

of mind. And this state of mind, which we express by the terms faith or belief, is understood by all—by the child as well as by the philosopher.—This state of mind cannot exist apart from some statement of fact, some declaration or testimony,—these are always presupposed to exist when we speak of faith or belief. It is implied too, that we understand the meaning of the words made use of in the statements, and comprehend the idea which they were intended to convey; otherwise, it is impossible to exercise faith,—there are certain statements which we must believe, so soon as we hear them, if we understand the meaning of the terms used, such as the axioms of Geometry, the first principles of Arithmetic, and Natural Philosophy. This arises from the very constitution of our nature—God has so formed us.

Then, with respect to Moral evidence, there are certain conditions which are requisite in order to faith in it. We must not only understand what is stated, but there must be in the statement nothing contradictory, nothing impossible (when we take all things into consideration). The moral character of the witnesses, whose testimony we are called to receive, will also have a considerable influence in carrying faith, no doubt, in the mind before which the testimony is laid. Indeed, when all the laws which respect moral evidence are fully complied with, both on the part of the witnesses, and on the part of those to whom the evidence is made, the result, faith in moral testimony, is as certain as if the statement had been an axiom of Geometry. For if moral evidence does not produce its legitimate effects on the mind and conduct, all that we can say is, the testimony has not been believed.

2. Faith in the testimony of God.

If faith be the belief of testimony, then *Scripture faith*, is just the belief of the statements contained in the Scriptures. This faith has respect to all statements recorded in God's Word, all facts, doctrines and duties—all precepts and promises—all exhortations and examples recorded; belief in these, is faith in the testimony of God. The state of the mind called *faith*, is the same in all, whatever be the statement believed. But the different dispositions and feelings of the mind, as well as the effects manifested in the conduct, flow from the nature of the truth believed.—“By faith a Christian believeth to be true whatsoever is revealed in the Word, for the authority of God himself, speaking therein, and acteth differently upon that which each particular passage thereof containeth, yielding obedience to the commands, trembling at the threatenings and embracing the promises of God, for this life and that which is to come.”

—Confession of Faith, Chap. xiv. sec. 12.—Keeping this in view, we may fully understand those declarations which are made in the Old Testament Scriptures, respecting the faith of the ancient saints. Their faith had respect to the express statements which God had made; these statements respected certain blessings promised to them, or to others through them. They knew God, as the living and true God, and gave implicit credence to his word, for they had in his perfections every warrant which they could require, in order to an active belief or perfect faith in his declaration. The consequences of this simple but sincere trust in his statements, were love, obedience, patience, and submission under trials and privations. Then, as now, there were some who possessed a stronger faith than others, or who exercised a more decided trust in the testimony of God. But it is evident that the faith of these ancient saints, under the former dispensation, had respect to truths presented in a different form or garb. Truth was then viewed through symbols, now we view the plain statements of the Spirit in the Word. Then the truths which they were called to believe were neither so numerous nor so explicit, as possessed by the Church of God now. Their is no essential difference between the faith of the saints of God under the former dispensations and the faith of God's people now; only, the one saw through a glass darkly, believing in promises of God respecting good things to come, the Christian looks at truth clearly revealed, respecting these things. The faith of both is simply belief of the testimony of God.

3. The objects of Scriptural Faith.

These are the objects respecting which God speaks in the Scriptures. He tells us respecting his own existence and perfections; and the statements which he makes respecting himself are designed to give us proper notions, so far as creatures can possess them, of all that he is in himself, and respecting the relation which he stands to others. Christ is presented

in the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit also is the object of faith. Indeed, all those things with respect to the knowledge of which we are indebted to revelation, are objects of faith, and these things are more numerous than at first might be supposed. Light shed by the Scriptures over all things, and in consequence of this, we can see all things clearly. But those things which we know only by revelation, are emphatically the objects of faith. The whole scheme of grace—God's purposes which he proposed in Christ Jesus before the world began—respecting the salvation of sinners; this purpose as it respects those whom he has chosen in Christ,—the mission, person, character and work, of the Saviour, and by implication as well as by statement—the fall and depravity of man—the necessity, as well as the reality, of the work of the Holy Spirit in the conversion and sanctification of the soul—the existence of the soul after death (for the Scriptures have brought life and immortality to light)—the resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust—the general judgment—and the final condition of the righteous and wicked—these, as well as many other truths, for the knowledge of which we are indebted to the Scriptures, are the objects of faith. We may reason respecting some of these truths, and see their conformity with the soundest dictates of reason, but they are not the ones on that account, matters which the Spirit of God has made known to us. But with respect to some of these truths, our reasonings and illustrations are often the means of obscuring, rather than setting them in a clearer light. For example, we may reason respecting the immortality of the soul, we may refer to facts in nature, which, we suppose to be somewhat analogous to the resurrection of the body, “but what will our reasonings prove,” if we keep out of view the testimony of God in his word? Our reasonings respecting the certainty of a future state, founded on the nature of the soul, (about which we are very ignorant) is like attempting to grasp a shadow, but when we take God's word for it, we have a reality which will never fail us.

Saving Faith, is the cordial belief of the testimony of God respecting Christ as the only mediator between God and man, it is the same as that which has been called justifying faith,—for the persons who are saved, are “justified by faith in Christ, from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses.” The objects of saving and justifying faith are the same, and the final issue is the same. The only difference between this and scriptural faith, in general, is this: Faith, in general, refers to the whole truths recorded in the Scriptures; Saving Faith refers especially to the truth respecting Christ as the Saviour of sinners. But how many truths of mighty moment are believed by the soul, when it is brought to receive Christ and walk in Him. Need we refer to those scripture statements respecting man's sin and guilt or those respecting his alienation from God by wicked works? The person who exercises this faith, not only receives these statements as the very truth most sure, but in this, as in many other matters, his consciousness corresponds with the testimony of the word—he sees his sin—he feels his guilt,—then the truth respecting Christ appears all important. The Son of God, an all-sufficient Saviour, Emmanuel, God with us, and God in our nature, set forth the propitiation—as the substitute of sinners, “he was wounded for our transgressions—he was bruised for our iniquities—the chastisement of our peace was on him, and with his stripes we are healed.” All the statements which represent Christ as the only Saviour, the all-sufficient Saviour, are cordially believed; and all those statements which represent all the blessings of salvation as conferred on men, in consequence of the mediation of the Saviour, have the full assent of the believer's soul, and thus he believes to the saving of his soul. There are some who have called this cordial belief of the truth respecting Christ, and the blessings of salvation through him.

Appropriating Faith, which is the act of the person who sincerely believes the truth as applicable to his own case. When he reads the testimony of God respecting man's depravity, he is conscious of his truth, and says, “so I am vile.” It causes those in whom it is, to speak in the first person, whether confession is made, or compassion is sought, or the offers of salvation through Christ are embraced. God's threatenings and promises, invitations and offers, are not only regarded as sincere, but as made to him, as truly as they are made to all.

We may consider the influence of faith in the sanctification of the soul, on some future occasion.