

Testimonium Spiritus Sancti Internum.

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EARLY in the war there was published in Paris a book by one Pescari, a grandson of M. Renan, the author of *The Life of Jesus*. It was introduced to the public by a preface from the pen of M. Bourget, who is, I fancy, among the most eminent of living men of letters in France. And it had the honour of being crowned by the French Academy of Letters. Though issued as a romance, it was understood to contain, under a thin veil, a strongly autobiographical element. It did not deny that the author had been brought up in the sceptical principles of his grandfather, or that, in being launched on the society of literary Paris, he had lived with the freedom too common there. But, becoming a soldier, he was sent out to the part of North Africa in French occupation. Living there in enemy-country, he was disciplined in vigilance and unselfishness by having to consider continually the safety of the men under his charge. Being often on the borders of the Sahara, he acquired habits of meditation, whilst wandering forth from the camp into the safer portions of the surrounding desert. He had always been a reader; but now his reading took a more serious turn, and he became a student of the Bible. One text especially laid hold of his mind—the saying of the centurion who sent for Jesus to come and heal his servant—‘For I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers: and I say unto one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.’ Every action of his daily life threw light on this text, and the text, in turn, threw light on every aspect of the daily routine. It penetrated, however, by degrees far more deeply into his mind; because he seemed to see in it both what the Saviour had done for him and what he might do for the Saviour. When he returned to Paris, he lost no time in letting it be known that he had undergone a spiritual change; and, when his book was published, not only did it exhibit his favourite text on the title-page, but the name it bore was *The Journey of the Centurion*. At the outbreak of the war the author was in the camp at Cherbourg, and he was among the first to be sent to the front. But his career

terminated within a fortnight; for he fell in the battle of Rossignol.

In this incident there are many points of interest; but the one on which I wish to fix attention is the part played in it by a verse of Holy Writ. In such spiritual crises it is no unusual thing for a Scripture text to discharge what Socrates would have called a maieutic office. Even where the mind may have been sceptical before, the impression of a divine evidence seems to sweep all doubts away, without the need of scientific inquiry. It is as if God had revealed Himself suddenly with irresistible and immediate testimony: and thenceforth He speaks not only in the particular text, but in His Word as a whole. This is what is called, in theology, the *Testimonium Spiritus Sancti Internum*.

This phrase has a sound of mystery; and it certainly belongs to that aspect of religion in which it is described as ‘the secret of the Lord’; yet it ought not to be incapable of theological control. The object of the present article is to furnish a definition which will bring it within the range of theological science; and I will attempt it in the following form: *When the Spirit of God is performing any of His characteristic operations in the spirit of man, any text of scripture embodying the truth which ought then to be filling the mind is apt to come home with unique force and conviction.*

Let this definition be tested by any of the characteristic works of the Holy Spirit. Of these our Lord Himself supplied a list when He said that the Spirit of Truth, when He came, would convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment.

First, *the conviction of sin*. This it is the office of the Holy Spirit to produce, and He may do it through a great variety of means. For days or weeks or years the awakening of the conscience may have been becoming more and more intense. Now, when the mind is in this condition through the operation of the Holy Spirit, any text of Scripture, describing sin as God sees it and setting forth its guilt and punishment, is apt to come home with overwhelming power.

Of this we have a memorable instance in the

case of St. Augustine. Living at the time when heathenism was giving place all over the Roman Empire to Christianity, he was caught between the two opposite influences. His father was a heathen, living with the freedom of a pagan; and Augustine was a pagan himself, living in a connexion which Roman morality did not disallow, but Christianity sternly condemned. His mother, on the contrary, was a Christian in whom the new religion had done its most perfect work. Well did the son know that he was prayed for every day, and that she was watching for his conversion. Other powerful influences of a Christian kind were brought to bear on him when, at the age of about thirty years, he went, as a teacher of rhetoric, to Milan, then the second capital of Italy and an imperial residence. The bishop of the city was St. Ambrose, now reckoned along with Augustine among the four great teachers of the Latin Church. At first Augustine went to hear him on account of the elegance of his Latinity and the eloquence of his delivery; but it was not long before his attention was captured by the truth itself. Under the preaching of Ambrose remarkable conversions were taking place in very high circles. One day an acquaintance, calling on Augustine and finding him engaged in reading the Epistles of St. Paul, expressed surprise at seeing him thus occupied; but, when Augustine confessed that he was now a reader of this kind of literature, the visitor testified that he had recently become a Christian himself; and he went on to mention other cases of young men in the imperial service who, in circumstances of extreme difficulty and at great sacrifice, had just confessed Christ. By this recital Augustine was so profoundly moved that, when the visitor took his leave, he turned to Alypius, a friend with whom he lodged, crying, 'What is it? What is wrong with us? Didst thou hear what he said? The uneducated are taking heaven by storm; but we, in spite of our learning, are wallowing in sensuality.' There was a garden behind the house, into which he moved quickly, followed by Alypius, and, sitting down, he went on talking in the same strain. But, feeling a rush of tears coming on, he was hastening alone to a remoter part of the garden when he heard from a house on one side of the garden the voice of a boy or girl, probably engaged in some game, saying, 'Take up and read, Take up and read.' In his excited condition he interpreted this as a divine

