

ARTICLE V.

A FEW OBSERVATIONS ON THE FOREGOING ARTICLE.*

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On every ground, excepting perhaps one, the writer of the foregoing article is entitled most fully to the opportunity which he has claimed of replying to the Remarks on the Call in our number for April last. The one ground which cannot so readily be admitted is, that *we made the attack*. Those Remarks were penned, under the impression that an attack had been made by him, which it was our duty to repel. But it is not necessary to press this point in the least. That the subject is one of importance and of difficulty; that Dr. Porter stands deservedly in the front rank of our ministry; that he considers himself to have been misunderstood and misrepresented in the Remarks;—these considerations, and perhaps it is not improper to add, the private

* This rejoinder to Dr. Porter's second article was prepared before we received the sad intelligence of our loss and the Church's loss in his death. The names *friend* and *brother* have been applied to him throughout this discussion in the fullest sense in which they are ever used. A particular friendship of more than a quarter-century's duration bound us together, and it was never interrupted for an hour. He was eminently worthy to be loved, trusted, and admired. He leaves behind him, in the whole ministry of our Church, no man of broader intellect, combined with more commanding eloquence, thorough scholarship, true-heartedness, and humble piety. His character displayed all these excellencies in a very eminent degree. May the divine Spirit qualify and call many more such men, as Dr. Abner A. Porter was, into the ministry of our Church. J. B. A.

sentiments entertained for him, of mingled respect, esteem, and affection, all unite to demand that he have the fullest liberty to criticise the Remarks. The Observations now to be submitted need not be extensive. Only here and there a point requires to be elucidated, which can be briefly done, and then the question may be left to the reader's judgment. Should it happen however that our friend shall desire to rejoin, he may rest assured of a cordial welcome again into these pages.

1. Our brother was astonished to have it said, that he “certainly condemns the term *supernatural* in reference to the call,” and in vain read his article twice over to find where and when. Let him look at the notes to page 80, and it will stare him in the face. He there quotes, as a fair sample of the theory which he denounces as fanatical, Dr. Thornwell’s statement that “a *supernatural* conviction of duty, wrought by the immediate agency of the Holy Ghost, is an essential element in the evidence of a true vocation to the ministry.”

But now Dr. Porter declares he is willing to take either sense of the term *supernatural* given by the reviewer, with Dr. Thornwell’s aid, and to say that in that sense he holds the call to be supernatural; which is so far satisfactory, and removes one supposed disagreement betwixt us out of the way.

2. There is one place, and but one, where Dr. Porter complains that “the reviewer grievously misrepresents” him. The reference made was to his language on p. 78. He is right—he was misrepresented, because he was misapprehended, and the misapprehension was occasioned by the paragraphing and the figuring which appeared together on that page. It is submitted however that the misrepresentation was not so grievous as it would have been if he had not elsewhere in the first article, and also in the Reply, repeatedly charged the theory he was opposing with pertaining in general to ignorant and fanatical people—a charge which has not been made out, and cannot be made out. This leads us to observe:

3. Dr. Porter takes the trouble to quote at considerable length from Owen and Edwards, to prove that there have been many fanatics setting up claims to a supernatural call, on the ground

of “new extraordinary revelations,” or “immediate prophetic inspirations,” “communicated by suggestions, impulses, voices, monitions, and revelations,” and “attended with texts of Scripture strongly impressed on the mind,” or “whispers and words immediately suggested or put into the mind.” It is not denied that such enthusiasts may abound now, and have at different periods abounded. This class of pretenders were expressly signalled in the sermon, which, reviewed by Dr. Thornwell, has given rise to the present controversy. “Pretensions to the Call, which are not founded upon a real call of God *properly authenticated according to the provisions of his Word*,” were arranged into three classes—the third being that of fanatics, “who claim that every one is the sole judge of his own case, and necessarily must be, and that all other evidence, but the convictions of his own mind, is inconclusive and needless.” In opposition to such fanatical claims, the doctrine was laid down that the validity of any man’s call to preach is to be evinced by three testimonies—that of his own conscience, that of some congregation, and that of some Presbytery. The testimony of the individual that he is called of God, was held to be *insufficient* though *necessary*, and the man a *deceived man* or a *deceiver*, where the other two elements of the proper scriptural authentication of the call from God did not come in. We all know that there are now, and have often been such deceivers, and that the peculiarity of their fanatical claim is, that it will allow no room for any proof, except their own convictions and assertions thereof. But, says Dr. Breckinridge, “if nothing else could be objected to pretensions of this, sort, it is sufficiently evident that the principle on which they proceed, defeats themselves—for every child of God is as really called to be a follower of Jesus, as any office-bearer can be to discharge any function for the edification of God’s people; and therefore every particular disciple is as much a judge, whether the office-bearer is divinely sent to him, as the office-bearer is whether he is divinely sent at all.” The claim of the fanatic is,—and our brother, in his first article, seems to admit the justice of it, (see p. 81), —that if conscious to himself that he is called, he might properly decline to submit his pretensions

to the judgment of the Church, for his call would authenticate itself. But the proper idea of the Church's prerogative would appear to be, that she is to sit in judgment on these professed calls which purport to come directly from God, and that no matter what may be the individual's confidence that he has been directly called of God, the Church may nevertheless reject him as not called at all. It is urged in the passage just referred to, that if a direct testimony to his call is necessary for the individual himself, similar testimony is necessary for those who are to judge of it, because lower testimony cannot authenticate a higher. This is taking for granted that the pretender has indeed had a direct call which is the very question submitted to the Church for her own separate and independent judgment. Is she is satisfied by her experience of his ministrations that he is called of God, and, also, that he can edify her? She is entitled to judge for herself upon both points, and all the individual's claims are nothing, until confirmed by this testimony of the Church and of the Presbytery.

This view of the subject makes it very plain, that no part of the testimonies collected with so much care and pains by our friend, have any bearing whatever upon the position he assails, and also that our theory of the call is very far from being that of enthusiasts or fanatics.

