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ART. III.—AUTHORITY IN MATTERS OF FAITH.

IN the theological and religious sphere, few questions are of greater importance than the question of authority in matters of faith. This primary basis is the starting-point of everything connected with faith, of everything which is of interest to Christian life. It is not surprising, therefore, that the subject should from the earliest time down to the present have impassioned those who have grasped its importance, and that it should have been by that fact the battle-field of philosophers as well as of Churchmen.

The arguments raised in former time by this polemic were dogmas decreed by oecumenical gatherings, or proofs taken from the Scriptures and considered infallible. Now, thanks to the progress made by critical and historical science, thanks to a more human psychology, and also to a greater feeling of responsibility, we have reached the point which enables us to establish quite differently, and more rationally, what should constitute the basis of faith. We no longer believe because we are told to believe, but because we have experienced the object of our faith. We no longer accept the convictions which are forced upon us; we consent to them only when we have tried their intrinsic value with regard to our religious faith. It is the nature of this experiment that we purpose to examine in this paper.

In starting from the point of moral consciousness which unveils the action of a Supreme Being on His creatures, we shall ascertain the fact that by means of successive revelations, this inner organ being transformed into religious consciousness, continues more and more to grasp the essence and the plans of Divinity, until it is perfectly enlightened by the personal revelation of Jesus Christ. We shall then see that the perfect knowledge of God is founded by Christ, and that His work in humanity has created a new faith. We shall have attained our aim if, in drawing the modern believer away from the accessory sources of Christian faith, and bringing him to the one source of life, we enable him to share the certitude that no faith can be quite firm until it has been tested by experiment, and unless we have but one last authority concerning faith—that of Christ's Person.

"A religious conception of the world is not a religion. Properly speaking, we cannot create a religion, we can but receive it."¹ Such is the opinion of a philosopher who is not a stranger to Christianity. In developing this opinion, the author shows that if, on the one hand, religion consists first of

¹ Secretan, "La Civilisation et la Croyance," p. 355.

all in communion with God, and if, on the other, man has freely resolved to separate himself from Him, he cannot return to Him of his own will alone. "If we could save ourselves we should already be safe."¹ From this we conclude that, if we wish to re-enter the primitive state which, led by our natural desire to free ourselves from a bond, we have abandoned, God Himself must be willing, and must stoop to His creature. Religion, for that reason, can only be revealed. Now, if it be asked whether this revelation applies to one special faculty of man, whether in man it finds a special organ which enables it to obtain knowledge of itself, we may answer that this revelation, in the essence of belief, appeals in different degrees to every means of knowledge. To inquire whether it applies to reason, to the heart or to the will, is a narrow-minded, not to say erroneous, starting-point. For man is altogether penetrated by it, whether he will or not, and that is precisely what gives him a special place in creation.

Thus considered, revelation makes man a dependent being, not only in regard to the sphere of his religious needs, but also, and even more, in regard to that which constitutes his whole being; intellect, will, feeling, are determined, in spite of himself, by a superior commanding power. Although he can, it is true, refuse to follow its injunctions and obey its peremptory orders, still it is doubtful whether he can ever free himself altogether from them. But in acknowledging our dependence, we confirm the existence of the authority of Him who is capable of exercising it, consequently of an absolute authority. This is a simple and logical conclusion.

This revelation, whose authority is unquestionable because it subjugates the whole being, discloses itself by means of two different agents—moral consciousness and religious consciousness. This division of purely theoretical order is equivalent to another, simpler perhaps, which distinguishes a general from a particular revelation. It will not be superfluous to dwell somewhat more closely on the distinctive features of each. The revelation which comes to man first of all, even before he can realize it, is that of a Supreme Being, who makes man's contingency clear to him. This experience is prior to any act of the will, and is the result of no intellectual process, of no reasoning, of no philosophical deduction. It is so independent of the subject in whom it is produced, so exterior to any personal activity, that one may without hesitation bestow upon it an absolute value.

