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I. BERKELEY'S IDEALISM.

A splendid edition of Bishop Berkeley's works was issued, in 1871, by Professor Alexander Campbell Fraser, the incumbent of the Chair of Logic and Metaphysics in the University of Edinburgh—the chair once illuminated by the genius of the illustrious Sir William Hamilton. The elaborate dissertations in which the accomplished Editor expounds the Bishop's idealistic system, and the fact that they have emanated from one who has succeeded the great exponent and defender of Natural Realism, have had the effect of calling attention afresh to the principles of Berkeley's philosophy. In proceeding to discuss them we deem it important to furnish a brief preliminary statement of the main features of Berkeley's system :

1. The Denial of Abstract Ideas.
2. The Denial of the Existence of Matter as Substance. There is no such thing as material substance.
3. The Denial of even the Phenomenal Existence of Matter, separate from and independent of spirit: denial of Natural Realism. Material things have no reality in themselves. Whatever reality or *casuality* material things possess, is dependent and relative.
4. *Esse est percipi*: the so-called material world depends for existence upon the perception of spirit. A thing exists only as it is sensibly perceived.

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#### IV. THE GROUND OF CERTITUDE IN RELIGIOUS BELIEF.

The comparison often instituted between the External and Internal Evidences of Christianity, as to their relative value, would seem to be an impertinence, when it is remembered that they are co-ordinates of one and the same argument. Two parties, for example, range themselves respectively in defence of the *apriori* and the *aposteriori* demonstration of the being of God ; each undervaluing, if not exactly denying, the validity of the reasoning upon the other side ; while in point of fact they are both "members one of another," and as strictly complementary as the ascending and descending curves of a single arch. These two branches of evidence can never be fairly disjoined, simply because they distinctly involve and support each other. It is inconceivable that miracles should be wrought, or that prophecies should be uttered, to attest a system which carries within itself no traces of its divine origin. On the other hand, a system whose lineaments are clearly supernatural cannot but be heralded to the world by credentials which shall challenge attention with superb authority.

There is, however, a distinction between the two, which possibly grounds the comparison in which they are so often weighed. The External Evidences, as the term indicates, break into the mind from without ; are therefore more obtrusive, and carry their whole weight of proof at once to those who are roused to consider them at all. Their significance is more easily apprehended, as they require no special culture of the affections to be appreciated. The Internal Evidences, on the other hand, are drawn from the genius of the system itself, and demand a measure of sympathy with the truths communicated. The evidence, is not, as before, like that of light falling upon the eye, which needs only to be opened in order to perceive. It is rather like that of heat, which can be felt only where a corresponding sensibility exists. In the one, the demonstration is *seen* ; in the other case, it is *felt*. In the one, the landscape is lighted up to the eye ; in the other, its beauty is disclosed to the sensibility and the taste.

Strictly co-ordinated as the light and the heat, they are like these communicated to us by different rays. The External Evidences authenticate Christianity viewed as a whole, and sweep away every cavil and doubt in the overwhelming presumption of its truth. The Internal Evidences verify this conclusion by a detailed examination of its parts, and rivet the conviction through the combined impressions which have been made singly by each. It follows, of course, that this line of proof is almost infinitely various. It is in fact kaleidoscopic: the same principles and facts, like so many colored stones, falling into new and changing combinations before the mind.

It will be the object of this paper to present one of these diversified proofs in the fact that CHRISTIANITY IS THE ONLY SYSTEM WHICH, DEPENDING WHOLLY UPON MORAL EVIDENCE, UNDERTAKES TO CONDUCT ITS ADVOCATES TO UNQUALIFIED CERTAINTY OF ITS TRUTH. Moral or probable reasoning, as it is variously termed, does not in its philosophic sense stand opposed to *certainty*, as though it were inferior in degree—but only to *demonstration*, from which it differs in kind. Its peculiarity is that it deals not with *necessary* truth, or the truth which must be at all times; but with *contingent* truth, that is with facts which exist as they are, but which might have been disposed differently by the Ruler of the Universe. It is plain that this is the species of evidence upon which we depend in the common affairs of life, upon which history is written, and by which the natural sciences are established. Upon it far the greater part of our knowledge and of our duty must rest. It is the only method under which character could be built up, or a moral system be conducted. It differs from demonstration, in that it admits of degrees from the lowest probability to the highest certainty: and our conviction is strong or weak according to the amount of evidence, after sifting and weighing the facts, which we accumulate in this scale or that.

