of the cognate definition of faith as a voluntary assent of the mind, it is not true of faith in general. We often believe unwillingly, and what is utterly repugnant to our feelings.

Secondly, It is not true even of religious faith, or faith which has religious truth for its object. For there may be faith without love, i. e., a speculative, or dead faith.

Thirdly, It is not true of many of the exercises of faith in good men. Isaac believed that Jacob would be preferred to Esau, sorely against his will. Jacob believed that his descendants would be slaves in Egypt. The prophets believed in the seventy years captivity of their countrymen. The Apostles believed that a great apostasy in the Church was to occur between their age and the second coming of the Lord. The answer of Thomas Aquinas to this, is, that a man is constrained by his will (i. e., his feelings) to believe in the Scriptures, and then he believes all the Scriptures contain. So that his faith, even in the class of truths just referred to, rests ultimately on feeling. But this answer is unsatisfactory. For if the question is asked, Why did the prophets believe in the captivity, and the Apostles in the apostasy? the answer would be, not from the effect of these truths upon their feelings, but on the authority of God. And if it be further asked, Why did they believe the testimony of God? the answer may be because God's testimony carries conviction. He can make his voice heard even by the deaf or the dead. Or, the answer may be, because they were good men. But in either case, the question carries us beyond the ground of their faith. They believe because God had revealed the facts referred to. Their goodness may have rendered them susceptible to the evidence afforded, but it did not constitute that evidence.

Fourthly, It is admitted that the exercise of saving faith, i. e., of that faith which is the fruit of the Spirit and product of regeneration, is attended by feeling appropriate to its object. But this is to be

referred to the nature of the object. If we believe a good report, the effect is joy; if an evil report, the effect is sorrow. The perception of beauty produces delight; of moral excellence, a glow of approbation, of spiritual things, in many cases. a joy that is unspeakable and full of glory.

Fifthly, It is also true that all these truths, if not all truth, have a self-evidencing light, which cannot be apprehended without a conviction that it really is what it is apprehended as being. It may also be admitted, that so far as the consciousness of true believers is concerned, the evidence of truth is the truth itself; in other words, that the ground of their faith is, in one sense, subjective. They see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, and therefore believe that He is God manifested in the flesh. They see that the representations made by the Scriptures of the sinfulness, guilt, and helplessness of fallen man, correspond with their own inward experience, and they are therefore constrained to receive these representations as true. They see that the plan of salvation proposed in the Bible suits their necessities, their moral judgments and religious aspirations, they therefore embrace it. All this is true, but it does not prove faith to be a conviction founded on feeling; for there are many forms of faith which confessedly are not founded on feeling; and even in the case of true believers, their feelings are not the ultimate ground of faith. They always fall back on the authority of God, who is regarded as the author of these feelings, through which the testimony of the Spirit is revealed to the consciousness. "We may be moved and induced," says the "Westminster Confession," [26](#) "by the testimony of the Church to an high and reverend esteem of the Holy Scripture; and the heavenliness of the matter, the efficacy of the doctrine, the majesty of the style, the consent of all the parts, the scope of the whole (which is

to give all glory to God), the full discovery it makes of the only way of man's salvation, the many other incomparable excellences, and the entire perfection thereof, are arguments whereby it doth abundantly evidence itself to be the word of God; yet, notwithstanding, our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority thereof is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit, bearing witness by and with the word in our hearts." The ultimate ground of faith, therefore, is the witness of the Spirit.

Faith a Conviction of the Truth founded on Testimony.

The only other definition of faith to be considered, is that which makes it, a conviction of truth founded on testimony. We have already seen that Augustine says, "We know what rests upon reason; we believe what rests upon authority." A definition to which Sir William Hamilton gives his adhesion.²⁷ In the Alexandrian School also, the Christian *pi,stij*, was *Auctontats-Glaube*, a faith founded on authority, opposed, on the one hand, to the heathen *evpisth,mh*, and on the other to the Christian *gnw/sij*, or philosophical explanation and proof of the truths believed. Among the school-men also, this was the prevalent idea. When they defined faith to be the persuasion of things not seen, they meant things which we receive as true on authority, and not because we either know or can prove them. Hence it was constantly said, faith is human when it rests on the testimony of men; divine when it rests on the testimony of God. Thomas Aquinas²⁸ says, "Non fides, de qua loquimur, assentit alicui, nisi quia est a Deo revelatum." "Faith, of which we speak, assents to nothing except because it is revealed by God." We believe on the authority of God, and not because we see, know, or feel a thing to be true. This is the purport of the teaching of the great body of the

scholastic divines. Such also was the doctrine of the Reformers, and of the theologians of the subsequent age, both Lutheran and Reformed. Speaking of assent, which he regards as the second act or element of faith, Aquinas says, "Hic actus fidei non rerum evidentia aut causarum et proprietatum notitia, sed Dei dicentis infallibili auctoritate." Turretin²⁹ says, "Non quaeritur, An fides sit scientia, quae habeat evidentiam: Sic enim distinguitur a scientia, quae habet assensum certum et evidentem, qui nititur ratione clara et certa, et ab opinione, quae nititur ratione tantum probabili; ubi fides notat assensum certum quidem, sed inevidentem, qui non ratione, sed testimonio divino nititur." De Moor³⁰ says, "Fides subjectiva est persuasio de veritate rei, alterius testimonio nixa, quomodo fides illa generatim descripta, scientiae et conjecturae opponitur Dividitur. . . . in fidem divinam, quae nititur testimonio divino, et humanam, quae fundata est in testimonio humano fide accepto." Owen,³¹ "All faith is an assent upon testimony; and divine faith is an assent upon a divine testimony." John Howe³² asks, "Why do I believe Jesus to be the Christ? Because the eternal God hath given his testimony concerning Him that so He is." "A man's believing comes all to nothing without this, that there is a divine testimony." Again,³³ "I believe such a thing, as God reveals it, because it is reported to me upon the authority of God." Bishop Pearson³⁴ says, "When anything propounded to us is neither apparent to our sense, nor evident to our understanding, in and of itself, neither certainly to be collected from any clear and necessary connection with the cause from which it proceedeth, or the effects which it naturally produceth, nor is taken up upon any real arguments or reference to other acknowledged truths, and yet notwithstanding appeareth to us true, not by a manifestation, but attestation of the truth, and so moveth us to

assent not of itself, but by virtue of the testimony given to it; this is said properly to be credible; and an assent unto this, upon such credibility, is in the proper notion faith or belief."

This View almost universally Held.

This view of the nature of faith is all but universally received, not by theologians only, but by philosophers, and the mass of Christian people. The great question has ever been, whether we are to receive truth on authority, or only upon rational evidence. Leibnitz begins his "Discours de la Conformite de la Foi avec la Raison," by saying, "Je suppose, que deux verites ne sauroient se contredire; que l'objet de la foi est la verite que Dieu a revelee d'une maniere extraordinaire, et que la raison est l'enchainement des verites, mais particulierement (lorsqu'elle est comparee avec la foi) de celles ou l'esprit humain peut atteindre naturellement, sans etre aide des lumieres de la foi." **35**

It has already been admitted that the essential element of faith is trust; and, therefore, in the general sense of the word to believe, is to trust. Faith is the reliance of the mind on anything as true and worthy of confidence. In this wide sense of the word, it matters not what may be the objects, or what the grounds of this trust. The word, however, is commonly used in reference to truths which we receive on trust without being able to prove them. Thus we are said to believe in our own existence, the reality of the external world, and all the primary truths of the reason. These by common consent are called beliefs. Reason begins with believing, i. e., with taking on trust what it neither comprehends nor proves. Again, it has been admitted that the word belief is often and legitimately used to express a degree of certainty less than knowledge and stronger than probability; as

when we say, we are not sure, but we believe that a certain thing happened.

The Strict Sense of the Word "Faith."

But in the strict and special sense of the word, as discriminated from knowledge or opinion, faith means the belief of things not seen, on the ground of testimony. By testimony, however, is not meant merely the affirmation of an intelligent witness. There are other methods by which testimony may be given than affirmation. A seal is a form of testimony; so is a sign. So is everything which pledges the authority of the attester to the truth to be established. When Elijah declared that Jehovah was God, and Baal a lie, he said, "The God that answereth by fire, let him be God." The descent of the fire was the testimony of God to the truth of the prophet's declaration. So in the New Testament God is said to have borne witness to the truth of the Gospel by signs, and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost (Heb. ii. 4); and the Spirit of God is said to witness with our spirits that we are the children of God (Rom. viii. 16). The word in these cases is *marturew*, to testify. This is not a lax or improper use of the word testimony; for an affirmation is testimony only because it pledges the authority of him who makes it to the truth. And therefore whatever pledges that authority, is as truly of the nature of testimony, as an affirmation. When, therefore, it is said that faith is founded on testimony, it is meant that it is not founded on sense, reason, or feeling, but on the authority of him by whom it is authenticated.

Proof from the General Use of the Word.

That such is the foundation and the distinctive characteristic of faith, may be argued, -- 1. From the general use of the word We are said to know what we see or can prove; and to believe what we regard as true on the authority of others. This is admitted to be true of what is called historical faith. This includes a great deal; all that is recorded of the past; all that is true of present actualities, which does not fall within the sphere of our personal observation; all the facts of science as received by the masses; and almost all the contents of the Bible, whether of the Old or of the New Testament. The Scriptures are a record of the history of the creation, of the fall, and of redemption. The Old Testament is the history of the preparatory steps of this redemption. The New Testament is a history of the fulfilment of the promises and types of the Old in the incarnation, life, sufferings, death, and resurrection of the Son of God. Whoever believes this record has set to his seal that God is true, and is a child of God.

Proof from Consciousness.

2. In the second place, consciousness teaches us that such is the nature of faith not only when historical facts are its objects, but when propositions are the things believed. The two indeed are often inseparable. That God is the creator of the world, is both a fact and a doctrine. It is as the Apostle says, a matter of faith. We believe on the authority of the Scriptures, which declare that "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." That God set forth his Son to be a propitiation for our sins, is a doctrine. It rests solely on the authority of God. We receive it upon his testimony. So with all the great doctrines of grace; of regeneration, of justification, of sanctification, and of a future life. How do we know that God will accept all who

believe in Christ? Who can know the things of God, save the Spirit of God, and he to whom the Spirit shall reveal them (1 Cor. ii. 10, 11)? From the nature of the case, "the things of the Spirit," the thoughts and purposes of God, can be known only by revelation, and they can be received only on the authority of God. They are objects neither of sense nor of reason.

Proof from Scripture.

3. It is the uniform teaching of the Bible that faith is founded on the testimony or authority of God.

The first proof of this is the fact that the Scriptures come to us under the form of a revelation of things we could not otherwise know. The prophets of the Old Testament were messengers, the mouth of God, to declare what the people were to believe and what they were to do. The New Testament is called "The testimony of Jesus." Christ came, not as a philosopher, but as a witness. He said to Nicodemus, "We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness." (John iii. 11). "He that cometh from above is above all. . . . And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth; and no man receiveth his testimony. He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true (verses 31-33). In like manner the Apostles were witnesses. As such they were ordained (Luke xxiv. 48). After his resurrection, and immediately before his ascension, our Lord said to them, "Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. (Acts i. 8). When they declared the death and resurrection of Christ, as facts to be believed, they said,

"Whereof we are witnesses" (Acts ii. 32, iii. 15, v. 32). In this last passage the Apostles say they were witnesses not only of the fact of Christ's resurrection but that God had "exalted" Him "with his right hand to be a prince and a saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." See Acts x. 39-43, where it is said, "He commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the judge of quick and dead. To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins."

The great complaint against the Apostles, especially in the Grecian cities, was that they did not present their doctrines as propositions to be proved; they did not even state the philosophical grounds on which they rested, or attempt to sustain them at the bar of reason. The answer given to this objection by St. Paul is twofold: First, that philosophy, the wisdom of men, had proved itself utterly incompetent to solve the great problems of God and the universe, of sin and redemption. It was in fact neither more nor less than foolishness, so far as all its speculations as to the things of God were concerned. Secondly, that the doctrines which He taught were not the truths of reason, but matters of revelation; to be received not on rational or philosophical grounds, but upon the authority of God; that they, the Apostles, were not philosophers, but witnesses; that they did not argue using the words of man's wisdom, but that they simply declared the counsels of God, and that faith in their doctrines was to rest not on the wisdom of men, but on the powerful testimony of God.

The second proof, that the Scriptures teach that faith is the reception of truth on the ground of testimony or on the authority of

God, is, that the thing which we are commanded to do, is to receive the record which God has given of his Son. This is faith; receiving as true what God has testified, and because He has testified it. "He that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son." The Greek here is, *ouv pepi,steuken eivj th.n marturi,an h[n memartu,rhken o` Qeo.j peri. tou/ ui`ou/ au`tou/*, "believeth not the testimony which God testified concerning his Son." "And this is the testimony, (*h` marturi,a*) that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son" (1 John v. 10, 11). There could hardly be a more distinct statement of the Scriptural doctrine as to the nature of faith. Its object is what God has revealed. Its ground is the testimony of God. To receive that testimony, is to set to our seal that God is true. To reject it, is to make God a liar. "If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his son."

Such is the constant teaching of Scripture. The ground on which we are authorized and commanded to believe is, not the conformity of the truth revealed to our reason, nor its effect upon our feelings, nor its meeting the necessities of our nature and condition, but simply, "Thus saith the Lord." The truths of revelation do commend themselves to the reason; they do powerfully and rightfully affect our feelings; they do meet all the necessities of our nature as creatures and as sinners; and these considerations may incline us to believe, may strengthen our faith, lead us to cherish it, and render it joyful and effective; but they are not its ground. We believe on the testimony or authority of God.

