
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 CHRISTIAN CONSCIOUSNESS IN CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY.[1]

BY THE REV. A. J. F. BEHRENDS, D.D., BROOKLYN, N. Y.

CLEARNESS of definition, and a fixed terminology, are the two great and indispensable conditions of solid progress in knowledge. Definite meanings must be associated with words and phrases, and, as in the employment of algebraic symbols, there must be no variation in their use through all the intricacies of a long and difficult argument. It is acknowledged, too, that many a phrase is best understood under the light of its historical origin and earliest use; and such an investigation may lead to the conclusion, that, however winning it may appear to be, its early and long service associates it with tendencies and

[1] The present article has not been cumbered with footnotes, for the simple reason that the only authors quoted are those whose names are given in the text, and whose writings are presumed to be familiar to the theological reader. The dogmatic treatises themselves have been read as carefully as time permitted, to discover what meaning was attached to the phrase "Christian Consciousness," and what part was assigned to it in theological science. Besides these, Dorner's History of Protestant Theology, and Herzog's Real-Encyclopädie—articles Dogmatik and Religion—may be read to advantage. Van Oosterzee's Christian Dogmatics contains a very clear and concise criticism of the subjective method in theology. The most searching and caustic handling of the mediation theology, which the writer has seen, is by Dr. Carl Schwartz, of Gotha, in a book entitled A Contribution to the History of the Newest Theology, which, however, closes with the year 1869. The boldest and most consistent advocacy of the theology

conceptions that cannot be defended. Of such phrases "Christian Consciousness" is one. Etymologically harmless and attractive, its theological history may prevent its acceptance by many. For it has been the watchword of a theological school. It has served, for more than seventy-five years, as the rallying-cry of a definite method in theological inquiry, whose claim of superior merit cannot be conceded, and many of whose fruits are not encouraging to Christian faith. It is an alien on American soil, and American theology is not friendly to its naturalization. It has been used among us in a greatly modified sense, and the honors claimed on its behalf have been comparatively modest; but it is well to recall the pedigree of the newcomer, and to remember that with the word must be associated a long and eventful history in religious thought. And, unless we are ready to range ourselves under the banner thus unfurled, or unless we are prepared to confess the poverty of our speech, it may be wise to abandon the phrase altogether to those whose theological spirit it defines.

Now the underlying debate, marked by this innocent phrase, does not concern the philosophical question as to the ultimate ground of certainty, which must be posited

based upon "Christian Consciousness," as its source and organ, by an American writer, is from the pen of Professor Allen, of Cambridge, whose book on the Continuity of Christian Thought created something of a sensation in New England circles of thought. There is, however, no single treatise in which the subject of this article has been submitted to a searching historical examination, followed by a critical analysis and exposition of its implications. The present writer rises from his brief essay, which he has found compassed with great and many difficulties, and for whose thorough study an exacting pastorate does not leave him the needed leisure, in the earnest hope that some one thoroughly at home in German theology may undertake the task, than which none could be of greater service to American theology. There can be no more mischievous state of things than the adoption of phrases whose principles are kept in the background, postulates whose simple enunciation would be promptly challenged and earnestly rejected. And in this catalogue of phrases "Christian Consciousness" is one of the most important.

in self-consciousness. All knowledge begins with, and is conditioned by, self-knowledge. I can be sure of nothing, unless I am sure of my present thought, and through that, of myself. Primarily, I am certain only of myself. All other knowledge is mediated by that. Without self-knowledge, the certainty of our mental states, the reality of our thought, there could be neither science, nor philosophy, nor theology. All this is self-evident, and if no more were intended by the claim urged in certain quarters that the Christian consciousness must be invested with a very high, if not the very highest, degree of authority, in determining Christian doctrine, than what is involved in the philosophical thesis that certainty must be traced to self-consciousness as its primary source,—the discussion would not be worth an hour's breath. Of course, I must begin where I am, and with myself. I cannot vault outside of myself in any process or pursuit of knowledge. But it does not follow that knowledge and certainty end where they begin. Like the radius of a great circle, firmly and constantly held to its invisible centre, thought may sweep a wide circumference infinitely removed from the point where it begins. I may be as certain of the divine existence as I am of my own, however true it may be that the consciousness of my own existence is the first thought that dawns upon me, and is woven into all subsequent mental life. It is the old question whether knowledge is limited to the consciousness of mental states, of ideal and empty relations only, or whether these states are not rather the transparent media through which the objects of knowledge are themselves apprehended. Are what we call the laws or categories of thought, limitations and hindrances in the search for truth, preventing us from even attaining any other than a regulative certainty, or are they essential lines along which all thought must move, and has moved from everlasting, so that the goal of an absolute certainty awaits our honest and patient endeavor? The latter thesis is here assumed. On this question Hegel is