Here, then, is Christianity, from its very nature, moving upon a plane of evidence which is not necessarily exclusive of doubt; yet producing, in all who surrender themselves to its influence, an unwavering assurance of its truth. What increases

the wonder, it works this conviction in all the faculties alike, and at every point where it touches the interests of the human soul. This, too, notwithstanding the immense range of its disclosures; stretching far beyond the limits of the human reason into the region of the Infinite and the Eternal; bringing the high mysteries of a supernatural world and lodging them as articles of faith and knowledge in the experience of the humblest saint, whose privilege it is to be taught of God as the truth is in Jesus. These are immense propositions. If they can be sustained, we find ourselves in a temple whose splendid dome is supported by pillars of beauty and strength grander than the Jachin and Boaz of Solomon's porch; and filled with a glory shining above the brightness of a thousand suns, from the self-illuminated pages of the inspired word.

The Scriptures speak of a three-fold Assurance: of *understanding*, of *faith*, and of *hope*. These may be thus distinguished: the *assurance of understanding* being the full conviction that we clearly perceive the meaning of Holy Scripture, and that we rightly interpret the principles of Grace as revealed therein; the *assurance of faith* being the firm persuasion of the reality and truth of all the Scriptures make known, embracing it with the heart, and acting upon it as each particular truth may require; *assurance of hope* being the well-grounded conviction that we are personally accepted before God, and shall never come into condemnation. The articulate discussion of each of these three topics, would show how this certainty is wrought within all the faculties of the soul; reciprocally strengthening each other, as the separate strands are wound together into the strength of the rope. The limits of a single article will not allow so wide a range. It will be necessary, therefore, to combine them, as far as possible, in one comprehensive view.

Let us, then, in the outset, note the emphasis with which the Apostle affirms the certainty of Christian knowledge and faith. In Colossians 2: 2, he pours out his prayer for all who had not seen his face in the flesh, "that their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding." There is no caution in his step, as

though doubtful of the ground upon which he treads; no hesitation in his tone, as though uncertain of the truth which he announces. On the contrary, the emphasis rings with the blast of a clarion in a four-fold intensification of language. After his gigantic fashion, he piles together his massive words, which, like separate beams, undergird the weakness of human speech and render it capable of sustaining the burden of his thought. These Colossians may not only have *understanding* of the truth, but the ASSURANCE of understanding also; and beyond this, the FULNESS of that assurance and then the RICHES of that fulness: until, rising to the fifth degree of his emphasis, he adds the ENTIRENESS of these riches themselves. Such is the majesty of this Apostolic prayer, ascending the stairway of a splendid climax, that Christians may possess *all* the WEALTH of the FULNESS of ASSURANCE of UNDERSTANDING. This is far from being the only passage of Scripture which affirms the certainty of Christian knowledge. Let us blend into a constellation a few of these blessed testimonies, beginning with that of our Lord: "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou has sent." (John 17: 3). So, too, that of the Apostle: "For 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. 4: 6). Well may he embody the same testimony in his prayer for the Ephesians (1: 17, 18): "that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him; the eyes of your understanding being enlightened," etc. And again, in his prayer for the saints at Colosse, (1: 9): "that they might be filled with the knowledges of His will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding." Finally, the beloved Mystic speaks from the depths of his own consciousness: "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may know Him that is true; and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son, Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life." (1 John 5: 20).

If in any case this grand result be not attained, the cause of

failure is not ambiguously exposed. "If any man will do his will," says the Master, "he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." (John 7 : 17). So the Apostle : "Neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." (1 Cor. 2 : 14). Christ says to Peter : "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." (Mat. 16 : 17). And again in his parting counsels to his disciples : "When He the Spirit of truth is come, He will guide you into all truth." (John 16 : 13). If from want of grace in the heart we are not in full accord with the system of grace, how shall we perfectly understand its nature? If the unsanctified reason will repose upon the deductions of logic rather than upon the demonstration of the Spirit, what basis of conviction remains but the value of the syllogism? If the reliance be upon "flesh and blood" for what the Father alone can reveal, where is the spiritual discernment upon which this certainty of knowledge rests? We have unwittingly changed the ground upon which this holy privilege is established; and fail of assurance, simply because "the eyes of the understanding" have not been "enlightened" through "the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of God." When it is remembered that this "assurance of understanding" is not only a spiritual gift, but a spiritual grace wrought in the soul, it will be seen that a complete surrender to the influence of the Gospel becomes the condition upon which this certainty of conviction shall be enjoyed.