It is objected to this view that we believe the Bible to be the Word of God on other ground than testimony. The fulfilment of prophecies,

the miracles of its authors, its contents, and the effects which it produces, are rational grounds for believing it to be from God. To this objection two answers may be made: First, that supernatural occurrences, such as prophecies and miracles, are some of the forms in which the divine testimony is given. Paul says that God bears "witness both with signs and wonders" (Hebrews ii. 4). And, secondly, that the proximate end of these manifestations of supernatural foresight and power was to authenticate the divine mission of the messengers of God. This being established, the people were called upon to receive their message and to believe on the authority of God, by whom they were sent.

The third proof, that the Scriptures teach that faith is a reception of truth on the ground of testimony, is found in the examples and illustrations of faith given in the Scriptures. Immediately after the fall the promise was made to our first parents that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. On what possible ground could faith in this promise rest except on the authority of God. When Noah was warned of God of the coming deluge, and commanded to prepare the ark, he believed, not because he saw the signs of the approaching flood, not because his moral judgment assured him that a just God would in that way avenge his violated law; but simply on the testimony of God. Thus when God promised to Abraham the possession of the land of Canaan, that he, a childless old man, should become the father of many nations, that through his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed, his faith could have no other foundation than the authority of God. So of every illustration of faith given by the Apostle in the eleventh chapter of his epistle to the Hebrews. The same is true of the whole Bible. We have no foundation for our faith in a spiritual world, in the heaven and hell

described in Scripture, in the doctrines of redemption, in the security and ultimate triumph of the Church other than the testimony of God. If faith does not rest on testimony it has nothing on which to rest. Paul tells us that the whole Gospel rests on the fact of Christ's resurrection from the dead. If Christ be not risen our faith is vain, and we are yet in our sins. But our assurance that Christ rose on the third day rests solely upon the testimony which God in various ways has given to that fact.

This is a point of great practical importance. If faith, or only persuasion of the truths of the Bible, rests on philosophical grounds, then the door is opened for rationalism; if it rests on feeling, then it is open to mysticism. The only sure, and the only satisfying foundation is the testimony of God, who cannot err, and who will not deceive.

Faith may, therefore, be defined to be the persuasion of the truth founded on testimony. The faith of the Christian is the persuasion of the truth of the facts and doctrines recorded in the Scriptures on the testimony of God.

§ 3. *Different Kinds of Faith.*

Though the definition above given be accepted, it is to be admitted that there are different kinds of faith. In other words, the state of mind which the word designates is very different in one case from what it is in others. This difference arises partly from the nature of its objects, and partly from the nature or form of the testimony on

which it is founded. Faith in a historical fact or speculative truth is one thing; faith in aesthetic truth another thing; faith in moral truth another thing; faith in spiritual truth, and especially faith in the promise of salvation made to ourselves another thing. That is, the state of mind denominated faith is very different in any one of these cases from what it is in the others. Again, the testimony which God bears to the truth is of different kinds. In one form it is directed especially to the understanding; in another to the conscience; in another to our regenerated nature. This is the cause of the difference between speculative, temporary, and saving faith.

Speculative or Dead Faith.

There are many men who believe the Bible to be the Word of God; who receive all that it teaches; and who are perfectly orthodox in their doctrinal belief. If asked why they believe, they may be at a loss for an answer. Reflection might enable them to say they believe because others believe. They receive their faith by inheritance. They were taught from their earliest years thus to believe. The Church to which they belong inculcates this faith, and it is enjoined upon them as true and necessary. Others of greater culture may say that the evidence of the divine origin of the Bible, both external and internal, satisfies their minds, and produces a rational conviction that the Scriptures are a revelation from God, and they receive its contents on his authority. Such a faith as this, experience teaches, is perfectly compatible with a worldly or wicked life. This is what the Bible calls a dead faith.

Temporary Faith.

Again, nothing is more common than for the Gospel to produce a temporary impression, more or less deep and lasting. Those thus impressed believe. But, having no root in themselves, sooner or later they fall away. It is also a common experience that men utterly indifferent or even skeptical, in times of danger, or on the near approach of death, are deeply convinced of the certainty of those religious truths previously known, but hitherto disregarded or rejected. This temporary faith is due to common grace; that is, to those influences of the Spirit common in a measure greater or less to all men, which operate on the soul without renewing it, and which reveal the truth to the conscience and cause it to produce conviction.

Saving Faith.

That faith which secures eternal life; which unites us to Christ as living members of his body; which makes us the sons of God; which interests us in all the benefits of redemption; which works by love, and is fruitful in good works; is founded, not on the external or the moral evidence of the truth, but on the testimony of the Spirit with and by the truth to the renewed soul.

What is meant by the Testimony of the Spirit

It is necessary, before going further, to determine what is meant by the testimony of the Spirit, which is said to be the ground of saving faith.

God, or the Spirit of God, testifies to the truth of the Scriptures and of the doctrines which they contain. This testimony, as has been seen, is partly external, consisting in prophecies and miracles, partly in the nature of the truths themselves as related to the intellectual

and moral elements of the soul, and partly special and supernatural. Unrenewed men may feel the power of the two former kinds of testimony, and believe with a faith either merely intellectual and speculative, or with what may be called from its ground, a moral faith, which is only temporary. The spiritual form of testimony is confined to the regenerated. It is, of course, inscrutable. The operations of the Spirit do not reveal themselves in the consciousness otherwise than by their effects. We know that men are born of the Spirit, that the Spirit dwells in the people of God and continually influences their thoughts, feelings, and actions. But we know this only from the teaching of the Bible, not because we are conscious of his operations. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." (John iii. 8.)

This witness of the Spirit is not an affirmation that the Bible is the Word of God. Neither is it the production of a blind, unintelligent conviction of that fact. It is not, as is the case with human testimony, addressed from without to the mind, but it is within the mind itself. It is an influence designed to produce faith. It is called a witness or testimony because it is so called in Scripture; and because it has the essential nature of testimony, inasmuch as it is the pledge of the authority of God in support of the truth.

The effects of this inward testimony are, (1.) What the Scriptures call "spiritual discernment." This means two things: A discernment due to the influence of the Spirit; and a discernment not only of the truth, but also of the holiness, excellence, and glory of the things discerned. The word spiritual, in this sense, means conformed to the

nature of the Spirit. Hence the law is said to be spiritual, i. e., holy, just, and good. (2.) A second effect flowing necessarily from the one just mentioned is delight and complacency, or love. (3.) The apprehension of the suitableness of the truths revealed, to our nature and necessities. (4.) The firm conviction that these things are not only true, but divine. (5.) The fruits of this conviction, i. e., of the faith thus produced, good works, -- holiness of heart and life.

When, therefore, a Christian is asked, Why he believes the Scriptures and the doctrines therein contained, his simple answer is, On the testimony or authority of God. How else could he know that the worlds were created by God, that our race apostatized from God, that He sent his Son for our redemption, that faith in Him will secure salvation. Faith in such truths can have no other foundation than the testimony of God. If asked, How God testifies to the truth of the Bible? If an educated man whose attention has been called to the subject, he will answer, In every conceivable way: by signs, wonders, and miracles; by the exhibition which the Bible makes of divine knowledge, excellence, authority, and power. If an uneducated man, he may simply say, "Whereas I was blind, now I see." Such a man, and indeed every true Christian, passes from a state of unbelief to one of saving faith, not by any process of research or argument, but of inward experience. The change may, and often does, take place in a moment. The faith of a Christian in the Bible is, as before remarked, analogous to that which all men have in the moral law, which they recognize not only as truth, but as having the authority of God. What the natural man perceives with regard to the moral law the renewed man is enabled to perceive in regard to "the things of the Spirit," by the testimony of that Spirit with and by the truth to his heart.

Proof from Express Declarations of Scripture.

1. That this is the Scriptural doctrine on the subject is plain from the express declarations of the Scriptures. Our Lord promised to send the Spirit for this very purpose. "He will reprove the world of sin," especially of the sin of not believing in Christ; "and of righteousness," that is, of his righteousness, -- the rightfulness of his claims to be regarded and received as the Son of God, God manifest in the flesh, and the Saviour of the world, "and of judgment," that is, of the final overthrow of the kingdom of darkness and triumph of the kingdom of light. (John xvi. 8.) Faith, therefore, is always represented in Scripture as one of the fruits of the Spirit, as the gift of God, as the product of his energy (pi,stij th/j evnergei,aj tou/ Qeou/) (Colossians ii. 12). Men are said to believe in virtue of the same power which wrought in Christ, when God raised Him from the dead. (Eph i. 19, 20.) The Apostle Paul elaborately sets forth the ground of faith in the second chapter of First Corinthians. He declares that he relied for success not on the enticing words of man's wisdom, but on the demonstration of the Spirit, in order that the faith of the people might rest not on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God. Faith was not to rest on argument, on historical or philosophical proof, but on the testimony of the Spirit. The Spirit demonstrates the truth to the mind, i. e., produces the conviction that it is truth, and leads the soul to embrace it with assurance and delight. Passages have already been quoted which teach that faith rests on the testimony of God, and that unbelief consists in rejecting that testimony. The testimony of God is given through the Spirit, whose office it is to take of the things of Christ and show them unto us. The Apostle John tells his readers, "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things. . . . The anointing which ye have

received of him abideth in you: and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him." (1 John ii. 20, 27.) This passage teaches, (1.) That true believers receive from Christ (the Holy One) an unction. (2.) That this unction is the Holy Ghost. (3.) That it secures the knowledge and conviction of the truth. (4.) That this inward teaching which makes them believers is abiding, and secures them from apostasy.

1 Corinthians ii. 14.

Equally explicit is the passage in 1 Corinthians ii. 14, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man." The things of the Spirit, are the things which the Spirit has revealed. Concerning these things, it is taught: (1.) that the natural or unrenewed man does not receive them. (2.) That the spiritual man, i. e., the man in whom the Spirit dwells, does receive them. (3.) That the reason of this difference is that the former has not, and that the latter has, spiritual discernment. (4.) This spiritual discernment is the apprehension of the truth and excellence of the things discerned. (5.) It is spiritual, as just stated, both because due to the operation of the Spirit, and because the conformity of the truths discerned to the nature of the Spirit, is apprehended.

When Peter confessed that Jesus was the Christ the Son of the living God, our Lord said, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." (Matt. xvi. 17.) Other men had the same external evidence

of the divinity of Christ that Peter had. His faith was due not to that evidence alone, but to the inward testimony of God. Our Lord rendered thanks that God had hidden the mysteries of his kingdom from the wise and prudent and revealed them unto babes. (Matt. xi. 25.) The external revelation was made to both classes. Besides this external revelation, those called babes received an inward testimony which made them believers. Hence our Lord said, No man can come unto me except he be drawn or taught of God. (John vi. 44, 45.) The Apostle tells us that the same Gospel, the same objective truths, with the same external and rational evidence, which was an offence to the Jew and foolishness to the Greek, was to the called the wisdom and the power of God. Why this difference? Not the superior knowledge or greater excellence of the called, but the inward divine influence, the *klh/sij*, of which they were the subjects. Paul's instantaneous conversion is not to be referred to any rational process of argument; nor to his moral susceptibility to the truth; nor to the visible manifestation of Christ, for no miracle, no outward light or splendour could change the heart and transform the whole character in a moment. It was, as the Apostle himself tells us (Gal. i. 15, 16), the inward revelation of Christ to him by the special grace of God. It was the testimony of the Spirit, which being inward and supernatural, enabled him to see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. The Psalmist prayed that God would open his eyes that he might see wondrous things out of his law. The Apostle prayed for the Ephesians that God would give them the Holy Spirit, that the eyes of their souls might be opened, that they might know the things freely given to them of God. (Eph. i. 17, 18.) Everywhere in the Bible the fact that any one believes is referred not to his subjective state, but to the work of the Spirit on his heart.

Proof from the Way the Apostles acted.

2. As the Scriptures thus expressly teach that the ground of true or saving faith is the inward witness of the Spirit, the Apostles always acted on that principle. They announced the truth and demanded its instant reception, under the pain of eternal death. Our Lord did the same. "He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." (John iii. 18.) Immediate faith was demanded. Being demanded by Christ, and at his command by the Apostles, that demand must be just and reasonable. It could, however, be neither unless the evidence of the truth attended it. That evidence could not be the external proofs of the divinity of Christ and his Gospel, for those proofs were present to the minds of comparatively few of the hearers of the Gospel; nor could it be rational proof or philosophical arguments, for still fewer could appreciate such evidence, and if they could it would avail nothing to the production of saving faith. The evidence of truth, to which assent is demanded by God the moment it is announced, must be in the truth itself. And if this assent be obligatory, and dissent or unbelief a sin, then the evidence must be of a nature, to which a corrupt state of the soul renders a man insensible. "If our gospel be hid," says the Apostle, "it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. . . . [But] God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (2 Cor. iv. 3-6.) It is here taught, (1.) That wherever and whenever Christ is preached, the evidence of his divinity is presented. The glory of God shines in his face. (2.) That if any man fails to see it, it is because the

God of this world hath blinded his eyes. (3.) That if any do perceive it and believe, it is because of an inward illumination produced by Him who first commanded the light to shine out of darkness.