command to go back to the house and read the book with which he had been occupied. Hastily retracing his steps, he glanced at the roll, and the very first words which met his eye were Ro. 13^{13, 14}: 'Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying; but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.' It will be seen that these words struck straight at the besetting sin in which he was entangled; and the sword of the Spirit proved the weapon required to cut his bonds, which fell at his feet, allowing him to step forth free; and he lost not an hour in communicating to his mother the blessed news that all her prayers had been answered. There had been going on for years a process of conviction; but now this came suddenly to a head. God Himself was passing judgment on his sin; but at the same moment God gave him the power to abandon and despise the evil habit. Never afterwards did Augustine doubt that God had spoken to him in the words of this text, and the divinity and authority of this one word extended themselves to all the words of Scripture.

Secondly, *righteousness*. If the conversion of St. Augustine is an illustration of the conviction of sin, equally is that of Luther connected with righteousness. Luther had, indeed, been long himself under the conviction of sin, though in a very different form from Augustine's; and this discipline of the Holy Ghost led on to something higher, culminating in a passionate conviction that righteousness was the all-in-all which he must obtain, if he was to live. To enjoy the favour and approval of God had come to appear to him the one thing worth seeking; and he was searching the universe, to know where he might find it.

It was in this state of mind that he came upon the text in the first chapter of Romans: 'For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.' The position in which this verse stands seemed to guarantee that it would contain the solution of the problem of salvation; for he already knew, from the grasp he had obtained of the general drift of Scripture and from the anticipations growing in his spiritual nature, that the gospel must be not of works, but through the grace of God alone. He was, however, for a long time completely baffled by the traditional interpretation,

which made 'righteousness' in this passage to be an attribute of God; for, as thus taken, it yielded no sense or connexion with what goes before or comes after. But, when it dawned on him, being probably suggested by some scholar or commentator, that 'the righteousness of God' here means a righteousness provided by God and given for nothing to sinful man, his mind was flooded with light, and this verse shone ever afterwards as a revelation sent to him in his despair, not only to remove his depression, but to fill him with gladness and thankfulness.

There was in this case no stumbling on the text, as in Augustine's. On the contrary, Luther had long been pondering this very passage and bringing to bear on it all the resources of learning and mental energy at his command; and this proves that there is no special virtue in the surprise or fortuitousness with which a text may present itself to the inquiring mind. On the contrary, the more knowledge of Scripture there is in the mind, the better; and, the more the Scripture is studied, the more likely is it to yield what is required at every exigency. The point to be noted, however, is that the Spirit of God, who had Luther's spirit in hand, used the witness of a great text to terminate his anxious inquiry and give him complete mental satisfaction. It would be a profitable task to collect the passages of Scripture which have been most used in this way in the course of centuries; and it would be found that, while unlikely passages have sometimes been used to bring peace, those most frequently employed for this purpose are the deepest and most gracious messages in the Word of God, wherein God offers His Son, or the Son offers Himself, as the Saviour of sinners. It is not, however, unusual for even the most hackneyed texts of this kind to present themselves to the mind in such circumstance as spiritual discoveries of the greatest novelty, the simplest elements of gospel-truth dawning on the mind with all the freshness of revelation; and this seems to prove that the apprehension of the truth is not a common act of the understanding, but a conviction brought home by the action of the Spirit of God. This is not, however, to be ascribed to any outflashing of supernatural light in the moment when the passage of Scripture is read or heard, though the subject of the experience is apt to describe it so, but rather to the state of soul into which the person has been brought

through the antecedent operation of the Holy Ghost.

