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ARTICLE VI.

ASSURANCE—WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT—AND THE CALL
TO THE MINISTRY.

[by the Rev. Dr. Thomas Smyth]

1. *A Treatise on Assurance, by the Rev. THOMAS BROOKS, Preacher at St. Mary's, Fish Street Hill, London, Author of Mute Christian, &c. &c. London, 1810.*
2. *The Forgiveness of Sin and the Possibility of Attaining a Personal Assurance of it, by Rev. S. EAST, Birmingham. Glasgow, 1847.*
3. *The Witness of the Spirit with our Spirit, by Rev. AUGUSTUS SHORT. Being the Bampton Lecture, for 1846.*
4. *The Doctrine of the Direct Witness of the Spirit, by FREDERICK A. ROSS. Phila., 1846.*

5. *What Constitutes a Call to the Gospel Ministry, in the Biblical Repertory, for 1831.* p. 196.
6. *The Necessity of a Divine Call. Ch. II of the Christian Ministry, by the Rev. CHARLES BRIDGES. Fourth Edition. London, 1835.*
7. *Necessary Call to the Ministry. Ch. III of the Christian Ministry, by J. EDMONSTON, a Wesleyan Minister. London, 1828.*
8. *On the Call of a Minister of Jesus Christ to the Sacred Office. Ch. IV. of EADE'S Gospel Ministry.*
9. *What is a Call to the Ministry? Tracts of the American Tract Society. Vol. 9, p. 333, and vol. 10, p. 285.*
10. *The Use of Preachers, and How to Obtain More, by the Rev. A. A. PORTER. Charleston, 1848.*
11. *A Call to the Ministry—What are the Evidences of a Divine Call? in the Pittsburgh Christian Advocate, 1841.*
12. *A Discourse on Theological Education, and Advice to a Student, by GEORGE HOWE, D. D. New York, 1844.*

The works at the head of this article cover the whole extent of practical, personal, and experimental piety, with special relation to one department of Christian duty.

Assuming the fact of man's inherent depravity and conscious guilt, salvation from the power and the curse of sin becomes the most interesting and momentous of all possible inquiries—its attainment the chiefest of all possible blessings—and the assurance of its possession the most unspeakable of all possible enjoyments. Without this assurance, the very magnitude of the interests at stake would only render the anxiety of the mind the more intolerable—our own relation to God more fearful—and our indisposition to, and incapacity for, duty more hopeless. Salvation being provided for guilty man, the assurance of its actual enjoyment must be conceived as a part of its gracious pro-

vision, both as a ground of hope and love towards God, and as a constant and effectual spur and motive to self-denying obedience. And in proportion as any duty is arduous and responsible, such an assurance of obligation and acceptance becomes necessary to zeal, energy and success. The ministry, therefore, being confessedly the highest sphere of Christian activity, and the most momentous of human instrumentalities, demands for its warrant, motive and support, the most satisfactory assurance that it is undertaken in accordance with the will of God, by His authority, and under the promise of His all-sufficient and ever-present help and guidance. And the fact is, that just so far as ministers have been men of sincere, ardent and devoted piety, have they given all diligence to make their, calling and election to this high, and holy office sure and satisfying.

The Christian ministry is the principal human instrumentality and means which God is pleased to use in carrying on the grand design of His wisdom, love and goodness towards His church and people.*

Every minister, therefore, in order to be satisfied that he is not a "thief and a robber," laboring without divine authority, divine instruction, divine assistance, divine acceptance, and divine success, must enter in at the door of Christ's ordained appointment. That door is a divine call, mission, commission, and authority, approved by God the Father,—issued by God the Son,—and signed, sealed, and witnessed by God the Holy Ghost.†

* Matt. 28: 19; Act 10: 41-42; Eph. 4: 11-16; 1 Cor. 1: 17-31; 2 Cor. 5: 18-21; 1 Cor. 3: 9. See Mr. Porter's Use of Preachers, § 4, p. 6-8.

See 1 Cor. 12: 28-29; Rom. 10: 15; Heb. 5: 4-5; Exod. 28: 1; Numb. 1: 50; Deut. 10: 8, and 33: 8, Comp. with Exod. 19: 6; Heb. 9: 6, and 1 Pet. 2: 5-9; Matt. 10: 1, 7; Mark 9: 14; Luke 9: l. 2, and 10: 1-2; Acts 13: 2; Gal. 2: 7; Col. 4: 17; Acts 20: 28; Heb. 13: 17-24. Here would be pertinent all the passages in which the numerous titles of ministers are given, and which all *imply* special designation and authority. Also all the passages which define their special qualifications and duties, such as 1 Tim. 3: 5; 1 Peter 5: 2-3; 1 Tim. 4: 14-15; 1 Tim. 4: 2; 1 Tim. 2: 25; 1 Cor. 12: 15, and 9: 16-17; Heb. 13: 17, &c. &c. 1 Tim. 5: 7-21; Titus 1: 5, 9, 10.

See Eade's Ministry, p. 218, &c. Bridge's, p. 93.

Divine Right of the Gospel Ministry, Part 1, ch. 4, p. 66, &c. London, 1654, 4to. Edmonson's Christian Ministry. Mr. Porter's Sermon, § 5, p. 8-9. Palmer on the Church, vol. 1, p. 165-167, where he gives the testimony of the Reformers. The Divine Right of the Gospel Ministry, London, 1654, where the necessity of this call is largely proved, p. 68-115.

As the ministry is the highest, most responsible, and most arduous Christian calling, and also that in which a Christian may best promote the glory of God and the salvation of souls, to disobey the call of God and to neglect or reject it, must involve the deepest criminality and incur the heaviest infliction of divine wrath. And while, therefore, an assurance of their call is all important to those who *have* entered upon the work of the ministry, THE ASSURANCE THAT THEY ARE NOT RESISTING AND SHUTTING THEIR EARS AGAINST A DIVINE CALL TO THIS WORK, is equally important to those who have hitherto “taken their ease in Zion.”

Our present object then, will be to inquire into the nature of assurance: the manner of the Spirit’s witness in giving and preserving this assurance: and the special nature of that call by which any man is required, and therefore warranted, to enter upon the preparation for, and the actual discharge of, the work of the Gospel Ministry.

In doing this, some reference will be made to views already presented in this work, and upon which—in consistency with the free and open character of the work, and in the exercise of the most exalted estimation of the author of those views—we will freely animadvert. The discussion will, it is hoped, lead to a more careful examination of this subject, and to the adoption of opinions as remote from that low and carnal policy which derogates from the work and glory of the ever blessed spirit, as they are from such a standard of experience as will necessarily create distress and difficulty in the minds of those who are most sincere and conscientious. For the sake of those who wish to examine this subject for themselves, we have given in the Notes the chief authorities we have consulted on the various points, and with which, therefore, general readers need not trouble themselves.

I. WE INQUIRE THEN, IN THE FIRST PLACE, WHAT IS
ASSURANCE?

Assurance is freedom from care, anxiety or fear—a firm, confident, and sure belief of what, is the object of our faith and hope. It is based upon evidence, and is thus dis-

tinguished from that counterfeit assurance, which is a groundless reliance upon one's own ability, opinion or character. Assurance may be an occasional feeling or an habitual state of mind.

Assurance, then, may be defined to be, *the certain knowledge of the reality of that of which we are assured.* It is a conviction produced by evidence. The certainty of this conviction is characterised by the nature of the evidence on which it is based, and may therefore be said to be of different kinds or degrees, in all cases, however, conveying that kind or degree of certainty which is sufficient to warrant the most undoubting confidence and the most unhesitating obedience.

In this discussion we assume that there is a God, infinite, eternal and unchangeable, in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth.*

We assume further; that God's veracity is necessary and immutable, so that whatever is in evident accord with His will, whether this is made known in His works, His laws, His gifts, His providence, or His word, is and must be certainly true. The ordinary course of nature, therefore,—the constitution of our senses as organs of our minds,—the faculties *by which the mind receives, compares and reasons upon ideas,—and the intuitive and necessary beliefs or perceptions to which we are thus led—in other words the reason and the understanding†—these are all pledges of God's veracity and channels of God's divine communication. In knowledge and understanding we are made like unto God "so that it is in His light we see light." "He would not practice a mockery upon us by giving us constitutional beliefs at variance with the objective reality of things, and so as to distort all our views of truth and of the universe. We were formed in his image intellectually as well as morally; nor would He give us the arbitrary structure that would lead us irresistibly to believe a lie."‡ "There is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the

* See on this foundation principle of the intuitive reason, some beautiful thoughts in Morell's Lectures on the Phil. Tendencies of the Age, Lond., 1848, p. 36-37, Lect. i., all.

† See Morell's Lectures on the Phil. Tendencies of the Age; Lecture ii, on Individualism, p. 71, 72, 74, 76, 77, 81, 82, and p. 69, 71, and p. 111, 132, 133, 136, 142, 168, &c.

‡ Dr. Chalmers' Posthumous Wks. vol. 1, p. 2, 3.