Proof from the Practice in the Church.

3. As Christ and the Apostles acted on this principle, so have all faithful ministers and missionaries from that day to this. They do not expect to convince and convert men by historical evidence or by philosophical arguments. They depend on the demonstration of the Spirit.

Proof from Analogy.

4. This doctrine, that the true and immediate ground of faith in the things of the Spirit is the testimony of the Spirit, producing spiritual discernment, is sustained by analogy. If a man cannot see the splendour of the sun, it is because he is blind. If he cannot perceive the beauties of nature and of art, it is because he has no taste. If he cannot apprehend "the concord of sweet sounds," it is because he has not a musical ear. If he cannot see the beauty of virtue, or the divine authority of the moral law, it is because his moral sense is blunted. If he cannot see the glory of God in his works and in his Word, it is because his religious nature is perverted. And in like manner, if he cannot see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, it is because the god of this world has blinded his eyes.

No one excuses the man who can see no excellence in virtue, and who repudiates the authority of the moral law. The Bible and the instinctive judgment of men, condemn the atheist. In like manner the Scriptures pronounce accursed all who do not believe that Jesus

is the Christ the Son of the living God. This is the denial of supreme excellence; the rejection of the clearest manifestation of God ever made to man. The solemn judgment of God is, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema maranatha." (1 Cor. xvi. 22.) In this judgment the whole intelligent universe will ultimately acquiesce.

Faith in the Scriptures, therefore, is founded on the testimony of God. By testimony, as before stated, is meant attestation, anything which pledges the authority of the attester in support of the truth to be established. As this testimony is of different kinds, so the faith which it produces, is also different. So far as the testimony is merely external, the faith it produces is simply historical or speculative. So far as the testimony is moral, consisting in the power which the Spirit gives to the truth over the natural conscience, the faith is temporary, depending on the state of mind which is its proximate cause. Besides these, there is the inward testimony of the Spirit, which is of such a nature and of such power as to produce a perfect revolution in the soul, compared in Scripture to that effected by opening the eyes of the blind to the reality, the wonders, and glories of creation. There is, therefore, all the difference between a faith resting on this inward testimony of the Spirit, and mere speculative faith, that there is between the conviction a blind man has of the beauties of nature, before and after the opening of his eyes. As this testimony is informing, enabling the soul to see the truth and excellence of the "things of the Spirit," so far as the consciousness of the believer is concerned, his faith is a form of knowledge. He sees to be true, what the Spirit reveals and authenticates.

§ 4. *Faith and Knowledge.*

The relation of faith to knowledge is a wide field. The discussions on the subject have been varied and endless. There is little probability that the points at issue will ever be settled to the satisfaction of all parties. The ground of faith is authority. The ground of knowledge is sense or reason. We are concerned here only with Christian faith, i. e., the faith which receives the Scriptures as the Word of God and all they teach as true on his authority.

Is a Supernatural Revelation needed?

The first question is, Whether there is any need of a supernatural revelation, whether human reason be not competent to discover and to authenticate all needful truth. This question has already been considered under the head of Rationalism, where it was shown, (1.) That every man's consciousness tells him that there are questions concerning God and his own origin and destiny, which his reason cannot answer. (2.) That he knows *a priori*, that the reason of no other man can satisfactorily answer them. (3.) That he knows from experience that they never have been answered by the wisdom of men, and (4.) That the Scriptures declare that the world by wisdom knows not God, that the wisdom of the world is foolishness in his estimation, and that God has therefore himself made known truths undiscoverable by reason, for the salvation of man.

Must the Truths of Revelation be Demonstrable by Reason?

A second question is, Whether truths, supernaturally revealed, must be able to authenticate themselves at the bar of reason be. fore

they can be rationally received; so that they are received, not on the ground of authority, but of rational proof. This also has been previously discussed. It has been shown that the assumption that God can reveal nothing which human reason cannot, when known, demonstrate to be true, assumes that human reason is the measure of all truth; that there is no intelligence in the universe higher than that of man; and that God cannot have purposes and plans, the grounds or reasons of which we are competent to discover and appreciate. It emancipates the from the authority of God, refusing to believe anything except the authority of reason. Why may we not believe on the testimony of God that there is a spiritual world, as well as believe that there is such a nation as the Chinese on the testimony of men? No man acts on the principle of believing only what he can understand and prove, in any other department. There are multitudes of truths which every sane man receives on trust, without being able either to prove or comprehend them. If we can believe only what we can prove at the bar of reason to be true, then the kingdom of heaven would be shut against all but the wise. There could be no Christian who was not also a philosopher. In point of fact no man acts on this principle. It is assumed in the pride of reason, or as an apology for rejecting unpalatable truths, but men believe in God, in sin, in freedom of the will, in responsibility, without the ability of comprehending or reconciling these truths with each other or with other facts of consciousness or experience.

May not Revealed Truths be Philosophically vindicated?

A third question is, Whether, admitting a supernatural revelation, and moreover admitting the obligation to receive on the authority of God the doctrines which revelation makes known, the revealed

doctrines may not be philosophically vindicated, so as to commend them to the acceptance of those who deny revelation. May not the Scriptural doctrines concerning God, creation, providence, the trinity, the incarnation, sin, redemption, and the future state, be so stated and sustained philosophically. as to constrain acquiescence in them as truths of the reason. This was the ground taken in the early Church by the theologians of the Alexandrian School, who undertook to elevate the pi,stij of the people into a gnw/sij for the philosophers. Thus the sacred writers were made Platonists, and Christianity was transmuted into Platonism. A large part of the mental activity of the School-men, during the Middle Ages, was expended in the same way. They received the Bible as a supernatural revelation from God. They received the Church interpretation of its teachings. They admitted their obligation to believe its doctrines on the authority of God and of the Church. Nevertheless they held that all these doctrines could be philosophically proved. In later times Wolf undertook to demonstrate all the doctrines of Christianity on the principles of the Leibnitzian philosophy. In our own day this principle and these attempts have been carried further than ever. Systems of theology, constructed on the philosophy of Hegel, of Schelling, and of Schleiermacher, have almost superseded the old Biblical systems. If any man of ordinary culture and intelligence should take up a volume of what is called "Speculative Theology," (that is, theology presented in the forms of the speculative philosophy,) he would not understand a page and would hardly understand a sentence. He could not tell whether the theology which it proposed to present was Christianity or Buddhism. Or, at best, he would find a few drops of Biblical truth so diluted by floods of human speculation that the

most delicate of chemical tests would fail to detect the divine element.

Attempts to do this Futile.

All such attempts are futile. The empirical proof of this is, that no such attempt has ever succeeded. The experiment has been made hundreds of times, and always with the same result. Where are now the philosophical expositions and vindications of Scripture doctrines by the Platonizing fathers; by the Schoolmen; by the Cartesians; by the Leibnitzians? What power over the reason, the conscience, or the life, has any of the speculative systems of our day? Who, beyond the devotees of the systems which they represent, understand or adopt the theology of Daub, of Marheinecke, of Lange, and others? Strauss, therefore, is right when he repudiates all these vain attempts to reconcile Christianity with philosophy, or to give a form to Christian doctrine which satisfies the philosophical thinker.[36](#)

But apart from this argument from experience, the assumption is preposterous that the feeble intellect of man can explain, and from its own resources, vindicate and prove the deep things of God. An infant might as well undertake to expound Newton's "Principia." If there are mysteries in nature, in every blade of grass, in the insect, in the body and in the soul of man, there must be mysteries in religion. The Bible and our consciousness teach us that God is incomprehensible, and his ways past finding out; that we cannot explain either his nature or his acts; we know not how he creates, upholds, and governs without interfering with the nature of his creatures; how there can be three persons in the Godhead; how in the one person of Christ there can be two intelligences and two wills;

how the Spirit inspires, renews, sanctifies, or comforts. It belongs to the "self-deifying" class of philosophers to presume to know all that God knows, and to banish the incomprehensible from the religion which he has revealed. "To the school of Hegel," says Bretschneider, "there are mysteries in religion only for those who have not raised themselves to the Hegelian grade of knowledge. For the latter all is clear; all is knowledge; and Christianity is the solution, and therefore the revelation of all mysteries."³⁷ This may be consistent in those who hold that man is God in the highest form of his existence, and the philosopher the highest style of man. Such an assertion, however, by whomsoever it may be made, is the insanity of presumption.

May what is True in Religion be False in Philosophy?

A fourth question included in this general subject is, Whether there is or may be a real conflict between the truths of reason and those of revelation? Whether that which is true in religion may be false in philosophy? To this question different answers have been given.

The Fathers on this Question.

First, while the Greek fathers were disposed to bring religion and philosophy into harmony, by giving a philosophical form to Christian doctrines, the Latins were inclined to represent the two as irreconcilable. "What," asks Tertullian, "has Athens to do with Jerusalem? The academy with the Church? What have heretics to do with Christians? Our instruction is from the porch of Solomon, who himself taught that the Lord was to be sought in the simplicity of the heart. . . . We need no seeking for truth after Christ; no research after the Gospel. When we believe, we desire nothing beyond faith,

because we believe that there is nothing else we should do. . . . To know nothing beyond is to know all things."**38** He went so far as to say, "Prorsus credibile est, quia ineptum est; . . . certum est, quia impossibile est."**39** Without going to this extreme, the theologians of the Latin Church, those of them at least most zealous for Church doctrines, were inclined to deny to reason even the prerogative of a *judicium contradictionis*. They were constrained to take this ground because they were called upon to defend doctrines which contradicted not only reason but the senses. When it was objected to the doctrine that the consecrated wafer is the real body of Christ, that our senses pronounce it to be bread, and that it is impossible that a human body should be in heaven and in all parts of the earth at the same time, what could they say but that the senses and reason are not to be trusted in the sphere of faith? That what is false to the reason and the senses may be true in religion?

Lutheran Teaching on this Point.

The Lutherans were under the same necessity. Their doctrine of the person of Christ involves the denial of the primary truth, that attributes cannot be separated from the substance of which they are the manifestation. Their doctrine concerning the Lord's Supper involves the assumption of the ubiquity of Christ's body, which seems to be a contradiction in terms.

Luther's utterances on this subject are not very consistent. When arguing against the continued obligation of monastic vows, he did not hesitate to say that what was contrary to reason was contrary to God. "Was nun der Verunft entgegen ist, ist gewiss dass es Gott viehmehr entgegen ist. Denn wie sollte es nicht wider die gottliche

Wahrheit seyn, das wider Vernunft und menschliche Wahrheit ist." [40](#) But in the sacramentarian controversy he will not allow reason to be heard. "In the things of God," he says, reason or nature is stock-star-and-stone blind. "It is, indeed," he adds, "audacious enough to plunge in and stumble as a blind horse; but all that it explains or concludes is as certainly false and wrong as that God lives." [41](#) In another place he says that reason, when she attempts to speculate about divine things, becomes a fool; which, indeed, is very much what Paul says. (Rom. i. 22, I Cor. i. 18-31.)

The Lutheran theologians made a distinction between reason in the abstract, or reason as it was in man before the fall, and reason as it now is. They admit that no truth of revelation can contradict reason as such; but it may contradict the reason of men all of whose faculties are clouded and deteriorated by sin. By this was not meant simply that the unrenewed man is opposed to the truth of God; that "the things of the Spirit" are foolishness to him, that it seems to him absurd that God should be found in fashion as a man; that He should demand a satisfaction for sin; or save one man and not another, according to his own good pleasure. This the Bible clearly teaches and all Christians believe. In all this there is no contradiction between reason and religion. The being of God is foolishness to the atheist; and personal immortality is foolishness to the pantheist. Yet who would admit that these doctrines are contrary to reason? The Lutheran theologians intended to teach, not only that the mysteries of the Bible are above reason, that they can neither be understood nor demonstrated; and not only that "the things of the Spirit" are foolishness to the natural man, but that they are really in conflict with the human understanding; that by a correct process of reasoning they can be demonstrated to be false; so that in the strict

sense of the terms what is true in religion is false in philosophy. "The Sorbonne," says Luther, "has pronounced a most abominable decision in saying that what is true in religion is also true in philosophy; and moreover condemning as heretics all who assert the contrary. By this horrible doctrine it has given it to be clearly understood that the doctrines of faith are to be subjected to the yoke of human reason."[42](#)

Sir William Hamilton.

Secondly, the ground taken by Sir William Hamilton on this subject is not precisely the same with that taken by the Lutherans. They agree, indeed, in this, that we are bound to believe what (at the bar of reason) we can prove to be false, but they differ entirely as to the cause and nature of this conflict between reason and faith. According to the Lutherans, it arises from the corruption and deterioration of our nature by the fall. It is removed in part in this world by regeneration, and entirely hereafter by the perfection of our sanctification. According to Hamilton, this conflict arises from the necessary limitation of human thought. God has so made us that reason, acting according to its own laws, of necessity arrives at conclusions directly opposed to the doctrines of religion both natural and revealed. We can prove demonstrably that the Absolute being cannot know, cannot be a cause, cannot be conscious. It may be proved with equal clearness that the Infinite cannot be a person, or possess moral attributes. Here, then, what is true in religion, what we are bound to believe, and what in point of fact all men, in virtue of the constitution of their nature do believe, can be proved to be false. There is thus an irreconcilable conflict between our intellectual and moral nature. But as, according to the idealist, reason forces us to the

conclusion that the external world does not exist, while, nevertheless, it is safe and proper to act on the assumption that it is, and is what it appears to be; so, according to Hamilton, it is not only safe, but obligatory on us to act on the assumption that God is a person, although infinite, while our reason demonstrates that an infinite person is a contradiction. The conflict between reason and faith is avowed, while the obligation of faith on the testimony of our moral and religious nature and of the Word of God is affirmed. This point has been already discussed.

