

"Intellect and reason are as necessary to faith as they are to moral excellence; for a creature destitute of reason is alike incapable of faith, morality and religion."

"Reason examines the tradition & the testimony, whether it be that of our five senses, our memory, our consciousness, or that of other persons; faith receives that testimony, and common sense walks by it."

FAITH IN CHRIST.

I. The things done for us will truly be to us as though they were not, unless they are believed. Hence, to the untutored and unbelieving barbarian or infidel, the universe is without a sin offering, a Sun of Righteousness, a Lord, Redeemer, and a Holy Spirit. Faith is necessary only as a means of attainment; as a means of enjoyment. It is not, then, an arbitrary enactment or requisition, but a gracious means of salvation.

II. Faith in Christ is the effect of belief. Belief is the *cause*; and trust, confidence, or faith *in* Christ, the *effect*. "*The faith*," sometimes means *the truth* to be believed. Sometimes it means "*the belief of the truth*;" but here we speak of it metonymically, putting the effect for the cause--or calling the effect by the name of the cause. To believe what a person says, and to trust in him are not always identical. True, indeed, they often are; for if a person speaks to us concerning himself, and states to us matters of great interest to ourselves, requiring confidence in him, to believe what he says, and to believe or trust *in* him, are in effect, one and the same thing. Suppose a physician present himself to one that is sick, stating his ability and willingness to heal him; to believe is to trust in him, and to put ourselves under his guidance; provided, only, we love health rather than sickness, and life rather than death.

III. While, then, faith is the simple belief of testimony, or of the truth, and never can be more nor less than that; as a *principle of action* it has respect to a person or thing interesting to us: and is confidence or trust in that person or thing. Now the belief of what Christ says of himself, terminates in trust or confidence in him: and as the Christian religion is a personal thing, both as respects *subject* and *object*, that faith in Christ which is essential to salvation is not the belief of any doctrine, testimony, or truth, abstractly, but belief *in* Christ; trust or confidence in him as a person, not a thing. We take Paul's definition of the term and of the thing, as perfectly simple, intelligible, and sufficient. For the term faith, he substitutes *the belief of the truth*. "God has from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through the sanctification of the spirit; through the belief of the truth." And of the thing, he says, "Faith is the *confidence* of things hoped for, the *conviction* of things not seen." And John says, it is "receiving testimony," for "If we receive the testimony of man," as a principle of action, or put trust in it, "the testimony of God is greater," and of course will produce greater confidence. Any belief, then, that does not terminate in our

personal confidence in Jesus as the Christ, and to induce trustful submission to him, is not faith unfeigned; but a dead faith, and cannot save the soul.

FACT.

Fact means something done. The term *deed*, so common in the reign of James the First, is equivalent to our term *fact*. Truth and fact, though often confounded, are not the same. All facts are truth, but all truths are not facts. That God exists, is a truth, but not a fact; that he created the heavens and the earth, is a fact and a truth. That Paul was the Apostle of the Gentiles, is a truth, but not a fact; and that he preached Christ to the Gentiles is both a fact and a truth. The simple agreement of the terms of any proposition with the subject of that proposition, or the representation of any thing as it exists, is a truth. But something must be done, acted, or effected, before we have a fact. There are many things true in religion, morals, politics, and general science, which are not facts; but these are all but the correspondence of words and ideas with the things of which they treat.

Facts have a power which logical truth has not; and therefore, we say, that facts are stubborn things. They are *things*, not *words*. The power of any fact, is the meaning; and therefore the measure of its power is the magnitude of its import. All moral facts have a moral meaning; and those are properly called moral facts, which either exhibit, develop, or form moral character. All those facts, or works of God, which are purely physical, exhibit what have been commonly called his natural or physical perfections; and all those facts or works of God, which are purely moral, exhibit his moral character. It so happens, however, that all his works, when properly understood, exhibit both his physical and moral character, when viewed in all their proper relations. Thus the deluge exhibited his power, his justice, and his truth; and therefore, displayed both his physical and moral grandeur. The turning of water into wine, apart from its design, is purely a demonstration of physical power; but when its design is apprehended, it has a moral force equal to its physical majesty.

The work of redemption is a system of work, or deeds, on the part of Heaven, which constitutes the most splendid series of moral facts which man or angel ever saw. And they are the proof, the argument, or the demonstration, of that regenerating proposition which presents God and *love* as two names for one idea.

When these facts are understood, or brought into immediate contact with the mind of man, as a moral seal or archetype, they delineate the image of God upon the human soul. *All the means of grace are, therefore, only the means of impressing this seal upon the heart; of bringing these moral facts to make their full impression on the soul of man.* Testimony and faith are but the channel through which these facts, or the hand of God, draws the image on the heart and character of man. If then the fact and the testimony are both the gift of God, we may well say that faith and eternal life are also the gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

To enumerate the gospel facts would be to narrate all that is recorded of the sayings and doings of Jesus Christ, from his birth to his coronation in the heavens. They are, however, concentrated in a few prominent ones, which group together all the love of God in the gift of his

Son. He died for our sins, He was buried in the grave, He rose from the dead for our justification, and is ascended to the skies to prepare mansions for his disciples, comprehend the whole, or are the heads to the chapters which narrate the love of God, and display his moral majesty and glory to our view.