Almighty giveth him understanding.”* And hence, whatever results from this natural constitution of our minds cannot but be true, and that which is contrary to it can not but be false.† “These inbred principles of natural light,” as Owen says, “do sufficiently and infallibly evidence themselves to be from God.” We may, therefore, have a demonstrative, infallible, or certain knowledge, of everything, which, in the proper exercise of our natural powers we know to exist, since in these “God reveals Himself,” as really and as certainly as in His word.‡

Further, as the testimony of others is a means of acquiring knowledge which God has made it natural and necessary for us to use,§ it is equally evident that the knowledge founded upon competent human testimony is certainly true. For although men are fallible, and their testimony is fallible in itself considered, yet there may be such a combination of rational evidence, as to make it certain, that in the particular cases to which it refers, such testimony cannot be false, but is certainly true; because, in these cases, men could neither be deceived nor disposed to deceive. And this certainty is not moral but natural, being based upon the constitution of things and the veracity of God.¶

It follows, further, that since the Scriptures present innumerable evidences founded upon the exercise of our own | minds, and upon the testimony of others, which cannot but be received as true, we may have certain knowledge that the Scriptures are true, and are what they claim to be—the inspired and infallible word of God. The contrary supposition implies the want of certainty in all the processes of thought, judgment and conviction, which God has himself given, and is therefore contradictory to the very nature of God and man.**

* See Morell's Lectures, p. 138, 140.

† See Dr. Owens' Wks. vol. 3, p. 245, 246, 329, 325, and The remains of the reverend and learned John Corbet, Lond., 1684, p. 77, &c., of certainty, also Halyburton's Wks., p. 506, 517.

‡ Owens Wks., vol. 3, p. 326.

§ This is one province of the understanding as distinguished from the reason. See Morell's Lectures as above, p. 75, 82, 86. See this in this innate tendency, to repose confidence in the testimony of others, p. 103, Lect. iii.

¶ See Corbet's Remains.

** Owen's Works, vol. 3, p. 349, 350, 351, 354, 356, 239, 241, 245, 249; 327, 329. Works of Rev. Thos. Scott, vol. 2, p. 25, 290. Dr. Jamieson's

Further, in the use of the same faculties and of all the means necessary, we can attain to a rational and assured certainty of what the Scriptures contain.* Our capacity to understand a book, does not depend upon the author or the origin of its contents, but upon our means of arriving at the certain meaning of its language.† To say, therefore, that because the Bible is an infallibly true book, we cannot understand it without an infallible human teacher to instruct us, is to destroy the foundation upon which its infallible evidences rest; to reason in a self-contradictory circle; and to make a series of infallible teachers necessary *ad infinitum*—in order that we may infallibly understand what each infallible teacher teaches, which is absurd.

It is further evident, that while we may *naturally* and *certainly* know that the Scriptures are God's inspired and infallible word, and what they teach, that nevertheless we may not be able *naturally* to perceive the whole truth of what is contained in the Scriptures, to receive and act upon them cordially, or to feel their power to produce saving, and sanctifying impressions. Just as we may naturally believe in God, and yet not love and enjoy Him—so we may naturally be convinced of the truth of the Bible and understand its doctrines, and yet not love or enjoy them. They may even appear to be contrary to our reason, because so entirely above it, and so entirely opposed to the bent and current of our passions and pursuits. We may have a knowledge of subjects, and yet not of their relations and true bearings.‡ When the Apostle James says, “even the devils believe and tremble,” he undoubtedly admits that they may assent to all the truths or propositions contained in the Scriptures.§ The true import and power of Scripture depends

Reality of the Holy Spirit's Influence, Edin. p. 68, 115, 75, 76. Halyburton's Works, 514, 532, 530, 535. Bellamy's Works, vol. 2, p. 504, 458, and generally all the works on the Evidences of Christianity and of the Bible. See also Confessio Helvetica Posterior in Niemeyer's Collection, p. 459. Works of Jonathan Edwards, vol. 4, p. 263. Life of Halyburton, by himself, p. 162, recent edition. Taylor's Spiritual Christianity, Lect. 1, and Edin. Pres. Review, June 1846, p. 52.

* Owen's Works, vol. 3, p. 379, 380, 499, and ch.9, p.502; and Buchanan on the Spirit, p. 99, 101.

† Halyburton's Works, p. 505, 506, 525, 526. Owen's Works; vol. 3, p. 351, 353, 357.

‡ See Locke Hum. Underst., B. 4, ch. 3.

§ See Dr. Candlish on the Atonement, p. 154.

“not upon the literal induction of the words, but upon the spiritual sense we attach to them, upon the religious intuitions they may serve to express—in a word, upon the whole state of the religious consciousness of the interpreter.” “The real essential meaning varies immeasurably, according to the conceptions which lie under the words.”*

God, therefore, may undoubtedly accompany the Scriptures with such an illuminating influence, through the operation of the Holy Spirit, as to impart to them a supernatural evidence, and thus, give assurance to the mind that “they are in the truth the word of God,”—that their doctrines are holy, just and true, and that they are “the power of God to the salvation” of the believing soul. That God *can* thus work in the hearts of men, and in this way present to them spiritual evidence as unknown to the natural mind, as light is to the blind, who will dare to deny? That God *will* do so, we know certainly by His promises and declarations, contained in that very word of whose infallibility we are already assured. That such influences *are imparted*, man is enabled by consciousness and his other faculties certainly to determine. And that such inward evidences of the divine truth, power, and efficacy of the Scriptures, are not only *attainable*, but are actually *attained*, every true believer proves to himself by his own experience, and to others by his life and conduct.†

The influences of the Holy Spirit, when thus exerted upon the mind, enabling it experimentally to know that the doctrines of Scripture are from God, produce that spiritual confidence which is more commonly called among theologians by the term assurance. This differs from natural assurance, not in its nature or exercise, nor in the faculties of mind by which it is exercised, but only in the nature of the evidence by which it is produced, and the power by which that evidence is presented. That evidence is the conscious exercise of such gracious affections, holy principles and spiritual operations, and such a perception of the self-evidencing truth and power of Scripture doctrines, as

* Morell's Lectures on the Phil. Tendencies of the Age, p. 91. See also p. 115.

† Owen, vol. 3, p. 310, 358, 289, 290, 333, 241, 410, 417, 433. Halyburton's, Works, p. 517, 527, 535, 536, and p. 165 of Life, and Locke's Hum. Underst. B. 4, ch. 18, §13 and §14.

are in Scripture attributed to the Holy Spirit, and which imply a divine Author, as certainly as the Scriptures themselves, or the other works of God. When, therefore, we are conscious of these exercises, we have assurance of that to which they testify,—the facts are ascertained by the evidence.* “Hereby we know that we are of the truth,” and “that these things are true,” and hereby the Holy Spirit beareth witness to our spirit, and guides us into all necessary truth.

It is further evident that, as in its nature, saving assurance is analogous to natural assurance, so like it, it is of different kinds and degrees. As it regards the truths and doctrines of the Scriptures, it is *the assurance of the understanding*; as it regards the testimony of God concerning Christ and salvation through Him, it is *the assurance of faith*; as it regards the glory of the future inheritance, it is *the assurance of hope*; as it regards our particular occupation in life and our obligation to undertake and to discharge any particular duty, it is *the assurance of conscience*, “making our calling and duty sure;” and as it regards our outward condition, health, suffering, and affliction, it is *the assurance of comfort*, enabling our patience, confidence, and resignation, “to have their perfect exercise,” “so that in whatever state we are we may therein be content.” “All these are diversities of operations” of one and the same spirit working in us, to will and to do according to God’s good pleasure, and thoroughly furnishing the man of God for every good word and work.

In all these cases, the object of which we are assured is external to us, and these kind of assurances may be denominated *objective*. But as it regards our own personal interest in Christ and salvation through Him, the evidence is not outward in the word, but inward in the heart, and this kind of assurance, which may be denominated subjective, is *the assurance of salvation*†—or, as it is called, the reflex exercise of saving faith, the assurance of sense, or the assurance of experience.

* See Dr. McLeod’s True Godliness, p. 134, 1145, 165. See The Morning Exercises, vol. 5, p. 631-632, where it is shewn by Traill to be grounded, not upon internal light, nor upon authority, as the Romanists teach, p. 612, but upon evidence, p. 618-619.

† See Dr. Williams.

These distinctions, like those of the various functions or powers of the mind—which is one and indivisible—will obviate difficulties, if we carefully, remember that the difference exists not in the principle, but in its application. The ONE principle of saving faith operates in various ways, as it acts upon, and acts through, the different faculties of the mind. In the understanding it produces saving knowledge—on the will, an actual appropriation of the Saviour and all His benefits to the soul—on the conscience, that true repentance, which shall never need to be repented of—on the affections it becomes love—on the active powers, holy obedience—on the desires, hope, and on the, whole soul, that godliness which is great gain.*

These distinctions will enable vs to understand how the old Divines regarded assurance as essential to the very nature of saving faith in its primary and direct exercise. Viewed in reference to the evidence upon which it rests, saving faith consists, as all will admit, in receiving, with absolute confidence and trust, the testimony of God concerning Christ—in complying with the commands, invitations and promises of God—in confiding in the ability, sufficiency, and willingness of Christ as a Saviour, and in looking for the all-sufficient grace of the Holy Spirit to regenerate, sanctify and comfort the heart. This assurance of faith is, it will be perceived, altogether *objective*, and regards the outward evidence of salvation, and warrant of our faith, and was therefore carefully distinguished by these Divines from the reflex assurance of faith, or what they termed the assurance of sense, which is *subjective*, and regards the internal evidence of a personal possession of Christ, and an interest in him.†

* See Dr. Candlish on the Atonement, p. 147, 148.