The View of Speculative Philosophers.

Thirdly, we note the view taken by the speculative philosophers. They, too, maintain that reason demonstrates the doctrines of revelation and even of natural religion to be false. But they do not recognize their obligation to receive them as objects of faith. Being contrary to reason, those doctrines are false, and being false, they are, by enlightened men, to be rejected. If any cling to them as a matter of feeling, they are to be allowed to do so, but they must renounce all claim to philosophic insight.

May the Objects of Faith be above, and yet not against Reason?

A fifth question is, Whether the objects of faith may be above, and yet not contrary to reason? The answer to this question is to be in the affirmative, for the distinction implied is sound and almost universally admitted. What is above reason is simply incomprehensible. What is against reason is impossible. It is contrary to reason that contradictions should be true; that a part should be greater than the whole; that a thing should be and not be

at the same time; that right should be wrong and wrong right. It is incomprehensible how matter attracts matter; how the mind acts on the body, and the body on the mind. The distinction between the incomprehensible and the impossible, is therefore plain and admitted. And the distinction between what is above reason, and what is against reason, is equally obvious and just. The great body of Christian theologians have ever taken the ground that the doctrines of the Bible are not contrary to reason, although above it. That is, they are matters of faith to be received on the authority of God, and not because they can be either understood or proved. As it is incomprehensible how a soul and body can be united in one conscious life; so it is incomprehensible how a divine and human nature can be united in one person in Christ. Neither is impossible, and therefore neither is contrary to reason. We know the one fact from consciousness; we believe the other on the testimony of God. It is impossible, and therefore contrary to reason, that three should be one. But it is not impossible that the same numerical essence should subsist in three distinct persons. Realists tell us that humanity, as one numerical essence, subsists in all the millions of human individuals. Thomas Aquinas takes the true ground when he says: "Ea quae sunt supra naturam, sola fide tenemus. Quod autem credimus, auctoritati debemus. Unde in omnibus asserendis sequi debemus naturam rerum, praeter ea, quae auctoritate divina traduntur, quae sunt supra naturam."[43](#) "Quae igitur fidei sunt, non sunt tentanda probare nisi per auctoritates his, qui auctoritates suscipiunt. Apud alios vero sufficit defendere non esse impossibile quod praedicat fides."[44](#) "Quidquid in aliis scientiis invenitur veritati hujus scientiae [sacrae doctrinae] repugnans, totum condemnatur ut falsum."[45](#)

The Objects of Faith are consistent with Reason.

While, therefore, the objects of faith as revealed in the Bible, are not truths of the reason, i. e., which the human reason can discover, or comprehend, or demonstrate, they are, nevertheless, perfectly consistent with reason. They involve no contradictions or absurdities; nothing impossible, nothing inconsistent with the intuitions either of the intellect or of the conscience; nothing inconsistent with any well established truth, whether of the external world or of the world of mind. On the contrary, the contents of the Bible, so far as they relate to things within the legitimate domain of human knowledge, are found to be consistent, and must be consistent, with all we certainly know from other sources than a divine revelation. All that the Scriptures teach concerning the external world accords with the facts of experience. They do not teach that the earth is a plane; that it is stationary in space; that the sun revolves around it. On the other hand, they do teach that God made all plants and animals, each after its own kind; and, accordingly, all experience shows that species are immutable. All the anthropological doctrines of the Bible agree with what we know of man from consciousness and observation. The Bible teaches that God made of one blood all nations which dwell on the face of the earth. We accordingly find that all the varieties of our race have the same anatomical structure; the same physical nature; the same rational and moral faculties. The Bible teaches that man is a free, accountable agent; that all men are sinners; that all need redemption, and that no man can redeem himself or find a ransom for his brother. With these teachings the consciousness of all men agrees. All that the Scriptures reveal concerning the nature and attributes of Gods corresponds with our religious nature, satisfying,

elevating, and sanctifying all our powers and meeting all our necessities. If the contents of the Bible did not correspond with the truths which God has revealed in his external works and the constitution of our nature, it could not be received as coming from Him, for God cannot contradict himself. Nothing, therefore, can be more derogatory to the Bible than the assertion that its doctrines are contrary to reason.

Faith in the Irrational impossible.

The assumption that reason and faith are incompatible; that we must become irrational in order to become believers is, however it may be intended, the language of infidelity; for faith in the irrational is of necessity itself irrational. It is impossible to believe that to be true which the mind sees to be false. This would be to believe and disbelieve the same thing at the same time. If, therefore, as modern philosophers assert, it is impossible that an infinite being can be a person, then faith in the personality of God is impossible. Then there can be no religion, no sin, no accountability, no immortality. Faith is not a blind, irrational conviction. In order to believe, we must know what we believe, and the grounds on which our faith rests. And, therefore, the refuge which some would take in faith, from the universal scepticism to which they say reason necessarily leads, is insecure and worthless.

While admitting that the truths of revelation are to be received upon the authority of God; that human reason can neither comprehend nor prove them; that a man must be converted and become as a little child before he can truly receive the doctrines of the Bible; and admitting, moreover, that these doctrines are

irreconcilable with every system of philosophy, ever framed by those who refuse to be taught of God, or who were ignorant of his Word, yet it is ever to be maintained that those doctrines are unassailable; that no created intellect can prove them to be impossible or irrational. Paul, while spurning the wisdom of the world, still claimed that he taught the highest wisdom, even the wisdom of God. (1 Cor. ii. 6, 7.) And who will venture to say that the wisdom of God is irrational?

Knowledge essential to Faith.

A sixth question, included under the head of the relation of faith to knowledge is, Whether knowledge is essential to faith? That is, whether a truth must be known in order to be believed? This Protestants affirm and Romanists deny.

Protestants of course admit that mysteries, or truths which we are unable to comprehend, may be, and are, proper objects of faith. They repudiate the rationalistic doctrine that we can believe only what we understand and what we can prove, or, at least, elucidate so that it appears to be true in its own light. What Protestants maintain is that knowledge, i. e., the cognition of the import of the proposition to be believed, is essential to faith; and, consequently, that faith is limited by knowledge. We can believe only what we know, i. e., what we intelligently apprehend. If a proposition be announced to us in an unknown language, we can affirm nothing about it. We can neither believe nor disbelieve it. Should the man who makes the declaration, assert that it is true, if we have confidence in his competency and integrity, we may believe that he is right, but the proposition itself is no part of our faith. The Apostle recognizes this obvious truth when

he says, "Except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood (eu;shmon lo,gon), how shall it be known what is spoken? for ye shall speak into the air. . . . If I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be unto him that speaketh a barbarian, and he that speaketh shall be a barbarian unto me. . . . When thou shalt bless with the Spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned, say Amen at thy giving of thanks? seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest?" (1 Cor. xiv. 9-16.) To say Amen, is to assent to, to make one's own. According to the Apostle, therefore, knowledge, or the intelligent apprehension of the meaning of what is proposed, is essential to faith. If the proposition "God is a Spirit," be announced to the unlearned in Hebrew or Greek, it is impossible that they should assent to its truth. If they understand the language, if they know what the word "God" means, and what the word "Spirit" means, then they may receive or reject the truth which that proposition affirms. The declaration "Jesus is the Son of God," admits of different interpretations. Some say the term Son is an official title, and therefore the proposition "Jesus is the Son of God," means that Jesus is a ruler. Others say it is a term of affection, then the proposition means that Jesus was the special object of the love of God. Others say that it means that Jesus is of the same nature with God; that He is a divine person. If this be the meaning of the Spirit in declaring Jesus to be the Son of God, then those who do not attach that sense to the words, do not believe the truth intended to be taught. When it is said God set forth Christ to be a propitiation for our sins, if we do not understand what the word propitiation means, the proposition to us means nothing, and nothing cannot be an object of faith.

Knowledge the Measure of Faith.

It follows from what has been said, or rather is included in it, that knowledge being essential to faith, it must be the measure of it. What lies beyond the sphere of knowledge, lies beyond the sphere of faith. Of the unseen and eternal we can believe only what God has revealed; and of what God has revealed, we can believe only what we know. It has been said that he who believes the Bible to be the Word of God, may properly be said to believe all it teaches, although much of its instructions may be to him unknown. But this is not a correct representation. The man who believes the Bible, is prepared to believe on its authority whatever it declares to be true. But he cannot properly be said to believe any more of its contents than he knows. If asked if he believed that men bitten by poisonous serpents were ever healed by merely looking at a brazen serpent, he might, if ignorant of the Pentateuch, honestly answer, No. But should he come to read and understand the record of the healing of the dying Israelites, as found in the Bible, he would rationally and sincerely, answer, Yes. This disposition to believe whatever the Bible teaches, as soon as we know what is taught, may be called an implicit faith, but it is no real faith. It has none of its characteristics and none of its power.

Proof that Knowledge is Essential to Faith.

That knowledge, in the sense above stated, is essential to faith is obvious, --

1. From the very nature of faith. It includes the conviction of the truth of its object. It is an affirmation of the mind that a thing is true or trustworthy, but the mind can affirm nothing of that of which it knows nothing.

2. The Bible everywhere teaches that without knowledge there can be no faith. This, as just stated, is the doctrine of the Apostle Paul. He condemned the speaking in an unknown tongue in a promiscuous assembly, because the hearers could not understand what was said; and if they did not know the meaning of the words uttered, they could neither assent to them, nor be profited by them. In another place (Rom. x. 14) he asks, "How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?" "Faith," he says, "cometh by hearing." The command of Christ was to preach the Gospel to every creature; to teach all nations. Those who received the instructions thus given, should, He assured his disciples, be saved; those who rejected them, should be damned. This takes for granted that without the knowledge of the Gospel, there can be no faith. On this principle the Apostles acted everywhere. They went abroad preaching Christ, proving from the Scriptures that He was the Son of God and Saviour of the world. The communication of knowledge always preceded the demand for faith.

3. Such is the intimate connection between faith and knowledge, that in the Scriptures the one term is often used for the other. To know Christ, is to believe upon Him. To know the truth, is intelligently and believingly to apprehend and appropriate it. Conversion is effected by knowledge. Paul says he was made a believer by the revelation of Christ within him. The Spirit is said to open the eyes of the understanding. Men are said to be renewed so as to know. We are translated from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light. Believers are children of the light. Men are said to perish for the lack of knowledge. Nothing is more characteristic of the Bible than the importance which it attaches to the knowledge of the truth. We are said to be begotten by the truth; to be sanctified by

the truth; and the whole duty of ministers and teachers is said to be to hold forth the word of life. It is because Protestants believe that knowledge is essential to faith, that they insist so strenuously on the circulation of the Scriptures and the instruction of the people.

Romish Doctrine on this Subject.

Romanists make a distinction between explicit and implicit faith. By the former is meant, faith in a known truth; by the latter faith in truths not known. They teach that only a few primary truths of religion need be known, and that faith without knowledge, as to all other truths, is genuine and sufficient. On this subject Thomas Aquinas says, "Quantum ad prima credibilia, quae sunt articuli fidei, tenetur homo explicite credere. Quantum autem ad alia credibilia non tenetur homo explicite credere, sed solum implicite, vel in praeparatione animi, in quantum paratus est credere quidquid divina Scriptura continet."[46](#) Implicit faith is defined as, "Assensus, qui omnia, quamvis ignota, quae ab ecclesia probantur, amplectitur."[47](#) Bellarmin[48](#) says, "In eo qui credit, duo sunt, apprehensio et iudicium, sive assensus: sed apprehensio non est fides, sed aliud fidem praecedens. Possunt enim infideles apprehendere mysteria fidei. Praeterea, apprehensio non dicitur proprie notitia. . . . Mysteria fidei, quae rationem superant, credimus, non intelligimus, ac per hoc fides distinguitur contra scientiam, et melius per ignorantiam, quam per notitiam definitur." The faith required of the people is simply, A general intention to believe whatever the Church believes."[49](#) The Church teaches that there are seven sacraments. A man who has no idea what the word sacrament means, or what rites are regarded by the Church as having a sacramental character, is held to believe that orders, penance,

matrimony, and extreme unction, are sacraments. So, of all other doctrines of the Church. True faith is said to be consistent with absolute ignorance. According to this doctrine, a man may be a true Christian, if he submits to the Church, although in his internal convictions and modes of thought, he be a pantheist or pagan.

It is to this grave error as to the nature of faith, that much in the character and practice of the Romish Church is to be referred, --

1. This is the reason why the Scriptures are withheld from the people. If knowledge is not necessary to faith, there is no need that the people should know what the Bible teaches.

2. For the same reason the services of public worship are conducted in an unknown language.

3. Hence, too, the symbolism which characterizes their worship. The end to be accomplished is a blind reverence and awe. For this end there is no need that these symbols should be understood. It is enough that they affect the imagination.

