

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *Bibliotheca Sacra* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bib-sacra_01.php

THE
BIBLIOTHECA SACRA.

ARTICLE I.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE "TESTIMONIUM SPIRITUS SANCTI:" A CONTRIBUTION TO ITS HISTORY IN THE REFORMED CHURCH DURING THE SIXTEENTH AND SEVENTEENTH CENTURIES.¹

BY D. W. SIMON, PH. D., PRINCIPAL OF THE CONGREGATIONAL THEOLOGICAL HALL, EDINBURGH.

THREE stages may be distinguished in the history of the theology of the Reformed Church down to the close of the seventeenth century; or, as it perhaps would be more exact to say, three classes of theological writings—using the word "theological" in a wide sense—may be distinguished down to the date mentioned: First, the *prae-Systematic*; secondly, the *Systematic*; thirdly, the *Scholastic*. In the *prae-systematic* class, we may place the writings of Zwingli, Capito, Bullinger, Peter Martyr Vermilius, Œcolampadius, Beza, and others; to the *systematic* class, belong, first, as its founder and leader, Calvin; then W. Musculus, Dusanus, Hyperius, Aretius, Boquin, Olevian, Ursinus, and Sohnius;

¹ This article is a continuation of the one published in the *Bibliotheca Sacra* for January, 1891, to the introductory remarks of which I must now refer my readers.

in the *third* class, Zanchius, Piscator, Keckermann, Chamier, Alsted, Wendelin, Heidegger, Turretine, Maresius, Alting, and Voetius, in whom the Reformed scholasticism may be said to have culminated; with the chief Federalists, Burmann, Heidanus, and Witsius.¹ The list of names here given lays no claim to completeness.

I. First, in point of time, comes Zwingli, with his more immediate coadjutors, who, whether from constitutional disinclination or previous training, or because their minds were so fully absorbed in the practical tasks that devolved upon them, wrote little that can be properly designated theological; at all events, in the systematic sense. Their position, in this respect, was more like that of Luther than that of Calvin.

1. *Zwingli.*

Zwingli, no less than the rest of his fellow-Reformers, attaches great importance to assurance of faith in relation both to personal salvation and to the divine authority of Scripture. But, from whatever reason, his statements on the subject are far more vague and indefinite than those of Luther and Calvin. Something was due, no doubt, to the native character of his mind, which was sober, practical, common-sense, little disposed to speculation or mysticism, more external than internal in its habit. More, still probably, to the fact that, instead of having, like Luther, to fight his way through difficulties due to his early training, to his firm belief in the authority of the church, to the lack of sound teaching and other causes, Zwingli grew up in refined surroundings, where the noblest elements of the natural man were called into play; and fell early under the influence of a teacher, Thomas Wytttenbach, who taught his pupils to expect the downfall

ical eyes; and to look alone to Christ and his work for salvation. His start, therefore, was different; though it is decidedly groundless to speak as though his interest had at first been chiefly or exclusively that of the theologian, or of the man of culture, or of the politician. A mere theologian after the modern type, destitute of personal religious experience, could never have become the Reformer he actually became.¹ No! his convictions and experiences were as essentially and truly evangelical as those of Luther, though the two were perhaps not so closely related and intertwined. One would perhaps, too, be justified in saying that, owing to the difference in their starting-point, Zwingli's religious life was rooted more directly in God as God; Luther's, more in God through Christ and his atoning work; or better, that, Zwingli never having experienced the dread of God that shook Luther's soul to its very foundations, his relation to God was marked by greater ease than Luther's, and that he, on that account, alluded less emphatically and frequently to that which had removed Luther's fear. Zwingli refers in a variety of ways to the blessed relation which he holds to God—a relation, be it not forgotten, which he distinctly and constantly recognized as due to Christ:—

"In God he is calm and confident; God is the Sabbath of his soul. God is his one and all; God is the incomparable, the supreme good, the one, exclusive originator and disposer of salvation; he feels he cannot quit God; he surrenders himself unconditionally to God, whose instrument he is; God is the proper object of faith; to believe is just to trust God, to have God; and whatever is reckoned a part of faith besides this, yea, even Christ and his redemption, the word of God, the church's means of grace, are but

¹ See Hundeshagen "On Zwingli" in *Stud. u. Kritiken* (1862), pp. 640-678; Lücke quoted there, p. 666. Even at the time when Luther nailed his theses to the church door at Wittenberg, he was forced to say of himself: "Haerebam enim id temporis magna quadam superstitione Romanae tyrannidis." How much more ten years earlier, when he was on a visit to Rome and eagerly visited all the churches and went through all the performances which were presented to such as would gain the favor and peace of God! *L. c.*, p. 678. Compare Dörner, *l. c.*, pp. 283-286 ff. Cf. Schweizer's *Glaubenslehre*, Vol. i. p. 14, and Goebel there quoted.

means for bringing about an immediate relation to God. The certitude of the soul consists in heartily trusting God. On God alone, on the grace of God, of which Christ is the mediator and pledge, on the workings of divine grace in and for man alone, can salvation rest; not on anything human, anything external, anything finite. Confidence which has not God for its centre is unbelief, is idolatry; whereas the greater our faith in God, the more is God, the eternal and unchangeable power of all good, in us." ¹

As I pointed out in the first paper, the witness of the Holy Spirit has two aspects, which, for the sake of brevity, I termed the *practical* and *intellectual* aspects: the former relates to the sinner's acceptance with God through Christ, to the fact of his sins being forgiven for Christ's sake, and thus his eternal salvation being secured; the latter, to the divinity of the origin and authority of the word of God, through which the message of forgiveness or news of reconciliation has come to the sinner. With this latter must not be confounded the insight into the mind of God as set forth in Scripture wrought in the mind of believers by the Spirit of God.

(1) Let us see now what Zwingli has to say bearing on the first point, namely, *the witness of the Spirit to the believer's personal acceptance by God*:—

"True faith is to put undoubting trust through Christ in the omnipotent God: such faith, where there is no doubt, is implanted by God himself." ²

"According to the New Testament, baptism is the sign of a covenant or league, and was not instituted for the purpose either of making the baptized righteous or of confirming their faith; for it is impossible that any external thing should confirm and establish faith, seeing it is an internal thing. Faith proceeds from God, who draws our minds to himself." ³

"Faith can by no means be drawn or learnt from words: God himself is its teacher. No one believes who is not drawn by the Father." ⁴

"Faith derives its origin, not from human reason, from the wisdom of the flesh, or from our knowledge; but from the Spirit of God illuminating and drawing us." ¹

"The Spirit of God [he remarks on the passage regarding the Comforter in John xvi.] teaches the meaning and mind of God *within*, in the heart of man." ²

Speaking of his method of treating parishioners who were still hampered by Romish prepossessions, he says:—

"I preached the word of God, knowing it would work; and if any one insisted on praying to the Saints, I just said, Very well, do as you like; I shall pray to God alone. Let us see who will fare the best. By-and-by those who were most opposed to me, began to hang after God. For they tasted within how sweet the Lord is." ³

"Regarding faith, the apostle says in Heb. xi., It is the substance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen; consequently not an uncertain opinion, but a firm, essential, thorough confidence, and entire clinging to these things, by which Paul means, to God himself. Faith is, moreover, a clear, undoubting certainty; a bright light in the soul." ⁴

"Faith is the symbol, sign, and fruit of election. He who believes knows himself to be elected." ⁵

"Faith is the gift of the Holy Spirit alone; and every believer knows himself to be a child of God by election." ⁶

"His principle [says Dorner] was that only in the most high God himself can truth, rest, and life be found. No mediator, nothing creatural, be it church or letter of Scripture or sacrament, can take his place or may separate us from him. Not merely would it be to lower our goal, but to rob God of his honor. Divine truth will not rest on any testimony less than its own; it leans on itself; it witnesses for itself." ⁷

In commenting on Rom. viii. 16, he says:—

"The Spirit of God bears witness with our spirit, that is, with our mind, that we are also sons of God; he teaches us within, persuades us and makes us certain that we are sons of God. They who have drunk of the Spirit of

¹ Resp. ad Val. Comparem, Vol. i. p. 232.