This primary revelation, which is none other than the manifestation of a sovereign invariable authority, creates in us the

¹ Secretan, "La Civilization et la Croyance," p. 356.

moral consciousness from which duty is derived. It is impossible to escape the one, for one cannot wipe out an impression made independently of self—denying the other does not bring us to any conclusion, for we cannot suppress an undeniable obligation which subsists in spite of any feeling we may entertain in connection with it. Moral consciousness is therefore an unquestionable reality which science is powerless to contest. It is the absolute which is above every external proof, and of which we feel, if we do not see, the evidence.

This fundamental principle would probably have been never contested, had it not occasionally been placed on the same ground as moral law by people who did not realize that, in so doing, they were confounding two extremes as opposite to each other, as *necessary* and *contingent*.

Moral consciousness is immutable and simple. It is the feeling of obligation in its greatest purity, in its greatest abstraction. It is the secret voice which condemns all we do against our own inner persuasion; that is to say, it is a criterion of divine origin.

Moral law, on the other hand, is a compound, a rational, that is to say, a human resultant of all the ideas of right produced by the surroundings, the education, the morals, and the religion of such and such a man or people. The difference and the distinction are evident. From all this we see, that what we call a general revelation perceived by the moral consciousness is, in fact, by its character of universal authority, the only one which compels every human creature, because it always makes him to feel his dependence. Religious consciousness makes us take a step further. From the feeling of dependence it elevates us into the need of adoration, for it determines the cause of the impression produced on us. While moral consciousness "enables us to experience an authority in which we acknowledge the direct action of the supreme and absolute Being, religious consciousness reveals to us the existence of God, by naming Him, and showing Him as existing and acting before us."¹ These two different kinds of consciousness are only the two degrees of the internal single organ. Their reciprocal relation to each other is so narrow, that we must analyze them to be able to distinguish them. Still, we must notice that if the one is fixed, unalterable, in spite of the most divers factors that could be brought to act upon it, the other, the religious consciousness, is susceptible of being enlightened and developed. For as it feeds on successive Divine revelations, it is by degrees enriched by deeper attainments, and succeeds in penetrating the nature of God and His universal plan more and more.

¹ C. Malan, "Manuel d'Instruction Religieuse," p. 5.

There are three phases through which the religious consciousness must pass. Each one corresponds with our stages of progress towards the divine Being. The first of these stages is distinguished by intellectualism. God is represented therein in an abstract, metaphysical form which excites no sympathy. It is the stage of pagan religion. The second has been reached by Judaism, which brings man face to face with a Being who appears to him as dictating His will and imposing His laws. Judaism has made God more concrete; and in bringing the creature nearer to the Creator, has prepared our accession to the last phase, Christianity, which closes the development which long centuries have completed. Christianity, taken as a whole, is a product of revelation, in which lies its source and by which it lives. Having been prepared in the course of history by successive manifestations of the Divine will to man's natural consciousness, it came into existence when God unveiled Himself entirely to it in the person of Jesus Christ. The plans of Providence were realized in Him, and were transmitted to humanity through Him. Now, a striking proof of man's high origin is that Christ by His life, by His word, has so well answered the human soul's aspirations, has inspired so great a confidence, that He at once acquired the authority which was His due as the Founder of God's kingdom. In drawing men to Himself, in enlightening his natural consciousness, He has transformed it, and given it a new nature through the impression which He leaves on it, and from the influence which He exercises over it; in a word, He has produced Christian consciousness. This, which constitutes the believer's consciousness, presupposes faith in Christ, and, consequently, faith in the Word which bears witness to Him.¹

The elements of this consciousness, and the materials upon which it is exercised, consist of the Scriptures and the person of Christ. These are the two only supports of Christian consciousness. They are different in kind, but do not exclude each other; on the contrary, their reciprocal contact gives them greater efficacy. While the one creates faith, the other strengthens and steadies it. A man cannot be converted into Christianity without the preaching of the Gospel, and a true Christian will always be found to consider Christ, who is the centre of this Gospel, to be his steadfast and only support.