What then does the apostle mean by this "assurance of understanding," and within what limitations must the phrase be restrained? Evidently he does not imply that reason is competent to measure all "the deep things of God;" for in the very next line, and in continuation of his thought, he speaks of the mystery that must be acknowledged, "the mystery of God and of the Father and of Christ." Nor again is it of every kind of assurance that he speaks; but an assurance of the thinking, reasoning faculty in man, the intellect through which he perceives and is convinced of truth. The "full assurance of understanding," then, is THE FIXED PERSUASION THAT WE HAVE GOD'S

MIND IN THE WORD, AND THAT WE RIGHTLY UNDERSTAND IT. The clear apprehension of truth by no means involves its full comprehension. We may touch that which we may not be able to embrace: and the one is as truly a ground of certainty as the other. Like the "stupendous mount" of Coleridge's hymn, whose "sunless pillars sank deep in earth" and whose "breast was veiled in the depth of clouds," the awful mysteries of Revelation may still be known as the mount itself was known. We may lie upon the bosom of the one, as upon the grey breast of the other; and know them both with a certainty, which is not disturbed by the darkness which hides the base and peak alike from sight.

The great question now presses, *what principles determine "the assurance of understanding" and render it possible to the Christian?*

1. We answer that DIVINE TRUTH IS RECEIVED SIMPLY AND ALONE UPON DIVINE TESTIMONY. It cannot be doubted that reliance on testimony is an elementary principle of our nature. It is seen in the credulity of childhood, which opens its faith to all that is communicated; withholding no part of its confidence, until later experience of error and falsehood imposes a necessary caution and reserve. Even when this restraint has been imposed, the natural tendency is to accept without suspicion every statement which is not in itself violently improbable, or where no reason appears for distrusting the veracity of the witness. It must needs be so. God having designed man to exist in society, there would be no cohesion of its parts without confidence in the veracity, one of another. All the transactions of business repose upon obligations and promises, which derive their value from faith in the integrity and truthfulness of those by whom they were given. The whole administration of justice is estopped, and society is left without protection, if facts cannot be established through the depositions of a credible witness. So limited, moreover, is the range of individual observation and experience, that there can be no generalized knowledge without the confluence of many experiences flowing through the channel of a common testimony. In short, all progress is locked, and

fellowship is barred, if the evidence of even human testimony is excluded as worthless.

Provision, therefore, is made for certainty of conviction in regard to Divine truth, in this principle which compels repose upon unimpeachable testimony; for the reason, that Divine truth is not offered to acceptance except upon Divine testimony. There are many propositions in the Bible, no doubt, so level to the natural understanding as to receive a ready assent without the need of any affirmative evidence. Let it be noted, however, even in regard to these, that a true faith grounds not upon the intrinsic probability of the case, but upon the Divine verity which guarantees the statement. Just here lurks the fatal crevice, through which the desired assurance leaks out of the heart that is left in darkness. There is always danger that our conviction will rest upon the suitability of the proposition to our natural apprehension, rather than upon the authority of a revelation. The certainty which seemed sufficient in the lower sphere, fails entirely in the sphere of supernatural truth. It fails, because it rests upon a faith that is human and not Divine—which is built upon the authority of reason, and not upon the competency of testimony. For be it remembered, Divine faith wrought in the soul by the Holy Spirit accepts the plainest truths precisely as the most difficult, upon a “thus saith the Lord.”

The principle is now in hand, which lifts us over the paradox of claiming to understand that which is in itself incomprehensible. It will not prejudice our case to admit that the staple truths of the Bible are mysteries which transcend the measure of human thought, mysteries solemn and vast as the Divine World from whose bosom they are drawn. Consider, for example, the Eternity and Omnipresence of God; what finite conception goes beyond the mere negative removal from Him of those limitations of time and space which so obstruct our own being? But who grasps all the positive elements which enter into them, as known to God Himself? There is, again, the adorable trinity in unity of the Godhead; what angel of the upper world can lift the veil which covers the mysterious mode of the Divine subsistence?