4. In his first article (p. 73), Dr. Porter set forth three possible answers to the question, *How* does the Spirit convince one of his duty to preach the gospel? The first, was through a direct and immediate communication of his will by an operation independent of means; the second, was by the ordinary means so used as to impart to the individual's consciousness an assurance that the call is from the Spirit. These two were represented as substantially the same, and involving equally a new revelation, and so constituting a dangerous, fanatical theory. Then on p. 79, we read: "The question is, not whether there is any putting forth of the power of the Spirit in a call to this office; but whether in ordinary cases it is only through ordinary instrumentalities, or also in a direct and immediate operation on the soul." Thus the call was dealt with as being under either view an *ope-*

ration of the Spirit—an exercise of his power. But in his Reply, it suits Dr. Porter to make a sharp distinction between the direct agency of the Spirit as involving an exercise of *power*, and as involving *instruction*; and he would fain have the reviewer to fall on the edge of that distinction. The former he admits, but he denies the latter; and he attempts to convict his friend, *first*, of confounding the two; and, *secondly*, of affirming an error in affirming the latter, viz., that the Spirit does directly impart *instruction*. Let us examine these two points:

First, then, as to the charge of confounding power with instruction, the language of Dr. Porter just now quoted, which is a fair sample of his general treatment of the subject makes it sufficiently evident that in his former article he drew no such distinction himself. But,

Secondly, as to his denial of direct instruction, the Reply, notwithstanding this denial which is generally maintained, yet in one place makes an admission which deserves to be signalled. With some warmth it repels what the reviewer said of Dr. Porter's wishing to prove that the Church and the individual could decide the question unaided by the Spirit. "Most expressly and repeatedly I affirmed that the aid of that blessed Agent is needed." "I believe in his real, present, personal, and if the reviewer please, supernatural aid. I admit even *direct* aid in Dr. Thornwell's sense of putting the soul in a condition to receive, discern, and accept the truth." (See foregoing article, p. 98). Here, then, not only is acknowledged a *direct* exercise of "power," (for the truth *ex hypothesi* is not yet received nor even discerned, and so cannot be a medium in any sense,) but there is also acknowledged here an operation of the Spirit, which would seem to be equivalent to a direct illumination of the soul respecting duty. The question being, Ought I to preach? it is acknowledged that the Spirit does directly put the soul into a condition, that is, does *directly illuminate it*, so as to enable the individual to apply the general principles of the Word to his particular case. This seems to approach very closely to the idea of *direct* instruction. The man reads the Word, but does not there perceive it to be his duty to preach the gospel. Then comes the

Spirit and *directly*, that is without the use of any means whatever, *illuminates the soul* and puts it into a condition to receive, discern, and accept the truth that he is called. Why surely this amounts to a direct and immediate call from the Holy Ghost, for it is he who interprets to the called his call. Just as the Spirit's direct illumination *of one's* soul as to the fact of his adoption is the direct witness of the Spirit unto him concerning that fact; so here the Spirit, directly and without the use of means, witnesses that one is called to preach, by directly and without the use of means putting his soul in a condition to receive, discern, and accept the truth that he is called. But this is not all. If our friend inculcates anything he does inculcate this: that the Spirit instructs *through* the Word. But there is no special revelation in the Word regarding any particular individual, making it his specific duty to preach the gospel. There is no such declaration, utterance, or precept. The Spirit therefore does not use any special truth as the medium through which he so instructs a man as to call him to preach. How, then, according to our brother, is the truth employed by the Spirit for this end? The general principles are used by him, and the individual is enabled to make an application of them to the special concrete case before his own mind by the Spirit's direct illumination. Manifestly then the Spirit instructs through no special truth, and his illumination, while it has reference to the truth, and is always in strictest consistency with it, is not imparted as to the particular case, *through* the truth, but is *directly* communicated. Now these plain consequences of an admission by Dr. Porter will do pretty well. For they seem to shut him up to agree with us, that no man is to intrude into the sacred office without a call from God, but that as God does not in his Word appoint this and that man to preach, it must be dangerous for any man to hold that he is so appointed without a direct illumination and persuasion from the Spirit thereto.

This will be therefore a good place to press the distinction between the *general* principles and deliverances of the Word and its *special* declarations—a distinction which is vital in the discussion of the question, introduced here by our brother, *How*

does the Spirit convince a man of his duty to preach? The doctrine of the Confession is true, that “the whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his glory, man’s salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture, unto which nothing is at any time to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit or the traditions of men.” But while that symbol thus holds up the Word as the perfect rule of our faith and practice, it goes on in the very next sentence to present to us the Holy Spirit as our guide and teacher. And Dr. A. A. Hodge is quoted by Dr. Porter as well pointing out how, while all “public revelations” pretended to since the apostles—as those of Swedenborg and the Mormons—have been inconsistent with Scripture, and of bad moral character; and while “private revelations have been professed only by vain enthusiasts and are incapable of verification,” nevertheless a “personal, spiritual illumination by the power of the Holy Ghost is necessary in every case for the practical and saving knowledge of the truth embraced in the Scriptures.” Dr. Hodge tells us why this is necessary, viz., our carnal and blind condition by nature. And he adds, that the illumination of the Spirit does not convey any new truth to the understanding, but only opens the mind and heart to the truth already presented in the Scriptures. Then he further proceeds to declare that “while the Scriptures are a complete rule of faith and practice . . . yet they do not descend in practical matters into details, but laying down general principles leave men to apply them in the exercise of their natural judgment in the light of experience and in adaptation to changing circumstances, as they are guided by the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit.”