Scripture may indeed be the way leading to faith; it may fulfil to us the same office as the Master's word did among the people of His time. But what is Scripture? Since it has been challenged by historical criticism and by theological scholarship, divers conceptions, varying according to the opinions and

¹ Walch, xv., 1115.

the degrees of piety of those who formed them, have been brought to light. We will not enter into particulars in regard to these different theories. We will only, as briefly as possible, explain our point of view, which we consider sufficiently well-grounded on the word of God to be neither in contradiction to the data of Scripture nor to the results of personal experience. That the Bible possesses a special authority is a generally admitted fact. Theological controversies do not bear on this attribution, but rather on the question of the knowledge how to put this authority in a definite shape and how to explain it.

The Protestant principle provides us already with an answer. In admitting that no exterior authority can be enforced on the conscience, in claiming for each individual the responsibility of his own religious life, this principle condemns every action, every act which is not the product of individual experience. In applying this principle to Scripture, we observe that its authority springs rather from its own nature than from its dependence on any particular ecclesiastical body which maintains it. If, indeed, the Protestant Churches appeal to Scripture as the supreme rule in matters of faith, it cannot be admitted that the Church, being an inferior authority, could guarantee that on which itself depends. There must, therefore, be some way of arriving at an absolute certainty on this point, independently of the Church—a way accessible to every Christian without distinction of education or of rank—and this only way is faith.

Such a starting-point once established, the authority of the Scriptures need not be proved by scientific demonstrations, whether drawn from history or dogmatics. In any case, we leave the question undecided whether Scripture is to be considered a revelation *in itself*, or only a document of revelation. Although we have every right to consider the Bible as a collection of documentary witnesses of revelation, that fact is not sufficient to give us the certainty of its authority in regard to faith. Properly speaking, a document belongs to history, and is in consequence submitted to the test of historical criticism. Therefore, though we might agree in affirming that the Bible possesses altogether a perfect documentary authority, we do not deny that some qualifications must be made on the subject. Such an opinion, for which we are indebted to scholarship, would at the very utmost produce a submission to an authority not of a religious nature, and an acquiescence which would be no better than that exacted by the Roman Church, and which could never succeed in producing a personal conviction. Dogmas do not lead to any greater inward certainty. Starting from a preconceived idea of the composition of the

Scriptures, faith thus attained subsists only as long as the premisses on which these dogmas are built up are not contested. But it is well known that they have been seriously contested and shaken by contemporary biblical criticism. Thus was the idea of plenary and verbal inspiration which became a dogma, and at last an article of faith. A theory on the manner in which religious truths should be revealed to us was established, by which thoughts and actions of a purely human kind were attributed to G.d. By such methods not only do we fail to obtain religious certainty, but if we have the misfortune to entertain any doubts in regard to the basis on which our belief in Scripture is founded, we even risk the loss of every possible certainty.

The error common to such conceptions has arisen from the fact that we endeavour to explain the authority of the Scriptures on the grounds of its origin, instead of founding it upon the effect derived from them. Faith is an immediate certainty. The revelation granted to the sacred writers is an act of the past. If, therefore, it is to have any influence upon us now, it must be made present to us. That the Bible is a document of Divine revelation is not sufficient; if it is to become of religious authority, it must also be the bearer of an actual revelation. Christianity cannot exist without such a revelation. For what is it worth, if God does not enter into the life, does not assure us of His communion with us, does not make us feel His paternal love—in a word, if He does not reveal Himself to every one of us individually? The contents of the Gospel are the same as those of the revelation. But the Gospel is not an objective message, which leaves each one free to believe or not to believe as he chooses. No; the Gospel is a divine power which begets faith. It is in this sense that we call it the “Word of God.” It is not a word spoken by God in the past; it is a word of the present time, by which He speaks *actually* to man.