² Explan. Articulorum. Articulus xviii., Vol. i. p. 28.

³ Hundeshagen, p. 690.

⁴ Schweizer's Central-Dogmen d. ref. Kirche, Vol. i. p. 124.

⁵ L. c., pp. 124, 125.

Christ, perceive within that they are sons of God. If any one do not perceive that he is a son of God, he has not yet this Spirit." ¹

This is, perhaps, the most distinct approach that Zwingli makes to a doctrinal statement of the Spirit's witness in its practical aspect; but from the circumstance that it is immediately suggested by one of the chief passages on which the doctrine is based, and that when dealing with the inner life independently his language becomes much more vague, we may infer that he can scarcely have made the subject matter of distinct reflection.

(2) Nor is he really any clearer or more definite with regard to the *intellectual aspect of the Spirit's witness*.

Considering that he posits a looser connection, not only between the *word* and personal salvation, but also even between Christ *as known* and salvation, than Luther, Calvin, and most other—not all—Protestants, this indefiniteness is scarcely unnatural. With regard to the first point he says, for example :—

"Faith is a gift of God, which we receive without foregoing works or merits; the Spirit blows where he will; election is a free act of the divine will; the Holy Spirit gives faith, however, *in an ordinary way*, to no one who has not been first preached to." ²

Referring specially to the Sacraments as viewed by the Romish Church, he uses language going beyond the point at issue, and says :—

"Grace is given alone by the Spirit. But the Spirit needs neither guide nor vehicle; for he himself is the force and carriage by which all things are borne." ³

Reasoning from this position that as all creatures live and move and have their being in God and are therefore of a divine race and have in them divine energy, he uses the remarkable words—words which might be put into the mouth of the broadest of modern broad thinkers :—

¹ Works, Vol. iii. p. 427.

² See Schweizer's Central-Dogmen, etc., Vol. ii. p. 101.

³ See Schweizer's Glaubenslehre, etc., Vol. ii. p. 566. Compare Dorner, pp. 317, 282.

"When I adduce the testimonies of heathen writers in addition to Holy Scripture, I am not alarmed by the hard judgments of those who have not yet learnt that writings are termed divine when they proclaim what the pure, eternal, and inerrant mind thinks. Shouldest thou find anything in Plato or Pythagoras in which thou notest a divine source, do not despise it, because a mortal has written it; but press on all the more to fellowship with God, in order that thou mayest see the light of truth all the more clearly; as we see that these men were not permitted to confess the religion of one God, though they inwardly possessed it; for such religion, wherever it may be found, is from God. From this source both Plato and Seneca drew." ¹

He is far, however, from undervaluing Scripture, as many are in danger of doing who chivalrously and rightly rejoice in the pearls of truth which they discover in ethnic writings.

But let us see what he says with regard to the second aspect of the Spirit's witness:—

"Scripture cometh from God, not from men; and the God who enlighteneth will enable thee to understand that the word cometh from God. God's word ought to be held in supreme honor and to no word should such faith be given as to his word. It cannot err: it is joyous; it teaches itself, it opens itself and illumines the soul with all salvation and grace, causes it to take comfort in God, humbles it so that it loses, yea, undoes itself and lays hold on God in itself." ²

In an interesting bit of autobiography, he tells us:—

"When some seven or eight years ago I began to devote myself entirely to the study of Holy Scripture, theological and philosophical questions would persist in intruding themselves on my attention. At last I was driven to say to myself, 'Thou must leave everything on one side and just find out the pure mind of God from his own simple word.' Then I began to ask God for light, and the Scriptures became much clearer, although I merely read them." ³ "The Holy Spirit must give to man immediate certainty of the truth. If we rely on the external word without the witness of the Spirit in us, we shall be relying on a creature, which can neither help us nor prove a substitute for the fellowship of God. Nor may we ascribe saving power either to the outward word or to the Sacraments. What the living word has alone to do is to impel us to seek Christ, in order that he may speak and work in us by his Spirit and give us the experience of his consolations and fellowship. This is the inner word which has its seat in the souls of believers; the inner teacher who has

¹ See Zwingli's "De Providentia" in Schweizer's Central-Dogmen, etc., p. 110. Compare Dorner, p. 281.

² Zwingli Op., Vol. i. p. 79, "Von der Klarheit und Gewüsse des Wortes Gottes."

³ See Dorner, *l. c.*, pp. 280, 283.

power to renovate the inner man. ¹ When this inner teacher has worked, we shall profitably call the letter, the outward words and signs, to mind. Their purpose is to stir us up to seek the truth inwardly. Words are signs, a spur, which drives, does not run. It is the inner word that first makes the outer sure and certain." ²

Nearer to the point than in these quotations, Zwingli does not come. It will be evident, therefore, that though he touches, he does not grasp it; he has experienced the inner certainty, but he seems to identify the *witness* of the Spirit with the immediateness of the certainty caused by the Spirit. At all events, he is by no means so definite on the subject as was Luther and as we shall find Calvin to have been. Whether he would have accepted the doctrine, had it been brought distinctly under his notice, cannot be decided. What he says about the inner word might incline us to the affirmative; his general characteristics would suggest the negative reply.

As fairly representing the remaining writings of the first class, we may quote from the works of Bullinger and Peter Martyr Vermilius.

2. *Bullinger.*

Bullinger's nearest approach to our subject is contained in the following vague passage:—

"This Spirit of God doth testify with our spirit that we are the sons of God, and therefore heirs of his kingdom. We are therefore a new creature, repaired now according to the image of God and endued with a new nature or disposition . . . walking . . . according to the working of the Holy Ghost by whom we are regenerate. The same substance and form of the body abideth still: the mind is changed, the understanding and will renewed. For by the Spirit of God the understanding is illuminated, faith and the understanding of God and heavenly things is plenteously bestowed and by it unbelief and ignorance are expelled." ³

¹ Note the affinity between Zwingli and Barclay.

² Dorner, p. 290.

³ Bullinger's "Decades" (Parker Society). Decade iv. Sem. ii. (Vol. iv. p. 101). Cf. Decade v. Sem. iii. (Vol. v. p. 94f.).

3. *Peter Martyr.*

Peter Martyr's¹ most distinct references to the witness of the Spirit are as follows:—

"I have always considered that there were two chief grounds for accepting the truth of the divine letters (*litterarum div.*), namely, the Spirit of God, and the word of God itself. Concerning the Spirit see John in chapter viii., who represents Christ as saying, 'If you have God for your Father why do ye not accept or hear my word?' Inasmuch as it is very certain that we should not have been adopted sons of God, apart from the intervention of the Holy Spirit, Christ testifies in this place that we are able so to distinguish his voice from that of a stranger, as that it shall be manifest and certain to us. Nor is it to be doubted that it is by the power of the Holy Spirit that we are constituted Christ's sheep, who do not follow errors and heresies (which are the voices of strangers); but Christ's voice alone, that is, the true genuine sense of Holy Scripture."