Now this is a clear and satisfactory setting forth of the truth in question. The Word gives us general principles, but in practical matters it does not descend into details or give us specific rules. Men are to apply the general principles to the practical questions which arise, by the use of their natural judgment and the light of their experience as *the Spirit guides them*. Yes, the Word is our rule, general not specific; but the Spirit is our guide

and teacher. We insist with Dr. A. A. Hodge on this teaching of the Spirit in all matters of practical detail,—it is not *reason* nor *experience* merely, by which we are to apply the general rules of the Word and so order our own steps, but we must have the direct illumination of the Spirit putting our minds into a condition to receive, discern, and accept the truth revealed. We need his guidance. Men cannot dispense with it, first, because as Dr. Hodge says) they are blind by nature, and their sight is very imperfect also after they are converted, so that they are disabled in either state from making a proper use of the Word, except as the Spirit shall illuminate their minds to understand it; but, secondly, because no rule of faith could by any possibility give us specific directions touching every point of our duty. The world could not contain the books which must have been written, had God thought proper to teach us in written words every particular of what might be his will respecting every one of us. Instead of furnishing the whole world with minute directions touching every particular individual's duty respecting every affair of life, God has chosen to give us a *rule* of faith applicable to all men alike, and then a *guide* to teach the way he should go, to every man who holds that rule in his hand and seeks to learn from it his duty in particular. The Scriptures are in many cases only a general rule of conduct for us—in many cases only a negative rule, instead of being either specific or positive. Dr. Porter seems disposed to evade all consideration of this distinction, but it must be pressed upon his notice. How does the Word teach any man that he in particular is called to preach? How does it teach any minister that he is called to one particular Church rather than another? Or how is any believer to know when he interprets and applies properly the general directions of the Word to his own particular case? It is perfectly certain that the rule of our faith does not furnish us with full and specific directions respecting the way in which we should go in those multitudinous exigencies which demand that we choose between different courses that lie before us. The Word, as Dr. A. A. Hodge well says, does not in practical matters descend to details, but it gives only general principles. Dr. Porter says our

distinction between the Word as a *rule* or as a *guide*, is a “mere play upon words,” for a rule is a guide, and that every one but the reviewer knows that he does not exclude the Spirit from using the Word to guide his people. But the reviewer craves to be informed how the Spirit can use Word for guiding us in those numerous cases where nothing specific is said by it touching our duty. Of course the Spirit is omnipotent, but that would suggest that he is not to be shut up to any means whatever. In this case, the Word is clearly not sufficient *in itself*, but we have the ever blessed and Almighty Spirit making it adequate. And it would seem that this must be either in the way of *direct guidance and instruction* as to specific duties, as we have expressed it, or in the way of a *direct illumination of the soul, enabling us to receive, discern, and apply the general principles and precepts of the Word* to the particular case in hand, as Dr. Porter has preferred to express it. The reader is welcome to take his choice between the two statements. What we are concerned to insist upon is, what Dr. Bannerman sets forth so well, (see Church of Christ, Vol. I., pp. 194-199,) that Christ is both the founder and the administrator of his Church, and operates continually in and upon it through his Spirit and his Word. His ordinances are only the channels of spiritual blessings. Having impressed upon his Church a certain character, he does not abandon it to proceed according to the law or nature thus imparted to it, and does not deposit with the Church or in her ordinances a store of grace to be dispensed apart from himself. Most especially he does not leave it for the Church by herself to call his ministers. “He keeps in his own hand all the power and grace, and is ever present directly, and with his own hand, to exercise that power and dispense that grace.” None of the ordinances, not even the Word itself, has any power or efficacy apart from the Spirit making use of it, and not even to honor the blessed Word itself, may we exclude the direct agency and operation of the Lord Jesus through his Spirit. Whereinsoever he must supplement the general teachings of his Word by specific guidance, whereinsoever he must enable the soul to receive and apply to concrete cases the general principles given in the Scriptures, we have his

presence and his power to perform for us these necessary things, and so we find his Word and Spirit sufficient for our rule and guide. What we are concerned to insist upon is, (to refer again to the impressive language of Dr. Thornwell,) that the means of grace, Scripture itself included, are all so many ways TO the Spirit—the galleries in which his glory shall be seen and his power felt. The means of grace are not laws of grace. The Holy Ghost is a Person, and we stand in need of his personal interposition and personal direction. And this is promised to us in the Scriptures. The Word is not the limit either of his power or of his teaching. Let fanatics on the one hand abuse the Scripture doctrine of the Spirit's guidance, and let rationalists on the other decry it—the one weighs no more with us than the other. Be it ours to walk in the safe middle revealed to us on this subject. The argument from abuse never is legitimate; but it is as applicable to the guidance of the Word as it is to that of the Spirit. Fanatics and impostors wrest the inspired Scriptures to their own deluding, and that of others. Fanatical excesses of all kinds are dangerous and dreadful. Under the cloak of the fanatic, Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Yet the foundation of God standeth sure. The seal of the Spirit is no vain delusion, though thousands be deceived by the counterfeit stamp. Let every man look well to his own heart. (See Thornwell's Collected Writings, Vol. II., pp. 362, 363).

But let it now be particularly observed, that the admission made by our friend as to the Spirit's *directly* putting the soul into a condition to receive and apply to concrete and specific cases the general directions of the Word, is precisely what the Confession of Faith appends as a qualifying clause to its statement touching the sufficiency of the Word as our rule of faith and practice. "Nevertheless," says that symbol, "we acknowledge the inward illumination of the Spirit of God to be necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the Word." Although the Word is our rule, no man can savingly understand it except by the Spirit's *directly*, that is, without use of means, operating on his soul to illuminate it. Things are *revealed* to us in the Word, but might as well not be

revealed there, unless there be a direct operation of the Spirit on the souls of its readers; this we are all to acknowledge. Accordingly, effectual calling is, in the same symbol, said to be *by the Word and Spirit*; sanctification is also described as *by the Word and Spirit*; and saving faith is said to be ordinarily wrought by the ministry of *the Word through the Spirit*. And Christ is said, in the Larger Catechism, to perform the office of a prophet “in his revealing to his Church in all ages by his Spirit and Word, in divers ways of administration, the whole will of God in all things concerning their edification and salvation.” Thus every where, in our symbols, it is *the Word and Spirit* which are held up together, and yet apart. It is not the Spirit *through* the Word—it is not the Spirit *by* the Word which our Standards refer to, but it is *the Spirit and the Word*, or else *the Word and the Spirit*—not as though the instrument is the equal of the agent, but as though the agent acts sometimes directly and without the instrument; even as in order to our understanding the Word he operates *directly* to illuminate our souls, and even as in divers ways of administration is revealed to the Church in all ages by his Spirit and by his Word the whole will of God in all things which concern their edification and salvation. How could the Larger Catechism more distinctly than in these terms set forth the idea that the Word by itself does not compass the whole teaching of the Spirit, but that by his Spirit and by his Word Christ continuously teaches his Church in all ages the whole will of God respecting all things? And, then, as to the Shorter Catechism, what does it mean by saying that “Christ exercises the office of a prophet in revealing to us by his Word and Spirit the Will of God for our salvation?” If the will of *God* is revealed to us only by the Word, what for is it added so distinctly that Christ reveals to us *by the Spirit* the will of God for our salvation?