† See the Marrow of Modern Divinity, Boston's long Note on p. 144—157, 20th ed. Berwick, 1811, and p. 160, 163. From the multifarious evidence adduced, this would appear to have been a distinction common to the Reformers, to the Westminster Divines, and to our standards, see p. 147—154. See also Robertson's History of the Atonement Controversy in Scotland, 1846, p. 29, 69, &c. See Zanchii Opera, Tom. iii, De. Fide. p. 7, 4. Dr. McLeod's True Godliness, p. 244, 169. "Thou hast, I say, a lively faith, both in that direct act whereby it justifieth, and also by a prudent observation of the work in thy soul — thou dost believe by faith that thou art justified by faith, thou hast also the attendant companion upon faith, that Christian hope," &c. Wks. of Bolton, vol. 4, p. 32, 33. See also Dr. Candlish on the Atonement, p. 148, 149—156, where he affirms the doctrine

This two-fold assurance of faith—the direct and the reflex—regards different objects. The former relates to the doctrine and the latter to the grace, of faith—the former to the foundation and the latter to the exercise, of faith—the former to the root, and the latter to the flower—the former to justification, and the latter to our knowledge of it as a sense of adoption—the former to our actual belief, the latter to our knowledge of having believed. The former is the direct act of faith on Christ and his righteousness, the latter is the reflex light of this faith in the heart.* The former cannot admit of doubt, while the latter is not inconsistent with many and frequent doubts. The former is the way of salvation, and the latter, of comfort; and the only way to secure, restore, or strengthen the latter, is by the former.†

The assurance of faith is the exercise of the mind, in actually receiving and resting upon Christ. The assurance of sense or experience, is the joyful confidence that we are in a state of gracious acceptance with God, from an examination of the work of God in our own souls.‡ The former is necessary and invariable, and of the very essence of saving faith, while the latter is desirable, is a privilege, and may and ought to be attained,§ but is manifested in different ways, and given in very different degrees to different believers.¶

Assurance, therefore, implies a spiritual understanding of

– shews that the difficulty arises from the nature of language which is always reflex whereas faith is direct – and shows the essential agreement of Dr. Bellamy, Hervey and Anderson, and their apparent contrarieties. See also Luther and Melancthon, as quoted in Scott's continuation of Milner's Ch. Hist., vol. 1, p. 45, 46, and vol. 2, p. 240, 275, Calvin's views in do., vol. 3, p. 543, 550, and especially p. 549, or his Instit. B. iii, C. 11, §7, 15, 16, 17, and Milner's own admission, p. 546.

* See Marrow of Divinity, p. 292, Note, and Rutherford, as quoted on p. 293.

† See Dr. McLeod's True Godliness, p. 199!-203.

‡ Dr. McLeod's True Godliness, p. 91, 92, 169, 224. Scott's Wks., vol. 1, p. 478, 5, 6, and vol. 2, p. 297. Ridgley's Body of Divinity, vol. 3, p. 263, 266, 267. How this is to be done, see Marrow of Divinity, p. 234. Owen's Wks., vol. 14, p. 112, 112, 113, and vol. 6, p. 128, &c. East on, p. 65, 98,

118, 148, 149. See also the Morning Exercises, vol. 5, p. 613, 627.

§ See the works by Brooks and East. Shepard's Sound Believer, p. 159, in opposition to the Romish view, see p. 159, 162, and to the Arminian view, p. 161, 178, 190, 227. Bryson's Real Christian, p. 120, 123.

¶ East on Forgiveness, p. 64, 161.

divine things, communicated by the Holy Ghost, which is supernatural and divine, and in the production of which the soul is entirely passive and recipient. Previous to its reception, the soul had no such spiritual understanding, and of course in the reception of it, it could have none. The greatest number of believers, therefore, know neither the time, or place, or manner, of their conversion, the change being wrought in many, doubtless, at a very early period of life. It is only when the spiritual understanding is imparted, spiritual things become perceptible in their power and glory to the soul, giving it an assurance of their certainty; and it is only then, that holy affections, principles, and desires are produced, so as to constitute the sure ground and evidence of our personal interest in Christ. Assurance, therefore, is rational, and founded on argument, although the argument is immediate, and the evidence intuitive.[†]

II. This leads us to inquire in the second place, HOW THE HOLY SPIRIT IMPARTS THIS ASSURANCE TO THE SOUL, OR, IN OTHER WORDS, HOW THE SPIRIT WITNESSES TO THE SOUL.

WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT.

The Holy Spirit, as Scripture teaches, works in the heart *personally*, and not merely through certain laws or agencies;—directly, and not through any intermediate cause;—*instrumentally*, in, by and with His word, His ministers, His ordinances, and every other means of affecting the mind and heart;—*rationally*, in accordance with our nature, as free, rational and accountable beings, so that while He gives origin to every holy principle, thought, determination, desire and obedience; “these,” as Bishop Butler says, “He performs *in us, with us and by us,*” so that while they “proceed from Him, they are still our desires, our counsel, and our works.”[‡]

* Ridgley’s Body of Divinity, vol. 3, p. 263, Philip Henry blamed those who laid stress on such knowledge, which he thought with many was impossible. See Life and Works, by Sir K. Williams, p. 12.

† Works of Jonathan Edwards, (Williams’ edition) English, vol. 4, p. 193, and Morell’s Lectures on the Phil. Tendencies of the Age, p. 30, &c.

‡ Bartlett’s Memoirs of Bishop Butler, with some previously unpublished matter, p. 525; see also Charnock’s Works, vol. 5, p. 209, 219, &c. Buchanan on the Holy Spirit, p. 98. See also Hosea 11: 4, and Life of Philip Henry, p. 44.

The Holy Spirit, as an omnipotent, omniscient, and infinitely wise Being, undoubtedly *may* cause His direct and personal presence to be evident to the soul.* This He did to Prophets, Apostles, and other holy men of God, who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.† Even they, however, appear to have had at first difficulty in assuring themselves that it was the Lord who spake to them, as in the case of Samuel, Gideon, and others.‡

While, however, some such communication of Himself appears to be necessary to the very supposition of the inspiration of supernatural truth,§ yet, now that He has completed the volume of inspiration, the Holy Spirit does not produce this assurance by any sensible or audible voice; nor by the communication of any truth to the mind;—nor by dreams or visions;—nor by emotional excitement and “bodily exercise which profit nothing.” The Holy Spirit produces assurance in the hearts of believers *now, in all ordinary cases, and in reference to all ordinary truths and duties*, only through the instrumentality of His word, His ordinances, and those holy affections, principles and desires, which by His personal and direct operation He implants within the soul.¶ These are the means he is pleased to employ;—to which He has limited his influences;—and by which He gives evidences to ourselves and others, that we feel and act, “not after the flesh,” but under the direct guidance of the Spirit.**

We *savingly* believe in the Scriptures, not because of

* Halyburton's Life, p. 159.

† Halyburton's do., p. 159. Owen's Works, vol. 3, p. 235, and Corbet's Remains, p. 89.

‡ Locke, B. 4, cap. 19, 514. Dr. Jamieson's Reality of The Spirit's Work, p. 227, 228.

§ Owen says, he cannot tell by what infallible tokens inspired men might know assuredly they were not imposed upon, "for these are things whereof we have no experience." See his opinion quoted approvingly also in Halyburton's Works, p. 511. Owen on the Spirit, 13: 2; do. 1, §10, and Works, vol. 3, p. 296.

¶ The Word of God is the instrument, and the Spirit the agent. He only teaches and applies what is in the Bible. Buchanan on the Holy Spirit, p. 95, 184. Halyburton's Works, p. 531, 532, 534, 536, 539, and Memoirs of his own Life, p. 158-168. Owen's Works, vol. 3, p. 353, 321, 349, 350-352, 235, 239. Rutherford's Trial and Triumph of Faith, Sermon. xiv., p. 145.

** Owen's Works, vol. 3, p. 309; 413, 410, 421, 422. See also the Memoirs of Rev. James Hogg, of Scotland. Edinburgh, 1846, p. 90-91. He lived in the 17th century.

any private voice, whisper, or suggestion from the Spirit, separate from the written word, suggesting to our mind that they are the word of God. Such an internal testimony would be delusive, as it has ever proved to be, and would itself stand in need of testimony*—it would imply as many distinct reasons for believing as there are believers, and it would imply that no one is under obligation to believe the Scriptures unless he has received this internal testimony.

We savingly believe the Scriptures, therefore, to be the word of God, solely because of that evidence they give of the authority, veracity, wisdom and holiness of God, by which they were dictated. The *capacity to discern this evidence* is given by the Holy Spirit, but the evidence itself is in the Scriptures, and while the Holy Ghost is the author of that spiritual capacity by which we perceive and appreciate the evidence, it is the evidence and not the capacity which gives us the assurance of faith.†

In like manner it is by the Holy Spirit we are *enabled* to perceive the grace and glory of Christ, as He is set before us in the Gospel, as an almighty, all-merciful, all-sufficient, and all-willing Saviour, and to receive and trust in God's commands, promises, and invitations concerning Him—but it is the actual exercise of faith, hope, and peace, in *believing* these things, by which an assurance of faith is enkindled in the soul. The assurance rests not upon the spiritual capacity imparted by the Holy Spirit in regeneration, but upon the evidence and warrant of personal faith,

* See Owen, vol. 3, at p. 421 and 422: “we persuade men to take the Scripture as the *only rule*, and the holy promised Spirit of God, sought by ardent prayers and supplications IN THE USE OF ALL MEANS appointed by Christ for that end, *for their guide*.” “If we shall *renounce the Scripture*, and the instruction given out of it unto the Church, by the Spirit of God, betaking ourselves unto *our own light*, we are sure it will teach us nothing, but either what they profess, or other things altogether as corrupt.”