preferred to Kant and Sir William Hamilton. The last word of the Kantian philosophy is man's hopeless ignorance; the first word of the Hegelian school is the original potential omniscience of man. The true philosophy maintains that man is neither impotent nor omnipotent, but endowed with mental capacity to pass from the certainty of self-knowledge to the certain apprehension of objective truth. The contention, therefore, that all certitude is rooted in the knowledge of self, cannot be made to substantiate the claim that all conviction of certainty must be spontaneous and intuitive. The former is fully granted, the latter is resolutely denied.

Nor does the debate touch the religious affirmation that the revelation of God in Holy Scripture deals only with the facts and doctrines designed and fitted to call forth intellectual assent, and to provoke spiritual responsiveness. The word of God is living. It has never been anything else. Prophets and apostles were not automatic penmen or speakers, borne away by a tempest of thoughts of which they knew little or nothing. Revelation was none the less real because supernatural. It means unveiling, it is inconceivable apart from illumination, though not synonymous with it. It was like fire in the bones of him who was favored with it, whose holy heat pervaded the entire mental and moral frame of prophet or apostle, stirring to profoundest and intensest reflection, issuing in fixed and unalterable personal conviction. The revelation was a vision. That living quality in the word of God is the abiding secret of its energy. Its first appearance was life, the life of knowledge, hope, and salvation; and where it does not bring life it has not truly come. Faith must seize, or be seized by, the life that the word suggests or conveys, or it fails to deal with the word in its divine reality. There is nothing magical in the impact of God's thought upon the mind of man. Neither in inspiration nor in regeneration is man passive. Christian theology can never, therefore, be indifferent to what is called

Christian experience. The Scriptures cannot be understood and expounded as the multiplication table can be repeated, or as the propositions of Euclid can be followed and verified. Grammatical, exegetical, historical helps are invaluable, as reproducing for us the local attitude and specific surroundings of the writer or speaker, but we must make his thought our own, reproducing it in terms of personal conviction, or the burden of the message will remain as foreign to us as are the antipodes to our sight.

Nor, once more, does the debate concern the question of progressive clearness in theological statement, or the need of a new adjustment of the separate doctrines in a self-consistent whole. No one claims that the creeds and confessions are infallible, and that their free criticism is irreverent. Nay, if the word of God be life, it must be born again in the mind and heart of each generation. If it be as sacred fire, its glow must quicken the pulses of each decade. Each age must create its own theology from the original sources, if it is to have any theology at all. That involves gradual and incessant enlargement, an elimination of past misapprehensions, and a retention of the transmitted testimony only so far as it is the vehicle of the transforming life of God. The Augustinian, the Calvinistic, the Federalistic, the Hopkinsian, the Arminian attempts at systematization have their historic place, but they are seen not to have co-ordinated all the vital facts, and to have inserted dead branches into the tree of Christian doctrine. There is a vague feeling, in our day, after a better system, growing out of living, deeper, and more fruitful principles than the idea of the church, or the doctrine of Divine decrees, or the fanciful notion of covenants, or a theory of virtue, or a philosophy of free agency. Some find escape in a reconstruction of theology by the Christological idea, and others despair of tracing all the lines of biblical teaching to the single point whence they take their departure, and in which they are firmly held together. Our theology, in its systematic form, is confes-

sedly in a formative state. We are neither Augustinians, nor Calvinists, nor Arminians; neither Old School, nor New. We touch all schools, and belong to none. We write and read monographs, not comprehensive treatises, as did Augustine, Aquinas, and Calvin. We look with distrust upon a finished and self-consistent theology. There is to-day no dominant type of systematic thought in Christian doctrine, and some think that it has disappeared never more to return. There can be no question that the Arminian controversy and the Wesleyan movement have powerfully quickened impatience with full-fledged systems, and given intensity and firmness to the spirit of toleration. Not because we have become indifferent to truth, and careless of theology, but because the word of God is seen to be of larger scope than the theological lines of any school. And perhaps it is true, as many think, that the golden age of systematic theology will never come again. Be that as it may, the burden of the hour is not to prove a thing to be either old or new, but to be true.

