

The
Faith.

THE CHRISTIAN FAITH.

The Revelation given by God is the Christian Faith as received by man. The entire body of revealed truth is addressed to the principle of faith, receiving on Divine evidence what becomes matter of certitude and assurance. This is the objective dogmatic Faith delivered to the saints. But this same Faith may also be regarded as having to win the assent of the world, and as presenting its credentials to the reason in order to universal acceptance. Hence we have two general aspects of our present subject: first the Christian Revelation as accepted by faith, and, secondly, as presenting its evidences to reason.

Received
by Faith.

THE CHRISTIAN REVELATION AS ACCEPTED.

The Christian Revelation in all its compass of truth is addressed to faith primarily, to reason only as subordinated to faith. It is committed to the supreme tenure of that principle which is the evidence and substantiation of spiritual things. This faith extends explicitly to all the facts, doctrines, and promises of the Holy Scripture, and implicitly to all its mysteries whether already revealed, in course of revelation, or reserved for the future.

Eph. iv. 21 Its supreme object is Christ and the truth as TRUTH IS IN JESUS. But it must be remembered that the Christian Faith is effectually such only to those whose belief is quickened by the Holy Ghost into the assurance of personal knowledge and experience.

It is obvious that this general proposition involves a consideration of the credentials of Christianity; but we have now to do with Revelation only as addressed to faith. As containing the Christian system of truth, and recorded in the Bible, it appeals

to a universal principle of human nature, the faculty of believing. This primary faculty is profoundly seated in our constitution : it works as the acceptance of truth on sufficient evidence, whether of consciousness, or intuition, or testimony. It is at the root of all knowledge generally, especially of all knowledge of spiritual things. Now it is to this principle pre-eminently that Revelation appeals : to faith alone as it is a revelation of spiritual principles and truth ; to faith conjoined with reason as it is a Divine record of facts through which these principles are taught. These two points have now to be briefly discussed.

I. Faith must here in all things have the pre-eminence.

Faith.

1. The grand revelations of the Word of God are all committed to that highest and noblest faculty which the Scripture calls *the evidence of things not seen*. The existence of a Supreme First Cause, the creation of the world *framed by the Word of God*, the nature of sin and the glory of redemption, the Person of the Incarnate and His atonement, the union of the Holy Spirit with the spirit of man, the processes and issues, in time and eternity, of the redeeming economy, in short all that belongs to the supernatural world, must be believed or they are not the heritage of the soul. There is no faculty competent to deal with them, to receive them, to appropriate them, but faith. Reason of itself is the soul's judgment according to sense : if it is regarded as occupied with the mysteries of the spirit and the spiritual world it is no longer reason but faith under the name of reason. Faith is to the other world what the senses are to the world that now is ; the eye, the ear, the taste, the touch that perceives what the physical senses cannot perceive. All is thus summed up : *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.*

Heb. xi. 1

Heb. xi. 3, 4.

1 Cor. ii 14.

2. Hence it is that, inasmuch as the principle of faith belongs as certainly to human nature as reason does, the evidences of the supernatural world are addressed to a faculty which they ought to awaken, even as light ought to awaken the faculty of seeing. If the great truths of Revelation excite no response it is because a deadly evil vitiates the faith which does not vitiate the natural senses. It is necessary to dwell upon this, because reason, thus set aside, will ask why it is that Revelation addressed to a uni-

Its Place
in
Human
Nature.

versal faculty in man does not meet with instantaneous and universal acceptance.

3. *There is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding.* There is a Spirit Who demonstrates truth to the mind, affections, and will of the personal man; but only to him who is sincere and *cometh to the light*. The credentials of Divine truth are self-evidencing: they are like the light of the sun in the natural world. This preliminary postulate is of the utmost importance, and may be established from the Scripture itself without any irrational begging of the question. First, let our Lord Himself be heard. The testimony concerning Him is, that He is *the true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world*. His testimony to Himself, borne, moreover, to one who was not His disciple, is: *Every one that is of the truth heareth My voice*, where *of the truth* points to the mystery of man's free posture of mind as disposed or otherwise to be guided aright. This final declaration of Him Who *knew what was in man* expresses the spirit of His entire teaching concerning the self-manifestation of His truth to every man's conscience who *wills to do His will*. Secondly, the light of the body of revelation is the Holy Ghost. The Saviour does not appeal to reason, apart from the mediation of the sole and supreme Convincer. That Spirit also knoweth what is in man, and brings His own Divine demonstration to every mind that does not refuse to consider what He says. He so adapts His arguments to the present fallen moral nature of men that their rejection can spring only from the perverseness of those whose spiritual eye of faith is darkened. As Christ is the Truth incarnate, the Holy Ghost is *the Spirit of the Truth*. He is the great Apologist of Revelation to the world. And St. Paul says, concerning His argument, that it is nothing less than demonstration: *ἐν ἀποδείξει Πνεύματος*. Hence, thirdly, descending to man, we may appeal to the testimonies of Scripture as to the sin and self-conviction of unbelief. The tenour of those testimonies may be summed up in the same Apostle's last word, concerning the heretic, the *αἰρετικὸν ἄνθρωπον*: he is *αὐτοκατάκριτος*, *condemned of himself*. Those who resist the truth are men of corrupt minds, and this has its evidence in their being *reprobate concerning the faith*. On the other hand, he tells us that there is a manifesta-
- The Spirit. Job xxxii. 8
John iii. 21
John i. 9.
John xviii. 37.
John ii. 25.
John vii. 17.
John xvi. 13.
1 Cor. ii. 4.
Titus iii. 11.
2 Tim. iii. 8.