After quoting Paul's words to the Galatians, "It is no longer I that live, but Christ that liveth in me," and to the Philippians, "To me to live is Christ," he goes on to say:—

"Which words signify no less than that the godly live in Christ and Christ in them; and that too by his Spirit. It is written also in the Epistle to the Romans that the Spirit of God bears witness with our spirit that we are sons of God. Nor is it right in any way to put aside a testimony that is so certain. Whosoever hath not that witness in himself is unworthy to be called a Christian." "And thus in the midst of the tribulations, which the world and Satan bring upon us we can spend our life joyously and tranquilly, seeing that we are most fully persuaded by the Holy Spirit himself that we shall attain eternal life."² "Which words (Rom. viii. 16) sufficiently show that a distinction is to be drawn between the Spirit who testifies and that spirit to which the testimony is given."³

Elsewhere, however, he says: "Our faith has always to struggle with a certain amount of doubt: wherefore it behooves us to pray that God would increase our faith."⁴

In the last quotation but one, the distinction between the witness-bearers is plainly enough recognized; but no

¹ *Loci Communes D. Petri Martyris, Londoni, 1583, p. 25.* Peter Martyr Vermiglius (Vermigli) was an Italian refugee.

² *Petri Martyris Loci, p. 434.*

³ *L. c., p. 407.*

⁴ *Pet. Martyr, p. 251, quoted in Schweizer's Glaubenslehre, Vol. ii. p. 541.*

effort is made to determine the difference, if difference there be, between the witness borne by the Spirit and that borne by the man to himself. I have not been able to find any references to the intellectual aspect of the witness of the Spirit that deserve quoting.

II. As representatives of the systematic writers, I shall adduce Calvin, Ursinus, and Sohnius.

1. *Calvin.*

Calvin, who was the second great Reformer, if not in time,—for he came on the field later than either Luther or Zwingli, not to mention others,—yet in influence, first demands our attention.

With regard to his position in the great work of inaugurating the Reformation, the following words of an eminent German theologian will probably commend themselves to the judgment of most:—

“Classical as Calvin’s writings are, above all his ‘Institutes,’ no one of them is a Reformatory writing in the sense in which the writings of Luther and Zwingli deserve that description. The Reformation had begun; Protestant doctrine, as to its chief features, was complete, its inner antitheses had already revealed themselves, when he began his work. His business was, in the main, to formulate and systematise religious materials that were already in circulation, and to make them the basis of practical organizations:—a task which, it must be confessed, he accomplished in a masterly manner.”¹

Calvin came whilst still young under the influence of men who had already been directly or indirectly influenced by the writings of Luther; men, too, who commanded respect for their character, intellectual power, general culture and position; so that, in this respect, he resembled Zwingli rather than Luther. Yet it must not be supposed that he effected the transition from Romanism to evangelical faith without severe struggles. It is possible, too, that but for the death of his father to whose will, in the style of an ancient Roman, he bowed in quick obedience, the process of change might have lasted much longer and been attended

¹ Hundeshagen in Studien und Kritiken, 1862, p. 695.

with far more difficulties. Originally designed for the church and, in fact, already in the enjoyment of a benefice, at his father's wish, against his own inclination, he turned to the law, which then promised more speedy advancement. Referring to the experience which led him to give up Catholicism, and with it all prospect of worldly profit and advancement, he writes:—

"To this pursuit [namely, the study of the law] I endeavored faithfully to apply myself, in obedience to the will of my father; but God, by the secret guidance of his providence, at length gave a different direction to my course. And, first, since I was too obstinately devoted to the superstitions of Popery to be easily extricated from so profound an abyss of mire, God, by a sudden conversion, subdued and brought my mind to a tractable frame, which was more hardened in such matters than might have been expected from one at my early period of life. Having thus received some taste and knowledge of true godliness, I was immediately influenced with so intense a desire to make progress therein, that although I did not altogether leave off other studies I yet pursued them with less ardor."¹

The studies to which he refers were probably theology in general, the writings of the German Reformers in particular, and especially the Scriptures; but more exact information with regard to his early development has not been furnished. We know less of it than of Luther's.

The unity which has characterized the theology of the Reformed Church, as compared with the Lutheran, is due doubtless in part to the fact that one and the same man was at once its practical and theological leader. If Luther had been his own systematic theologian, the history of German theology might have been very different from what it was, at all events during the centuries with which we are here concerned. Especially would this have been the case with the doctrine of the "witness of the Spirit." Luther's practical experience thereof and insight into its nature was as rich as Calvin's—perhaps indeed richer; yet how long ere it secured anything like the formulation and position in Lutheran The-

¹ Commentary to the Psalms, Vol. i. author's preface, p. xl. See p. xliii for an account of the origin of the "Institutes," which he calls a "Summary of the Principal Truths of Religion."

ology, which Calvin gave it at the very outset! So far, too, as Calvin's influence extended, the doctrine of the witness of the Spirit found distinct recognition not only in Confessions of Faith, but also in Systems of Theology. Indeed, it may well be that the place given to it by Hunnius, and after him by nearly all the Lutheran systematic theologians, was due to Calvin, though some of them labored under the impression that a stress was being laid on it by the Reformed Church which was fitted to open the way for those whom they styled fanatics.

(1) Let us see what Calvin himself says with regard to the *practical aspect of the Spirit's witness*.

Express statements, as well as numerous incidental allusions, make it quite clear that he regarded the word of God which he preached as identical with the Scriptures,¹—as the means whereby forgiveness is brought home to the mind of the sinner. It will suffice to quote the following words, which are the more significant as having been directed against those who were thought to undervalue the Scriptures and to exalt the direct teachings of God:—

“Non enim ideo (Dominus spiritum suum) promisit, ut *praetermissa scriptura* per nubes et aera vagemur, sed ut veram ejus intelligentiam adipiscamur eaque contenti simus. Haec enim sunt verba Christi, ‘cum venerit Spiritus veritatis patefaciet vobis omnia quae a me audiistis.’ Videmus eum non promittere apostolis spiritum qui novas doctrinas fabricet, sed qui solum eos confirmet in evangelio, quod ipsis fuerat praedicatum.”²

With regard more especially to the Spirit's witness to the sinner's acceptance the following passage may be quoted:—

its blindness, that it is always blind even in his light. Hence without the illumination of the Spirit the word has no effect; and hence, also, it is obvious that faith is something higher than human understanding. Nor were it sufficient for the mind to be illumined by the Spirit of God unless the *heart* also were *strengthened* and *supported* by his power."¹ "The word cannot penetrate our mind unless the Spirit, that *internal teacher*, by his enlightening power, make an entrance for it."² "But if the illumination of the Spirit is the true source of *understanding in the intellect*, much more manifest is his agency in the *confirmation of the heart*, inasmuch as there is more distrust in the heart than blindness in the mind; and it is more difficult to inspire the soul with security than to imbue it with knowledge. Hence the Spirit performs the part of a seal, *sealing upon our hearts the very promises*, the *certainty of which was previously impressed* upon our minds. . . . The apostle . . . teaches that the hearts of believers are stamped as with a seal and calls it the Spirit of promise, because it ratifies the gospel to us."³ "Pernicious is the scholastic dogma that we can have no stronger evidence of the divine favor towards us than *moral conjecture*, according as each individual deems himself not unworthy of it."⁴ "But, they say, it is rash and presumptuous to pretend to an undoubted knowledge of the divine will. I would grant this, did we hold that we were able to subject the incomprehensible counsel of God to our feeble intellect. But when we simply say with Paul, 'We have received not the Spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God' (1 Cor. ii. 12), what can they oppose to this, without offering insult to the Spirit of God?"⁵ "The Spirit is called the 'Spirit of adoption' because he is *witness* to us of the free favour with which God the Father embraced us in his well-beloved and only-begotten Son, so as to become our Father and give us boldness of access to him; nay, he dictates the very words, so that we can boldly cry, 'Abba, Father.' For the same reason he is said to have 'sealed us, and given us the earnest of his Spirit in our hearts,' because, as pilgrims in the world, and persons in a manner dead, he so quickens us from above as to *assure us* that our salvation is safe in the keeping of a faithful God. Hence also the Spirit is said to be 'life because of righteousness.'⁶