4. To the same principle is to be referred the practice of reserve in preaching. The truth may be kept back or concealed. The cross is held up before the people, but it is not necessary that the doctrine of the sacrifice for sin made thereon should be taught. It is enough if the people are impressed; it matters not whether they believe that the sign, or the material, or the doctrine symbolized, secures salvation. Nay, the darker the mind, the more vague and mysterious the feeling excited, and the more blind the submission rendered, the more genuine is the exercise of faith. "Religious light," says Mr. Newman, "is intellectual darkness."[50](#)

5. It is on the same principle the Roman Catholic missions have always been conducted. The people are converted not by the truth, not by a course of instruction, but by baptism. They are made Christians by thousands, not by the intelligent adoption of Christianity as a system of doctrine, of that they may be profoundly ignorant, but by simple submission to the Church and its prescribed rites. The consequence has been that the Catholic missions, although continued in some instances for more than a hundred years, take no hold on the people, but almost uniformly die out, as soon as the supply of foreign ministers is cut off.

§ 5. *Faith and Feeling.*

It has already been seen, --

1. That faith, the act of believing, cannot properly be defined as the assent of the understanding determined by the will. There are, unquestionably, many cases in which a man believes against his will.

2. It has also been argued that it is not correct to say that faith is assent founded on feeling. On this point it was admitted that a man's feelings have great influence upon his faith; that it is comparatively easy to believe what is agreeable, and difficult to believe what is disagreeable. It was also admitted that in saving faith, the gift of God, resting on the inward illuminating testimony of the Holy Spirit, there is a discernment not only of the truth but of the divine excellence of the things of the Spirit, which is inseparably connected with appropriate feeling. It was moreover conceded that, so far as the

consciousness of the believer is concerned, he seems to receive the truth on its own evidence, on its excellence and power over his heart and conscience. This, however, is analogous to other facts in his experience. When a man repents and believes, he is conscious only of his own exercises and not of the supernatural influences of the Spirit, to which those exercises owe their origin and nature. Thus also in the exercise of faith, consciousness does not reach the inward testimony of the Spirit on which that faith is founded. Nevertheless, notwithstanding these admissions, it is still incorrect to say that faith is founded on feeling, because it is only of certain forms or exercises of faith that this can even be plausibly said; and because there are many exercises of even saving faith (that is, of faith in a true believer,) which are not attended by feeling. This is the case when the object of faith is some historical fact. Besides, the Scriptures clearly teach that the ground of faith is the testimony of God, or demonstration of the Spirit. He has revealed certain truths, and attends them with such an amount and kind of evidence, as produces conviction, and we receive them on his authority.

3. Faith is not necessarily connected with feeling. Sometimes it is, and sometimes it is not. Whether it is or not, depends, (a.) On the nature of the object. Belief in glad tidings is of necessity attended by joy; of evil tidings with grief. Belief in moral excellence involves a feeling of approbation. Belief that a certain act is criminal, involves disapprobation. (b.) On the proximate ground of faith. If a man believes that a picture is beautiful on the testimony of competent judges, there is no aesthetic feeling connected with his faith. But if he personally perceives the beauty of the object, then delight is inseparable from the conviction that it is beautiful. In like manner if a man believes that Jesus is God manifest in the flesh, on the mere

external testimony of the Bible, he experiences no due impression from that truth. But if his faith is founded on the inward testimony of the Spirit, by which the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ is revealed to him, then he is filled with adoring admiration and love.

Religious Faith more than Simple Assent.

4. Another question agitated on this subject is, Whether faith is a purely intellectual exercise; or Whether it is also an exercise of the affections. This is nearly allied to the preceding question, and must receive substantially the same answer. Bellarmin,⁵¹ says, "Tribus in rebus ab haereticis Catholici dissentiunt; Primum, in objecto fidei justificantis, quod haeretici restringunt ad solam promissionem misericordiae specialis, Catholici tam late patere volunt, quam late patet verbum. . . . Deinde in facultate et potentia animi quae sedes est fidei. Siquidem illi fidem collocant in voluntate [seu in corde] cum fiduciam esse definiunt; ac per hoc eam cum spe confundunt. Fiducia enim nihil est aliud, nisi spes roborata. . . . Catholici fidem in intellectu sedem habere docent. Denique, in ipso actu intellectus. Ipsi enim per notitiam fidem definiunt, nos per assensum. Assentimur enim Deo, quamvis ea nobis credenda proponat, quae non intelligimus." Regarding faith as a mere intellectual or speculative act, they consistently deny that it is necessarily connected with salvation. According to their doctrine, a man may have true faith, i. e., the faith which the Scriptures demand, and yet perish. On this point the Council of Trent says: "Si quis dixerit, amissa per peccatum gratia, simul et fidem semper amitti, aut fidem, quae remanet, non esse veram fidem, licet non sit viva; aut eum, qui fidem sine caritate habet, non esse Christianum; anathema sit."⁵²

Protestant Doctrine.

On the other hand Protestants with one voice maintain that the faith which is connected with salvation, is not a mere intellectual exercise. Calvin says:**53** "Verum observemus, fidei sedem non in cerebro esse, sed in corde: neque vero de eo contenderim, qua in parte corporis sita sit fides: sed quoniam cordis nomen pro serio et sincero affectu fere capitur, dico firmam esse et efficacem fiduciam, non nudam tantum notionem." He also says:**54** Quodsi expenderent illud Pauli, Corde creditur ad justitiam (Rom. x. 10): fingere desinerent frigidam illam qualitatem. Si una haec nobis suppeteret ratio, valere deberet ad litem finiendam: assensionem scilicet ipsam sicuti ex parte attigi, et fusius iterum repetam, cordis esse magis quam cerebri, et affectus magis quam intelligentiae."

The answer in the Heidelberg Catechism, to the question, What is Faith? is, "It is not merely a certain knowledge, whereby I receive as true all that God has revealed to us in his Word, but also a cordial trust, which the Holy Ghost works in me by the Gospel, that not only to others, but to me also, the forgiveness of sin, and everlasting righteousness and life are given by God, out of pure grace, and only for the sake of Christ's merit."**55**

That saving faith is not a mere speculative assent of the understanding, is the uniform doctrine of the Protestant symbols. On this point, however, it may be remarked, in the first place, that, as has often been stated before, the Scriptures do not make the sharp distinction between the understanding, the feelings, and the will, which is common in our day. A large class of our inward acts and states are so complex as to be acts of the whole soul, and not

exclusively of any one of its faculties. In repentance there is of necessity an intellectual apprehension of ourselves as sinners, of the holiness of God, of his law to which we have failed to be conformed and of his mercy in Christ; there is a moral disapprobation of our character and conduct; a feeling of sorrow, shame, and remorse; and a purpose to forsake sin and lead a holy life. Scarcely less complex is the state of mind expressed by the word faith as it exists in a true believer. In the second place, there is a distinction to be made between faith in general and saving faith. If we take that element of faith which is common to every act of believing; if we understand by it the apprehension of a thing as true and worthy of confidence, whether a fact of history or of science, then it may be said that faith in its essential nature is intellectual, or intelligent assent. But if the question be, What is that act or state of mind which is required in the Gospel, when we are commanded to believe; the answer is very different. To believe that Christ is "God manifest in the flesh," is not the mere intellectual conviction that no one, not truly divine, could be and do what Christ was and did; for this conviction demoniacs avowed; but it is to receive Him as our God. This includes the apprehension and conviction of his divine glory, and the adoring reverence, love, confidence, and submission, which are due to God alone. When we are commanded to believe in Christ as the Saviour of men, we are not required merely to assent to the proposition that He does save sinners, but also to receive and rest upon Him alone for our own salvation. What, therefore, the Scriptures mean by faith, in this connection, the faith which is required for salvation, is an act of the whole soul, of the understanding, of the heart, and of the will.

Proof of the Protestant Doctrine.

The Protestant doctrine that saving faith includes knowledge, assent, and trust, and is not, as Romanists teach, mere assent, in sustained by abundant proofs.

1. In the first place, it is proved from the nature of the object of saving faith. That object is not merely the general truth of Scripture, not the fact that the Gospel reveals God's plan of saving sinners; but it is Christ himself; his person and work, and the offer of salvation to us personally and individually. From the nature of the case we cannot, as just remarked, believe in Christ on the inward testimony of the Spirit which reveals his glory and his love, without the feelings of reverence, love, and trust mingling with the act and constituting its character. Nor is it possible that a soul oppressed with a sense of sin should receive the promise of deliverance from its guilt and power, without any feeling of gratitude and confidence. The act of faith in such a promise is in its nature an act of appropriation and confidence.

2. We accordingly find that in many cases in the Bible the word trust is used instead of faith. The same act or state of mind which in one place is expressed by the one word, is in others expressed by the other. The same promises are made to trust as are made to faith. The same effects are attributed to the one, that are attributed to the other.

3. The use of other words and forms of expression as explanatory of the act of faith, and substituted for that word, shows that it includes trust as an essential element of its nature. We are commanded to look to Christ, as the dying Israelites looked up to the brazen serpent. This looking involved trusting; and looking is declared to be believing. Sinners are exhorted to flee to Christ as a

refuge. The man-slayer fled to the city of refuge because he relied upon it as a place of safety. We are said to receive Christ, to rest upon Him, to lay hold of Him. All these, and other modes of expression which teach us what we are to do when we are commanded to believe, show that trust is an essential element in the act of saving faith.

4. The command to believe is expressed by the word *pisteu*,w not only when followed by the accusative, but also when followed by the dative and by the prepositions *evpi*,(*eivj*(*evn*. But the literal meaning of *pisteu*,*ein eivj*, or *evpi*,, or *evn*, is not simply *to believe*, but to believe upon, to confide in, to trust. Faith in a promise made to ourselves, from the nature of the case, is an act of confidence in him who makes the promise.

5. Unbelief is, therefore, expressed by doubt, fear, distrust and despair.

6 The believer knows from his own experience that when he believes he receives and rests on Jesus Christ for salvation, as He is freely offered to us in the Gospel.

The controversy between Romanists and Protestants on this subject turns on the view taken of the plan of salvation. If, as Protestants hold, every man in order to be saved, must receive the record which God has given of his Son; must believe that He is God manifest in the flesh, the propitiation for our sins, the prophet, priest, and king of his people, then it must be admitted that faith involves trust in Christ as to us the source of wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. But if, as Romanists teach, the benefits of redemption are conveyed only through the sacraments,

effective *ex opere operato*, then faith is the opposite of infidelity in its popular sense. If a man is not a believer, he is an infidel, i. e., a rejecter of Christianity. The object of faith is divine revelation as contained in the Bible. It is a simple assent to the fact that the Scriptures are from God, and that the Church is a divinely constituted and supernaturally endowed institute for the salvation of men. Believing this, the sinner comes to the Church and receives through her ministrations, in his measure, all the benefits of redemption. According to this system the nature and office of faith are entirely different from what they are according to the Protestant theory of the Gospel.

§ 6. *Faith and Love.*

As to the relation between faith and love there are three different views: --

1. That love is the ground of faith; that men believe the truth because they love it. Faith is founded on feeling. This view has already been sufficiently discussed.

2. That love is the invariable and necessary attendant and consequent of saving faith. As no man can see and believe a thing to be morally good without the feeling of approbation; so no one can see and believe the glory of God as revealed in the Scriptures without adoring reverence being awakened in his soul; no one can believe unto salvation that Christ is the Son of God and the Son of Man; that He loved us and gave Himself for us, and makes us kings and priests

unto God, without love and devotion, in proportion to the clearness and strength of this faith, filling the heart and controlling the life. Hence faith is said to work by love and to purify the heart. Romanists, indeed, render *πίστις διὰ ἀγάπης ἐνερgetheis* in this passage (Gal. v. 6), "faith perfected or completed by love." But this is contrary to the constant usage of the word *ἐνερgetis* in the New Testament, which is always used in a middle sense, "*vim suam exserere*." According to the Apostle's teaching in Rom. vii. 4-6, love without faith, or anterior to it, is impossible. Until we believe, we are under the condemnation of the law. While under condemnation, we are at enmity with God. While at enmity with God, we bring forth fruit unto death. It is only when reconciled to God and united to Christ, that we bring forth fruit unto God. Believing that God loves us we love Him. Believing that Christ gave Himself for us, we devote our lives to Him. Believing that the fashion of this world passes away, that the things unseen are eternal, those who have that faith which is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen, set their affections on things above where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. This necessary connection between faith and love, has already been sufficiently insisted upon.

Romanists make Love the Essence of Faith.

3. The third doctrinal view on this subject is that of the Romanists, who make love the essence of faith. In other words, love with them is the form (in the scholastic sense of the word) of faith; it is that which gives it being or character as a Christian virtue or grace. While on the one hand they teach, as we have seen with the Council of Trent, that faith is in itself mere intellectual assent, without any moral virtue, and which may be exercised by the unrenewed or by those in a state

of mortal sin; on the other hand, they hold that there is such a Christian grace as faith; but in that case, faith is only another name for love. This is not the distinction between a living and dead faith which the Scriptures and all Evangelical Christians recognize. With Romanists the *fides informis* is true faith, and the *fides formata* is love. On this point, Peter Lombard⁵⁶ says: "Fides qua dicitur [creditur?], si cum caritate sit, virtus est, quia caritas ut ait Ambrosius mater est omnium virtutum, quae omnes informat, sine qua nulla vera virtus est." Thomas Aquinas⁵⁷ says: "Actus fidei ordinatur ad objectum voluntatis, quod est bonum, sicut ad finem. Hoc autem bonum quod est finis fidei, scilicet bonum divinum, est proprium objectum charitatis: et ideo charitas dicitur forma fidei, in quantum per charitatem actus fidei perficitur et formatur." Bellarmin⁵⁸ says: "Quod si charitas est forma fidei, et fides non justificat formaliter, nisi ab ipsa caritate formata certe multo magis charitas ipsa justificat. . . . Fides quae agitur, ac movetur, formatur, et quasi animatur per dilectionem. . . . Apostolus Paulus . . . explicat dilectionem formam esse extrinsecam fidei non intrinsecam, quae det illi, non ut sit, sed ut moveatur." All this is intelligible and reasonable, provided we admit subjective justification, and the merit of good works. If justification is sanctification, then it may be admitted that love has more to do with making men holy, than faith considered as mere intellectual assent. And if it be conceded that we are accepted by God on the ground of our own virtue, then it may be granted that love is more valuable than any mere exercise of the intellect. Romanists argue, "Maxima virtus maxime justificat. Dilectio est maxima virtus. Ergo maxime justificat." It was because this distinction between a "formed and unformed faith" was made in the interest of justification on the ground of our own character and

merit, that Luther, with his usual vehement power, says: "Ipsi duplicem faciunt fidem, informem et formatam, hanc pestilentissimam et satanicam glossam non possum non vehementer detestari." It is only as connected with false views of justification that this question has any real importance. For it is admitted by all Protestants that saving faith and love are inseparably connected; that faith without love, i. e., that a faith which does not produce love and good works, is dead. But Protestants are strenuous in denying that we are justified on account of love, which is the real meaning of the Romanists when they say "fides non justificat formaliter, nisi ab ipsa caritate formata."