But what is it which induces us to believe in the Gospel? By what means are we to recognise it as the “Word of God”? It is through Him who constitutes its centre; it is through the person and life of Jesus Christ. As we contemplate Jesus and study His life; as we witness His invincible love for, and His unlimited devotion to ungrateful and sinful humanity; as we realize the perfect communion existing between Him and the Father, we cannot but feel subjugated by His power and influence, because *in* Him, and *by* Him, we find God. “Christ showing us the Father”—this is the central idea of the Gospel. The experience acquired by His first disciples of His spiritual power and influence on them is still perpetuated by ourselves. Their writings may be docu-

ments of the past, as far as their exterior form is concerned ; they nevertheless reveal to us their divine origin by making us feel their effectual power. The Jesus of to-day is the same as the Jesus of the Apostles. He is still present, existing and acting among us. And just as we contemplate in Him the perfect image of God, so the word which makes Him known to us is also to us the word of God. What strikes us still more particularly is that whatever may be the human voice which speaks that word, we forget that it is man's voice. We only recognise the word of God Himself, who enters into direct communication with us. His word enables us to feel that the same God who revealed Himself in Jesus, and acted through Him, exercises now His influence upon ourselves.

Hence there can be no doubt in regard to the value we may ascribe to the Scriptures, nor to the Christian authority we may derive from them. Scripture has indeed, become an authority based upon the faith we place in the person of Him who is its Creator, and whose spiritual influence has formed Christian consciousness.

This is the true and only authority to which every believer must appeal. It is the true authority, because it depends on the unexceptionable witness of that intimate circle of disciples which received the Master's teaching directly from Himself, and because from our own experience we realize the genuineness of the effects produced by that teaching. It is the only authority, because it goes back to God, of whom Christ is the personal revelation.

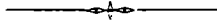
In conclusion, we may say that this authority presents us with the threefold character of a moral, spiritual, and experimental authority. A moral authority, that is to say, independent of all traditions, free with regard to all scientific research, unassailable even in regard to the most negative results of scriptural criteria, which cannot weaken the intrinsic value of Christ's inner life. Spiritual authority it possesses, enabling us to throw over letter-worship and mere dogmatism, both being powerless to produce real and living faith, for neither leads to the Gospel, but rather to the law, which, "if it be a light burden to the pharisee, is a heavy yoke to the sincere man."¹ They do not help us to reach the Saviour. He only becomes such to us when, starting from the narratives that draw us to Him, and rising gradually above external testimony, we come in contact with Jesus Himself. Then only will His historical life be lightened up by the true light ; then only shall we grasp the real compass of His earthly career.

¹ Hermann, "Der Verkehr des Christen nach Gott," p. 64.

And, lastly, experimental authority. Christ never imposed Himself upon us authoritatively. On the contrary, He always invited His hearers to put His doctrine to the test. This is still our task, and as we accomplish it we are constrained to render due homage to His personality. We recognise the wonderful transformation it has wrought in the world, bringing with it the progress of a higher civilization, and the regeneration of the individual by the principles which He came to reveal. If we are living Christians we shall become better as we come into closer contact with Him; we shall feel that His presence in our hearts is so mighty as to take possession of our whole being, in order to transform and fashion it to His life.

Does this authority, then, incur the reproach of subjectivism? We cannot think that it does; for what we find in our communion with Christ is neither ourselves nor the frequently vague results of Christian speculation. What we find in Christ is God Himself stooping down to us. "Nulli prosit qui cognoscit Deum in gloriâ et majestate, nisi cognoscat eundem in humilitate et ignominiâ. Sic Joh. xiv., cum Philippus juxta theologiam gloriæ diceret 'Ostende nobis Patrem,' mox Christus retraxit et in seipsum reduxit ejus volatilem cogitationem quærendi Deum alibi, dicens, 'Philippe, qui videt me videt et Patrem meum.' Ergo in Christo est vera theologia et cognitio Dei."¹

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ART. IV.—THE DEVELOPMENT OF ANGLICAN SERVICE-MUSIC FROM THOMAS TALLIS TO SAMUEL SEBASTIAN WESLEY. (*Concluded.*)

PART II.

III. **A**ND now, as we proceed with our study, there rises into view that brilliant constellation, in which it is Henry Purcell's highest praise that he shines with surpassing glory. Humfrey, Blow and Wise are the other lights, not to be called lesser but in comparison with him; and of Turner and Tudway it is enough to say that their individual brightness is not extinguished in the blaze of light. The first three were choir-mates in the Chapel Royal in 1661, under Captain Henry Cook; and the others only a few years later. Humfrey was

¹ Luther.