It will be seen that, whilst as to the fact of this practical aspect of the Spirit's witness Calvin is distinct enough, there is not a little vagueness in references to the *modus*; and we

¹ Institutes, Bk. iii. chap. ii. sect. 33.

are left in some doubt how far he understood by it an action of the Spirit distinct from his action in inspiring faith and renovating the life; whether, in fact, the witness has not that faith and renovation for its necessary vehicle, even as thought has words for its vehicle as well as presupposition.

(2) All the more clear and definite is the position he takes up relatively to the *witness borne by the Spirit to the divine origin of Scripture*.

“A most pernicious error has very generally prevailed, viz. that Scripture is of importance only in so far as conceded to it by the suffrage of the church: as if the eternal and inviolable truth of God could depend on the will of men. With great insult to the Holy Spirit, it is asked, Who can assure us that the Scriptures proceeded from God? Who guarantee that they have come down safe and unimpaired to our times? Who persuade us that *this* book is to be received with reverence, and *that one* expunged from the list, did not the church regulate all these things with certainty? On the determination of the church, therefore, it is said, depend both the reverence which is due to Scripture and the books which are to be admitted into the canon. . . . How shall we then be persuaded that it came from God without recurring to a decree of the church? It is just the same as if it were asked, How shall we learn to distinguish light from darkness, white from black, sweet from bitter? Scripture bears upon the face of it as clear evidence of its truth, as white and black do of their color, sweet and bitter of their taste.”

Referring to Augustine's statement that he would not believe the gospel, were he not moved by the authority of the church,¹ he says:—

“Those who are not yet enlightened by the Spirit of God, become teachable by reverence for the church, and thus submit to learn the faith of Christ from the gospel. In this way, the authority of the church leads us on and prepares us to believe in the gospel; and it is plain [from other passages²] that even Augustine would have the certainty of the godly to rest on a very

ceed in the way of argument, it is easy to establish, by evidence of various kinds, that if there is a God in heaven, the Law, the Prophecies, and the Gospel proceeded from him. . . . Still, however, it is preposterous to attempt by *discussion* to rear up a full faith in Scripture. . . . Although we may maintain the sacred word of God against gainsayers, it does not follow that we shall forthwith implant the certainty which faith requires in their hearts. Profane men think that religion rests only on opinion; and, therefore, that they may not believe foolishly, or on slight grounds desire and insist to have it proved by reason that Moses and the prophets were divinely inspired. But I answer, that the testimony of the Spirit is superior to reason. For as God alone can properly bear witness to his own words, so these words will not obtain full credit in the hearts of men, until they are sealed by the inward testimony of the Spirit. The same Spirit, therefore, who spoke by the mouth of the prophets, must penetrate our hearts in order to convince us that they faithfully delivered the message with which they were divinely entrusted. . . . Let it therefore be held as fixed, that those who are inwardly taught by the Holy Spirit acquiesce implicitly in Scripture; that Scripture, carrying its own evidence along with it, deigns not to submit to proofs and arguments, but owes the full conviction with which we ought to receive it to the testimony of the Spirit. Enlightened by him, we no longer believe, either on our own judgment or on that of others, that the Scriptures are from God; but in a way superior to human judgment, feel perfectly assured—as much so as if we beheld the divine image visibly impressed on it—that it came to us, by the instrumentality of men, from the very mouth of God. We ask not for proofs or probabilities on which, to rest our judgment, but we subject our intellect and judgment to it as too transcendent for us to estimate. This, however, we do, not in the manner in which some are wont to fasten on an unknown object, which, as soon as known, displeases; but because we have a thorough conviction that, in holding it, we hold unassailable truth."¹

As to Calvin's recognition of the fact of the Spirit's witness, there can, therefore, be no doubt: but he can scarcely be said to discuss, still less to throw light on, its nature and mode. Even its relation to the Spirit's certifying action through *media* is not made clear—whether it be a something superadded or not; further, whether, if it be something superadded, it is specifically discernible as such: and still

the point at which their leader left it. On the contrary, some of them are less clear and definite than he was.

2. *Ursinus.*

Ursinus touches on both the intellectual and practical aspects of the Spirit's witness in treating of the subject of assurance of faith.¹

With regard specially to the latter, he says:—

“The same Spirit by whose inspiration the Scriptures were given, bears witness in the hearts of believers. For faith is nothing but the firm *assensus* with which we assent to every word handed down to us from God and the confidence which we have that God is propitious to us, according to the word of Scripture (*juxta vocem*). This certitude of ours rests not on the testimony of man or any creature, but is to be known or established by the power of the Divine Spirit himself, through no other doctrine than that of the prophets and apostles, read, heard and meditated.”

Referring to the example of the people of Sychar, and turning to the intellectual side, he remarks:—

“So it may happen that such as are not yet converted or are yet weak, may be moved most powerfully by the testimony of the church, as coming under their very eyes, to believe in Scripture; and yet afterwards be enlightened (*illustrati*) by the richer light of faith and be convinced by far more certain testimony that it is the word of God.”²

“The voice and consensus of the Catholic Church ought indeed to serve for confirmation amongst other testimonies: yet the authority of Scripture should not hang thereon; sed ex ipsa scriptura potius disci oportere, quibus argumentis eam divinitus traditam esse, nobis agnoscendum sit, nimirum quia Deus ipse hoc testatur eaque doctrinae coelestis vis et ratio est, ut etiam contradicentibus cunctis hominibus hanc esse Dei vocem, non aliunde manifestus ac certius, quam ex ipsa cognosci queat.”

“The arguments or testimonies for the certitude of the Christian religion are twofold. The first is the witness which is proper and known alone to those who are born again of the Spirit of Christ; the force of which is such that it not only abundantly witnesses to and seals the truth of the prophetic

¹ Ursinus Zacharias (his family name was Beer or Bär — Bear) was born in Breslau, July 18, 1534. He first became professor in the university of his native place, but in 1561 accepted a call to Heidelberg, and ended a laborious

and apostolic doctrine in our minds, but efficiently turns and moves our hearts to embrace and follow it."