These moral facts unfold all the moral grandeur of Jehovah, and make Jesus the effulgence of his glory, the express image of his substance. These are the moral seal which *testimony* conveys to the understanding, and *faith* brings to the hearts of sinners, by which God creates them anew, and forms them for his glory. It is the Spirit which bears witness--the Spirit of God and of Christ which gives the testimony, and confirms it in the disciples. But let us next proceed to *testimony*.

TESTIMONY.

The Romans, from whom we have borrowed much of our language, called the witness the *testis*. The declaration of this *testis* is still called testimony. In reference to the material system around us, to all objects and matters of sense, the eye, the ear, the smell, the taste, the feeling, are the five witnesses. What we call the evidence of sense, is, therefore, the testimony of these witnesses, which constitute the five avenues to the human mind from the kingdom of nature. They are figuratively called witnesses, and their evidence, testimony. But the report or declaration of intelligent beings, such as God, angels, and men, constitute what is properly and literally called *testimony*.

As light reflected from any material object upon the eye, brings that object into contact with the eye, or enables the object to make its image on the eye, so testimony concerning any fact, brings that fact into contact with the mind, and enables it to impress itself, or to form its image upon the intellect, or mind of man. Now, be it observed, that as by our five external senses we acquire all information of the objects of sense around us, so by testimony, human or divine, we receive all our information upon all facts which are not the objects of immediate exercise of our five senses upon the things around us.

To appreciate the full value of testimony in divine work of regeneration, we have only to reflect, that all the moral facts which can form moral character, after the divine model, or which can effect a moral or religious change in man, are found in the testimony of God: and that no fact can operate at all, where it is not present; or where it is not known. The love of God in the death of the Messiah, never drew a tear of gratitude or joy from any eye, or excited a grateful emotion in any heart among the nations of our race to whom the testimony never came. No fact in the history of six thousand years, no work of God in creation, providence, or redemption, has ever influenced the heart of man or woman, to whom it has not been testified. Testimony is, then, in regeneration, as necessary as the facts of which it speaks.

The real value of any thing, is the labor which it cost, and its utility when acquired. If reason and justice arbitrated all questions upon the value of property, the decision would be, that every article is worth the amount of human labor which is necessary to obtain it; and when obtained, it is again to be tried in the scales of utility. Now, as all the facts, and all the truth which can renovate human nature, are in the testimony of God; and as that testimony cost the labor and the lives of the wisest and best that ever lived, that testimony, to us, is just as valuable as the facts which it records, and the labors and the lives which it cost, and just as indispensable in the

process of regeneration, as were the labors and the lives of Prophets, Apostles, and the Son of God.

History, or narrative, whether oral or written, is only another name for testimony. When, then, we reflect how large a portion of both Testaments is occupied in history, we may judge of how much importance it is in the judgment of God. Prophecy, also, being the history of future facts, or a record of things to be done, belongs to the same chapter of facts and record. Now if all past facts, and all future facts, or all the history or testimony concerning them, was erased from the volumes of God's inspiration, how small would the remainder be! These considerations, added together, only in part exhibit the value and utility of testimony in the regeneration of mankind. But its value will be still more evident, when the proper import of the term *faith* is fully set before us.

FAITH.

No testimony, no faith: for faith is only the belief of testimony, or confidence in testimony as true. To believe without testimony, is just as impossible as to see without light. The measure, quality, and power of faith, are always found in the testimony believed.

Where testimony begins, faith begins; and where testimony ends, faith ends. We believe Moses just as far as Moses speaks or writes: and when Moses has recorded his last fact, or testified his last truth, our faith in Moses terminates. His five books are, therefore, the length and breadth, the height and depth, or, in other words, the *measure*, of our faith in Moses. The *quality* or value of faith is found in the quality of value of the testimony. If the testimony be valid and authoritative, our faith is strong and operative. 'If,' says John, 'we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater,' stronger, and more worthy of credit. The value of a bank bill, is the amount of the precious metals which it represents, and the indisputable evidence of its genuineness; so the value of faith is the importance of the facts which the testimony presents, and the assurance afforded that the testimony is true. True, or unfeigned faith, may be contrasted with feigned faith; but true faith is the belief of truth: for he that believes a lie, believes in vain.

The *power* of faith is also the power, or moral meaning of the testimony, or of the facts which the testimony represents. If by faith I am transported with joy, or overwhelmed in sorrow, that joy or sorrow is in the facts contained in the testimony, or in the nature and relation of those facts to me. If faith purifies the heart, works by love, and overcomes the world, this power is in the facts believed. If a father has more joy in believing that a lost son has been found, than in believing that a lost sheep has been brought home to his fold, the reason of this greater joy is not in the nature of his believing, but in the nature of the facts believed.