Now were there time and space, it would be proper and perhaps not very difficult to disprove Dr. Porter’s allegation, that the weight of the Reformed and the Puritan testimony is against the doctrine of immediate teachings by the Spirit. But it is time perhaps that both our friend and his reviewer should drop all

human authorities and come to the main question, What does the Word, which is the only and sufficient rule of faith and practice, teach about the Spirit? Is it the doctrine of the Bible that the Spirit never communicates directly with the soul of man, but only through the Scriptures? On the contrary, it asserts that he comes to the sinner dead in sin and unable to hear the Word at all, and directly communicates to him life and light—in certain cases as of infants, idiots, and the insane not making, so far as we know, any use whatever of the Word. It says that he communicates *charismata* for his own service directly to men; for, all these various gifts, both ordinary and extraordinary, are wrought in us by “one and the self-same Spirit dividing to every man severally as he will.” It says that he witnesses to the believer his being a child of God. It says the sons of God are all led by the Spirit of God. It says (by the mouth of our Lord himself), “when he the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth,” and “he shall take of mine and shall show them unto you.” Here, then, is the Word, our perfect rule of faith, telling how in certain cases its Divine Author surpasses its limits, does for sinners *directly* what itself cannot do at all, communicates gifts to his servants and light to his followers in a way itself cannot attain, guides them into all truth, and reveals to them things which, with the Word in their ears and before their eyes, they have not perceived nor understood. And thus we are taught in the Word itself that the Spirit operates directly as well as through the Scriptures on the soul of man, so that our guiding is *by the Spirit and the Word*. And now what will our brother do with the Scripture for this confession which it makes that the blessed Revealer is not shut up to the use of it as his means of operation? He cannot call the Scripture *fanatical*, and yet for these same declarations which it makes he applies at term to us.

In conclusion of this observation: The sufficiency of Scripture as the only rule of our faith and practice is a favorite topic with the reviewer, and his classes will bear him witness how much he delights to insist on this grand Protestant principle. Perhaps on no point of his official instructions is he

accustomed to dwell with more earnestness. And therefore Dr. Porter by no means fairly represents the reviewer's position, in saying that he affirms "new revelations." Of course the very last thing any one holding the reviewer's idea of the Call would say is, that it is a "new revelation." Our friend labors hard to fasten that consequence upon the reviewer's doctrine, but it cannot be done. The term *revelation* of course, whenever it is strictly applied, refers to the Word of God alone, but there is no such use of that word in the Scriptures (however our friend may seek to juggle with it) as shuts out the idea from God's Word of the direct teachings of the Spirit. We read that "no man knows the Father but he to whom the Son will reveal him;" and that if in anything we who believe are otherwise minded than the perfect are, "God shall reveal even this" unto us. Such passages, and they are many, suggest the idea of the *teachings of the Spirit* where the Word may have failed to be rightly apprehended, or may not have given positive and specific directions. We read of God's hiding things from the wise and prudent (although they did possess and consult the written Word) and revealing the same to babes who can not be instructed by the Word. We read of things being taught in demonstration of the Spirit—of things the eye hath not seen, nor the ear heard (although the province of the Word is to appeal to those faculties), but "God hath revealed them to us by the Spirit," which Spirit "we have received, that we might know the things which are which are freely given to us of God." Such is the Bible use of the terms "revealed" and "revelation," and Dr. Porter cannot produce any passages which warrant his peculiar use of these terms. The question in debate was, whether the Spirit ever communicates directly with the soul. The reviewer maintained that he does, and his friend then endeavors to throw odium on that position by charging that he holds to "new revelations," which in the reviewer's apprehension are a very different affair. With our Confession, we reject all "new revelations of the Spirit," but acknowledge the necessity of his illumination and guidance. With Dr. A.A. Hodge we hold that the Spirit's illumination conveys to the understanding no new truth that is

general, while he does guide and teach us in all practical matters as to our own particular duty. And this guidance of the Spirit is far safer than that of our own *reason* applying the Word.

5. Let the state of the question be now fairly considered. Dr. Porter began the discussion by alleging, that “in whatever way such a call [to the ministry] may be described, whether as a conviction of duty, the testimony of the man’s consciousness, etc., . . . if it is referred to a direct and special agency of the Spirit, it affirms a revelation,” and that “the idea that this call is a direct and immediate conviction or suggestion . . . not referable to the ordinary influences of the Spirit through the rational faculties of the soul and through the use of ordinary means, brings it at once within the region of blind human fancy and imagination, and of Satanic influence.” [See pp. 79, 80, 82.] And he proceeded to declare that Drs. Breckinridge and Thornwell held such a doctrine. Now it is not probable, whatever inferences we might draw from his expressed views, that Dr. Thornwell had before his mind the question, whether the call is *mediate* through the truth of the Word, or *immediate* in the sense of not being through that truth. What he *certainly did affirm* directly was the exclusion of all human agency external to the man himself as the necessary medium of the Spirit’s call, although *perhaps* he also implied that the call is so far direct and immediate as not to be given through the medium of the Word. These representations of his position will be found to have been made in the Remarks on Dr. Porter’s article, pp. 314 and 324. But now Dr. Porter (see p. 133) says definitely that he understood Dr. Thornwell as affirming that the call is direct and immediate in the sense of its being without the use of the ordinary means, and accordingly in this view especially, he applies to it such terms as “fanatical and dangerous.” In the course of the discussion he is led to maintain that the Spirit never does *directly* instruct men, but always and only through the medium of the Word. Perhaps there should be expressed here some qualification of the statement that this is what he maintains, because it does not seem perfectly certain what was the precise ground he occupied.