3. *Sohnius.*

Georgius Sohnus (Georg Sohn),¹ who was one of the later and more prominent of the disciples of Melancthon, or rather of those who combined Melancthonianism with the Swiss type of theology, expresses himself as follows with regard to the witness of the Spirit:—

(1) As to its *practical aspect* he says:—

"Believers ought to hold without any doubt that they are justified and absolved." "There is not the least reason why a believer should be doubtful regarding his justification and the remission of his sins; and if sometimes (as is wont to happen under temptation), he is tossed to and fro by doubts, it behooves him to wrestle with them." "The terms employed in Scripture to describe faith show that it denotes not doubt, but certain and firm assurance; as, for example, *πληροφορία, ὑπόστασις, ἔλεγχος, παρήσια, πεποιθῆσις.*"²

"A seal is wont to be set on those things which we wish to be certain and indubitable to others, so that whatever hesitation and doubt might possibly arise, may, in this way, be as far as possible removed. Pledges are given for the same reason. But believers are sealed by the Holy Spirit, and the same Spirit is given to them as a sort of pledge; in order that every one may firmly hold and be certain, regarding the promise of the forgiveness of sin, adoption, and eternal life. For, as we are taught in 2 Cor. i. 22; Eph. i. 13; iv. 30 and elsewhere, this seal is given to counteract all doubt in our minds. Concerning this Spirit as a pledge, it is said, 'He is not the Spirit of bondage unto fear,' etc. (Rom. viii. 15); and, 'He bears witness with our spirit that we are sons of God.' This he does in order 'that we may know the things freely given us of God' (1 Cor. ii. 12); because 'he crieth in our hearts, Abba, that is, Father' (Gal. iv. 6)."³

¹ Born in 1551, became, first, professor of theology at Marburg, then at Heidelberg, where he died in 1589. He published in 1588 a "Synopsis Corporis Doctrinae Phil. Melancthonis," etc., and, in 1591, "Exegesis præcipuorum articuloꝝ Augustanae Confessionis." A complete edition of his works in two volumes appeared at *Herborn* in 1591, from which these passages are taken.

² Opera theologica, Vol. ii. p. 883.

³ Sohnus, *l. c.*, Vol. ii. p. 886.

(2) With the question of the *testimony of the Spirit to the word of God*, he deals as follows. It will be worth while to give the references in their setting:—

“The word of God is what God has revealed to men in word and speech, through men immediately called; first and foremost by Christ the Saviour of the human race. . . . Wherefore this word is the principle and norm of all true theology and *ἀπόκρισις* and the irrefragable judge in every controversy undertaken concerning theological matters.”¹

“This word is twofold, *ἄγραφον* and *ἔγγραφον*. The *ἄγραφον* word is that which is handed down and propagated *viva voce* and by the Jews is termed *Cabala*, by the Greeks *παράδοσις*, by the Latins *traditio*. It is first prophetic, then apostolic. . . . The word of God *ἔγγραφον* is what God has consigned to writing by means of men directly called and inspired by the Holy Spirit, who were, so to speak, his amanuenses, whether they themselves wrote or confirmed what was written by others.”²

“The question now is, How do we know at the present day that God was the author of these books; and that he wrote them through prophets and apostles as his amanuenses? And that what is handed down in them really took place and was done? For indeed it ought to be certainly established that God is the author of this Scripture. Unless this be certain, the mind will never rest, but perpetually fluctuate; and faith will totally vanish. For faith rests on the word, not of man, but of God, and is directed toward him alone, who is unchanging truth. Conscience is ruled by the voice of God, not by that of man, and hangs on him alone, who is the Lord of conscience. . . . Whence, then, does it appear at the present day that these books proceeded forth from God, were divinely dictated to prophets and apostles; and that the doctrine they contain was confirmed by miracles? I reply, Partly from testimony, partly from arguments internal and external. Amongst the internal, is the witness of the Holy Spirit, internally addressing our mind and declaring, yea, as it were, sealing to our Spirit, that these books of Scripture are *θεοπνεύματος*, that is, dictated by himself. For those who are the sons of God and have his Spirit, they being illuminated by the internal light of the same Spirit and certainly persuaded by his *secret testimony*, believe assuredly that that which these books contain is divinely dictated; and by spiritual judgment are able to discriminate between them and spurious and adulterated books, many of which were formerly circulated under the names of the apostles; and to tell whether they smack of the Spirit of God. For

After adducing the external testimonies and the various other evidences, he goes on to say further:—

"Of supreme moment is the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit in the business of begetting assurance with regard to Holy Scripture. The external testimonies and the other arguments partly instruct and partly confirm those who already have the internal witness, serving as a kind of prop to human infirmity. Those again who as yet lack the internal witness are invited by their means to the consideration of Scripture. They further serve to convince and refute opponents and to keep them from despising, calumniating, and blaspheming this doctrine."¹

It will be obvious that Sohnius rather goes beyond, than falls behind, even Calvin in the strength of his language regarding the Spirit's witness. He is much more definite than Ursinus, his contemporary. At the same time, it can scarcely be maintained that he deals with the question as to the *modus*, though some of his expressions look in that direction.

We now pass on to the writings of the third, or *Scholastic*, class.

III. Reformed writings of the Scholastic type.

1. *F. Wendelin.*

(1) Wendelin touches on the *practical aspect of the Spirit's witness* when treating of the marks by which saving faith is distinguished from temporary and historical faith. The fifth among the marks adduced is the hope of glory, which maketh not ashamed, because it is kindled by that Spirit, who testifies with our spirit that we are the sons of God (Rom. viii. 16).²

Further, he says:—

"Saving faith is enkindled in man, not by moral suasion alone; for he is

“Those who are sealed, and have the earnest of the Spirit in their hearts, and with whose spirit the Spirit of God bears witness, that they are sons of God—they are able, and ought to apply to themselves by faith, the promise of grace regarding the free remission of sins.”¹

The fact is distinctly enough affirmed; as to its nature or mode, Wendelin is silent.

(2) To the *intellectual aspect of the Spirit's witness*, he refers in the following passages:—

“The question between us and the Papists is this: What is the ground of the authority of the Scripture, as far as we are concerned? In other words, Whence does it appear that Scripture is divine or inspired by God? We maintain that the chief ground is: ² The persuasion of the Holy Spirit, who makes us certain regarding their divinity; because he testifies that the Spirit, that is, the doctrine of the Spirit, is truth (1 John v. 6); because he leads us into all truth (John xvi. 33); because he awakens faith in us by the word (Rom. x. 17); because, finally, he is the author of Scripture (2 Pet. i. 21). By this internal testimony individuals are rendered for themselves certain of the divinity of the word, or of the Holy Scripture. On which ground, also, they are able to benefit others; for such as are certain and illumined in themselves are the better able to succor those who are agitated by doubts and fears.”

The objection that the authority of Scripture cannot be proved by Scripture, he meets by saying, that “it depends not only on Scripture, but on the internal witness of the Holy Spirit.”

God witnesses concerning himself even as did Christ (John viii. 14.)³ In clearness, and even in force, Wendelin is decidedly inferior to Sohnius, or even to Ursinus.

2. *B. Keckermann.*

(1) Keckermann⁴ does little more than glance at the *prac-*

¹ *L. c.*, p. 1041.

² Wendelin's *Systema*, etc. Prolegomena, p. 46. Cf. Schweizer, Vol. i. p. 204.

³ *L. c.*, p. 52; cf. pp. 53, 58.

⁴ Bartholomæus Keckermann's *Methodus in usum studii theologiae*. Frankfurt.

tical aspect of the witness of the Holy Spirit, though what he says seems to imply agreement with the view generally taken by Reformed divines.