Thirdly, *judgment*. The whole course of a Christian life, from the initial experiences just described to the consummation when, at death, the soul, made perfect in holiness, passes out of this world, may be comprehended under the term 'judgment'; for the conduct in which it consists is a daily and hourly judging of what is right and what is wrong, what is wise and what otherwise, what is excellent and what is more excellent. The approval and the choice of what is in accordance with the will of God may be said to form the path of progress which has to be trodden.

The Spirit of God, however, has also the business in hand; for the perfecting of the saints involves His glory quite as much as it does their welfare. There are two ways in which He leads forward those who have committed themselves to His guidance. On the one hand, He is leading by Providence and, on the other, by the Word. His providence extends to every incident of a human experience, and He is pledged to make all things work together for good. On the other hand, He is also daily guiding by the Word, making it a light to the feet and a lamp to the path, so that nothing escapes from its illumination. These two operations go together and work into each other. Every day the providential leading raises questions in the exercised mind, and the reading of the Word supplies the answers. Everyone who is in the way of seriously committing the course of his life to God, and at the same time daily reading the Word of God, is aware how wonderfully the two fit into each other, the course of Providence demanding the enlightenment of the Word, and the Word interpreting the riddles of daily duty. The pilgrim knows that his path is not of his own choosing, but intended by a higher wisdom for the development of character, and the daily reader of the Word of God knows how it seems to be expressly fashioned for the situations into which Providence brings him. If there be in our human existence such a thing as an authentic divine voice audible to man, it is this interpretation of Providence by Scripture.

It is not, however, all plain travelling for any pilgrim on this journey. The path gets darkened and confused by both error within and misleading voices without—by the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life—by the world,

the flesh and the devil. This is what we call temptation or what Jesus, in the passage where He spoke of 'judgment,' characterized as 'the prince of this world.' The classical example of resistance to such onsets of the powers of evil is the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness; and it is well known what a decisive part, on that occasion, was played by the Word of God. It was by wielding this sword of the Spirit that Jesus discomfited the tempter. It is not to be thought that the words of Scripture, in this incident, came to His relief in any way different from that in which similar ones may come to any other tempted human being. In all probability He had learned them all by heart, storing them up in His memory; and word of Scripture learned by anyone in this way are like the arrows in a quiver, ready to be used as occasion may require. No doubt, however, each, as it arose in the mind of the Son of Man, would be identified with a glow of delight as a weapon supplied by the Spirit for the occasion, and would be remembered afterwards as a word stamped and sealed with the testimony of God Himself. At any rate, this is what takes place in our experience; and such victories are like flags marking the progress of Christian attainment.

It is not solely, however, in private experience that this interpretation of Providence by Scripture, and of Scripture by Providence, takes place: the same thing is experienced on the larger scale of society. There is a German proverb that the history of the world is the judgment of the world (*Der Welt Geschichte ist der Welt Gericht*); and those who study present-day history in a religious spirit can use for its interpretation the Word of God. Many do so, and find the application of Scripture to events national or international no less remarkable than its bearing on those of private life. During the War multitudes of Christians have been reading the news brought from the seats of war day by day in this light, and they have had no difficulty in discovering the manifest tokens of divine judgment. Especially in the final passages was this searching light almost painfully visible; and, when principalities and powers were swept from their places, and the greatest of them all had to go begging for an asylum in a foreign land, who could fail to remember the passage in Isaiah where, on the arrival of the king of Babylon in the world of shades, the mighty kings of bygone generations rise from their thrones, to greet him and ask with

astonishment, 'Art thou become like unto us?' Only let us be glad that the fallen monarch in the present case still lives and may, therefore, through the process of judgment, now impending, be granted repentance unto life.