† “The Holy Ghost gives a spiritual sense of the power and reality of the things believed—strengthens against temptations to unbelief, and in other ways confirms our faith—but the ground of our faith is the truth of God manifesting itself in Scripture.” See this subject fully argued in Owen's Wks., vol. 3, p. 299-310, &c., 312-334, how the Scriptures give evidences of their truth, p. 334-344. See also Halyburton's Wks., Nature of Faith, p. 531, 532 and 534, 535, 539, 543, 545. Lord Barrington's Wks., vol. 1, 169, 178, vol. 2, p. 225, 230. See also Rutherford's Trial and Triumph of Faith, Sermon. xiii, p. 136, Edinb. 1845. Winslow on the Spirit, p. 269. Dr. Jamieson's Reality of the Spirit's Work, p. 41, 42, 46, 111, 238, 257.

and hope, and joy, which by that capacity we actually perceive in the word and feel in our hearts.*

In the same manner it is by the Holy Spirit, we are enabled to continue and to grow in grace, to live, and walk and triumph by faith; but our abiding assurance of faith and hope, and joy, does not arise from the spiritual capacity, which may be really strong while sensible feeling may be torpid or asleep, but it is by the sustaining, comforting, and enlivening power of graces in actual exercise, that this assurance is maintained.

In the same way, it is by the Holy Ghost, imparting to us "His own holy wisdom in that spiritual-mindedness, which is the spirit of power and of a sound mind," that we are enabled to discern between good and evil, truth and error, duty and disobedience, what is really *good* for us, and what is pleasing to us, what we would approve and enjoy hereafter, and what would seem to be immediately desirable, and are thus enabled to acquiesce in the divine will, to bear and to do what God pleases, to deny ourselves, to be active and devoted, to enter upon or continue any course of life, and, generally, to be "thoroughly furnished for every good work," so as to please God in all our ways. But it is in the actual experience of these things, in actually finding ourselves so directed, qualified, fitted, strengthened, sustained, satisfied, convinced, and blessed — that we have an assurance that we are doing God's will in that way in which He would have us to "serve the Lord."

The Holy Spirit, therefore, does not *ordinarily* make Himself known and felt in: producing within us the capacity to believe, to know, to undertake and to do what He wills, but he makes Himself known in, by, and through the exercise of this capacity when we actually understand, know, will, and do. What the Holy Ghost imparts is a new principle, capacity, or disposition called "*spiritual*," because it is a participation of His holy nature. This principle is unknown to us naturally, imparted to us while passively recipient, and unfelt by us until we find it in actual exercise within us. It is demonstrated by its conscious exercise and effects. These are entirely different from, and above, any natural exercise of our faculties of mind. They

* Edward's Wks., vol. 4, p. 343. Winslow on the Spirit, 275.
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must, therefore, have originated without us, and have been imparted to us.* And as only like can produce like, such a spiritual capacity and such spiritual exercises must prove their author to be the Holy Spirit. This they do, although we are altogether ignorant and unconscious of the time, place, and manner in which this principle was imparted and is still sustained in the soul. “The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.”

The meaning of this passage—which is the most direct and intentionally didactic on the subject of the Spirit’s operations in the whole Bible—is evidently this. “The Holy Spirit is imperceptible, and incomprehensible in the manner of His operations, but is clearly and incontrovertibly discerned in the effects produced by Him. The time and manner of His working are hid from us and inappreciable to our faculties, but His power and divinity are demonstrated by the work he accomplishes.† “Christ

* See Edwards, vol. 4, p. 343, 105, 108, 109.

† The word wind *may* be interpreted variously, as it has been, by referring it to the Holy Spirit, to man’s spirit; or more properly to the wind, but the design of the analogy—to point out the truth that as a cause which is hidden and unperceived, and beyond our cognizance, may be demonstrated by its effects, so may the Holy Spirit be known by His effects, while unknown in the actual production of them—this we say is most evident, and has been admitted, as far as we can find, by all reputable commentators and critics. Bishop Butler has elaborated the argument in a discourse on this text, preserved and recently published by Mr. Bartlett, in his Memoirs of Bishop Butler, London, 1839; p. 517, 520, 523, 524, 526. “Hominis renati per spiritum actiones conspiciuntur admirabiles, ORIGO IPSA LATET.” Poole’s Synopsis. See also Poole’s Annotations, The Westminster Assembly’s Annotations, Bloomfield’s Critical Digest and Greek Testament, Kuinoel, Koppe, &c. &c. Lampe, in his invaluable work on John, sustains the same view unhesitatingly, Tom. 1, p. 579, 580. See on the Analogy 1, K. 19: 11, 12. Cant. 4: 16; Ezek. 37: 11; Acts 11: 21; Ps. 29: 5; Is. 35: 5; Ps. 89: 16. On the doctrine, see 1 Cor. 12: 11; Rom. 11: 34; Eccles. 11: 5; 1 Cor. 2: 11; 1 John 2: 29; 1 John 3: 7-10, 14, 24; 1 John 4: 13, and 5: 19, &c. &c. As quoted in Bartlett’s Memoir of Butler, 520, and 525, Butler says: “The work of Regeneration carries great resemblance to what is observed of the wind: for, as there we gather its blowing from its sound; and other effects, though we do not see the blast, nor its rise and passage, nor are acquainted with the cause that sets it on; so may a child of God know he is such, by the effects and characters of that relation; though he do not see the Spirit that renews him, though the operations, by which he is renewed; be such as fall not under the observation of his outward senses, nor is perhaps his own mind conscious to many things by which that change is wrought in him.” “If, as hath been said, it act

means," says Calvin, that the movement and operation of the Spirit of God is not less perceptible in the renewal of man than the motion of the air, *but that the manner of it is concealed.*"*

"The Spirit itself, therefore, bears witness with our spirit,"† and gives assurance of duty, and obligation, not by any immediate suggestion or impression, accompanied by a kind of internal light or noise; nor by any distinct enunciation, in any way, of what is truth or duty in the case; not, in short, by way of *assertion*, but by way of substantial evidences and proofs. The Apostle here, as in other places, (e.g. Rom. 8: 15, and Gal. 4: 6,) declares the fact that the ever-blessed Spirit, "THE COMFORTER," does actually witness, with our spirits, and imparts to them the spirit of adoption, but *how* or in what manner the Spirit operates, this the Apostle does not attempt to define here or elsewhere. We are, however, taught in many passages that it is by the results—the fruit, earnest, seal, and impress of the Spirit, we are assured of His saving work in our souls, and of our saving interest in the Redeemer. (1 John, 2: 3, and 3: 23, 24; 1 John 4: 12, 13, and 5: 1, 9, 10, 11, &c.)‡ The Holy Spirit produces in our hearts those divine

upon us by the outward ministry of the word, by the inward dictates and reasonings of our minds,—if the *effects* only of his working be visible, *but the manner of it imperceptible, &c.*"

The Dutch Annotations, ordered by the Synod of Dort, and "published by authority," 2 vols. Fol. London, 1657, take the same view, and on Rom 8: 16, have these words—"witnesseth together with our spirit, which observes the evidences of our being the children of God, which our spirit by the Spirit of God finds in itself." Of exactly similar import is the explanation given in the Westminster Assembly's Annotations And Diodati's in loco.

Bishop Heber, in his Hampton Lectures on the Holy Spirit, also shews, that while the Holy Spirit and His work are undistinguishable by our faculties, the reality of His operation may be known from his precept and the perceptible effect. See p. 330.

Bishop Bull is very strongly of the same opinion. See Harmon, Apost. Diss. Post. as quoted in Williams' Def. of Modern Calvinism, p. 31, 32; and also in Richard Watson's Works.

* See Commentary in loco.

† Rom. 8: 16. See on this passage, in relation to the views of Calvin and the Reformers. Scott's Continuation of Milner's Ch. Hist., vol. 3, p. 548, 549, and 543--550. See a most explicit passage against all direct, sensible communications, as fanatical, in the Formula Concordantiæ, in Hase's Libri Symbolici, vol. 2, p. 672.

‡ The particle *οὐν* in this passage, "*ad nos laborantes refertur.*" says Beza.