"At the moment at which we are justified, the Holy Spirit is poured out into us, as the apostle clearly teaches when he utters to the Romans (viii. 1), *There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.* Afterwards, in the ninth and following verses, he goes on treating of the Holy Spirit, who, being poured into the hearts of the elect, causes them to perceive that they are free from condemnation, and adopted into the privileges of sons. As many as *are led by the Spirit of God* (ver. 14), *they are the sons of God*, that is, they perceive and recognize that they are sons of God, as it were by a certain earnest or pledge, or, as the apostle in verse 15 calls the same Spirit, the *Spirit of adoption.*"¹

(2) All the more full are his references to the question of the ground of our *certainty* that the *Scriptures are the word of God*, and to the work of the Holy Spirit in producing that certainty.

"Which are the canonical books of the Holy Scripture is recognized and chiefly known by the testimony of him who is the author of the said books, namely, the Holy Spirit; though also, at the same time, from their nature and quality: secondarily, by the testimony of the true church.

"At this point, controversy is raised by the Papists, who affirm that we are able to recognize and know what and how many books are canonical in Scripture solely and exclusively from the testimony of the church. The orthodox opinion of the evangelical church on the contrary, is that this knowledge is based on a twofold testimony: the one, and the most important, internal; the second, secondary and external. The internal testimony, again, is twofold, namely, first, that due to the force of the witness; the second, to the peculiar nature and property of the testimony itself. As to the former, we have two arguments with which we meet the Papists: *First*, the numerous passages scattered through the canonical books which testify that what is there set forth is the word of God; as, Isa. lv. 11; lviii. 14; 1 Cor. ii. 13. From these passages we may argue as follows: These dicta are either true or false; if false, Scripture contains what is false, which it is ungodly to assert; if true, we have God's express testimony and judgment, by appeal to which we can establish that the books which contain these dicta are canonical. In the power or force of the witness we include, *secondly*, the internal witness by which the Holy Spirit testifies in the hearts of the elect, and seals what and how many books are canonical. For the elect alone have faith; therefore the elect alone know what is the norm of faith. Now the Holy Spirit works faith in the elect: therefore, also does he illuminate the understanding of the

¹ Opera Omnia, Tom. ii., "Systema Theologiae," p. 209.

same, in order that they many recognize what is the sure norm of faith. Nor can these things be separated from each other. Either the Holy Spirit does not work faith in the elect, which is absurd, or he at the same time shows them what is the norm of certain faith. And of a truth, if the church were to affirm a thousand times that these or the other books of Scripture are the word of God, it would affirm in vain, unless the Holy Spirit stirred up faith in us; which faith, inasmuch as it has the word of God for its object, necessarily also has for its object that these or the other books are the word of God. If, however, we believed this on the authority of the church, we should believe also the remaining dogmas of faith on the same authority, because they are derived from the canonical books. There is need, therefore, for the witness of the Spirit, as Scripture expressly declares, *Ye have an unction from the Holy One, so that ye know all things*, i. e., the Holy Spirit (1 John ii, 20, 27). This, too, is the chief witness to the canonical books. To it is conjoined another, of the same grade, namely, the nature and properties of the canonical Scripture, which properties are threefold; namely, the majesty of its matter and style; its efficacy in moving the minds of men; and the agreement and harmony that prevail between the books.

“The *secondary* testimony, which is a sort of instrument by which we are led to the principal and authentic testimony, is the witness, first, of the church universal; then to a particular church; further, that of believers by whose preaching we are taught that these books are to be regarded as canonical; although we do not on the ground of such testimony hold the canonical books to be beyond all exception; but by means of this external testimony, the Holy Spirit stirs up in us faith by which we believe in the authority of the canonical books. The Papists, therefore, do us serious injustice when they charge us with despising the witness of the church regarding Scripture; for we reverently confess that it has discharged the function (*a*) of guardian to which God entrusted this treasure; (*b*) of herald, which promulgated the voice and word of God. The position of the question between us, therefore, is this, whether we chiefly and *per se* recognize and believe the canonical books, and hold such and such books to be canonical, because of the testimony of the church: this is what we deny, because that which is posterior is not the cause of recognizing what is prior.”¹

It will be seen that whilst Keckermann is strenuous enough

ness of the *Spirit* in replying to the question, so constantly raised in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries,—

"Whether a believer can be certain of his own faith or that he truly believes in Christ? A twofold certainty is ascribed to faith: *One*, regarding the grace of justification which faith lays hold of in the word of promise and by which he is made certain that his sins are remitted; the other, regarding *itself*, by which every believer knows and is certain that he has justifying faith. The power depends on the direct act of faith as directed to its proper object; that is, on the apprehension and special application of the promise of grace through the inward operation of the Holy Spirit. The *latter* depends on the act of faith reflecting on itself—an act by which the believer compares his faith with the word of the gospel, and thereby perceives its efficacious power and movement, in his heart through the Holy Spirit."¹

"Two kinds of spiritual demonstration obtain: the one, external, namely that of the divine word or testimony, which is higher than all human testimony (1 John v. 10), the other, internal, namely of the Holy Spirit, who witnesses with our spirit that we are sons of God (Rom. viii. 16); whom we also have received in order that we might know the things freely given us of God."²

Alting's account of the process by which assurance is gained, aims at greater precision than had marked most of his predecessors; but the process itself is losing some of its objectivity; the assurance is becoming increasingly a result of the believer's reflection on his own states—a matter of moral inference. With regard to the witness of the Spirit in relation to the divine authority of Scripture, he says in reality nothing, though he lays it down as "thesis of the orthodox that Holy Scripture can neither be heard, read, nor understood with point without the internal illumination of the Holy Spirit:"³ and that "apart from such illumination it must remain obscure and a folly—a savorer of death unto death."⁴

4. *Burmann.*

The allusions to our subject made by this eminent and

¹ *L. c.*, p. 729.

² *L. c.*, p. 731.

³ *L. c.*, p. 49.

influential divine are neither numerous nor detailed, but fairly explicit.

(1) With regard to the *practical side of the Spirit's witness*, he says:—

“The sign and pledge or earnest of that gracious name is the Holy Spirit, who is called the ‘Spirit of adoption’ (Rom. viii.; Gal. iv.) because he soothes our minds with his inward fellowship and word addressed to us, and enables us to approach God with boldness as our Father.

“This testimony, however, does not consist in any single *internal allocution* or, as it were, special divine answer or *oracle* to the soul. Nay, more, it may be too scrupulously distinguished from faith and other Christian affections, as if it were secretly imparted to us after we have believed, by another and separate act of the Spirit and by a direct allocution. In which way, the adversaries are accustomed to calumniate that Spirit of adoption, and to compare him with an empty and deceptive echo. For as soon as we believe, we are sealed by that which we believe: and this itself is the note and character of the Spirit; and faith is his only sign (Eph. i. 13, 14; iv. 30) The virtues which result from his indwelling are his sureties and witnesses.”¹

It will be seen from the negative and critical tone of the above quotations, that Burmann has considered the question of the *modus* more fully than his predecessors, though in the issue, he does not advance beyond their position.