There is also the truth of the Incarnation, so pleaded for by all the instincts of a created nature that it is postulated in every religion upon the earth. Yet who can trace the seam at which the two natures are brought together in the unity of an individual person? We refer only to the mysteries which are undisputed and which no finite reason has attempted to fathom. How then, it may be asked, can such a system of transcendental truths claim to be understood at all, much less with the assurance that it is rightly understood? The answer is, because it depends alone upon the testimony of one whose infinite knowledge renders Him competent to make the revelation. I have never been to Rome; you have, and your declaration is sufficient evidence to me that such a place exists. So, reason's short line may not take the soundings of God's infinitude, and her dim sight may not explore the recesses of His immensity; yet if He throw the covering from His throne in a revelation of His own purposes and thoughts, the solemn secrets are known to me as things that are, though never measured in their boundless extension or in the exhaustion of their mighty issues. The Divine origin of Christianity is conspicuously shown, in that all its truths rest upon the same plane of evidence. The deepest mystery is received with the same unhesitating assurance with the plainest fact of history, or the simplest principle in ethics, for the obvious reason, that everything is alike told to us, and the veracity of the witness is the guarantee of our faith. All opposition of the heart being removed by Divine grace, the Christian is perfectly willing to accept the Divine testimony. He only needs to know that his grammatical construction of the record is correct, to be fully persuaded of the truth which is revealed. As all its statements rest upon the same authority, he has no more difficulty in accepting the inexplicable than the demonstrable.

If, then, the Divine testimony be the *objective* ground of certainty, there must be a corresponding *subjective* ground in the actualizing power of faith, making real to us the spiritual world. Our contact with matter is close through the five senses by which it continually obtrudes itself. Yet there are pauses in life when the soul retires within its own chambers, to learn that it belongs

to a sphere that is not material. Often in the silence of night, as in the pause of some grand music, the soul hears "a still small voice" from beyond the stars pleading for that which is not "of the earth, earthy." Now, if God give us five senses to recognize the world of matter, shall there be no power by which to discover the world of spirit? Observe that our bodily senses not only convey impressions from without, but they verify as real the objects which make them; as when, against all the whimsies of the Idealist, the sight of a tree is accompanied with the fixed belief of its substantive existence. Hence Isaac Taylor calls the body an organ of the soul; and the senses he terms open paths, by which the soul goes forth and takes possession of a world foreign to itself. In the intellectual sphere, also, the same provision is made for certainty of conviction. Our logic, if the links but hold together, will conduct to conclusions as certain as any that are yielded through the senses. Arguing, then, from analogy, there should be a certifying power in faith ensuring the same satisfaction and repose in the spiritual sphere, which sense-perception ensures in the material, and demonstration in the intellectual.

We do not, however, rest upon the presumption created by this analogy. The truths of Christianity must be verified as the foundation of duty and worship. They must be *certainties*, not mere *probabilities*. Reason cannot make them such, for they are out of its reach. Even if it could, the process would be too slow. They must antedate reason, and furnish that on which she may proceed in her deductions. The principles of duty cannot be settled in the stir and strife of actual temptation, when they should be at hand and ready for use. How then shall these be certified to the Christian, unless there be in faith an apprehensive power by which they are seized and verified? This is that actual power, which the Apostle emphasizes as characteristic of true faith. In Hebrews 11:1, it is described as the "substance of things hoped for." But hope respects the future (Romans 8:24, 25) made up of expectation and desires as its constituents. There must then be in hope an underlying conviction of some good not yet in possession, though actually

existing. This realization is by faith; which is thus the substance, the actualization of what is future. Again, it is "the evidence of things not seen:" that is, by a spiritual apprehension of these through the testimony of God, there is an actual seizure of them in their felt reality. How they are demonstrated, we may not in all respects comprehend: but a conviction of their truth is produced by a faith Divinely implanted, which tests and embraces them all.

These observations have almost anticipated the second ground of certitude in Christian belief:

2. There are SPIRITUAL INSTINCTS IN MAN TO WHICH THE GOSPEL DIRECTLY APPEALS, AND THROUGH WHICH ITS CLAIMS ARE BOTH RECEIVED AND VERIFIED. Just as the axioms in Mathematics are the wheels upon which the demonstration proceeds—just as there are primary beliefs from which all discursive reasoning takes its departure, and to which it recurs for verification—so there are principles in the moral constitution to which Divine truth is congenial. There must be a nexus between the object and the subject, a ring-bolt by which the *without* may be fastened to the *within*. If a revelation be given, what can it avail without the points in man himself to which it can be attached? And if man's true glory lies in the Divine image in which he was created, there must be voices in the soul responding to the Divine Original speaking through the word. Eight and twenty years ago when the building in which the writer has so long been permitted to minister, was nearly finished, a crowd was assembled in the open square opposite to witness a triumph of Mechanical Science in lifting the lofty spire to its place upon the tower of which it was intended to be the crown. For convenience it had been built upon the ground, completely hid within the tower it was hereafter to surmount. It was curious to see its tapering point, as it emerged above its prison walls; rising with a slow but steady movement towards the bright sky, until its huge bulk swung free in air one hundred and fifteen feet from the ground beneath; then poising for a little, like a bird upon the wing, it settled with an easy motion downward, the strong protruding beams falling into great iron