That raises the crucial question, how can we know what is true? What shall be our method of search? It is here, in the *method* of Christian theology, the point of departure and the court of appeal, rather than in the specific results of study, that the controversy of the hour gathers, and where it has swung as on a pivot for more than eighty years. Three methods have prevailed from the very first, represented by Aquinas, Duns Scotus, and Abelard, in the Middle Ages, by Augustine, Jerome, and Pelagius, in earlier times. The first is the traditional or ecclesiastical, the second is the inductive and biblical, the third is the individualistic or rationalistic method. In the first method mental energy is concentrated on the church and its dogmas, in the second on the Scriptures, in the third on self. The latter method, again, has assumed three main forms, speculative, emotional and practical,—as knowledge, feeling, or conscience, has been regarded central and distinct-

ive in the philosophy of the soul. Where thought is regarded as the seat of the divine image, the subjective method has issued in rationalism; where the feelings have been considered the cradle of religion, the result of the method has been mysticism or mystical pantheism; and where the conscience has been consulted as the oracle of truth, the method has resolved theology into ethics.

The subjective method had its representatives in the rationalist Abelard, and in Bernard, the mystic, but the tendencies never came to their full development and fruitage until the Reformation left men free to speak and write as they thought. The overshadowing power of the Roman Catholic church checked the growth of the subjective method, as it also hampered the free use of Holy Scripture. Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin opposed the authority of the Bible to the authority of the Church. On that line the fierce battle was waged. It is true that Luther has frequently been quoted as introducing the subjective method, and committing German theology to its use, but his utterances are clear-cut and unequivocal, as when he declares that "Christian doctrine is learned by the revelation of God himself; *first, by the external word; then, by the working of God's Spirit inwardly.* The gospel, therefore, is a divine word that came down from heaven, and is revealed by the Holy Ghost, who was also sent for the same purpose; yet in such sort notwithstanding, *that the outward word must go before.*" It is Dorner's labored insistence that in Luther's theology the formal and the material principles were of co-ordinate authority, that Scripture and faith were invested with equal and complementary honors, but the sturdy Reformer would have made short work with such an interpretation of his doctrine. To him the word of God was a living word, reproducing itself in the joyful testimony of faith; but the precedence was always given to Scripture as the primary and solely authoritative revelation. And his freedom in biblical criticism, leading him to the rejection of the Epistle by James, was not due

to subjective prepossessions, but to the objective conviction that the Bible contained a definite and fixed "gospel," by which its separate utterances were to be interpreted, and its separate books to be judged. Luther's principle was simply that of measuring the books of the Bible by the preponderant teaching of the Book as a living whole. His method was as emphatically, though in a different way, objective, as was that of Calvin or of John Knox. But the scholastic spirit reasserted itself in the churches of the German Reformation. The theology wrought out on purely biblical lines, yet all too hastily, took form in the Augsburg Confession; and thenceforward the main endeavor was to maintain the integrity of the doctrinal symbol, the plenary and even verbal inspiration of the Bible being used to invest the proof-texts with divine infallibility. Theology once more became scholastic, confined within the limits of an ecclesiastical creed, as Rome had confined it within the lines of an ecclesiastical tradition. It was really an abandonment of the Reformation principle; but in the reaction that followed the introduction of Deism by way of France, the authority both of the church and of the Bible was abandoned, and the appeal was made to the human reason. The subjective method in theological inquiry came to the front, and challenged alike the Church of Rome and the churches of the Reformation. It was intensely and exclusively rationalistic. It resolved revealed into natural theology, and left in the latter only these three things — God, duty, and immortality; while the thorough-going skepticism of Hume and the materialistic French philosophy reduced even these to a shadow. The eighteenth century was one of profound spiritual darkness, relieved only by the pious fervor of Spener, the evangelical simplicity of the Moravian brotherhood and the devotion of the Wesleys. It seemed as if Christianity had been buried in a grave so dark and deep that its resurrection was beyond hope. The poor heard the gospel with gladness, but the great churches answered

it with a sneer. Faith had perished in the seats of culture and among the educated.