On pp. 98 and 99 of the foregoing article, as well as on pp. 84, 85, of the first one, he seems to allow that the Spirit does communicate with men otherwise than through the written Word, so that he makes it easy to reply to his condemnation of the belief of fanatics in "suggestions, monitions, voices, and revelations of the Spirit," that he himself says that "the heavens above and the overarching firmament" may be used by the Spirit as an "instrument to convince us of our duty," and that the winds may bear us his instructions, and also the stars, also thunderbolts and earthquakes, as well as a mother's voice or as human tears and sighs. (See first article, p. 85).

But probably this precise point of the use of the Word by the Spirit in his calling men into the ministry has been sufficiently considered in the preceding Observation. It is proposed now to drop all further question of the place of the Word in the matter of the Call to preach, that the discussion may be narrowed down to what Dr. Thornwell did certainly affirm, viz., that men are called to the ministry by a direct vocation of the Spirit, which is not mediated through any mere human agency. And now upon this point, how stands the debate between the reviewer and his friend? The former affirms a *direct* call from God, inasmuch as the individual has a conviction of conscience produced by the direct agency of the Holy Ghost. The latter maintains that the conviction of conscience is but indirectly the call of God, being inferentially deduced from the conscious possession of suitable gifts and from the judgment of the Church.

It was said by Drs. Breckinridge and Thornwell that the validity of the call was evinced by the testimony of conscience, and of the Church. They represented the conviction of duty as an element in the evidence of a true vocation, for they were alive to the danger of fanatical pretensions and were perfectly sensible of the Church's title to judge for herself all professed messengers from God. But possibly it might be said in greater strictness of speech, that the conviction of conscience is not so much an *evidence* of God's call, as his call itself. The thing to be evidenced is God's will that this man shall go and preach, and the conviction of conscience that he ought

to preach, is to that man presumptively God's call to him. This conviction is the *direct* call—it is not mediated through any one else. And it is presumptively the work of the Holy Ghost. Now comes the second expression of God's will—the testimony of the Christian people. Strictly speaking, perhaps this also is not an evidence of the call, but an element of the call itself. It is the expression of God's will through the uttered judgment of his people. This is the first element in the *indirect* call—that is, the call as mediated through others than the man himself. Thirdly, there is the testimony of a court. This is the third element in the call, or the second in the indirect call—the expression of God's will through one of the courts of his house. The call is now completed, consisting of the *direct* element of the man's conscientious convictions and the *indirect* elements of the judgment of the people and of a church-court. God's will is now fully expressed *according to the belief of these parties entitled to judge of it*, and the duty of the individual is thus clearly ascertained *to their satisfaction*. The *status questionis* may therefore be put thus

1. *The thing to be proved*, viz., God's will that this particular man should preach—in other words, this particular man's duty to preach.

2. *The proof*—God's call, which consists of, *first*, a conviction of conscience, God's direct call to the man; and, *secondly*, the two-fold judgment of the Church, God's indirect call.

According to this statement of the question the debate is reduced to this point: Whether a conviction of conscience that one should preach may be *immediately* produced by the Holy Ghost, or must always be *mediately* wrought through means and instrumentalities. And now having dropped the entangling question about the place of the Word in this matter, which perhaps may be considered as having been really foreign to the question and as having served only to embarrass it, the discussion is still further narrowed to this single point, Whether a conviction of conscience that one is called to preach may be immediately produced by the Holy Ghost, without the intervention of

human instrumentalities. The reviewer affirms and Dr. Porter denies. This is what Drs. Breckinridge and Thornwell affirmed, and perhaps it is all they did affirm touching this matter, and for this, interpreted by Dr. Porter as a denial of the sufficiency of the Word, he assails their doctrine as fanatical and dangerous. And he maintains that *gifts* and the *Church's appointment* constitute the Call without any direct operation of the Spirit upon the individual's own mind. (See *Review* for January, 1872, pp. 69, 70, 100, 101.)

Let the reader judge now between these conflicting views. Is it indeed true that the Spirit has no direct hand in calling men into the ministry, but that any man may assume the office who infers a call from being conscious of his possessing the needful gifts, provided the Church's opinion of him is also favorable? And is it on the other hand a fanatical doctrine that the man who is truly called to preach must and will feel a supernatural conviction of his duty wrought by the immediate agency of the Holy Ghost? Is it safe to say that an individual, upon his own judgment that he has the necessary gifts may venture into the awful ministry as soon as the Church will call him, but fanatical and dangerous to say that he may not do this without a call directly from the Spirit impressed upon his heart? Is it safe to say that the Church can discern that this or that particular person ought to be in the ministry, and that her appointment (with his possession of the gifts) is the Call, but fanatical and dangerous to insist that, along with the Church's call, there must be the direct vocation of the Spirit? Has the Holy Ghost anything directly to do with the Call to the ministry, or has he not? And if he has, where does his direct agency come in? If it is fanatical to hold that he directly teaches the man his duty in the premises, must it not be fanatical to say that he directly teaches the Church her duty in the premises, and so will not his direct agency in the work of thrusting forth laborers into the Lord's vineyard be altogether denied? And will it not soon come to this that calculations of expediency on the man's part, and on the Church's part, are to form the whole ground-work of a call to the gospel ministry? Now if this be not a low semi-rationalistic

view of the ministry, and be not calculated to fill our pulpits with a generation of men not called of God to the work, a generation of time-servers and preachers without the demonstration and power of the Spirit, then Church History, as it recounts the workings of Formalism and Moderatism, has no solemn warnings for us or those who may come after us.