§ 7. *The Object of Saving Faith.*

Fides Generalis.

It is conceded that all Christians are bound to believe, and that all do believe everything taught in the Word of God, so far as the contents of the Scriptures are known to them. It is correct, therefore, to say that the object of faith is the whole revelation of God as contained in his Word. As the Bible is with Protestants the only infallible rule of faith and practice, nothing not expressly taught in Scripture, or deduced therefrom by necessary inference, can be imposed on the people of God as an article of faith. This is "the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free," and in which we are bound to stand fast. This is our protection on the one hand, against the usurpations of the Church. Romanists claim for the Church the prerogative of infallible and authoritative teaching. The people are

bound to believe whatever the Church, i. e., its organs the bishops, declare to be a part of the revelation of God. They do not, indeed, assume the right "to make" new articles of faith. But they claim the authority to decide, in such a way as to bind the conscience of the people, what the Bible teaches; and what by tradition the Church knows to be included in the teaching of Christ and his Apostles. This gives them latitude enough to teach for doctrines the commandments of men. Bellarmin⁵⁹ says: "Omnium dogmatum firmitas pendet ab auctoritate praesentis ecclesiae." On the other hand, however, it is not only against the usurpations of the Church, that the principle above mentioned is our security, but also against the tyranny of public opinion. Men are as impatient of contradiction now as they ever were. They manifest the same desire to have their own opinions enacted into laws, and enforced by divine authority. And they are as fierce in their denunciations of all who venture to oppose them. Hence they meet in conventions or other assemblies, ecclesiastical or voluntary, and decide what is true and what is false in doctrine, and what is right and what is wrong in morals. Against all undue assumptions of authority, true Protestants hold fast to the two great principles, -- the right of private judgment, and that the Scriptures are the only infallible rule of faith and practice. The object of faith, therefore, is all the truths revealed in the Word of God. All that God in the Bible declares to be true, we are bound to believe. This is what theologians call *fides generalis*.

Fides Specialis.

But, besides this, there is a *fides specialis* necessary to salvation. In the general contents of the Scriptures there are certain doctrines concerning Christ and his work, and certain promises of salvation

made through Him to sinful men, which we are bound to receive and on which we are required to trust. The special object of faith, therefore, is Christ, and the promise of salvation through Him. And the special definite act of faith which secures our salvation is the act of receiving and resting on Him as He is offered to us in the Gospel. This is so clearly and so variously taught in the Scriptures as hardly to admit of being questioned.

Christ's Testimony.

In the first place, our Lord repeatedly declares that what men are required to do, and what they are condemned because they do not do, is to believe on Him. He was lifted up, "That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." (John iii. 15.) "He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." (v. 18.) "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: but he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." (v. 36.) "This is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day." (John vi. 40.) "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life. I am that bread of life. . . . This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, . . any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever." (vers. 47-51.) In another place our Lord says, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent. (John vi. 29.) The passages, however, in which faith in Christ is expressly demanded as the condition of salvation, are too numerous to be cited.

We are said to be saved by receiving Christ.

That Christ is the immediate object of saving faith is also taught in all those passages in which we are said to receive Christ, or the testimony of God concerning Christ, and in which this act of receiving is said to secure our salvation. For example, in John i. 12, "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God." "I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not." (John v. 43.) "If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God has made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son." (1 John v. 9, 10.) "He that hath the Son hath life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." (v. 12.) "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." (v. 1.) It is, therefore, receiving Christ; receiving the record which God has given of his Son; believing that He is the Christ the Son of the living God, which is the specific act required of us in order to salvation. Christ, therefore, is the immediate object of those exercises of faith which secure salvation. And, therefore, faith is expressed by looking to Christ; coming to Christ; committing the soul to Him, etc.

Teaching of the Apostles

Accordingly the Apostle teaches we are justified "by the faith of Christ." It is not faith as a pious disposition of the mind not faith as general confidence in God; not faith in the truth of divine revelation; much less faith "in eternal verities," or the general principles of truth and duty, but that faith of which Christ is the object. Romans iii. 22: "The righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all

and upon all them that believe." Galatians ii. 16: "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law." iii. 24: "The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith." v. 26: "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." Galatians ii. 20: "I live by the faith of the Son of God," etc., etc.

Christ our Ransom.

Christ declares that He gave Himself as a ransom for many; He was set forth as a propitiation for sins; He offered Himself as a sacrifice unto God. It is through the merit of his righteousness and death that men are saved. All these representations which pervade the Scriptures necessarily assume that the faith which secures salvation must have special reference to Him. If He is our Redeemer, we must receive and trust Him as such. If He is a propitiation for sins, it is through faith in his blood that we are reconciled to God. The whole plan of salvation, as set forth in the Gospel, supposes that Christ in his person and work is the object of faith and the ground of confidence.

We live in Christ by Faith.

The same thing follows from the representations given of the relation of the believer to Christ. We are in Him by faith. He dwells in us. He is the head from whom we, as members of his body, derive our life. He is the vine, we are the branches. It is not we that live, but Christ, who liveth in us. These and other representations are utterly inconsistent with the doctrine that it is a vague general faith in God

or in the Scriptures which secures our salvation. It is a faith which terminates directly on Christ, which takes Him to be our God and Saviour. God sent his Son into the world, clothed in our nature, to reveal his will, to die for our sins and to rise again for our justification. In Him dwells the fulness of the Godhead, from his fulness we are filled. He to us is wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Those who receive this Saviour as being all He claimed to be, and commit their souls into his hands to be used in his service and saved to his glory, are, in the Scriptural sense of the term, believers. Christ is not only the object of their faith, but their whole inward, spiritual life terminates on Him. Nothing, therefore, can be more foreign to the Gospel than the Romish doctrine, substantially revived by the modern philosophy which turns the mind away from the historical, really existing, objective Christ, to the work within us; leaving us nothing to love and trust, but what is in our own miserable hearts.

Christ is not received in a Special Office alone.

Admitting that Christ is the immediate and special object of those acts of faith which secure salvation, it is asked, Whether it is Christ in all his offices, or Christ in his priestly office, especially, that is the object of justifying faith? This seems an unnecessary question. It is not raised in the Bible; nor does it suggest itself to the believer. He receives Christ. He does not ask himself for what special function of his saving work he thus accepts Him. He takes Him as a Saviour, as a deliverer from the guilt and power of sin, from the dominion of Satan, and from all the evils of his apostasy from God. He takes Him as his wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. He takes Him as his God and Saviour, as the full, complete, satisfying,

life-giving portion of the soul. If this complex act of apprehension and surrender were analyzed it doubtless would be found to include submission to all his teaching, reliance on his righteousness and intercession, subjection to his will, confidence in his protection, and devotion to his service. As He is offered to us as a prophet, priest, and king, as such He is accepted. And as He is offered to us as a source of life, and glory, and blessedness, as the supreme object of adoration and love, as such He is joyfully accepted.

Is the Sinner required to believe that God loves him?

Again, it is questioned, Whether the object of saving faith is that God is reconciled to us; that our sins are forgiven; that we are the objects of the saving love of God? This is not the question above considered, namely, Whether, as Romanists say, the object of faith is the whole revelation of God, or, as Protestants contend, Christ and the promise of redemption through Him, although many of the arguments of the Romanists are directed against the special form of the doctrine just stated. They argue that it is contradictory to say that we are pardoned because we believe; and, in the same breath, to say that the thing to be believed is that our sins are already pardoned. Again, they argue that the only proper object of faith is some revelation of God, but it is nowhere revealed that we individually are reconciled to God, or that our sins are pardoned, or that we are the objects of that special love which God has to his own people.

In answer to the first of these objections, the Reformed theologians were accustomed to say, that a distinction is to be made between the remission of sin *de jure* already obtained through the death of Christ, and remission *de facto* through the efficacious application of it to us.

In the former sense, "remissio peccatorum jam impetrata" is the object of faith. In the latter sense, it is "remissio impetranda," because faith is the instrumental cause of justification, and must precede it. "Unde," says Turretin,[60](#) "ad obtinendam remissionem peccatorum, non debeo credere peccata mihi jam remissa, ut perperam nobis impingunt; sed debeo credere peccata mihi credenti et poenitenti, juxta promissionem factam credentibus et poenitentibus, remissum iri certissime, quae postea actu secundari et reflexo ex sensu fidei credo mihi esse remissa."

The second objection was answered by distinguishing between the direct and the reflex act of faith. By the direct act of faith we embrace Christ as our Saviour; by the reflex act, arising out of the consciousness of believing, we believe that He loved us and died for us, and that nothing can ever separate us from his love. These two acts are inseparable, not only as cause and effect, antecedent and consequent; but they are not separated in time, or in the consciousness of the believer. They are only different elements of the complex act of accepting Christ as He is offered in the Gospel. We cannot separate the joy and gratitude with which a great favour is accepted. Although a psychological analysis might resolve these emotions into the effects of the act of acceptance, they belong, as revealed in consciousness, to the very nature of the act. It is a cordial and grateful acceptance of a promise made to all who embrace it. If a general promise of pardon be made to criminals on the condition of the confession of guilt, every one of their number who makes the confession knows or believes that the promise is made to him. On this point the early Reformed and Lutheran theologians were agreed in teaching that when the sinner exercises saving faith. He believes that for Christ's sake he is pardoned and accepted of God. In other

words, that Christ loved him and gave Himself for him. We have already seen that the "Heidelberg Catechism,"⁶¹ the symbolical book of so large a portion of the Reformed Church, declared saving faith to be "Certa fiducia, a Spiritu Sancto per evangelium in corde meo accensa, qua in Deo acquiesco, certo statuens, non solum aliis, sed mihi quoque remissionem peccatorum aeternam, justitiam et vitam donatam esse idque gratis, ex Dei misericordia, propter unius Christi meritum." In the "Apology of the Augsburg Confession of the Lutheran Church" it is said,⁶² "Nos praeter illam fidem [fidem generalem] requirimus, ut credat sibi quisque remitti peccata." Calvin says,⁶³ "Gratiae promissione opus est, qua nobis testificetur se propitium esse Patrem: quando nec aliter ad eum appropinquare possumus, et in eam solam reclinare cor hominis potest. . . . Nunc justa fidei definitio nobis constabit, si dicamus esse divinae erga nos benevolentiae firmam certamque cognitionem, quae gratuita in Christo promissionis veritate fundata, per Spiritum Sanctum et revelatur mentibus nostris et cordibus obsignatur." "Hic praecipuus fidei cardo vertitur, ne quas Dominus offert misericordiae promissiones, extra nos tantum veras esse arbitremur, in nobis minime: sed ut potius eas intus complectendo nostras faciamus. . . . In summa, vere fidelis non est nisi qui solida persuasione Deum sibi propitium benevolumque patrem esse persuasus, de ejus benignitate omnia sibi pollicetur: nisi qui divinae erga se benevolentiae promissionibus fretus, indubitata salutis expectationem praesumit."

This is strong language. The doctrine, however, is not that faith implies assurance. The question concerns the nature of the object seen, not the clearness of the vision; what it is that the soul believes, not the strength of its faith. This Calvin himself elsewhere beautifully

expresses, saying, "When the least drop of faith is instilled into our minds, we begin to see the serene and placid face of our reconciled Father; far off and on high, it may be, but still it is seen." A man in a dangeon may see only a ray of light streaming through a crevice. This is very different from broad daylight. Nevertheless, what he sees is light. So what the penitent sinner believes is, that God for Christ's sake is reconciled to him. It may be with a very dim and doubtful vision, he apprehends that truth; but that is the truth on which his trust is stayed.

Proof of this Doctrine.

This is involved in the appropriation of the general promise of the Gospel. The Scriptures declare that God is love; that He set forth his Son to be a propitiation for sin; that in Him He is reconciled; that He will receive all who come to Him through Christ. To appropriate these general declarations, is to believe that they are true, not only in relation to others, but to ourselves that God is reconciled to us. We have no right to exclude ourselves. This self-exclusion is unbelief. It is refusing to take of the waters of life, freely offered to all.

Galatians ii. 20.