Then came Schleiermacher, himself trained among the Moravians, who has been called "the greatest divine of the nineteenth century." This honor belongs to him, however, mainly as the prophet of a transition period, as the prominent leader in the reaction against an empty and flippant rationalism, in which he summoned the age to a profounder study of religion in its living root, and to a more reverent estimate of Christianity. He met the rationalists on their own ground, overthrowing their conclusions by a profounder philosophy of human nature, in whose sense of absolute dependence he found the eternal ground and necessity of religion. But he agreed with them in adopting the subjective method of theological inquiry, substituting feeling for understanding as the primary source and final test of all religious truth. The mystical method supplanted the rationalistic. Religion was defined as consisting neither in knowledge nor in conduct, but in a determinate feeling, the consciousness of absolute dependence, and the task of theology was represented as exhausted in a description of the pious feeling. With Schleiermacher the phrase "Christian Consciousness" became indicative of a fixed method of inquiry. Religion being regarded as a primitive energy, beginning and ending in pious feeling, "the highest norm was no longer, as hitherto, the letter of Scripture, nor a dogmatic formula, nor a postulate of the sound human understanding, but the religious feeling, the state of the pious self-consciousness, before which every doctrine must authenticate itself. The result was that a large amount of the old dogmatic material was thrown overboard, as not pertinent to the representation of the religious life, and remanded to history, cosmology, and metaphysics. Herein consists the importance of the 'Dogmatik,' that the religious feeling presented with infallible tact all that is essential to faith, while all the withered branches of dogmatics were cut away with the

sharp knife of criticism." This is the judgment of a friendly reviewer. Schleiermacher reduced Christian theology to its narrowest bounds. His system represents the minimum of doctrinal conviction involved in Christian faith. Hence the many and serious gaps in the dogmatic results of his labors. The essential being of God is reduced to causality, inspiration is virtually eliminated, the idea of sin is feebly grasped, miracles are ignored, the atonement loses its central place and scriptural significance, and universal restoration is frankly affirmed. It is needless to say that such a system cannot take the rank of a great and comprehensive achievement in theological construction, however marked the genius of its author, and however fresh and fruitful the theological method which he introduced. He may, not inaptly, and without discredit either to his learning or his piety, be called a mystical pantheist. The philosophical postulate of his system is the affirmation that God and the world are two *correlates*, so that a Being of God is not to be thought of without the world, nor outside of the same, but that God is simply the living unity of the world, "the totality of all being, regarded as unity." The mystical element in his thought is his reference of religion to the domain of feeling, as not only rooted in, but wholly contained in, the sense of dependence, so that the pious or Christian consciousness becomes the sole organ or criterion of Christian doctrine. Hence the Dogmatik discusses, first the postulates involved in the consciousness of absolute dependence, then the implication involved in the consciousness of sin, and finally the implications involved in the consciousness of grace. Theology exhausts itself in describing Christian feeling, and then, by the aid of a powerful dialectic, bringing to light the intellectual and ethical postulates. Doctrine is purely inferential, open to constant revision by a profounder analysis of the religious feeling. Hence the meagreness of Schleiermacher's use of the Bible and the creeds in his exposition of Christian faith. The original,

creative, perpetually living material of theology was found in the immediate knowledge which the Christian has of Christ. The New Testament and the church can only corroborate, the primary sources and the ultimate criteria of Christian doctrine are subjective, not objective. If Schleiermacher taught any thing, he taught this; and this postulate characterizes all his followers, though none have equalled him in the fearless consistency of its application. He is the father of the mystical method in modern theology, where the Christian consciousness is regarded as supplying the materials of Christian doctrine.