sockets within the tower,—in whose giant clasp it has been held from that day to this, swinging in the breeze higher than the tall pine of the forest. Will the reader spare us the illustration, if we now put forth the hand to find the sockets in man's moral structure, in which the massive truths of Divine Revelation secure their lodgment forever?

(1). For example : how are we to explain *the universal conviction that there is a God* ; not dislodged from its seat in the bosom of the professed Atheist himself? Incredible as it might at first sight appear, there is not in the whole compass of Revelation a formal affirmation of this pre-existent and ultimate truth, which forms the bed-rock on which all religion, natural and revealed, is founded. Can the strange omission be accounted for, if there were not some provision in man's nature to receive and retain a truth which is nevertheless folded within the implications of Scripture language throughout? How, then, does the knowledge come? Is it innate, born within us, when we ourselves are born? woven into the texture of the soul, as the bright threads form the pattern upon the canvas? On the contrary, no formulated truth of any kind lies originally in the mind as a part of its necessary furniture. There are capacities, indeed, for the receiving of truth ; faculties wonderfully sensitive to its approach ; but knowledge comes only from contact of these with the external truths which wake them into action. Does it come, then, by intuition—the mind having an immediate apprehension of God, similar to the perception of natural objects through the organs of sense? There can be no such outlook upon Him of whom it is written, “No man hath seen God at any time ; the only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him.” (John 1 : 13). Does the knowledge come finally through demonstration of the reason? It is a sufficient answer that no line of argument adds a particle to our antecedent conviction of this truth, or serves any other purpose than to vindicate it as a truth already known at the bar of human reason, and to paralyze any assault upon it as a great faith in the soul. The solution is to be sought in that religious nature wherein man's true likeness to God consists, and to which the

fact of the Divine existence presents itself with a self-evidencing power. The truth is no sooner proclaimed than it awakes its own echo in the soul, like the voice returning from the hills. In the one case we find in the configuration of the landscape that which rolls back the wave of sound; in the other, it is the congeniality of the spiritual nature which responds to the call addressed to it by "the Father of Spirits." Or, to vary the figure, the soul of man is like a mirror which reflects the August Being who stands before it. The thought which is awakened in the one, like the image upon the surface of the other, is the shadow which the truth has cast from the reality of its own substance. The naturalness of this truth to the human soul, renders the conviction both universal and ineradicable. Wherever man is found, he is susceptible of religious ideas; which are definitely formed and expressed, just in proportion as mind itself has been developed. The universal acceptance of the doctrine of a God is simply the instinctive response of man's spirit to the truth as soon as it is presented. Hence, too, the ludicrous imbecility of Atheism in attempting to expunge the idea of God from human thought. It must use the idea, in order to argue against it; which only needs bare presentation to authenticate itself. Every line of the discussion, therefore, like each stroke of the hammer, only chisels deeper the immortal inscription upon the tablet of memory.

(2.) Let us find another of these sockets, in *the indestructible persuasion of God's conversableness with His creatures*. You can build up a presumption against it which shall seem impregnable as another Gibraltar. It is easy to ask whether an Infinite Spirit, whose mode of being and every attribute transcend the limit of human reason, will or can condescend to creatures who in the comparison are less than the mites of the Microscope? Add to this the distance which widens ever between the holiness that consumes in its brightness and the impurity which defiles a sinner, and we stand appalled at the estrangement which would seem to be final. Yet with all the sense of littleness as contrasted with the immensity of God, with all the shame of guilt that cowers beneath the wrath and scorn of the Lawgiver, there

remains beneath it all, as a live coal hidden in the embers, a sustaining conviction that even this God will be found accessible to those who seek Him. It is an amazing paradox, this faith of the race in the most improbable suggestion which could be offered to the naked reason. But in the midst of our surprise let it be remembered that through this instinctive persuasion of God's conversableness the great truths of a Divine Revelation and Incarnation find their lodgment in the human soul. It is here, and here alone, that the one doctrine and the other are mortised into the belief of the race.