(2) In the course of his exposition of the *evidences of the divine authority of Scripture*, he remarks:—

“Besides these *ἔντρονα* and internal arguments, there are also *ἄντρονα*, or external arguments or evidences, both divine and human. The *human* are the church, and some outside the church, as, for example, Jews, Gentiles, heretics. The *divine* are, first, external, namely, the express witness borne by the Scripture itself to its own origin, as in Luke xvi. 29; John v. 39; 2 Tim. iii. 15. Secondly, ‘the internal witness of the Holy Spirit, by which the divinity and certitude of Holy Scripture is effectually sealed in our hearts, so that, not only convinced, but also fully persuaded thereof, we accept them as the word of God.’ This, also, the leaders of Romanism recognize; so that our only controversy with them is as to the mode in which the Holy Spirit persuades us of the divinity of Scripture; whether by the witness of the church or by the notes of divinity impressed on Scripture and which he shows us by his illumination.”²

¹ Burmanni, *L. c.*, Vol. ii. p. 219. Rom. xxiii.

² Francisci Burmanni Synopsis Theologiae, etc. Genevae. 1678. Vol. i. p. 23. Comp. Schweizer, Vol. i. p. 206.

(5) *Witsius.*¹

No divine, either of the Lutheran or Reformed Church, is so explicit regarding the witness of the Spirit in its practical aspect as the celebrated author of the work on "The Covenants." Indeed, Witsius, as the following quotations will show, verged closely on what is apt to be designated the mystical view of the subject—a view which, because mystical, many repudiate. With regard to the more intellectual aspect of the same witness, he is silent.

(1) His words about the *practical aspect* are as follows:—

"Let us now consider the other effect of the Spirit, which, according to the apostle, consists in this that he 'beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.' Here we have two witnesses agreeing in one testimony: the one of a lower rank, *our spirit*; the other of the highest, the *Spirit of adoption*, who is the Spirit of the Son of God (Gal. iv. 6). Both may be well qualified for this, but each in his own measure, degree, and order.

"By *our spirit* is understood the mind and conscience of every believer, whereby he may be conscious of what passes in his own heart. In this sense, the apostle said, 'What man knoweth the things of a man save the spirit of a man which is in him?' (1 Cor. iii. 11).

"The testimony of our spirit consists in exact representation of our state, by certain marks and a full assurance of faith, which is followed by a most quiet tranquillity of soul and a joy unspeakable. For as the spirit which beareth witness and the man to whom he does so, are in effect all one, no other testimony needs here be thought of than the composure of the soul, which by infallible marks is conscious of its own happiness.

"It is very requisite that this testimony, which is given of an affair of the greatest moment, be solid and well grounded. We are, therefore, above all, to attend to two things: *First*, that our spirit be very exactly instructed from the word of God about the marks by which a child of God may be known and distinguished. . . . *Then* a most careful self-examination whether we have the marks given of God in Scripture.

"These marks are of two kind: *First*, a certain good habit or disposition of soul, with the consistent tenor of a pious life: *then*, peculiar acts of God toward his beloved people, which he vouchsafes only to those whom he loves as a father. Those of the *former* kind are the impression and expression of the divine image with a holy conformity to our father and elder brother: a

¹ Hermann Witsius, born 1626, in West Friesland; professor of theology successively at Franeker, Utrecht, Leyden; died, 1708. His chief work was the "Oeconomia Foederum Dei cum Hominibus," first published in 1685. I quote from the English translation, "The Economy of the Covenants between God and man," etc. 1837. Vol. ii. pp. 8-12.

new life worthy of God: a true and sincere love of God: a filial fear and obedience: unfeigned brotherly love.

“But besides, there are some special acts of divine love vouchsafed alone to God's children. . . . Sometimes they are ravished on high by his Spirit: he surrounds them, too, with the beams of his supercelestial light, gives them a view of his face, shining with the brightest love; kisses them with the kisses of his mouth, admits them to the most endearing, mutual intercourse of mystical love with himself; and while he plentifully sheds abroad his love in their hearts, he gives them to drink of rivers of honey and butter; and that often in the greatest drought of the parched soul, when expecting no such thing. There are many more mysteries in this secret intercourse with our Heavenly Father which believers sometimes see, taste, and feel, and which no pen of the learned can represent as they deserve.”

“These things tend greatly to the consolation of God's children: but knowing the deceitfulness of the heart, and fearing here, above all things, to be deceived, they do not entirely acquiesce till the *testimony of the Spirit of God* is superadded to the *testimony of their own spirit*.

“That testimony is given principally in this manner: *First*, the Spirit of God makes those holy habits which, we said, were the distinguishing marks of the children of God, and which at times are often involved in much darkness and covered with much rubbish and filth, to shine with clearness in their soul and, as it were, readily present themselves to the contemplation of the mind when examining itself: and *then* excites our spirit, otherwise ready to faint, to the diligent observation of the things in our mind both transacted in and by it; enlightening the eyes of the understanding with supernatural light, to prevent our being deceived by what is specious rather than solid, or our overlooking those things on the observation of which our consolation depends. There, is, *moreover* a certain *internal impulse* which no human language can explain, *immediately assuring* God's beloved people of their adoption no less than if they were carried up to the third heavens and had heard it audibly from God's own mouth, as the apostles formerly heard in the holy mount ‘a voice from the excellent glory’ (2 Pet. i. 17). *Lastly*, seeing no testimony is stronger than that which is proved by facts, the Spirit of God does not leave himself *without witness* in that respect: for he excites generous emotions and the sweetest raptures in believers and delights them with consolations so ravishing and ecstasical and even exceeding all thought, that they cannot consider them in any other light than as so many testimonies of their adoption.

“Nor is there any reason to apprehend the children of God will, in this case, suffer themselves to be imposed upon or admit, for a testimony of the Holy Spirit, what is a lie and mere illusion of the deceiving spirit. For in this voice of the Spirit of God, there is so much clearness, majesty, and efficacy, whereby it penetrates, with an irresistible power, into the bottom and inmost recess of the heart, that they who have been accustomed to that voice, can easily distinguish it from all others. The world, certainly, cannot receive

this 'Spirit, seeth him not, neither knoweth him' (John xiv. 17); but Christ's sheep know the voice of their shepherd (John x. 4). And when it sounds, not so much in their ears as in their hearts, they joyfully exclaim, 'This is the voice of my beloved,' etc. (Cant. ii. 8). As formerly in extraordinary appearances God gave such clear indications of his majesty to the prophets, as to leave no room for doubt; so, in like manner, the Spirit, the Comforter, irradiates the minds of the elect with such beams of light, that they can easily distinguish him from the Spirit of darkness. But as the proper sound of any voice cannot be distinguished but by the hearing of it, so these things are only to be learned by experience."

6. *F. Turretine.*

Francis Turretine,¹ the zealous defender and expounder of Reformed orthodoxy after the type of the Synod of Dort, may be said to have closed the seventeenth century as far as the Reformed Church is concerned. His chief work, the "Institutio theologiae Elencticae," etc.,² not only summed up the traditional and current theology, but did more, perhaps, than any other single work to determine or color the theology of the future, so far as it professed to be orthodox, alike in Switzerland, France, and Britain. His treatment of both aspects of the witness of the Spirit is marked by great clearness, if not by special depth or insight.

With regard to the *practical aspect* he remarks:—

"The opinion of the orthodox is, that believers may be certain about their own faith, truth, and sincerity, not only with a human and fallible, but with a divine and infallible certitude; which, however, may be greater or less, according as faith itself is stronger or more languid; but, also, that they may and ought to be certain of the grace of God and forgiveness of sins; seeing that when earnestly contrite for sin, they lay hold by true faith, of the promise of free compassion in Christ, trust confidently in it, and thus render their own hearts fearless. . . . The foundation thereof is, partly, the infallible promise of the gospel (John iii. 14-16; 1 Tim. i. 15); partly, the infallible testimony of the Holy Spirit in each man's consciousness (Rom. viii. 16). . . . The certitude of present grace is not contained directly in the word, but hangs on the testimony of the Holy Spirit and the vision of the heart,

¹ Born at Geneva, 1623; died, 1687.