§ See Ross on the Direct Witness, p. 24-30, and p. 30-36, where he gives

graces, qualities, desires, convictions, zealous endeavours, and holy actions, which are the genuine evidences of His working and demonstrations of His power. He shines upon His own work thus produced, invigorates and strengthens it, and by bringing these principles into lively exercise, He assures our hearts of His will and of *our* duty. The Holy Spirit testifies to our spirits, convinces, satisfies, and removes all occasion of anxiety or fear. There are, therefore, two witnesses concurring in their testimony—"our spirit," that is, our mind or conscience, and the Spirit of adoption, (*πνευμα του θεου* v. 14). "Both concur to the production of assurance: The one operates in the way of accurate examination of the state of the soul, the claims of duty and obedience, and the disposition and fitness of the soul in reference to them, in the light of the precepts, promises, and directions of God's word. The other gives efficiency to these efforts, by enabling the soul to discern in itself a mind and temper correspondent to what the word requires, and by imparting an assurance of God's favor and approbation, and of our being in the path of duty. "How this is done we cannot fully understand, any more than we can understand how He produces any other effect in our mind."*

The foundation of this argument is laid in the ultimate truths already specified,—the infallible truth of what is made known by the proper exercise of whatever faculties and capacities God imparts, and the power of God, to communicate spiritual impressions to the soul: "The spirit of man which is in him, knows the things of man," 1 Cor. 2, 11. The renewed heart or "reason," has received a spiritual principle by which it can intuitively discern and judge spiritual things. By this "spirit" we understand God's will as revealed in the Word, feel what is there promised, and exercise faith, and love, and obedience to God's will. Now of all this we are consciously assured, and cannot be deceived. The veracity of God is pledged for its certainty,

proof from Doddridge, Scott, Henry, and other Commentators. Many others will be referred to in these notes. Indeed, with the few exceptions, we specify the testimony of Commentators is altogether against this theory. Pearson on the Creed, and Dr. Barrow, both state the fact without attempting to explain the rationale.

Hodge's Commentary in loco. See also Dr. Mason's Disc. on Assurance of Faith, in Works, Vol. 1., p. 325; and Sermons, by Dr. Andrew Thomson, of Edinburgh. Appendix on Assurance of Faith.

and “our own hearts have confidence toward God.” Such spiritual exercises are the fruits and evidences of the Spirit, and are given in that Word — of which He has given us assured certainty — as infallible way-marks of His presence and of His will concerning us. And as our “spirits” assure us of the exercises themselves—the thoughts, feelings, emotions, and purposes—so do these exercises demonstrate the purpose and will of the Spirit concerning us. He is “the Spirit of truth,” and cannot lie, (John 14, 17, Tit. 1, 2) —“He searcheth all things, even the deep things of God,” and can “guide into all truth” and unto all duty, (1 Cor. 2, 10)—He is Lord and God, and worthy of infinite and implicit credit. His testimony, therefore, while it is secret and inexpressible, (Rev. 2, 17, 1 Pet., 11, 8, 2 Cor. 12, 4), inconstant; variable, and various in its sensible manifestations, is nevertheless, certain and infallible, silencing objections, scattering temptations and removing all scruples.*

On the other hand, our views and feelings as evidenced by our spiritual consciousness, and judged by our spiritual understanding,[†] are not carnal and selfish, but have supreme regard to God’s glory; are firm and abiding in their character, (Eph. 1,13); give us settled purposes, and hopes; lead the soul upward in the “cry” of earnest prayer;[‡] fill it with love to God, and with willing and earnest desires of new obedience; lead to the diligent use of appointed means; are not presumptuous and confident, but anxious, and often scrupulously doubtful; sustain us under difficulty and hindrances; give a comfortable and abiding hope, persuasion, or joy ; and thus, as well as by many other modes and operations, bear a sincere and infallible testimony to our hearts, that they are not the delusions of Satan, or the imaginations and desires of our own spirit.[§] From this double testimony we have double assurance—the best assurance of the best blessing—“a witness with a wit-

* See Forty-Six Sermons on Romans, ch. 8, by Thomas Horton, D. D., Lond. 1674, Fol., p. 246.

[†] John 1, 12, Gal. 4, 6—14, 1, John 5, 10, Eph. 1, 12, Acts 15, 8, 9, 1 John 4, 16, 2 Cor. 1. 12.

[‡] Calvin seems to place the witness very much in this, and in boldness to call God Father. See his commentary in loco.

[§] See, a Commentary on the Romans, by Rev. Thomas Wilson, Lond., 1627, Fol. Edn. second, in loco.

ness indeed.” Our rejoicing is this—even the testimony of our conscience,” (2 Cor. 1, 12). “He that believeth on the Son hath the witness in himself,” (1 John 5, 10,) “his conscience bearing him witness in the Holy Ghost,” (Rom. 9, 1).

Such is the doctrine, as we have seen, of the Westminster Divines, and such, unquestionably, is the doctrine of the Westminster standards, as adopted by our own Church: This will be found at length in the chapter “on the Assurance of Grace and Salvation,” (Conf. of Faith, ch. Xviii.) and more succinctly in the Larger Catechism, (Q. 80, 81,) where it is said that “such as” *already* “truly believe in Christ, and endeavor to walk in all good conscience before Him, may, without extraordinary revelation, by faith grounded upon the truth of God’s promises, and by the Spirit enabling them to discern in themselves those graces to which the promises of life are made, and “then” bearing witness with their spirits that they are the children of God, be infallibly assured that they are in a state of grace.” In the chapter in the Confession, it is taught that “hypocrites and other unregenerate men may vainly deceive themselves with false hopes and carnal presumptions, that they are in the favor of God,” &c. The hope of the believer, however, “is not a bare conjectural and probable persuasion grounded upon a *fallible* hope,” *such as suggestions and extraordinary impulses*, “but an infallible assurance,” &c., (as above) “attained unto in the right use of ordinary means.”

The Holy Spirit, therefore, in bearing His testimony, and in inspiring assurance, does not operate independently of Scripture by an inward light, as the Quakers teach.* Neither does He do so by an immediate suggestion of the truth,—accompanied by more or less excitement,—that any individual is saved, is pardoned, is adopted, or is called by God to any particular privilege or duty. This is the view entertained by the Methodist Church, and by some others out of that Church.

The testimony of the Spirit, says Mr. Watson,† “is a direct testimony “to, or an inward impression on, the soul,

* See the subject in this view ably handled in Dr. Wardlaw’s Letters to the Society of Friends, Glasgow, 1836.

† See his Institutes in Wks., vol. ii, p. 255, Eng. Ed.

whereby the Spirit of God witnesses to my Spirit, that I am a child of God; that Christ hath loved me, and given himself for me; that I, *even I*, am reconciled to God.”

“That a *supernatural conviction of duty*,” says the writer in this Review,* wrought by the immediate agency of the Holy Ghost, is an essential element in the evidence of a true vocation to the ministry, seems to us to be the clear and authoritative doctrine of the Scriptures.”

“The certain knowledge of God,” says Barclay, “can be obtained by no other way than the inward, immediate manifestation and revelation of God’s Spirit, shining in and upon the heart, enlightening and opening the understanding.” And this manifestation he teaches to be independent of the Word, and to convey truths new and otherwise unknown.†

Now that the Spirit cannot impart such a witness or call, except in, the way of actual inspiration, accompanied of course with miraculous attestation,—and that in all ordinary cases He does not in fact do so, we firmly believe.

1. Scripture no where warrants the opinion that He does.

2. Scripture, on the contrary, leads us, as we have seen, to an opposite conclusion. And if, therefore, it is not a DIVINELY ATTESTED FACT, that the Spirit does so operate, no graces, or convictions, or opinions, can make it a fact.‡

3. Such a witness, or call, carries with it no impress or evidence by which it can be traced to the Holy Spirit. Such suggestions, and such excited emotions, *might* arise, and often *do* arise from the operation of the mind itself, when the imaginative faculty has been long or deeply excited by sympathy, anxiety, or hope. Or they *might* be awakened by the delusions of Satan. They imply, *necessarily*, no divine impressions. They exert no holy, divine, or supernatural influence. They are not grounded upon any word or promise of God. They are, therefore, a most unwarrantable ground of evidence, and can lead to no true and abiding comfort.§

* See Southern Pres.. Review, No. 3, vol. f, p: 143, 144.

† See Apology for the Quakers, p. 19,20, and Wardlaw, p. 43, 44

‡ See Ross on the, Direct Witness, p. 39.

§ See Edwards’ Works, vol. 4, on the Affections, p. 131, 132, and Stoddard as there quoted.

Such suggestions are not evidence at all—they neither prove their own origin nor the fact they assert. They may, or may not, accompany saving and holy influences, but in themselves, they can only delude the mind with a false and groundless hope. It is only when the Holy Spirit gives such evidence as proves the truth of what is believed, that He is said to witness with our Spirits.* Then *alone* He imparts an evidence, or seal, or earnest—such as God alone could impress, and by which therefore we cannot be deluded.†

4. Such suggestions are in contradiction to the facts already established, that the testimony of the Spirit regarding truth, duty, and privilege, is limited to the word, and that it is rational and given in, through and by, our faculties.‡ The former is necessary to guard against endless error and delusions, and the latter that we may be led by “the cords of a man,” and have the witness within ourselves. Such suggestions, however, supersede and set aside the Scriptures, open up the way for every delusion,§ and are incapable of any rational evidence.

It cannot be said that such suggestions are intuitively believed, by the reason, and that they are, as they then would be, infallible, for they relate to what is supernatural and beyond the range of our natural reason; nay, they relate to things of which it is positively declared that “the natural heart receiveth them not, neither can it know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” Such suggestions cannot, therefore, be based upon the veracity of God, as evidenced in our constitution, and they are not warranted as we have seen by that veracity, as it is made known in His word. The understanding of spiritual and heavenly things, implies a spiritual capacity,—and the witness of the Holy Ghost, implies the existence of that “*Spirit*” within us, to discern, and of the work within us, which is to be discerned.