(3.) What shall be said further of *the decision of conscience, the soul that sinneth shall die?* Men of quick sensibility, like John Foster, shudder at a destiny too fearful for them to contemplate without a half-denial: and others less scrupulous, in the frenzy of their affright, seek to wrench themselves out of the grasp of a doctrine which binds them over to a doom so terrific. Yet, by a strange fascination, the faith of mankind has been held to the necessity of the just punishment<sup>e</sup> of the wicked hereafter. To what is it due, but to that sense of justice in the soul of man which answers to the justice that dwells in God? Aside from this, there would be no operation of conscience fastening upon the transgressor the conviction of ill-desert and blame, and responding to the supremacy of law as vindicated in the penalty.

(4.) Will these specifications suffice, or shall they be confirmed by the addition of a fourth? What shall we say then of the *sweet and invincible persuasion of the Divine mercy and love?* Reference has been made to the dictum of conscience which responds to the authority of law as enforced by the penalty, and would seem to fill with despair the sinner who is convicted of guilt. And so it would, but that side by side with the clear view of God's holiness before which angels stand veiled in adoring awe,—side by side with the sense of guilt which lies upon the conscience of the sinner "a vast oppressive load,"—there runs parallel with both an ineradicable conviction that this just and holy God may be propitiated. Even when not embodied in a formal proposition, it exists as a sentiment in the heart, sustaining the sinner from the collapse of despair. It looks like a won-

derful contradiction, until we push deep enough into what is fundamental in man's religious nature. There is another side of the Divine character, besides that of holiness, justice and power. He is crowned also with the attribute of mercy and grace. If He has fashioned us after His own likeness, He must have put the stamp of His own image of love, by which He provides for the soul's spontaneous recognition of the Father as well as the Judge. It is this conviction which lies at the root of all our ideas of atonement and sacrifice, redemption and forgiveness. In this is laid the basis for the recognition of a Mediator, as before for the recognition of a God. When Jehovah stands before the soul in the reality of His being, it responds by pronouncing the name of its God; when the Mediator stands before the soul burdened with guilt, it responds by pronouncing the name of its Redeemer. The same subjective ground exists in the nature of man, as a creature and as a sinner, for the recognition of both—just so soon as, in a full-orbed revelation, Jehovah is disclosed in the complement of all His attributes and relations.

3. It is time, however, to rise to a higher plane, in that THE MOST DIFFICULT TRUTHS OF THE BIBLE ARE SO TAKEN UP INTO CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE, AS TO RECEIVE THE MOST PRACTICAL AND SUBSTANTIVE VERIFICATION. This will be made clear by illustrations drawn from the knowledge of every child of God.

(1.) We have seen that when the conscience aroused by the denunciations of the law binds the sinner under a sense of guilt, it is through this conviction the doctrine of Redemption finds entrance with its proposed relief; for "they that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." But observe the long train of other truths which must enter with this—truths, at first sight, the most abstract and the most transcendental; yet absorbed into Christian experience, as the most healing in their practical application and influence. If there is a Redemption, there must first be a Redeemer. He, as Mediator between two estranged parties, must be the equal, and be partaker of the nature, of both. Thus we are lifted at once to those strange heights, the distinction of Persons in the God-head, and the incarnation of the Only-Begotten of the Father. Then follow

by necessary implication the Covenant between the Persons of the Trinity, the distribution of offices between them in the same, the substitution of Christ under the law for His people, His expiatory suffering and death, His vicarious obedience, the imputation of His righteousness, and through it the complete justification of the believer before God. Here is a cluster of doctrines, interlacing and inter-dependent, a solar system of truths revolving around a common centre. They come before us, not as speculative abstractions; but as potential factors of a practical scheme, through which we are to be saved from eternal death. The soul, in the agony of despair, cries out for a Redeemer; who, when He comes, implicates in His person and work the deepest and darkest of all the mysteries of Revelation; and imports every one of them into the experience, as the most vital and efficient of all practical truths. I may not comprehend any one of these enumerated doctrines, in their intrinsic glory and manifold ramifications; but I may know them as substantive facts entering into the matter of my personal salvation, and verified to me in the unfoldings of my own experience.