Here I am led to expatiate on a very popular and pernicious error of modern times. The error is, that the nature, or power and saving efficacy of faith, is not in the truth believed, but in the *nature* of our faith, or in *the manner of believing* the truth. Hence all that unmeaning jargon about the nature of faith, and all those disdainful sneers at what is called "historic faith,"--as if there could be any faith without history, written or spoken. Who ever believed in Jesus Christ, without hearing the history of him? '*How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?*' Faith never can be more than the receiving of testimony as true, or the belief of testimony; and if

that testimony be written, it is called history--though it is as much history when flowing from the tongue, as when flowing from the pen.

Let it be again repeated, and remembered, that there is no other manner of believing a fact, than by receiving it as true. If it is not received as true, it is not believed; and when it is believed, it is no more than regarded as true. This being conceded, then it follows, that the efficacy of faith is always in the fact believed, or the object received, and not in the nature or manner of believing.

"Faith was bewildered much by men who meant
To make it clear, so simple in itself.
A thought so rudimental and so plain,
That none by comment could it plainer make.
All faith was one. In object, not in kind,
The difference lay. The faith that saved a soul,
And that which in the common truth believed,
In essence, were the same. Hear, then, what faith,
True Christian faith, which brought salvation, was:
Belief in all that God revealed to men;
Observe, in all that God revealed to men,
In all he promised, threatened, commanded, said,
Without exception, and without a doubt."

This holds universally in all the sensitive, intellectual, and moral powers of man. All our pleasures and pains, all our joys and sorrows, are the effects of the objects of sensation, reflection, faith, &c., apprehended or received, and not in the nature of the exercise of any power of capacity with which we are endowed. We shall illustrate and confirm this assertion by an appeal to the experience of all.

Let us glance at all our sensitive powers. If, on surveying with the eye a beautiful landscape, I am pleased, and on surveying a battle field strewn with the spoils of death, I am pained,--is it in accordance with truth to say, that the pleasure or the pain received was occasioned by the nature of vision, or the mode of seeing? Was it not *the sight*, the thing seen, the object of vision, which produced the pleasure and the pain? The action of looking, or the mode of seeing, was in both cases the same; but the things seen, or the objects of vision, were different;--consequently, the effects produced were different.

If on hearing the melody of the grove I am delighted, and on hearing the peals of thunder breaking to pieces the cloud, dark with horror, hanging over my head, I am terrified,--is the delight or the terror to be ascribed to the manner or nature of hearing, or to the thing heard? Is it not the thing heard, which produces the delight or the terror?

If I am refreshed by the balmy fragrance of the opening bloom of spring, or sickened by the fetid effluvia of putrid carcasses,--are these effects to be ascribed to the peculiar nature or mode of smelling, or to the thing smelt? Or when the honey and the gall come in contact with my

taste,--is the sweet or the bitter to be regarded as the effect of my manner of tasting, or to the object tasted? And when I touch the ice, or the blazing torch,--is the effect or feeling produced to be imputed to the manner of feeling them, or to the thing felt? May we not, then, affirm that all the pleasures and pains of sense; all the effects of sensation; are the results, not of the manner in which our five senses are exercised, but of the objects on which they are exercised? it may be said, without in the least invalidating this conclusion, that the more intimate the exercise of our senses is with the things on which they are exercised, the stronger and more forcible will be the impressions made: but still it is the object seen, heard, smelt, tasted, or felt, which affects us.

Passing from the outward to the inward man, and on examining the powers of intellection one by one, we shall find no exception to the law which pervades all our sensitive powers. It is neither the faculty of perception, nor the manner of perception, but the thing perceived, that excites us to action: it is not the exercise of reflection, but the thing reflected upon: it is not memory, nor the exercise of recollection, but the thing remembered: it is not imagination, but the thing imagined: it is not reason itself, nor the exercise of reason, but the thing reasoned upon, which affords pleasure or pain--which excites to action--which cheers, allures, consoles--which grieves, disquiets, or discommodes us.

Ascending to our volitions and our affections, we shall find the same universality. In a word, it is not choosing, nor refusing; it is not loving, hating, fearing, desiring, nor hoping; it is not the nature of any power, faculty, or capacity of our nature, nor the simple exercise of them, but the objects or things upon which they are exercised, which give us pleasure or pain; which induce us to action, or influence our behavior. Faith, then, or the power of believing, must be an anomalous thing; a power *sui generis*; an exception to the laws under which every power, faculty, or capacity of man is placed, unless its measure, quality, power, and efficacy be in the facts which are testified, in the objects on which it terminates.

There is no connection of cause and effect more intimate; there is no system of dependencies more closely linked; there is no arrangement of things more natural or necessary, than the ideas represented by the terms *fact*, *testimony*, *faith*, and *feeling*. The first is for the last, and the two intermediates are made necessary by the force of circumstances, as the means for the end. The fact, or the thing said to be done, produces the change in the frame of mind. The testimony, or the report of the thing said or done, is essential to belief; and belief of it is necessary to bring the thing said or done to the heart. The change of heart is the end proposed in this part of the process of regeneration; and we may see that the process on the part of Heaven is, thus far, natural and rational; or, in other words, consistent with the constitution of our nature.

The Christian System.