The *Testimonium Spiritus Sancti Internum* may be said to have been restored to Christendom, or at least to theological thought in this country, by the late William Robertson Smith, Professor of Hebrew in Aberdeen. In the process of introducing to the knowledge of his countrymen the modern Biblical Criticism, he had to take up positions irreconcilable with the current ways of stating and defending the inspiration of the Bible; but he appealed from these to older views on the same subject, which, he maintained, had been those of the Reformers and even of the divines of our own country by whom the confessional books were framed by which so-called heterodox opinions have now to be tested. The cumbrous modes of proof for the divinity of Scripture, of which errorlessness is the central feature, were, he held, the invention of a later age—of post-Reformation orthodoxy—but he proposed to lead the Church back to the faith of a time when the perception of the divine was more direct and intuitive. 'If I am asked,' he stated, 'why I receive Scripture as the Word of God, and as the only perfect rule of faith and life, I answer, with all the Fathers of the Protestant Church: Because the Bible is the only record of the redeeming love of God, because in the Bible alone I find God drawing near to man in Christ Jesus, and declaring to us, in Him, His will for our salvation. And this record I know to be true by the witness of His Spirit in my heart, whereby I am assured that none other than God Himself is able to speak such words to my soul.'

On turning in the direction in which the accused professor pointed, scholarly minds found the facts to be as he had stated. Calvin, for example, passes very lightly over the arguments for the divinity of Scripture derived from such testimonies as those of prophecy and miracles, but reposes with perfect security on the internal witness of the Spirit of God; and this is the more remarkable for two reasons—first, because he undertook more than any other of the Reformers to derive everything directly from God's Word, for the authority of which he might, therefore, have been ready to accept every kind of external support; and,

secondly, because, like the other Reformers, he was confronted by those then termed Anabaptists, who appealed to the inner light, with which Calvin's appeal might have been supposed to have considerable affinity. Even more surprised, however, were inquiring minds to find that in the symbolic documents of the Presbyterian Church the authority of Scripture is based, not on errorlessness, but on more interior qualities, and especially on the testimony of the Spirit of God.

The aim of Professor Robertson Smith was probably pretty faithfully expressed by one of his friends and supporters, who, at the time, issued a pamphlet bearing the title *The Bible Independent of Criticism*. He wished to place the Church in a position from which she could regard with equanimity the operation of both literary and historical criticism. While rejecting the distinction, which some scholars before him had adopted, that the Bible *is* not God's Word, but *contains* God's Word, he distinguished between 'the general veracity of the Bible as a credible account of the historical origins of our religion, which is to be proved by the ordinary methods of historical evidence, and the infallible truth of the divine Word, the spiritual doctrine, the revelation of God Himself, which is the substance of the record.' 'So long as we go to Scripture only to find in it God and His redeeming love, mirrored before the eye of faith, we may rest assured, that we shall find living, self-evidencing, infallible truth in every part of it, and that we shall find nothing else.'

I have never felt quite sure that the thesis of Professor Candlish, the friend of Professor Robertson Smith above alluded to, that the Bible is independent of criticism, can be maintained. It is independent of a sane and reasonable criticism; but unfortunately all criticism is not of this character; and it would not be necessary to go far to find examples of a style of criticism which, if the charges brought by it against the Scriptures could be substantiated, would negative beforehand every claim to divine authority. There is, for example, a criticism of the Old Testament to which the suggestion would not be alien or abhorrent that the Book of the Law discovered in the Temple by Josiah and his friends not only was the Book of Deuteronomy, but was found there because they had themselves put it there, and was palmed off by them as something which they well knew it

not to be. There is a criticism of the New Testament which does not allow more than seven of the words of Christ to be indubitable and thus robs the great and precious promises which proceeded out of His mouth of the direct authority of the Saviour. If such were the real character of the Bible as a whole, I venture to say, it would be the duty of honest scholarship, not to help Dagon to his feet, but to smash the idol. The very least that Christian Apologetics must be held responsible for is to prove that the writers of Scripture desired to tell the truth and succeeded in doing so. This may not, indeed, have precluded certain infirmities in the human authors, the results of which have not been obliterated; but these no more interfere with the transmission of the divine message than the various readings which have crept in during the transmission of the book to modern times—this comparison is Professor Robertson Smith's, and these are almost his very words—but the total result is worthy of the God of truth. The notion that the Bible is independent of criticism makes the task of the apologete too easy, tempting him to fall asleep at his post, like a general so confident that the citadel is safe that he neglects to defend the outworks through which it is to be attacked; and it has, in fact, encouraged a habit of bringing against the Bible charges of inaccuracy and personation with a recklessness never displayed towards any other literature under the sun.