(2.) So it is in the actings of faith and repentance, and in the delicious peace which settles upon the troubled thoughts through a sense of pardon sealed upon the conscience. Will any say that the Christian has not the knowledge of all this, from the testimony of his own experience? But see how it involves the entire office-work of the Holy Spirit, the surpassing mystery of the new birth, and all that pertains to the spiritual conflict and progressive sanctification of the believer. The whole discipline of grace, with its blessed effect in mellowing the character and life, draws into it and along with it the most insoluble of problems—how spirit is able to act directly upon spirit—how it shall act upon free spirit with an invincible efficacy, and yet not disturb the spontaneity of its action nor blunt the edge of its responsibility; but like the spirit within the wheels of Ezekiel's vision, animating and directing, without impeding their movement. I cannot know the Holy Ghost in the awful communion of the Godhead, nor of the deep secrecy with which He dispenses the Divine life and the Divine

power to the children of men; but I may know Him in the spiritual life which He has given me, and in the holy calm which, as the Comforter, He diffuses through the soul.

(3.) In the use of prayer we ascend the mount of worship, and learn the secret of communion with the Most High. Who can solve the mystery, even of human intercourse, when, through conventional symbols, one pours the whole contents of his being into the bosom of another? But here is intercourse without the intervention of sign or sound; the creature kneeling before his God in the silence of thought, or in the sultry stillness of unutterable emotion, whilst the eye of the Omniscient rests upon the secret movement of the soul itself. Where is the Christian who, in the office of prayer, does not go up into the cloud, as Moses did, and talk face to face with the thunder? "Shall we, who are but dust and ashes, take upon us to speak to the Lord?" Yea, verily; and He will answer back to us, "as a man speaketh with his friend." Thus, in the daily acts of the daily Christian life, the electric circuit is complete, and there are flashes of light between heaven and earth. All that is incomprehensible in the communion of soul with the Infinite Spirit, is taken up and verified in the experience of the most unlettered saint who, under a sense of his adoption, is able to say, "our Father who art in Heaven."

(4.) Once more: "How much of the inscrutable is taken up in the Christian grace of Hope? "We are saved by hope," saith the Apostle; "but hope that is seen is not hope; for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?" What, then, are the unseen things which hope anticipates through the prophetic power of that faith of which it is born? What, but the triumph of the soul over death, the resurrection of the body, and "the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory?" Mystery upon mystery; mysteries dark as the grave from which its victim is delivered; mysteries bright as the joy of angels, and stretching through the eternity of ages; mysteries bursting away from the comprehension of reason, yet implicitly contained, as the oak within the acorn, in the experience of the humblest saint who can say "I know whom I have believed." Thus does the Christian swing around the whole circle of revealed

truth, each doctrine fitting into his experience, as the key into the wards of a lock. The verification of the highest mysteries of faith is complete, through the sympathy with which they are embraced, and become the mould into which the whole Christian life and character are fashioned.

It should not be overlooked that the faith which embraces and assimilates this system of truth, is the expression of every faculty alike. Every power of the human soul is brought into play. The mind is employed in understanding the propositions of the Bible, and knowing the method of grace in restoring men to the favour of God. The affections are drawn out to the Lord Jesus as "the chiefest among ten thousand." The will, through its volitions, must render into act the decisions of the judgment and the reason. Even the imagination must present the Gospel in the vividness of its reality; and the moral taste must appreciate the "beauty of holiness," which is so large an element in our sanctification. It is scarcely necessary to point out the bearing of all this upon the certitude of faith. The concurrence of these different powers gives cumulative force to the conviction reached. The aberrations in one will be corrected in the others, affording safeguards against the possibility of error in the final result. We have thus the verification which is claimed in science, under every variety of test and especially of experience.

4. This assurance of understanding has its final support in THE DIRECT INFLUENCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, ILLUMINATING THE TRUTH HE HAS INSPIRED. It is unnecessary in this connection to discuss the doctrine of Inspiration, or to go beyond the simple fact that "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." In the free use of their own faculties, they were so quickened and guided by this Divine Agent as rightly to apprehend and safely to communicate Divine truth. Correlative with this is the other office of the Holy Ghost, in illuminating the minds of those to whom this truth is to be a saving efficacy. The word is not the Divine word, except as it is given by the Divine Spirit: it is not read in a Divine light, except it be opened to the understanding by a Divine exposition. This illumination is distinctly promised by Christ,

to His disciples: "but the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you." (John 14 : 26). The promise is repeated in language slightly different: "when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth; for He shall not speak of Himself: but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak; and He will show you things to come. He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you." (John 16 : 13, 14).