² First edition published 1679-1685; 2d ed., 1688. A compendium thereof with numerous additions from the theologians was issued by L. Riissen at Amsterdam, in 1695. Turretine's work was republished at Edinburgh in 1847-48.

earnestly examining itself; and on the experimental sense of the notes and effects of grace such as penitence, pursuit of holiness, self-denial, and loving God above all things," etc. ¹

"It is not, then, a question of moral and conjectural certitude—which even our adversaries allow: nor, of an extraordinary certitude bestowed on a few by revelation,—which they admit: but of a divine and infallible certitude, which ordinarily any believer does or may enjoy, not of his own ordering or by natural light, but of the grace of the Spirit, through the *εμπνευμα* of faith, which, resting on the external promises of the word and the internal witness of the Holy Spirit, shows itself more or less in all; but in all as much as suffices for true comfort." ² "Nor do we ask whether the certitude which the believer has of his own faith and justification be of just the same kind as the certitude which we have of the articles of faith and the dogmas expressly contained in Holy Scripture:—whether every believer be held to believe that he himself is in the grace of God with altogether the same faith as that with which the dogmas of the faith are believed. In either case it may be true and undoubting. The two testimonies, however, namely, that of the promise in the word and of the Spirit in the heart, are not of equal necessity; for whilst the former is necessary to the believer and without it he cannot continue a believer, the latter merely tends to his perfection. To doubt the promises of God is to lack true faith and to be out of grace: but doubt as to one's own safety and the pardon of one's sins may be due to the sense of one's own infirmities." ³

"The question, therefore, is, whether a true believer may be certain, not on the ground of his discernment of his own proper worth, but of the power and guardianship of God, with a certitude not merely of the object, but also of the subject; not of moral and conjectural opinion and hope, but of true and justifying faith, enkindled in his heart by the Spirit of adoption; after proper examination of himself; not only concerning his own present faith and justification, but also concerning his safety and glorification in the future? We affirm it, our opponents deny it." ⁴

Among the arguments such as the nature of faith, the example of saints, and so forth, that from the witness and sealing of the Spirit is also adduced:—

"It does not suffice the glory of God merely to preserve his people;—he wishes them to be certain, thereof, in order that they may be able to render him thanks. Nor would it suffice us for our comfort merely to *be* in the grace of God, and to have no sense of it. For to happiness is necessary not

heart, by the Spirit testifying to the truth of the application of the promises. . . . The certitude thus generated is not conjectural and probable, but divine and infallible."¹

Concerning the fact of a witness of the Spirit, he is in no doubt, though the language employed to describe it is vague enough—more vague by far than that of some of his prerunners, especially Witsius: but the problem of the *modus* is entirely ignored.

(2) Turretine's treatment of the *witness of the Spirit in relation to the Scripture* is scarcely on a level with that of the other aspect, at all events, as far as the position taken up is concerned.

"The question with which we are confronted is, By what argument do we establish the divinity of Scripture? The Papists suspend this authority on the witness of the church, and wish the voice of the church to be regarded as the chief reason for accepting the *authenticity* of the Scriptures. We do not deny that the witness of the church has a weight of its own; but yet we maintain that Scripture is to be regarded as divine, not on account of the church, but for its own sake or for the sake of the notes which mark it." "If I be asked, why or on *what account* I believe Scripture to be divine, I reply, By Scripture itself, which shows itself to be such by its 'notes.'—If, again, whence or *by whom*, by whose action, do I believe? I reply, By the Spirit of God who produced that faith in me. If, finally, *Through* what means or instrument? I shall reply, Through the church, which God uses for handing the Scripture down to me."² "That the Scriptures are known (a) to us through themselves, we prove, from the very nature of the Scriptures. For, as a law borrows its authority not from the judges or those who publish it, but from the praise alone; as a will derives its force not from the *notarius* but from the disposition of the testator; as a rule derives its regulative force from its own innate perfection, not from the workman using it; so Scripture, which is the law of the Supreme Prince, the will of the Heavenly Father, and the *ἀκλόητος* rule of faith, owes its authority to itself, and not even as regards us, to the church. (b) From the nature of *summa genera* and first principles. For as those things are known in and of themselves, and are *ἀναρροδαία*, which cannot be proved by other reasons—otherwise we should

premiely necessary to our salvation. (c) When we apply our faculties to any object, we at once discriminate and know them, without any external argument, on account of the mysterious proportion and propension of a faculty to its object:—light is at once and most certainly known by its brightness, food by its pleasantness, smell by its fragrance, even though there be no witness. So the Scripture, which as respects the new man and the spiritual senses is described by the figure, now of wonderful light (Ps. cxix. 105); now of delightful food (Ps. xix. 10; Isa. lv. 1, 2; Heb. v. 14); now of a most fragrant odor (Cant. i. 3); is easily and at once known by and of itself, by its own light, sweetness and *εὐωδία*,—nor is there need of other arguments to prove that¹ it is light, food, or a sweet savor."

"Two things must be distinguished—the explanation of faith considered *objectively*, as to the things to be believed; and *faith* considered subjectively or formally so far as the act of believing is concerned. The former comes from the external witness of the Holy Spirit embodied in Scripture: the latter from his internal witness impressed on consciousness and speaking in the heart. For the generation of faith, both are necessary, the presentation of the truth in the word and its application in the heart: and the Holy Spirit works in both ways, in the word and in the heart. He is therefore properly said to testify *objectively* in the word, in the way of reason why we believe: he is also said, but less properly, to testify in the heart, efficiently and after the manner of a principle, by whose virtue we believe;—in which sense the Spirit who is mentioned among the witnesses of the divinity of Christ and the truth of the gospel is said to testify that *the Spirit is truth* (John v. 6); the same Spirit acting in the heart of believers, testifies that the doctrine of the gospel which has been handed down by the Spirit is true and divine."²

"When it is said in the fifth article of the 'Conf. Gall.,' 'that we know the books of Scripture to be canonical, not so much by the general consent of the church as by the witness and internal persuasion of the Holy Spirit,' we must understand by the Spirit, the Spirit speaking both in the word and in the heart. For the same Spirit who acts objectively in the word, setting before us the truth, operates also efficiently in the heart, impressing the same truth on our minds: he is thus most alien from the *Spiritu enthusiastico*."³

Turretine, as the last expression shows, was exceedingly afraid of mysticism or enthusiasm; so fearful, thereof, that it led him to evacuate scriptural words of their natural meaning. This fear of his—a fear shared not merely by most of his contemporaries, but also by many of his predecessors—so took possession of the churches which came under the influence of his theological system, that in many cases no

¹ *Institutio Theologiae*, etc., Vol. i. pp. 90, 91.

² *L. c.*, Vol. i. p. 72. ³ *L. c.*, Vol. i. p. 92.

place was left even for conversion and regeneration ; that it was deemed possible to prove the divinity of Scripture by rigorous process of argument ; and that to be inwardly assured of reconciliation with God and eternal life was condemned as presumptuous. Turretine, in fact, in this as in other respects, gave voice and systematic form to the spirit and ideas which became characteristic of the Reformed churches during a great part of the eighteenth century.