6. Our brother says that the reviewer confounds *conscience* with *consciousness*, which confusion is the occasion of very much of the difficulty that has arisen. From this complaint, one would expect to find a clear separation betwixt these terms made by the writers who preceded the reviewer in this discussion, and especially by Dr. Porter himself. Now it is perfectly certain that neither Dr. Breckinridge nor Dr. Thornwell was concerned to distinguish carefully between these terms in relation to the call, as the reader may easily discover. As to our brother himself, it must be confessed that he appears to have in most places observed such a distinction, but he has not uniformly done so. The reader will find that on p. 79, for example, (*Review* for January, 1872), “conviction of duty,” “testimony of consciousness,” “impression fixed on the conscience,” seem to be looked upon as various modes of expressing one idea. The question therefore did not properly turn upon any difference between *conscience* and *consciousness*, but between the *directness* or *indirectness* of the call. If it were said that the Spirit makes “an impression on the conscience,” or if it were said that he employs “the testimony of consciousness,” it was with our friend the same fanatical idea, so long as the Spirit was said to act directly, and not through external means. Now, however, Dr. Porter insists upon the great importance of distinguishing between these terms. Admitting that the Spirit may produce a certain and assured conviction of his calling one to preach, our brother protests that “if this fact be made known to the man’s consciousness, that is another matter”—in fact a new “revelation.” (P. 115). And this explains the force of a sentence in the first article of our friend (p. 81), where it is said “if the evidence of such a call to his own consciousness be necessary to authorise any one to undertake the work of the ministry, then it is sufficient of

itself, without being submitted to the judgment or the Church. For such a call authenticates itself.” The writer proceeds to say the Church could not sit in judgment on a call to a man’s *consciousness*, unless she were furnished with like extraordinary testimony, because a lower cannot authenticate a higher testimony. The idea is, that if a man should plead before the Church that his consciousness tells him God calls him to preach, she must admit him to the ministry without question as one extraordinarily called! Indeed! But may not the man be *lying*?—and has not the Church the right and duty of judging for herself respecting his claims? Or, if the man believes honestly that his consciousness tells him he is called, is it therefore certain that his belief is correct?—perhaps he may only be in the position which our friend wishes to put the reviewer in, viz., of confounding terms which differ! Or, suppose that the man is actually conscious of a call to preach, is it proved by this experience of his that it is God who utters the call? The man has had the deepest and strongest possible impression made upon his mind that God calls him into the ministry—is it not conceivable that an evil spirit, instead of the good Spirit of God, is the author of his impressions? Is every honest fanatic inspired, who feels that consciousness tells him that he is inspired? Is every devotee of Satan called with a holy calling, whose mind the devil fills with such a delusion? Is not our friend confounding “consciousness” with an inference which is drawn from a deliverance of consciousness? It is precisely because there are honest as well as dishonest pretenders to special revelations made to their consciousness that the Church is divinely authorised to judge every man’s pretensions to the call to preach,

*“The facts of consciousness are to be considered in two points of view; either as evidencing their own ideal or phenomenal existence, or as evidencing the objective existence of something else beyond them. A belief in the former is not identical with a belief in the latter. The one cannot, the other possibly may be refused . . . We cannot possibly refuse the fact of its evidence [that of consciousness] as given, but we may hesitate to admit that beyond itself of which it assures. . . . The whole phenomenon, as given in consciousness, may be admitted, and yet its inference doubted . . .

and to refuse many such. When God does really call any man to preach, it follows, of course, that the man will hear the call and will know that it is God who calls him; "the call of God never fails to be convincing,"—so said Dr. Thornwell, and truly; but the converse of the statement he does not utter, viz., that the man who is convinced of his call never fails to be one called of God.

Touching the terms *conscience* and *consciousness* therefore, the confusion is with our brother, who identifies a deliverance of consciousness with an inference from that deliverance? And now it begins to appear why he is so anxious to deny that the believer can be conscious of the Spirit's operation within him. The Spirit is said in Scripture to witness to the believer, and there can hardly be such a witnessing and the believer not be *conscious of* it. Dr. Porter is evidently afraid to admit this, because he fancies that he must then admit what any fanatic may choose to declare that he is conscious of. It is a pity such a ghost as this should scare him from accepting the positive testimony of Scripture, that the Spirit does directly communicate with the children of God, and that they do know that it is he who speaks to their hearts.

And here there is a misstatement of the reviewer's idea (of course not designed by our brother) touching the evidential relation which a conviction *of* conscience sustains to the call. We are represented (see foregoing article, pp. 94, and 123, 124,) as holding that the conviction *of* conscience is one *of* the *evidences* of a man's having the consciousness that he is called to preach—that the *consciousness* of the call is first, and the conviction of conscience second—that the man *knows* first that he is called, and then conscience comes in and tells him that it is his duty to obey the call.

Consciousness is only a phenomenon; the contrast between the subject and the object may be only apparent, not real; the object given as an external reality may only be a mental representation, which the mind is, by an unknown law, determined unconsciously to produce and to mistake for something different from itself; all this may be said and believed without self-contradiction—nay all this has, by the immense majority of modern philosophers, been actually said and believed." Sir William Hamilton's *Metaphysics*, Lecture XV.

Now, let it be clearly understood, what the thing is which is to be proved, viz., that it is God's will this man should preach the gospel. The thing to be proved is, not the consciousness of the man that he is called, but what God wills respecting him—and, of this will of God, the direct proof is, that the man is conscious that God calls him to preach. Now this is substantially the same as to say that the conviction of conscience proves that it is God's will that he should preach. For to say that I have a conviction of a call, and to say that I have a consciousness of a conviction of a call are one and the same thing; just as, according to Sir William Hamilton, to say that I know, and to say that I know that I know, are one and the same. The conviction of conscience therefore is not a proof of the consciousness of a call, but the conscious conviction of conscience is the call itself directly from God to the man. And to hold that a knowledge of the call is mediated through a conviction of conscience does not make the call *mediate*, for the conscience is part of the man himself. But if a demand is made for a stricter philosophical accuracy, and the distinction is pressed, between a conviction and a consciousness of that conviction, then the case will stand thus: Not that the conviction of a call proves the consciousness of the call—that is nonsense; but that consciousness witnesses the existence of the conviction, and this, conviction is the direct call.