There are seasons with us all when a cloud settles upon the mind, as when night draws its pall of darkness over the earth. We open the Scriptures, but the Oracle is dumb. Its words are cold and unsuggestive, and reason fails to break the shell in which the Divine comfort is hidden. Again, this shell parts asunder apparently of itself, and our "souls are satisfied as with marrow and fatness." This alternation of light and darkness in the soul of the believer, like the day and night in nature, is due to the same cause, the appearance and withdrawal of the irradiating sun. The logical propositions may be understood well enough by the natural understanding through a light, so to speak, *outside* of the word; but we want a light *within* the word, which shall reveal the import and blessing it has for us. It may be likened to those skeleton signs in the streets of our cities, made up of innumerable points vague and unimpressive in the diffused glare of day; but when lighted at night by a jet of gas, the name written in fire blazes into the darkness with the splendor of a distant star. And so the Holy Ghost dwelling within us quickens every faculty and brings to a clear insight of the truths, as He lights up before us the word in which it is deposited.

These then are principles upon which rests that assurance of understanding, which the Scriptures declare to be the privilege of every Christian. Let them be massed together in a sentence, that they may be seen in their combined strength. First, we have the unimpeachable testimony of Jehovah himself; over against which there is the actualizing power of faith, making real to us all that is revealed. Second, there are the moral

instincts of our nature, to which the truth directly appeals, and in which it finds a secure lodgment. Third, these truths, even the most abstract and difficult, are taken up and verified in Christian experience, subjecting them to a practical test. Fourth, the Holy Spirit dwells in the believer, for the declared purpose of "guiding him into all truth." His illuminating work stands over against His work of Inspiration, as its necessary complement and correlative. All these converging to a common end, bring to an assurance which can never be shaken by the combined assault of earth and hell. The argument is complete in itself; but when coupled with the assurance of Faith and of Hope, it becomes a three-fold cord not easily broken. The certainty of conviction is seen to be borne not only to the understanding to perceive truth, but to the heart to embrace it, and to the will to practise it; in short, to all those qualities of man's nature which cause him to live by anticipation in the future, as well as memory in by the past.

The object of this discussion is not simply apologetic, but chiefly experimental. There is probably no topic of practical religion involved in so much obscurity, as this grace of assurance. Singular confusion of mind exists from not distinguishing the kinds of assurance, and failing to recognize the principles upon which they are grounded. Thus the comfort of believers is often marred, and one of the most powerful incentives to personal holiness is weakened. It will be helpful to many, if the mist and haze surrounding this entire subject could be dispelled—if with the beloved John we could be brought to feel; that God "has given us an understanding that we may know Him that is true," and beyond this, "that we are in Him that is true." As one of the internal evidences of Christianity, it gives an immense advantage to go before the world with a bold challenge to compare this wonderful certainty of supernatural truth with the cloudiness of doubt enveloping all the systems of Ethics and Religion which depend upon human reason alone. How much like a wail of despair is the confession of Cicero, that while reading the arguments of Plato for the immortality of the soul, he seemed to be

convinced; but as soon as he laid down the book, they slipped from his grasp and vanished into air? Yet what conviction needs more to be rooted within us, than this which underlies all worship and obedience to God, and all hope of enjoying the presence of His glory? To serve the purpose of religion, it must cease to be a probability resting on the shifting sands of finite speculation, and become an ascertained reality to us through a Divine revelation. Yet this is but one of many topics upon which certainty is brought to the soul by the Inspired Word.

We live in an age when freedom of inquiry is scarcely free from the insolence of trampling with scorn upon the faiths of the past, and construing their age into a presumption of error and superstition. It is necessary then to go down to the bottom facts of Christianity, as they rest in the ineradicable instincts of a spiritual nature—those internal evidences which come up from the depths of the system, and with its own voice proclaim it to be Divine and true. Our Christian beliefs will then be like the everlasting mountains, which seem to grow from the central granite of the earth itself. Their foundation will be laid in a Divine testimony mortised into the deepest necessities of the soul itself; and the structure which rises from that base will be as enduring as the nature from which it springs.

B. M. PALMER.

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## V. CREATION AS A DOCTRINE OF SCIENCE.

Until very recently the theory of Creation has been generally accepted by thoughtful men as giving the only credible account of the origin of our Cosmos, *i. e.* "Our world in all its beautiful order." This general acceptance of the theory is owing, largely, to the fact that it has been believed to be taught in the Scriptures, regarded by most as given by inspiration of God,—and by such as rejected this idea—as embodying the oldest and most authentic traditions of our race. Its general acceptance, however, has not been altogether for this reason. In part, it is owing,