Conscience cannot attest the divine author of such sug-

* See Edwards’ do., p. 133, and Heb. 2:4; Acts 14: 3; John 5: 36; John 10: 25; 1 Johh.5: 8.

† 2 Cor. 1: 22; Eph. 1: 13; Rev. 2: 17, and 7: 3; and Edwards do, p. 133, 134, 136, 137. See also p. 343, and 2 Cor. 5: 5, with the context in Rom. 8: 16, as alluding to support under great trials.

‡ See Halyburton’s Works. Nature of Faith, p. 525; 523.

§ See South. Presb. Review, do.; p. 145, 146, 135.

gestions, because its office is the enforcement of truth or duty, and not their discovery; and because, as a natural power, it can only act naturally, and must have a rule by which to decide, and marks by which to determine. The convictions of conscience presuppose knowledge of the truth or object, of whose truth or nature it can otherwise tell us nothing.

Neither can consciousness* give such an attestation, since it can neither witness to what is past or future, nor to the nature of what is present. Consciousness only testifies to existing impressions or states of thought and feeling. It testifies, by intuitive belief, to what is in the mind itself, to states of mind, but not to objects external to it. The feeling, and the object which causes it, are entirely different and distinct. Mere feelings might be supposed to arise spontaneously, were it not for another intuitive and primary law by which we refer them to some object as their source. But whether this object is immediate or remote, bodily or spiritual, real or imaginary, we come to know in the exercise of other intuitive laws of mind in which the mind is active and not passive. In this way we recognize objects and determine their nature.†

A voice or suggestion can only make an impression on the soul. It cannot, however, lead either through consciousness or conscience, to the knowledge of its source or of the nature of that source. It remains, therefore, that the understanding should take up the impression or suggestion and bring it “to the law and to the testimony,” knowing that if not warranted by this, “there is no truth in them.”‡ But the understanding cannot act until the mind has been already supernaturally renewed, and gifted with power to discern spiritual things. It is only when so renewed and guided by the teaching of the Holy Ghost, the mind can apply the tests of the word and the tests, of its own experience, and thereby know what is truth and duty. For, supposing the mind to exist in a state of blank spiritual unsusceptibility, and supposing truth to be then communicated to it in words, what effect could these words produce in such a mind?§

* See South. Pres. Review, p. 146.

† See Mill’s Logic, p. 34, 35.

‡ The Reviewer admits that the word gives three sources of proof, by which such suggestions are to be tested. See S. P. Review, p. 146-152.

§ See Morell’s Lectures on the Phil. Tend. of the Age, p. 135-137.

This is the only rational way of receiving the Spirit's testimony, and that testimony or witness is, as we have seen, given in accordance with our rational powers. It is not then the *working* of the Spirit of which we are conscious, but the *result* of that work.* "We do not see, or hear, or feel the Holy Spirit working within us, but we are sensible of what is *wrought* within us.† There is neither a light, nor a voice, nor a felt stirring within, but there are convictions, and feelings, and desires, and the sensible graces which in Scripture are attributed to Him. The part which our own Spirit performs is, that with the eye of consciousness we read what is in ourselves—with the spiritual mind we read and clearly understand what is in the word, and feel its application to ourselves—by this also we discern the lineaments of truth or grace, or qualification for duty impressed by the Spirit upon our hearts. By the Holy Ghost also we are sustained in making a firm and confident application to ourselves, and a firm and confident conclusion respecting ourselves. And thus we are led by a most rational process and a most rational demonstration to a most rational conclusion,‡ and "that not by a tardy or elaborate argument, but with an evidence and a directness as quick and powerful as intuition." "Thus there is no whisper by the Spirit distinct from the testimony of the word. Thus there is no irradiation, but that whereby the mind is enabled to look reflexly and with rational discernment upon itself. And hence, there is no conclusion, but what comes immediately and irresistibly out of the premises which are clear to me, while they lie hid in deepest obscurity from other men. And all this you will observe with the rapidity of thought—by a flight of steps so few, as to be got over in an instant of time—by a train of considerations strictly

* See Dr. Chalmers' Lecture on Romans, upon ch. 8: 2. 16, in Works, vol. 24, p. 63. Bates' Works, vol. 4, p. 318.

† See Dr. Chalmers' do., where he illustrates from the analogy of the wind, of vegetation, and from the parable of the seed springing up we know not how, &c., p. 64, and from which we quote.

‡ Halyburton's Works, p. 523. "I observe that this light or objective evidence whereon faith is bottomed, has no affinity with, but is at the furthest remove from enthusiastic impulse or imaginations.

1. This is not a persuasion without reason. Here is the strongest reason, and the assent hereon passed leans upon the most pregnant evidence.

2. It carries no contradiction to our faculties, but influences them each in a way suitable to its nature and condition.

logical, while the mind that enjoys and is imprest with all this light is not sensible of any logic, and yet withal by the Spirit of God.”*

5. Such suggestions are transient and variable, and are incapable, therefore, of giving abiding comfort or habitual guidance, since, instead of imparting assurance, they foster doubt and pave the way either; for great presumption or great distress, according too the natural habit and temper of the mind. “The word that I have spoken,” says Christ, “the same shall judge you in the last day.”† John 12: 48. If, then, “we would judge ourselves” by this sure and all-sufficient testimony, “we should not be judged,” and “we should not be condemned with the world.” Our testimony and our judgment would be firm and abiding, and not driven about by every wind of doctrine, or made subservient to the state and condition of our feelings. But if sensible evidence of the direct and present influence of the Spirit is required, as a ground of comfortable assurance and hope, then, even when such feelings *are* present, we cannot possibly decide whence they come or whither they go; and when the saving fruits of the Spirit are beclouded, the heart is left without any anchor, and is overwhelmed with every fearful doubt.‡

6. The witness of Spirit can not be sensible, otherwise it would be felt in the case of regenerated infants, children and youth. But so far from this being the case, many of the most devoted and eminent Christians can give no account of the time or manner of their conversion or other spiritual changes.§ The same argument will apply to God the Father and the Son, to Angels and to Satan, who must all on such principles evidence their peculiar operation by peculiar impressions.¶

3. Yea more, none of our faculties in their due use do contradict, or At least, disprove it. Whereas enthusiastic impressions are irrational.

4. This is not a persuasion, nor a ground for it without, or contrary to the word, but it is in evidence of the word itself, that by it we are directed to attend to, and improve.

5. Yea, it is what our other faculties, in their due use will give a consequential confirmation to, as we have heard.”

* Dr. Chalmers' Lectures on Romans, p. 68, 69. See also Mills' Logic, p. 4,5. Halyburton's Works, p. 523, 524.

† Brooks on Assurance, p. 98, 111, 112.

‡ See Ross on the Direct Witness, p. 48, &c.

§ Buchanan on the Spirit, p. 223; and Owen, vol. 2, p. 283, 482, 492.

¶ See Halyburton's Memoirs, p. 157.

7. Such suggestions conflict with other tests of the Spirit's witness laid down in the written word. The evidences of a divine call to saving faith, or to any particular duty, such as the ministry, is made subject in the word of God—1st, to the evidence of its fruits, and 2d, to the judgment of those who are authorised to decide upon character and fitness. Now, can we believe that God would embody the infallible evidence of His call in a state of mind and feeling of which the recipient can give no account to others, nor any *rational* account whatever—an evidence which *might* be produced by the natural powers of the mind, or by Satanic influence—and to which *might* be opposed the authorised determination both of God's people, of God's officers, and of God's rule of judgment by outward fruits.*

8. Such suggestions are, to say the least, impracticable and useless. It is admitted on all hands, that they are and maybe, delusive; and that they are incapable of proof to others. They are, therefore, useless to God, who can discern the heart;—to their possessor, because he cannot certify their origin to himself or others;—and to others, because to them they are altogether inappreciable.*

9. Such operations of the Spirit must be either uniform or false. They must be uniform, because the Holy Spirit is the source of “that wisdom from above,” by which we are directed in the choice, pursuit, and successful discharge of *every* calling in life—of every duty, and in every emergency. What is necessary in one case, is proportionately necessary in all, and a witness, therefore, which is only applicable in one case, cannot be divine, but must be illusory.†

10. Such evidence of the guiding influence and direction of the Spirit is contrary to the great mass of holy witnesses in every age of the Church, and is not, therefore, likely to be correct.

Mr. Watson's authorities in support‡ of his views, utterly

* See Ross on the Direct Witness, p. 40.

† The direct testimony of the Spirit is claimed by Mr. Wesley, the Quakers, and others, as peculiar to them. This, however, would prove that the doctrine cannot be that laid down in the Bible, since it would limit the testimony of the Spirit to a small portion of those who give positive evidence of His saving, sanctifying, and comforting influences. See Ross on the Direct Witness, p. 36, 44.