7. Dr. Porter considers it a very good argument against the direct call of the Spirit that its authority must be such as that no church or church—court could presume to sit in judgment upon it, since a lower authority never can authenticate a higher. But he does not hesitate to declare that every man who is conscious of having received the needful gifts has thereby obtained *indirectly* a call to the ministry, which he is bound to obey or incur dreadful guilt. (See the first article, pp. 100, 101). Thus he holds to an indirect call of the Spirit, mediated through an inference from a fact of which the individual is conscious. Here therefore is an indirect call which is fully authoritative, because it is the call of the Spirit, and it is hard to see why Dr. Porter should not insist upon every such individual man's taking on

himself the honor of the ministry without any regard whatever to the Church's sanction. The Spirit has called him—indirectly it is true, yet distinctly and positively. The authority of this indirect call is as full and complete as that of the directest call can possibly be. Such a call, therefore, Dr. Porter should say, must authenticate itself. There can be no need of submitting it to the judgment of the Church, and every man accordingly may be sole judge of his own title to the ministerial office. Such is the sweep of Dr. Porter's logic as it bears upon his own views of the call—it sanctions the pretensions of the wildest fanatic who ever raved. His indirect call of the Spirit through gifts, is as real and authoritative as our direct call of the Spirit. It can with no more propriety be submitted to the judgment of any inferior authority. Thus the argument forged by him against our position, if it has any force, must operate to destroy his own theory.

8. In his Reply to the Remarks, Dr. Porter seems unwilling to admit that he had directly charged Dr. Thornwell with the theory which he condemned as dangerous and fanatical. He is entitled of course to say in what sense he designed to be understood. Had this sufficed him, it would have been proper to say no more on that point. But he proceeds with an endeavour to demonstrate that what Dr. Thornwell said is really too dark to be understood, and to assert that the reviewer and his correspondent give incongruous expositions of Dr. Thornwell's language, so that it is plainly exhibited as obscure and confused. That there is no incongruity in these expositions, and that the thing expounded is not a confused statement, will both appear to the reader, who will examine what is quoted from Dr. Thornwell on pp. 293, 294, of the Remarks. It will be there discovered, that the reviewer and his correspondent were both of them warranted in the expositions which our brother says are incongruous. Dr. Thornwell there himself makes the comparison of the call in one aspect of it, that is, in its *mighty, invincible power*, to the Spirit's drawing a sinner to Christ; but, in another aspect of it, that is, in its *direct and supernatural certainty and force*, to the Spirit's witness with the believer that he is a child of God. Here, then,

are the two statements which our brother calls “incongruous expositions” of Dr. Thornwell’s meaning, but unfortunately for our brother, they are both Dr. Thornwell’s own statements. It is in vain our brother endeavors to show that the theory of Dr. Thornwell is dark and incomprehensible, just as he labored in vain to prove that it is fanatical and dangerous.

Dr. Porter pleads Dr. Thornwell’s statement in the unpublished letter that his “friends sometimes charged him with a spice of fanaticism,” as excusing him “if his article either expressly or impliedly made such a charge.” When it is considered that this charge, whether expressly or implicitly made, was in the strongest terms, and to the widest extent, and in the most public manner, this plea, from what might be said privately and face to face to Dr. Thornwell himself, will hardly be accepted. But what signifies any such *conditional* statement? Why not either a complete denial, or a complete acknowledgment in the premises? Indeed, to say no more about the bearing of the first article, what is the significance of the whole of the second? What signify particularly all the extracts from Owen and from Edwards about enthusiasts and fanatics, if they do not signify that the theory which Dr. Porter opposes—Dr. Thornwell’s theory—tends that way? We say “Dr. Thornwell’s theory,” for the reviewer brought forward no theory of his own. If he said any thing different from the doctrine he undertook to defend, it would have been easy of course for Dr. Porter to point it out. But probably nothing could be signalled as added by the reviewer; for whatever things our brother would point out in the Remarks as extreme, he would doubtless acknowledge are all held forth by Dr. Thornwell in that “Discourse on the Personality of the Spirit,” which Dr. Porter read “with delight, admiration, wonder, and some doubts,” but which he passes over in the fewest possible words. One satisfaction the reviewer certainly has, touching his defence of Dr. Thornwell’s theory, and that is, that whereas his friend began with expressions which seemed to be very confident ones concerning the bad character of the theory in question, he is now ready to profess that he always doubted as to the real *meaning* of it, and doubts now more than ever.

9. Numerous cases where our brother differs with us have been passed over without notice in this rejoinder. It will be seen, for example, that we give different representations of what Owen and other eminent authorities have held on the question under debate. It has not appeared worth while to say any thing more as to the opinions really held by these great men: *first*, because any reader who desires can generally get access for himself to these works, and so can compare our opposing statements; and, *secondly*, because after all it is not a question of human authorities, but of the divine testimony. Still further, it will be noticed that Dr. Porter construes the history of Calvin, Knox, and Haliburton, very differently from the reviewer. Let the reader compare the contradictory representations for himself. It is deemed necessary to make but one point relative to both Calvin and Knox. Our brother regards it as incredible that either of them should have been conscious of the direct call of the Spirit without immediately obeying it, or that Calvin, after obeying the call and preaching publicly in Paris for a time, should shrink from the work and wish to retire. He “cannot think this of John Calvin. Similarly he asks: “Who can believe” the like of John Knox? Now we profoundly venerate both these Reformers; but we find no difficulty in believing them to have been men and not gods. The hesitancy felt by Jonah, and Jeremiah, and Moses, might be felt by Calvin or Knox. Dr. Thornwell said that he resisted long his call into the ministry. The various administrations of the Spirit may be in different degrees of strength in the case of different men and perhaps of the same man at different periods. We make also one point as touching the case of each of these Reformers by itself. *First*, as to Knox’s history: Dr. Porter errs in saying that the reviewer denies the people’s right to call whom they will—there is no point clearer; nor does the reviewer see any inconsistency between the Spirit’s dealing directly with Knox’s conscience, and yet causing the final appeal which shall overcome his scruples to be in connection with John Rough’s sermon on the people’s right to call. *Secondly*, with reference to Calvin and Du Tillet: Our brother surely cannot have examined himself the correspondence