Professor Robertson Smith was wont to distinguish between the divine communication of God's heart and will in the Bible and the record of it, much in the same way in which anyone might distinguish between a letter and the envelope in which it is conveyed, though I do not remember that he himself made use of this illustration. Even the envelope, however, of a letter is not a negligible quantity to persons of taste. In shape and colour it must be congruous with the sheets within. If it come from a lofty quarter, such as a government office or a king's court, it is likely to bear some mark or stamp by which it is dignified. And so, if the Bible be what it claims to be—a message from the King of kings and the Lord of lords—it is likely to bear even external indications of its high origin, and these it is the task of Apologetics to point out.

But the letter, not the envelope, is the thing; and the merit of Professor Robertson Smith consisted in the clearness with which he defined this

divine essence in the Bible and claimed for it unique authority. The very name of Apologetics, as well as the place usually assigned to this discipline in a theological curriculum, would seem to suggest that the ordinary work of the apologete is of a preliminary and introductory nature, belonging to the region of probability and possibility; it is external and intended for the outsider. But Christianity can claim, and ought to claim, to have Apologetics of quite a different order—not for the outsider, but for the insider, not external and merely probable, but internal, experimental and demonstrative. When, in the ways discussed

above, the Scripture has, through the operation of the Holy Spirit, convinced of sin, righteousness and judgment—when the reader finds that, the more he reads the Bible, the better he grows, and that, the better he grows, the more he reads it; and when this continues for a lifetime with a growing sense of reality and blessedness—then there forms itself in the mind an assurance of conviction about the Bible and its truth which the happy possessor is apt to compare with the certainty of the axioms of geometry, and which, at least he can say sometimes, fills him with a joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Literature.

MRS. GLADSTONE.

THE biography of Mrs. Gladstone, which her daughter Mrs. Mary Drew has written—*Catherine Gladstone* (Nisbet; 12s. 6d. net)—is more than a surprise. It is a revelation. Everybody knew Mrs. Gladstone as the devoted wife of the great British statesman, and she was as devoted as we understood her to be. There is an amusing anecdote of her interest in his speeches in the House of Commons. It is quoted from the *Recollections of an Irish Judge*:

‘In the House one day I noticed, looking at the Ladies’ Gallery, that a small patch of the dull brass grille shone like burnished gold. I asked an attendant if he could explain it. “That,” said he, “is the place where Mrs. Gladstone sits to watch the Grand Old Man whenever he speaks—she rests one hand on the grating, and the friction, as you see, has worn it bright.”’

Yes, she was devoted. What she was to him, what difference her devotion made to him and to the world, history is unable to tell. But she was more than an adoring and self-sacrificing wife. She was a woman, we see now, of an independent mind and an exceedingly rich individuality. Her presence was itself a power. She was a queen and moved as a queen among gladly obedient subjects. Her humour and her emotional sympathy went well together, like high-bred horses. Her gift of giving was a Godlike endowment. And her womanliness was always the first and the most

penetrating impression. How often did she meet a difficult situation by readiness of resource:

‘Mr. and Mrs. Gladstone had flitted up to London during the Recess, and were staying in Harley Street for a day or two—there was practically no household, and they had arranged to go to luncheon with their next-door neighbour. They were on the point of starting when the bell rang and Lord Granville was shown in. “Can you give me some luncheon?” he said. Mr. Gladstone was just about to explain that unfortunately there was no luncheon, and that they were going out for luncheon. What was his surprise when Mrs. Gladstone broke in before he could answer—“Oh yes, dear Lord Granville, too delighted to have you.” Such was her husband’s confidence in her powers of resource, that he veiled his astonishment and drew Lord Granville into the empty dining-room for his talk.

‘Like a scene in a play, presently the door opened; footmen entered with trays; the cloth was laid, the table dressed, the butler brought in wine, etc. Mrs. Gladstone had quietly slipped out of the house and brought back with her the whole contingent—hostess, servants, and food—from next door. Chuckling with delight, Mr. Gladstone seated himself at the head of the table, and turning to his hostess, now by a miracle changed into his guest: “May I have the pleasure of giving you some of this excellent pie? I have special reason for highly commending it,” etc. etc.’

The biography is more than a success as a