Accordingly the Apostle in Galatians ii. 20, says, "The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." The object of the Apostle's faith, therefore, the truths which he believed, and faith in which gave life to his soul, were, (1.) That Christ is the Son of God; (2.) That He loved him; (3.) That He gave Himself for him. The faith by which a believer lives, is not specifically different in its nature or object from the faith required of every man in order to his salvation. The life of faith is

only the continued repetition, it may be with ever increasing strength and clearness, of those exercises by which we first receive Christ, in all his fuiness and in all his offices, as our God and Saviour. "Qui fit ut vivamus Christi fide? quia nos dilexit, et se ipsum tradidit pro nobis. Amor, inquam, quo nos complexus est Christus, fecit ut se nobis coadunaret. Id implevit morte suam se ipsum tradendo pro nobis, non secus atque in persona nostra passus est. . . . Neque parum energiae habet pro me: quia non satis fuerit Christum pro mundi salute mortuum reputare, nisi sibi quisque effectum ac possessionem hujus gratiae privatim vindicet." [64](#).

It is objected to this view of the case that by the "love of God," or "of Christ," in the above statement, is not meant the general benevolence or philanthropy of God, but his special, electing, and saving love. When Paul said he lived by the faith of Christ who loved him, and gave Himself for him, he meant some thing more than that Christ loved all men and therefore him among the rest. He evidently believed himself to be a special object of the Saviour's love. It was this conviction which gave power to his faith. And a like conviction enters into the faith of every true believer. But to this it is objected that faith must have a divine revelation for its object. But there is no revelation of God's special love to individuals, and, therefore, no individual has any Scriptural ground to believe that Christ loved him, and gave Himself for him. Whatever force there may be in this objection, it bears against Paul's declaration and experience. He certainly did believe that Christ loved him and died for him. It will not do to say that this was a conclusion drawn from his own experience; or to assume that the Apostle argued himself into the conviction that Christ loved him. Christ specially loves all who believe upon Him. I believe upon Him. Therefore Christ specially

loves me. But a conclusion reached by argument is not an object of faith. Faith must rest on the testimony of God. It must be, therefore, that God in some way testifies to the soul that it is the object of his love. This he does in two ways. First, by the general invitations and promises of the Gospel. The act of appropriating, or of accepting these promises, is to believe that they belong to us as well as to others. Secondly, by the inward witness of the Spirit. Paul says (Rom. v. 5), "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." That is, the Holy Ghost convinces us that we are the objects of God's love. This is done, not only by the various manifestations of his love in providence and redemption, but by his inward dealings with the soul. "He that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." (John xiv. 21). This manifestation is not outward through the word. It is inward. God has fellowship or intercourse with the souls of his people. The Spirit calls forth our love to God, and reveals his love to us. Again, in Romans viii. 16, the Apostle says, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." This does not mean that the Spirit excites in us filial feelings toward God, from whence we infer that we are his children. The Apostle refers to two distinct sources of evidence of our adoption. The one is that we can call God Father; the other, the testimony of the Spirit. The latter is joined with the former. The word is summaturei/, unites in testifying. Hence we are said to be sealed, not only marked and secured, but assured by the Spirit; and the Spirit is a pledge, an assurance, that we are, and ever shall be, the objects of God's saving love. (Eph. i. 13, 14; iv. 80. 2 Cor. i. 22.)

This is not saying that a man must believe that he is one of the elect. Election is a secret purpose of God. The election of any

particular person is not revealed, and, therefore, is not an object of faith. It is a thing to be proved, or made sure, as the Apostle Peter says, by the fruits of the Spirit. All that the doctrine of the Reformers on this subject includes is, that the soul in committing itself to Christ does so as to one who loved it and died for its salvation. The woman healed by touching our Saviour's garment, believed that she was an object of his compassionate love, because all who touched Him with faith were included in that number. Her faith included that conviction.

§ 8. *Effects of Faith.*

Union with Christ.

The first effect of faith, according to the Scriptures, is union with Christ. We are in Him by faith. There is indeed a federal union between Christ and his people, founded on the covenant of redemption between the Father and the Son in the counsels of eternity. We are, therefore, said to be in Him before the foundation of the world. It is one of the promises of that covenant, that all whom the Father had given the Son should come to Him; that his people should be made willing in the day of his power. Christ has, therefore, been exalted to the right hand of God, to give repentance and the remission of sins. But it was also, as we learn from the Scriptures, included in the stipulations of that covenant, that his people, so far as adults are concerned, should not receive the saving benefits of that covenant until they were united to Him by a voluntary act of faith.

They are "by nature the children of wrath, even as others." (Eph. ii. 8.) They remain in this state of condemnation until they believe. Their union is consummated by faith. To be in Christ, and to believe in Christ, are, therefore, in the Scriptures convertible forms of expression. They mean substantially the same thing and, therefore, the same effects are attributed to faith as are attributed to union with Christ.

Justification an Effect of Faith.

The proximate effect of this union, and, consequently, the see. ond effect of faith, is justification. We are "justified by the faith of Christ." (Gal. ii. 16.) "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." (Rom. vii. 1.) "He that believeth on him is not condemned." (John iii. 18.) Faith is the condition on which God promises in the covenant of redemption, to impute unto men the righteousness of Christ. As soon, therefore, as they believe, they cannot be condemned. They are clothed with a righteousness which answers all the demands of justice. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." (Rom. viii. 33, 34.)

Participation of Christ's Life an Effect of Faith.

The third effect of faith, or of union with Christ, is a participation of his life. Those united with Christ, the Apostle teaches (Rom. vi. 4-10), so as to be partakers of his death, are partakers also of his life. "Because I live, ye shall live also." (John xiv. 19.) Christ dwells in our hearts by faith. (Eph. iii. 17.) Christ is in us. (Rom. viii. 10.) It is not

we that live, but Christ liveth in us. (Gal. ii. 20.) Our Lord's illustration of this vital union is derived from a vine and its branches. (John xv. 1-6.) As the life of the vine is diffused through the branches, and as they live only as connected with the vine, so the life of Christ is diffused through his people, and they are partakers of spiritual and eternal life, only in virtue of their union with Him. Another familiar illustration of this subject is derived from the human body. The members derive their life from the head, and perish if separated from it. (Eph. i. 22; 1 Cor. xii. 12-27, and often). In Ephesians iv. 15, 16, the Apostle carries out this illustration in detail. "The head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." As the principle of animal life located in the head, through the complicated yet ordered system of nerves extending to every member, diffuses life and energy through the whole body; so the Holy Spirit, given without measure to Christ the head of the Church, which is his body, diffuses life and strength to every member. Hence, according to Scriptuie, Christ's dwelling in us is explained as the Spirit's dwelling in us. The indwelling of the Spirit is the indwelling of Christ. If God be in you; if Christ be in you; if the Spirit be in you, -- all mean the same thing. See Romans viii. 9-11.

To explain this vital and mystical union between Christ and his people as a mere union of thought and feeling, is utterly inadmissible. (1.) In the first place, it is contrary to the plain meaning of his words. No one ever speaks of Plato's dwelling in men; of his being their life, so that without him they can do nothing; and much less, so that holiness, happiness, and eternal life depend upon that

union. (2.) Such interpretation supposes that our relation to Christ is analogous to the relation of one man to another. Whereas it is a relation between men and a divine person, who has life in Himself, and gives life to as many as He wills. (3.) It ignores all that the Scriptures teach of the work of the Holy Spirit and of his dwelling in the hearts of men. (4.) It overlooks the supernatural character of Christianity, and would reduce it to a mere philosophical and ethical system.

Peace as the Fruit of Faith.

The fourth effect of faith is peace. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Rom. v. 1.) Peace arises from a sense of reconciliation. God promises to pardon, to receive into his favour, and finally to save all who believe the record which He has given of his Son. To believe, is therefore to believe this promise; and to appropriate this promise to ourselves is to believe that God is reconciled to us. This faith may be weak or strong. And the peace which flows from it may be tremulous and intermitting, or it may be constant and assured.

Assurance.

To make assurance of personal salvation essential to faith, is contrary to Scripture and to the experience of God's people. The Bible speaks of a weak faith. It abounds with consolations intended for the doubting and the desponding. God accepts those who can only say, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." Those who make assurance the essence of faith, generally reduce faith to a mere intellectual assent. They are often censorious, refusing to recognize

as brethren those who do not agree with them, and sometimes they are antinomian.

At the same time, Scripture and experience teach that assurance is not only attainable, but a privilege and a duty. There may indeed be assurance, where there is no true faith at all; but where there is true faith, the want of assurance is to be referred either to the weakness of faith, or to erroneous views of the plan of salvation. Many sincere believers are too introspective. They look too exclusively within, so that their hope is graduated by the degree of evidence of regeneration which they find in their own experience. This, except in rare cases, can never lead to the assurance of hope. We may examine our hearts with all the microscopic care prescribed by President Edwards in his work on "The Religious Affections," and never be satisfied that we have eliminated every ground of misgiving and doubt. The grounds of assurance are not so much within, as without us. They are, according to Scripture, (1.) The universal and unconditional promise of God that those who come to Him in Christ, He will in no wise cast out; that whosoever will, may take of the water of life without money and without price. We are bound to be assured that God is faithful and will certainly save those who believes (2.) The infinite, immutable, and gratuitous love of God. In the first ten verses of the fifth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, and in the eighth chapter of that epistle from the thirty-first verse to the end, the Apostle dwells on these characteristics of the love of God, as affording an immovable foundation of the believer's hope. (3.) The infinite merit of the satisfaction of Christ, and the prevalence of his continued intercession. Paul, in Romans viii. 34, especially emphasizes these points. (4.) The covenant of redemption in which it is promised that all given by the Father to the Son, shall come to

Him, and that none of them shall be lost. (5.) From the witness of the Spirit, Paul says, "We . . . rejoice in hope of the glory of God," because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost given unto us. That is, the Holy Ghost assures us that we are the objects of that love which he goes on to describe as infinite, immutable, and gratuitous. (Rom. v. 3-5.) And again, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God." If, therefore, any true believer lacks the assurance of faith, the fault is in himself and not in the plan of salvation, or in the promises of God.

Sanctification a Fruit of Faith.

The fifth effect of faith is sanctification. "Which are sanctified," says our Lord "by faith that is in me." Although in this verse (Acts xxvi. 18), the words "by faith" do not qualify the preceding clause, "are sanctified," alone, but are to be referred to all the preceding particulars, illumination, deliverance from Satan, forgiveness of sins, and the eternal inheritance, yet the immediate antecedent is not to be omitted. We are sanctified by faith as is elsewhere clearly taught. "Faith which worketh by love and purifies the heart." (Gal. v. 6, and Acts xv. 9.)

The relation of faith to sanctification is thus set forth in the Scriptures, --

1. We are justified by faith. So long as we are under the law, we are under the curse, and bring forth fruit unto death. There is, and can be no love to God, and no holy living until we are delivered from his wrath due to us for sin. We are freed from the law, delivered from its condemnation, by the body or death of Christ. It is by faith in Him as the end of the law for righteousness, that we personally are freed

from condemnation and restored to the favour of God. See all this clearly taught in Romans vi., and in the first six verses of the seventh chapter. It is thus by faith we pass from judicial death to judicial life, or justification. This is the first and indispensable step of sanctification so far as it reveals itself in the consciousness of the believer.

2. It is by faith that we receive the indwelling of the Spirit. Christ (or the Spirit of Christ) dwells in our hearts by faith. Faith is the indispensable condition (so far as adults are concerned) of this indwelling of the Spirit. And the indwelling of the Spirit is the source of all spiritual life. Faith is indeed the fruit of the Spirit, and therefore the gift of the Spirit must precede the exercise of faith. It is nevertheless true that faith is the condition of the indwelling of the Spirit, and consequently of spiritual life. Life must precede breathing, and yet breathing is the necessary condition of living.

3. Faith is not only the condition of the Spirit's dwelling in us as the source of spiritual life, but we live by faith. That is, the continuance and exercise of spiritual life involve and suppose the constant exercise of faith. We live by exercising faith in God, in his attributes, in his providence, in his promises, and in all the truths which He has revealed. Especially is this life sustained by those exercises of faith of which Christ is the object; his divine and mysteriously constituted person, as God manifest in the flesh his finished work for our redemption; his constant intercession; his intimate relation to us not only as our prophet, priest, and king, but as our living head in whom our life is hid in God, and from whom it flows into our souls. We are thus sanctified by faith, because it is

through faith that all the religious affections and all the activities of spiritual life are called into exercise.

4. We are sanctified by faith, as it is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen. "The things of God," the truths which He has revealed concerning the spiritual and eternal world exist for us while in this world, only as the objects of faith. But faith is to the soul what the eye is to the body. It enables us to see the things unseen and eternal. It gives them substance, reality, and therefore power, -- power in some little measure in proportion to their value. Thus the things seen and temporal lose their dominant power over the soul. They are not worthy to be compared with the things which God has prepared for them that love Him. The believer, -- the ideal, and at times the actual believer, as we learn from Scripture and from history, is raised above the things of time and sense, overcomes the world, and becomes heavenly minded. He lives in heaven, breathes its atmosphere, is pervaded by its spirit, and has a prelibation of its joys. This renders him pure, spiritual, humble, self-denying, laborious, meek, gentle, forgiving, as well as firm and courageous. The whole of the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews is devoted to the illustration of the power of faith especially in this aspect. The Apostle shows that in times past, even under the dim light of the former dispensation, it enabled Noah to stand alone against the world, Abraham to offer up his only son, Moses to prefer the reproach of Christ to the treasures of Egypt; that others through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire; that others were by faith made strong out of weakness, waxed valiant in fight; that others submitted to the trial of cruel mockings and scourgings that others by faith endured to be stoned, sawn asunder, or slain with the sword; and

that yet others through faith consented to wander about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, afflicted, and tormented. All these, we are told, through faith obtained a good report.