or he could not speak of it as he does. In the very letter referred to, as not containing “one word” from Calvin about his consciousness of a call, etc., he says: “If there was any ground to dispute my call, I believe that you have got no such reasons to impugn my ministry, but *the Lord has furnished me* with more firm and stable ones for my confirmation. If you entertain some doubt about that, it is enough for me that it is quite clear *to my own satisfaction.*” He also in the same letter begs his friend: “Allow me to follow the rule of *my conscience,*” and expressly refers to *Jonah’s case*, and his fear of the Lord’s *finding him out* as he did the prophet. There is a previous letter of the same correspondence, dated July 10, 1538, in which the great Genevese says, that when he first entered on the work at Geneva, he “*discerned the calling of God which held*” him “*fast bound,*” and expresses his “*assurance*” in the continued “*guidance of the Lord,*” upon which he felt that he could more safely rely, than “*upon his own judgment.*” Calvin has no tincture of Rationalism in his creed—he does not lean on *his own judgment* in the things of God. Neither does his creed smack at all of Popery, nor yet of Independency—he does not implicitly rely on the judgment of *the Church*. But it is to *the Lord* he chiefly looks for direction in reference to questions of duty—the Lord by his Spirit and his Word.

10. In the close of his article, and indeed in the very last sentence, Dr. Porter introduces a new view of the theory opposed by him, declaring it—to be “deeply infected with the virus of the prelatial, sacerdotal and apostolical-succession spirit.” This is a most unexpected and extraordinary utterance. Hitherto our condemnation has been that of the *fanatics* and *mystics*—now as our brother is about to lay down his pen he launches this new thunderbolt! The first impression made by this charge was, that our friend was joking—and the next, that he must count *fanaticism* and *mysticism* attributed by him previously to the reviewer to be not quite so bad as *semi-rationalism*—the charge we had insinuated against his theory; and must therefore intend to throw in this additional accusation against our doctrine just to be even with us! Nor has the most careful reflection enabled us

to discern any serious foundation for this charge. Surely history does not exhibit, if we have rightly learned its lessons, any actual alliance, in general, of fanatics or mystics with prelacy, sacerdotalism, and apostolical succession. Those who abounded in the twelfth century, and again in, the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, were, generally, enemies, not friends, of the Papacy. And then the philosophy of the case would seem equally with the history of it to contradict Dr. Porter. What is the favorite and leading idea of prelacy and sacerdotalism and apostolical succession? It is that the Church has a deposit of knowledge, power, and grace, in her hands, with authority to use and administer this deposit herself, (see Bannerman's Church of Christ, Vol. I., pp. 206-210); but the Scripture doctrine is, that Christ is the administrator no less than the founder of his Church. Accordingly the theory defended by us is, that the Head of the Church himself calls whom he will into the ministry. So far from our sympathising with apostolical succession, the idea which we hold forth is, that the Holy Ghost directly deals with the individual consciences of true ministers, and that the chief ground of their right to preach is not any external thing whatsoever, but the inward and supernatural and direct call of the Spirit. We exalt the spiritual; but prelacy and sacerdotalism and apostolical succession exalt the external. And Dr. Porter himself insists that the call comes *from the Church*, or at least *through the Church*, and not *directly from the Holy Ghost*.

Christ did directly call men to bear rule in his house while he was on the earth, but now in his absence the Church calls in his stead, and not the Spirit! In the matter of the Call then, the Church, and not the Spirit, is the Vicar of Christ! Let the reader look at Bannerman's Church of Christ, Vol. I., pp. 83-90, and see how closely this view approximates to that of the Church of Rome. So then what we, in this discussion with our brother, insist upon, is the *Spirit's* part, and what he insists on chiefly is the *Church's* part. The reader may decide whether of the two views is the more consistent with "prelacy, sacerdotalism, and apostolical succession."

To conclude: All which the two writers, who have been de-

fended in this review asserted, was simply that every true minister is called of God, and feels more or less confidently assured of it. They urged that men cannot make ministers. They said it is not safe nor right to persuade all who seem to have the needful gifts that they ought to preach; and they said that no man may preach unless he feels God's commission certified to his heart. What they insisted on, was simply that the called will feel his call with a more or less deep and strong assurance wrought within his mind by the Holy Spirit. They held, that when God calls, the called man will hear and will know that God calls, nor will he be able always to resist the call. Upon this comes our brother and avers that here is a dangerous and fanatical claim to "new revelations of the Spirit," and that to say that the Holy Ghost can impress upon the mind a conviction of duty, and the man be conscious that the Spirit does call him is of the Evil One himself! The call to preach is not from God directly or immediately, nor is it individual and specific, but it comes always through the Church, and is for every man who has the needful gifts and qualifications! Let the reader judge between these conflicting theories, and especially let him revert to the two passages quoted from Drs. Breckinridge and Thornwell as the foundation of the serious charges made against their theory—let him revert to those passages now, after this long discussion, and say if they really do contain anything that is very bad or very dangerous,

For ourselves, we are profoundly impressed with the belief that their theory of the call is not only true, but very important to be urged at the present time. We are just now in far more danger of the rationalistic than of the fanatical extreme. The doctrine of the Spirit is far more hateful to this worldly age than even the doctrine of the Church. The tendency of our times sets more strongly towards a cold materialism than towards even the pseudo-spiritual—certainly with thoughtful and leading minds. There is too much tendency with many to persuade men into the ministry, as an affair of mere human calculation and expediency. Perhaps with some of the *persuaded* there may be a disposition in these times of pecuniary pressure amongst us to

seek the ministry for a livelihood. There is too great eagerness with many to usher all who have gifts—sometimes alas! in very moderate quantity—into the service of the Church. We do want more, yes, many more ministers; but we want none whom the Church shall herself make. It is not the call of the Church, it is not the possession of any natural gifts which ought to move any man to engage in this work, but the call directly from the Spirit. It is men whom the Lord himself sends that we want to see running with his message to dying sinners. It is the Lord himself we desire to have thrust forth the laborers into his harvest.