tion of the truth to every man's conscience in the sight of God ; and that, in every case in which it is hid, the cause is to be found in a blindness superadded by the god of this world. The same God who in the natural sphere commanded the light to shine out of darkness in the beginning, commandeth still the light of His knowledge to shine in the face of Jesus Christ. No command of God can be disobeyed. There was light follows Let there be light in the moral world also ; but the light, like its Author, may be rejected of men : the darkness comprehendeth it not.

2 Cor. iv.
2, 4.

2 Cor. iv.
6.

Gen. i. 3.

John i. 8.

4. To those who receive the light, in the sense of not refusing it, revelation is one whole, and all its glorious system of truth is received and surely believed. To them it is both objectively and subjectively THE FAITH ; and, inasmuch as Christianity has brought it in all its fulness into the world, it is to them THE CHRISTIAN FAITH. This phrase has therefore a large meaning. It signifies that it is not their Philosophy simply, the glory of their reason, the Tradition they have derived from their fathers, but the rich inheritance which the Holy Spirit has given to that one supreme faculty of their souls, the faith which is the evidence of things not seen. It is a body of truth which, as reason did not give it, so reason cannot take it away. It is a region in which they walk by faith, which their faith habitually visits, in which their faith lives, and moves, and has its being.

The
Faith.

Heb. xi.
1.

II. But some of these remarks have already suggested that faith is strictly allied with reason in the acceptance of Christianity as a system of truth. The Spirit Who awakens faith regenerates the reason so that it humbles itself to receive mysteries which it cannot understand ; the evidences on which faith rests are such as the reason is called on to approve, here the judgment of the mind having its full honour ; and in the acceptance of the whole economy of the Scriptures of Revelation faith and sound reason are blended into a perfect unity.

Reason.

1. The Christian Faith presents to the faculty by which the infinite and the eternal are perceived a system of truth which human reason cannot fathom or understand, against which it naturally rebels. But the same Spirit Who opens the eye of faith gives reason its perfect soundness, so that it consents to accept what it cannot itself verify. Here of course we regard Revelation

Reason
and
Faith.

as one organic whole, which has for its unifying principle one overwhelming truth, the union of God and man in Christ. Around this centre revolve other equally incomprehensible doctrines; and beyond these in a wider orbit many which are not in the same sense beyond the human faculties. And speaking of the one vast Revelation we may say that it is committed to faith and submissively wondered at by reason. Faith is elevated to receive it and reason humbled to submit to it.

Faith and
Reason.

2. But this faith is not arbitrary or despotic. It gives its rights to reason in all things over which reasoning presides. It presents the evidences for the being of God, for the Incarnation of the Son, for the mystery of the Atonement; and reason must either admit the evidence as in the case of the Divine existence, or confess that it has nothing to plead against it, as in the case of the Incarnation. Like sin before the presence of Divine justice reason shuts her mouth and is silent. But, descending into the province of the general external evidences of Revelation the matter changes its character. Either it must be said that here reason and faith are one under different names, or faith must be regarded as no longer the faculty of perceiving the infinite but as the principle of believing on evidence. In either view faith and reason are here inseparable. Faith accepts and relies on what there is every reasonable ground for believing. Our great term, THE CHRISTIAN FAITH, then becomes the body of external revelation which is surely believed in by all Christians because they are assured of the strength of its evidences. But this leads us at once to the Credentials of Revelation.

Cred-
entials

THE CREDENTIALS OF THE CHRISTIAN REVELATION.

Revelation, which is one with the Christian Faith, which is one with its documents and records, presents its sufficient Credentials to the reason and heart and will of man as one great body of irresistible evidence. First, it comes to mankind as a response to the universal desire and expectation of communication from above: to the craving