5. Faith sanctifies because it is the necessary condition of the efficacy of the means of grace. It is through the Word, sacraments, and prayer, that God communicates constant supplies of grace. They are the means of calling the activities of spiritual life into exercise. But these means of grace are inoperative unless they are received and used by faith. Faith does not, indeed, give them their power, but it is the condition on which the Spirit of God renders them efficacious.

That good works are the certain effects of faith is included in the doctrine that we are sanctified by faith. For it is impossible that there should be inward holiness, love, spirituality, brotherly kindness, and zeal, without an external manifestation of these graces in the whole outward life. Faith, therefore, without works, is dead. We are saved by faith. But salvation includes deliverance from sin. If, therefore, our faith does not deliver us from sin, it does not save us. Antinomianism involves a contradiction in terms.

Certainty of Salvation.

A sixth effect attributed to faith in the Scriptures is security, or, certainty of salvation. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John iii. 16.) "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." (John v. 24.) "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever." (John vi. 51.) "All that

the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. . . . And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day." (John vi. 37, 40.) "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them. and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." (John x. 27, 28.)

The Eighth Chapter of Romans.

The whole of the eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans is designed to prove the certain salvation of all who believe. The proposition to be established is, that there is "no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." That is, they can never perish; they can never be so separated from Christ as to come into condemnation. The Apostle's first argument to establish that proposition, is, that believers are delivered from the law by the sacrifice of Christ. The believer, therefore, is not under the law which uondeinns, as Paul had before said (Rom. vi. 14), "Ye are not under the law, but under grace." But if not under the law he cannot be condemned. The law has had its course, and found full satisfaction in the work of Christ, who is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. He renders every one righteous, in the sight of the law, who believes on Him. This is the first reason which the Apostle gives why those who are in Christ shall never be condemned.

His second argnment is that they have already within them the principle of eternal life. That principle is the Spirit of God; "the life-giving" as He was designated by the ancient Church. To be carnally minded is death. To be spiritually minded is life and peace. Sin is

death; holiness is life. It is a contradiction to say that those in whom the Spirit of life dwells, should die. And, therefore, the Apostle says, Although the body dies, the soul lives. And if the Spirit of Him who raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken even your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. The indwelling of the Spirit, therefore, secures not only the life of the soul, but also the ultimate and glorious life of the body.

The third argument for the security of believers, is, that they are the sons of God. As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. That is, they are partakers of his nature, the special objects of his love, and entitled to the inheritance which He gives. If sons then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. According to the Apostle's mode of thinking, that any of the sons of God should perish, is impossible. If sons they shall certainly be saved.

The fourth argument is from the purpose of God. Those whom He has predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son, them He calls to the exercise of faith and repentance; and whom He thus calls He justifies, He provides for them and imputes to them a righteousness which satisfies the demands of the law, and which entitles them in Christ and for his sake to eternal life; and those whom He justifies He glorifies. There is no flaw in this chain. If men were predestinated to eternal life on the ground of their repenting and believing through their own strength, or through a cooperation with the grace of God which others fail to exercise, then their continuance in a state of grace might be dependent on themselves. But if faith and repentance are the gifts of God, the results of his effectual vocation, then bestowing those gifts is a revelation of the

purpose of God to save those to whom they are given. It is an evidence that God has predestinated them to be conformed to the image of his Son, i. e., to be like Him in character, destiny, and glory, and that He will infallibly carry out his purpose. No one can pluck them out of his hands.

Paul's fifth argument is from the love of God. As stated above,⁶⁵ the Apostle argues from the greatness, the freeness, and the immutability of that love that its objects never can be lost. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things." If He has done the greater, will He not do the less? If he gave even his own Son, will He not give us faith to receive and constancy to persevere even unto the end? A love so great as the love of God to his people cannot fail of its object. This love is also gratuitous. It is not founded on the attractiveness of its objects. He loved us "while we were yet sinners;" "when we were enemies." "Much more, then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." God's love in this aspect is compared to parental love. A mother does not love her child because it is lovely. Her love leads her to do all she can to render it attractive and to keep it so. So the love of God, being in like manner mysterious, unaccountable by anything in its objects, secures his adorning his children with the graces of his Spirit, and arraying them in all the beauty of holiness. It is only the lamentable mistake that God loves us for our goodness, that can lead any one to suppose that his love is dependent on our self-sustained attractiveness, when we should look to his fatherly love as the source of all goodness, and the ground of the assurance that He will not

allow Satan or our own evil hearts to destroy the lineaments of his likeness which He has impressed upon our souls. Having loved his own, He loves them to the end. And Christ prays for them that their faith may not fail.

It must be remembered that what the Apostle argues to prove is not merely the certainty of the salvation of those that believe but their certain perseverance in holiness. Salvation in sin, according to Paul's system, is a contradiction in terms. This perseverance in holiness is secured partly by the inward secret influence of the Spirit, and partly by all the means adapted to secure that end -- instructions, admonitions, exhortations, warnings, the means of grace, and the dispensations of his providence. Having, through love, determined on the end, He has determined on the means for its accomplishment.

The sixth argument of the Apostle is that, as the love of God is infinitely great and altogether gratuitous, it is also immutable, and, therefore, believers shall certainly be saved. Hence the conclusion, "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

It will be seen that the Apostle does not rest the perseverance of the saints on the indestructible nature of faith, or on the imperishable nature of the principle of grace in the heart, or on the constancy of the believer's will, but solely on what is out of ourselves. Perseverance, he teaches us, is due to the purpose of God, to the work of Christ, to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and to the primal

source of all, the infinite, mysterious, and immutable love of God. We do not keep ourselves; we are kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation. (1 Peter i. 5.)

Endnotes

- [1.](#) *De Praedestinatione Sanctorum* [II.], 5; *Works*, edit. Benedictines, Paris, 1838, vol. x. p. 1849 b.
- [2.](#) *On the Intellectual Powers*, Essay II. ch. xx.; *Works*, Edinburgh, 1849, pp. 237 b, 328 a, b.
- [3.](#) *Philosophy of Religion*.
- [4.](#) *Die einfachste Dogmatik*, Sec. 338; Tübingen, 1826, p. 376.
- [5.](#) *Biblical Psychology*, p. 174.
- [6.](#) *Vorlesungen über Glauben und Wissen*, von Johann Eduard Erdmann, Berlin, 1831, p. 30.
- [7.](#) *Letters on the Philosophy of the Human Mind*, London, 1855, pp. 75, 76.
- [8.](#) Meiklejohn's *Translation of Critic of Pure Reason*, London, 1855, p. 498.
- [9.](#) *Glauben und Wissen*, Berlin, 1837, p. 29.
- [10.](#) Reid's *Works*; edit. Edinburgh, 1849, note A, Sec. 5, p. 760.
- [11.](#) *Graecarum Affectionum Curatio*, sermo. i. edit. Commelinus, Heidelberg(?) 1592, p. 14, lines 11, 12.
- [12.](#) *Summa*, II. ii. quaest. ii. art. 9, edit. Cologne, 1640, p. 8 b, of third set.
- [13.](#) *Ibid.* quaest. i. art. 4, pp. 3 b, 4 a, of third set.
- [14.](#) *System der Christlichen Lehre*, Einl. II. A. Sec. 8. 3, 5th edit. Bonn, 1844, p. 18.
- [15.](#) *In Joannis Evangelium Tractatus*, XL. 9; *Works*, edit.

Benedictines, Paris, 1837, vol. iii. p. 2088 b.

[16.](#) *Liber Sententiarum*, III. xxiii. B., edit. 1472(?).

[17.](#) *Summa*, II. ii. quaest. ii. art. 4, edit. Cologne, 1636, pp. 6 b, 7 a, of third set.

[18.](#) McCosh, *Intuitions of the Mind*, part II. book ii. ch. 1, edit. New York, 1860, p. 197.

[19.](#) *Lectures on Metaphysics and Logic*, vol. i. "Metaphysics," lect. xii., edit. Boston, 1859, pp. 152, 153.

[20.](#) *Intuitions of the Mind*, p. 198.

[21.](#) *Dogmatik*, 3d edit. Leipzig, 1842, p. 307.

[22.](#) Sixth edit. Leipzig, 1845, p. 4.

[23.](#) *Dogmatik*, Sec. 20, edit. Tübingen and Stuttgart, 1840, vol. i. p. 282.

[24.](#) *Dogmatik*, edit. Tübingen and Stuttgart, 1840, vol. i. p. 298.

[25.](#) *Ibid.* p. 356.

[26.](#) Chapter i. Sec. 5.

[27.](#) See page 46.

[28.](#) *Summa*, II. ii. quaest. 1. art 1. Cologne, 1640, p. 2, a, of third set.

[29.](#) *Institutio*, XV. ix. 3, edit. Edinburgh, 1847, vol. ii. p. 497.

[30.](#) *Commentarius in Johannis Marckii Compendium*, cap. xxii. Sec. 4, Leyden, 1766, vol. iv. p. 299.

[31.](#) *Doctrine of Justification*, ch. i. edit. Philadelphia, 1841, p. 84.

[32.](#) *Works*, vol. ii. p. 885, Carter's edition, New York, 1869.

[33.](#) *Ibid.* p. 1170.

[34.](#) *An Exposition of the Creed*, 7th edit. London, 1701, p. 3.

[35.](#) *Theodicee, Works*, edit. Berlin, 1840, 1839, part ii. p. 479.

[36.](#) See above, p. 58.

[37.](#) *Systematische Entwicklung*, Sec. 29, 4th edit. Leipzig, 1841, p. 163.

[38.](#) *De Praescriptionibus adversus Haereticos*, cap. 7, 8, 14, *Works*, Paris, 1608, (t. iii.), p. 331: "Quid ergo Athenis et Hierosolymis? quid Academiae est, qui et ipse tradiderat: Dominum in simplicitate cordis esse quaerendum. Viderint qui Stoicum, et Platonium, et Dialecticum, Christianissimum protulerunt. Nobis curiositate opus non est post Christum Jesum, nec inquisitione post Evangelium. Cum credimus, nihil desideramus ultra credere. Hoc enim prius credimus, non esse quod ultra credere debeamus . . . Cedat curiositas fidei, cedat gloria saluti. Certe aut non obstrepant, aut quiescant adversus regulam. Nihil ultra scire, omnia scire est."

[39.](#) *De Carne Christi*, cap. 5, *Works*, (t. iii.), p. 555: "Natus est Dei filius: non pudet quia pudendum est. Et mortuus est Dei filius: prorsus credibile est, quia ineptum est. Et sepultus, resurrexit: certum est, quia impossibile est."

[40.](#) *Works*, edit. Walch, vol. xix. p. 1940.

[41.](#) *Ibid.* vol. xii. pp. 399, 400.

[42.](#) *Works*, edit. Walch, vol. x. p. 1399.

[43.](#) *Summa*, I. quest. xcix. art 1, edit. Cologne, 1640, p. 185, a.

[44.](#) *Ibid.* quaest. xxxii. art 1, p. 64, a.

[45.](#) *Ibid.* quaest. i. art 6, p. 2, b.

[46.](#) *Summa*, II. ii. quaest. ii. art. 5, edit. Cologne, 1640, p. 7, a, of third set.

[47.](#) *Hutterus Redivivus*, Sec. 108, 6th edit. Leipzig, 1845, p. 271.

[48.](#) *De Justificatione*, lib. i. cap. 7, *Disputationes*, edit. Paris, 1608, vol. iv. 714, a, c.

[49.](#) Strauss, *Dogmatik, Die Christliche Glaubenslehre*. Tübingen and Stuttgart, 1840, vol. i. p. 284.

[50.](#) *Sermons*, vol. i. p. 124.

[51.](#) *De Justificatione*, lib. i. cap. 4, *Disputationes*, edit. Paris, 1608,

vol. iv. p. 706, d, e.

[52.](#) Session vi., Canon 28; Streitwolf, *Libri Symbolici*, Gottingen, 1846, vol. i. p. 37.

[53.](#) *On Romans x. 10; Commentaries*, edit. Berlin, 1831, vol. v. p. 139.

[54.](#) *Institutio*, III. ii. 8; edit. Berlin, 1834, vol. o. p. 358.

[55.](#) Question 21.

[56.](#) *Liber Sententiarum*, III. xxiii. C. edit. 1472(?)

[57.](#) *Summa*, II. ii. quaest. iv. art. 3, edit. Cologne, 1640, p. 11, a, of third set.

[58.](#) *De Justificatione*, lib. ii. cap. 4; *Disputationes*, edit. Paris, 1608, vol. iv. pp. 789, a, b, 790, c.

[59.](#) *De Sacram.* lib. ii. c. 2. (?)

[60.](#) *Institutio*, XV. xii. 6; *Works*, edit. Edinburgh, 1847, vol. ii. p. 508.

[61.](#) XXI.; Niemeyer, *Collectio Confessionum*, Leipzig, 1840, p. 434.

[62.](#) V. 60; Hase, *Libri Symbolici*, Leipzig, 1846, p. 172.

[63.](#) *Institutio*, lib. III. ii. 7, 16; edit. Berlin, 1834, vol. i. pp. 357, 364.

[64.](#) Calvin *in loco*.

[65.](#) Page 107.