‡ See given in his Institutes Wks, xi. vol., p. 269, &c., and in his Life of Wesley, Wks. vol. 5, p. 178, &c.

fail. They all of them express their belief in the FACT of the witness and influence of the Holy Spirit, but they do not profess to believe in the self evidencing manifestations of the Holy Spirit, nor in the direct and immediate suggestion of any fact or truth concerning our spiritual condition—nor in any other of his peculiar views.* With all our industry in making a somewhat extended research, we cannot find any writer beyond the Quaker or Methodist denomination, either patristic, Reformer, Puritan, Westminster Assembly, either European, English or Scottish, who adopt these views. That our assurance is, in all cases of a saving nature, produced by the direct and immediate operation of the Holy Spirit, is undoubtedly the received opinion of all Orthodox Divines. A few are willing to admit, that when it pleases Him, the Holy Spirit may and does shed abroad in the soul, an illuminating influence, giving very perceptible and unusual experience,† but this they believe is done not by way of suggestion, independent of the reading or hearing of the word, and independent of our graces, convictions and feelings, but on the contrary, in, by, and through these. The established doctrine of divines we believe to be, that all such assurance is produced by the Holy Spirit shining upon His own word, His own ordinances, and His own work in the soul, and thus giving that “demonstration of the Spirit,” which is more conclusive and certain than even mathematical reasoning.‡

* By interpreting them in his own way, Mr. Barclay makes the same writers and others also teach *his* peculiar views. See Apology, p. 23, and Wardlaw, p. 45.

† These are Owen, Halyburton, Horton, Haldane, and in one passage, Mr. Brooks. The *real* and full sentiments of these authors, however, we have had and will have, occasion fully to present.

‡ These authorities have been mostly given in the previous references upon the various topics. Some others are here added. Short, in his Bampton Lectures, enumerates among “the enthusiastic pretensions,” condemned by the whole body of the Church, “special impulses, and extraordinary illuminations of the Spirit, for the personal assurance of salvation and comfort of the Christian,” p. 166, 165, &c. He quotes in proof of the position that the Church of England has ever denied “the necessity of a sensible illumination or impulse, whether instantaneous or otherwise, for assurance of salvation,” p. 173. A number of authors and a great number of selections from the Homilies, see on p. 166, 171, and p. 231-237. See on the doctrines of the Church generally, from the beginning, p. 153-171, and on the true principles as laid down by that Church, p. 171-175. The object of the work is to illustrate the witness of the Spirit, in the various manifestations of Christian piety. On the doctrine of the Church of England, see also

11. Such evidence is contradicted by facts, which, upon the supposition of its truth, are perfectly astounding and inexplicable.

1. It is found to be in readiness *just in proportion* to the demand made for it as a prerequisite to any office or duty in any Christian community.

2. It is found to be most confident where the judgment of others is most contradictory to it.

3. It is found associated with doctrines the most opposite and contradictory in different portions of the same body, (e. g. the Quakers,) and in different bodies.

4. It is found sustaining the same individuals at different times, in the inculcation and assertion of doctrines the most palpably contradictory to each other, and to the word of God.

5. It is boldly claimed by many, who, nevertheless, have proved utterly incompetent and unworthy. Swedenborg alleged that he was constantly under this immediate guidance of the Spirit.

12. If the Holy Spirit testifies to a fact not evidenced and propounded in the Scriptures, then whatever He thus testifies, must be as infallibly true as the Word of God itself. But it is affirmed that the Spirit testifies to the teaching of Romanists, Prelatists, Quakers, Irvingites, and innumerable sects, who all teach what is contrary to the Bible and to each other. The Spirit, therefore, only testifies to what He has made known in the Word.

a Summary of Faith and Practice, by Dr. Burrow, vol. 2, p. 4, 12, 37, 38, 40, 42, 79, 80, 93, 88. See Melancthon and Luther, as quoted in Scott's Continuation of Milner's History of the Church, vol. 1, p. 45, 46, and his own views also, and in vol. 3, p. 543-550. See quotations from the Fathers, and views of many Divines in the Synod of Trent, in *ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 275, 276, 283. See the articles of the Synod of Berne, A. D. 1532, quoted in *do.*, vol. 3, p. 249, and Calvin's views and others fully, at p. 543-550. Flavel's Wks., vol. 6, p. 402, 403. Bane on the Ephesians, Lond., 1643, Fol. p. 142. Wks. of Rev. William Bridge, vol. 5, p. 167. Howe's Wks., vol. 1, p. 450. Williams' Defence of Modern Calvinism, p. 31, 32, 35. Bellamy's Wks., vol. 2, p. 503. Haldane on the Atonement, Ed. 2nd, p. 111, 157. Serle's *Horæ Solitariae*, vol. 2nd. Hurrioon's Wks., vol. 3, p. 312. Doddridge's Lectures, 4to p. 452. Waterland's Wks., vol. 10, p. 502. Bates' Wks., vol. p. 318. Winslow on the Holy Spirit, p. 239-243, 265, 300, 269-275. Bellamy's Wks., vol. 1, p. 455, vol. 2, p. 291-296, to which the reader is particularly referred. Dickinson's Marks of Saving Faith, see given in Tracts of the American Tract Society. Also the importance of distinguishing True and False Conversions, by Rev. Seth Williston, given in Tract No. 165, of *do.*

13. If the Spirit, by immediate and supernatural suggestion, imparts the knowledge of one fact or truth, He can impart the knowledge of all. And if the importance of the subject or duty makes this *necessary* in one case, then it is necessary in all, since all are of unspeakable importance and involve everlasting consequences, (Math. 5, 18, 19). Thus would the Scriptures be set aside as unnecessary, since, if texts may be pleaded for such suggestions, as it regards some truth or duty, they may be pleaded also for “all truth” and duty.

14. If the testimony of the Spirit given by supernatural and direct suggestion conveys the truth of any proposition or fact, then this truth or fact was either already in the Scriptures, or in existence, or else such a testimony is incredible, since God never required the belief of a proposition or fact which was not already true, nor does the Spirit ever testify to a fact which has not been already established. He first works, and then testifies to his own work.*

15. If it is said that this testimony of the Spirit is only by way of impulse or feeling, or shining, or voice, and not by the statement of any truth or fact—then we reply as before, that these constitute no evidence at all, and witness nothing.

Finally we remark, that such a testimony of the Spirit cannot be admitted, because its advocates are led to adopt positions, which we believe to be contrary to Scripture, and to fact, and to each other.

Mr. Watson, who has very ably and extensively written upon the subject, says we cannot love God, until we are assured by this witness of His Spirit, that He loves and is reconciled to us, since He alone knows the mind of God, and He alone can tell us that God loves us.† But we have seen that until we actually possess and exercise a spiritual mind, we cannot discern spiritual things, and cannot, therefore, either know or love God spiritually. He thus “puts us,” to use his own words, “upon the impossible task,”‡ of knowing God before we are savingly enabled to do so, which is absurd.

To know that it is the Spirit of God who speaks to us,

* See Dr. Candlish on the Atonement, p. 153, 154, and Bellamy there quoted.

† Works, vol. 2, p. 214, 215, and vol. 2, p. 262, 263; vol. 4, p. 300, 301.

‡ Do. do.

on any occasion and in any manner, we must have some criterion by which to judge of His speaking, and so on ad-infinitum. But when a spiritual capacity has been imparted, and spiritual things are understood and felt, and the Holy Spirit gives clearness to the outward evidence and power to the inward principle, then is the heart able to stand fast and rejoice in hope, and while the manner in which these gifts are bestowed is unknown, this spiritual mind enables us to love God in Christ, from whom they all proceeded.

The argument that “love to God directly implies a knowledge of His love to us,”* is therefore in one sense true, and in another untrue. Objectively or doctrinally, as it regards certain evidence of God “being in Christ reconciling sinners unto Himself, and not imputing their trespasses unto them,” it is true. But it is not true, that to love God we must have a personal, direct attestation made by the Holy Ghost to our minds, that God has pardoned and adopted us. This is not faith, but sight and sense; it makes this testimony and its fruit precede justification,† whereas the Apostle makes this “peace with God” to follow justification; (Rom. 5: 1.) and to witness to this peace, therefore, before justification, would be to testify to what is not the fact; it makes faith our work in consequence of this witness, whereas it “is the gift of God,” and the first fruit of the Spirit;—it implies that there cannot be faith where there is not already assurance;‡ and yet, Mr. Watson says, “the faith that *brings* us into this state” of “comfortable assurance,” must maintain us in it;§ thus, in one place making faith *precede* justification;|| and in another making assurance, which is an exercise of faith, precede faith.** The error, we conceive, lies in denying to faith the *instrumental* connexion with salvation, attributed to it in the word of God,†† and in making special love the ground of faith,‡‡ instead of God's warrant in the Gospel, made plain to us by

* Works, vol. 4, p. 300.

† See vol. 4, p. 293, where this is taught.

‡ See vol. 4, p. 301.

§ Do., p. 303, and vol. 2, p. 248, and vol. 6, p. 259, 264.

|| Vol. 11, 255.

** Do., p. 249; vol. 4, p. 293; vol. 11, p. 255.

†† Vol. 11, p. 262-264.

‡‡ Do., p. 267.

the regenerating influence of the Holy Ghost, "whose work is one," and who in enabling us to exercise faith, thereby produces at the same time saving faith, hope and joy.*

We agree with Mr. Watson, in believing that the Holy Ghost not only witnesses with, or in our spirit, but to our spirit;† but when he makes the Holy Spirit give "witness to the great fact that our sins are forgiven,"‡ &c., he makes *necessary* to saving knowledge what he admits the text on which he founds his doctrine may not require,§ which Scripture never asserts, and which we have shewn can never be proved to ourselves or to others. In fact, Mr. Watson admits that the *manner* in which this truth is communicated by the Holy Spirit, cannot be described, and is different in different individuals;||—that it is open to the greatest delusions;—that it requires the fruits of the Spirit to test this test and make sure this assurance; **—that it is *necessary*, and that *always*,†† and yet that it conveys no certain assurance of final salvation,‡‡ or of any permanent security;—it is according to him a direct witness of *adoption and pardon*, and is yet only "*a comfortable persuasion or conviction*," and "does not necessarily imply the absence of all doubt."§§

Such are some of the difficulties in which this theory involves its most skilful advocates. It leads ultimately to the endless circle—that we know that our feelings and convictions are saving, because of the direct witness of the Spirit assuring us that we are saved; and we know that this assurance is the testimony of the Spirit, and not of our own minds or of Satan, because of the fruits to which it leads.!!! And this theory, at the same time, substitutes an inward suggestion and experience of our minds for the only divine warrant given for, our faith in the word and testimony of God.†††

On both sides of this question, therefore, of the witness of

* See this admitted in do., vol. 11, p. 267.

† Works, vol. 292, and vol. 11, p. 261, 262, 255, 257.

‡ Do. do., 293, and vol. 11, 262, 263.

§ Works, vol. 11, p. 260.

|| Works, vol. 4, p. 301; vol. 11, p. 257.

** Do., vol. 4, p. 295, 305.

†† He admits also that this witness must be in accordance with the various modes in which it is represented in Scripture.

‡‡ Works, vol. 4, p. 303, and vol. 5, p. 175.

§§ Do., Vol. 11, p. 254.

!!! See Ross on the Direct Witness, p. 46-52. *** See do., p. 52-61.

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the Spirit, there are dangerous errors to be avoided—errors of excess—and errors of defect:—the error of the Sadducees who denied the doctrine and necessity of the Holy Spirit's influence, in order that we may in any measure and as it regards any duty—will and do what is holy and pure;—the error of the Pelagians who reduce the proffered help of the Holy Spirit to mere natural capacity, or the knowledge imparted by revelation;—and the error of the Semi-Pelagians,[†] who attribute to man's ability the preparation of the heart, and who teach that the grace of willing and acting is given in consequence of this preparation.[‡] So much for the errors of defect. But on the other hand, there are errors of excess which are as carefully to be avoided:—the errors of all, who, like Montanus, claim the special guidance and direction of the Spirit, to complete and perfect the doctrine and order of the church;[§]—the error of all, who like various sects at different periods, of the church, claimed for themselves the illapses and illuminations of the Holy Spirit for guidance, instruction and ability to preach;—the erroneous assumption also of the Romish church, in claiming the exclusive possession of the Holy Spirit for authenticating and interpreting inspired writings, and for imparting all heavenly grace;—and, finally, the error of erecting as a standard of experience and a test of sincerity, a sensible manifestation of the personal and direct operation of the Holy Spirit, as is unwarranted and unrequired by the word of God. While such a standard may accord with the remarkable experience of a few, it is adapted to throw doubts, darkness and difficulties, if not absolute despair, in the way of the truly conscientious and sincere, while it offers no obstruction to the self-confident, hypocritical, or presumptuous, and which, therefore, can do only harm, and that to God's dear and most tender-hearted and spiritually minded children.

But to our doctrine on this subject of the witness of the Spirit, there is one objection not yet noticed, and which has been deemed of insurmountable difficulty. It is urged strongly by Mr. Watson, and by the Reviewer, and is this: If the witness of the Spirit is to be gathered from the conform-

* See Short's Bampton Lectures, p. 194, 137; 145; 139.

† Do. do., p. 141, 150, 141, 144; 148, &c.

‡ Do. do., p. 142.

§ Do.

ity of our experience, and character, and motives, to those described in the Scriptures as the work and operation of the Spirit, then the witness is in fact not that of the Spirit at all; but is only the witness of our own spirit.*

Now to this objection we have several replies.

1st. This objection does not give us credit for believing and teaching as truly as the objectors can, the direct and personal operation of the Spirit in the production of every holy principle, capacity, feeling, desire and purpose, and also in upholding, strengthening, and confirming them. What we deny, is not the direct and personal operation of the Spirit, but the *sensible and self-evidencing nature* of this *process* as a necessarily required test and evidence of the reality of what is thus produced. We believe in the necessity and fact of the Spirit's operation—we deny the capacity to discern the time and manner of His operation.

2dly. The term "*witness*," is itself metaphorical, and can only be explained, therefore, by what is taught elsewhere of the nature and incomprehensibility of the divine operations.

3dly. The analogy of language and the actual usage of Scripture sustain the interpretation, that by the term "witness of the Spirit," is to be understood, the effect produced by the Spirit—the testimony given by Him in those graces of which he is the only possible author,—and this view is sustained as admissible by the construction and the context of that passage in which the words are used, (Rom. 8, 16.)† The objection, therefore, is founded upon a view of this passage, which is not necessary—nor sustained by the general doctrine of Scripture.

4thly. The testimony of our spirits to any thing within the range of our capacity, is founded on the veracity of God, and is therefore infallible, and hence the testimony of that "Spirit" which is "the gift of God," *imparted* for the very purpose of spiritual discernment, must be infallible, also,

5thly. This inward infallible testimony is rendered more assured by the infallible evidence and test of the outward word, made plain and applicable to us by the infallible teaching of the Holy Spirit. Nor is this reasoning in a circle. We are, *conscious* and therefore certain of a spirit-

* See Watson's Wks., vol. 4, p. 295, 300, and vol. 11, 255, 256, 257.

† See Stuart's Commentary in Edward's Works, vol. 4.

ual capacity. The infallibility of this consciousness we assume, though “we cannot tell whence it cometh.” And in the exercise of this capacity we discern the truth in the word and its application *to* us, and the actual existence of that grace which is there ascribed to the Holy Spirit, wrought *in* our hearts, and are therefore intuitively led to attribute that grace—whether it comforts, or directs to duty—to the Holy Ghost.

6thly. Scripture and reason both warrant: us in saying, that those spiritual views, feelings, desires, and principles which could not be produced by our natural powers, and could only be imparted by the Holy Ghost, are a direct and literal witness given by Him to our “Spirits”—speaking more loudly and incontrovertibly than if we actually heard a voice from the upper sanctuary. Nay, so assuredly are these spiritual views, the witness of the Spirit, that in Scripture they are actually denominated the Spirit,* (John, 3: 6, Rom. 8: 5, 1 Cor. 2: 14, and 15: 49, 2 Cor. 5: 17, Gal. 4: 19, &c.)

In the language of Scripture and reason, therefore, these fruits of the Spirit are the Spirit Himself, witnessing with our spirits, and demonstrating that “He who hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God.” “But how and in what manner He works these effects we know not any more than how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child. Therefore it is called a hidden life, (Col. 3: 3,) being in this respect unknown even to spiritual men, though they are themselves the subjects of it.”†

* See Howe’s Wks., vol 2, p. 60,61, and vol. 5, p. 8, 9, 12, who gives several arguments in proof. Also the Marrow of Modern Divinity, p. 295, 296, 297.

The Spirit witnesses to his operations already existing, and not by or in the operations, whether they are faith or hope, or, a conviction of duty. See Shepard’s Sound Believer, p. 231-237. Horton’s Discourses on Romans, ch. viii, p.245, 247. See also John, .14, 23, 21. Before He seals He writes. . He renovates before He consoles, and qualifies before He calls. See also Brooks on Assurance, p. 214, 215, 216.

† Burkett on the N. Test., on John 3. 8, Loud. Fol. 16th edition, p. 235. See him also on Rom. 8, 16, p: 428. The Spirit witnesses, he says, “by laying down marks of trial in the Scriptures, by working these graces in us, and by helping us to discover this work in our souls... which testify by reflecting upon them,” &c.; “all this He does not by way of impulse, &c., but in the way of argumentation.” Haldane on Rom. 8: 16, strongly insists that the witness of the Spirit is distinct from this—that it is immediate, and that it is felt—but *how* it is felt, he admits, cannot be explained. And what is thus witnessed, he makes to be “the revelation of a truth consonant to the Word of God, and made to the believer in that blessed book.”

III. Having thus cleared our way and obviated difficulties, we are now prepared, to lay down what we consider to be the nature and evidence of a call to the ministry. But the limits of this Review, and the length to which our remarks have already reached, compel us to reserve what we have to say on this subject for a future number.

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ARTICLE VII.

CRITICAL NOTICES.

1. The Work claiming to be The Constitutions of, the Holy Apostles, including the Canons. Whiston's Version, revised from the Greek; with a Prize Essay, at the University of Bonn, upon their Origin and Contents. Translated from the German, by IRAH CHASE, D. D. New York: D. Appleton & Co. 1848. pp. 496. 8vo

In the book whose title is thus given, we have the so-called Constitutions and Canons of the Apostles, works which, as to the claim of an Apostolic origin which they set up, can be regarded only as stupendous impostures, but which still have exerted a powerful influence on the world. They are unquestionably of high antiquity—were written certainly before the fifth century—and as they contain regulations and precepts, covering the whole relations of the clergy to each other, and reveal the ecclesiastical usages which were in existence, or were sought to be introduced at the period when those books were written, they are of great interest in an archaeological point of view: The Constitutions claim indeed to have proceeded directly from the Apostles, and to have been issued either by the whole College of the Apostles, or in some cases by an individual Apostle, prescribing a Constitution for the government of the Bishops, Presbyters and Dea-