The subjective method, introduced by Schleiermacher, has continued to dominate the development of German theology to the present day, though its results have become increasingly richer and more evangelical, and the idea of religion has assumed a larger meaning. Nitzsch may be mentioned as bringing the method into closer and more constant relation with a reverent and patient use of the Bible, Neander as linking it with the life of the church, and Twesten as disclosing its harmony with the testimony of the great confessions. By these corrective processes, modern German theology has attained substantial enlargement and has become in the main profoundly evangelical. Religion, too, is now affirmed to include knowledge and conduct as well as feeling, as rooted alike in man's intellectual, emotional, and ethical nature, though its initial source is posited in feeling. Neander's motto "Pectus est quod facit theologum," may be said to have been altered so as to read: "Pectus est quod facit religiosum, sed non facit theologum." A "pectoral theology" has come to be recognized as insufficient. The entire subjective life, as involving not only pious feeling, but primary mental affirmations, and ethical postulates, has come under review. And this again has been brought into relation with history, with the sober verdicts of the Christian church, and especially with the oldest documents outlining the faith of Christianity. Christian consciousness is interrogated on-

ly as illumined and informed by the teaching of history and the New Testament. The method is regressive from personal faith in Christ, through the church to the Holy Scriptures, as containing the oldest record of the historical revelation of Christ. In this way the objective sources and criteria of Christian knowledge have been regained, though without reinstatement in their original priority of authority. The subjective method is still primary and controlling, though no longer exclusive.

This fact is unmistakable in the definition given of theology, and in the treatment of its subject matter. Theology, in our schools and dogmatic treatises, is defined to be "the science of God and his relations to the universe." Its outlook is objective. The German divines, on the other hand, speak of theology as "the science of religion." The outlook is subjective, introspective. It is the life of God in the soul that is the primary object of attention. And this method of inquiry has produced a literature peculiarly rich in the analysis of the elements of true piety. It is predominantly contemplative and devotional, great in spiritual insight and uplift. And yet it is in constant danger of refining, until it becomes so attenuated and shadowy as to result only in another kind of scholasticism, the scholasticism of mystical absorption. It lacks vigor, the rough energy that makes any theology effective for aggressive use. It is a razor, rather than a broad-axe.

The subjective method determines, not only the definition of theology, but the subdivisions under which its special doctrines are brought under review in German dogmatic treatises. Schleiermacher's dogmatic plan has already been noticed. Nitzsch discourses of the Good, the Evil, and Salvation. Lange treats of Christian doctrine under the forms of Ideal, Real, and Universal Christology. Rothe begins his Dogmatik by the statement that its mission is the analysis and clear portraiture of the evangelical pious consciousness, and accordingly divides theology into two parts, the consciousness of sin and the conscious-

ness of grace. Harless, Kahnis, and Luthardt make the ecclesiastical consciousness their point of departure, and the latter defines theology as the ecclesiastical science of Christianity, and again as the science of the coherence of dogmas, which theology must reproduce from the religious faith of the Christian. "Gottesgemeinschaft" is his watchword, determining the form of his dogmatic labors, tracing this fellowship with God to its ground in His eternal love, its beginning in the creation of man, its disturbance by sin, its restoration in Jesus Christ, and its appropriation by faith in Him. An admirable plan for a sermon, but according to our Anglican standards, of doubtful incisiveness and efficiency for theological science. Luthardt's watchword reappears in Philippi, the very title of whose book is suggestive of his method: "The Church Doctrine of Faith," and his divisions treat of the original fellowship with God, its disturbance, and its restoration. The same key-note is given by Thomasius, who develops it from the Christological idea as the point of departure. With Hase theology is purely descriptive, without any attempt to reach a definite conclusion. Twesten defines dogmatics as "a living reproduction of belief from the soul of the believer." Dorner regards the vocation of theology to be "the exhibition of Christianity as truth," and the immediate source of knowledge is declared to be Christian experience or faith. Nearly two hundred pages are devoted to the discussion of the dogmatic method, under the head of Pisteology, and the resultant may be described as a Hegelian refinement of Schleiermacher's postulate, its more thorough philosophical exposition. Referring to Schleiermacher's doctrine that the pious and Christian state of the subject constitutes the sole contents of Christian doctrine and that consequently theology exhausts itself in the description of the Christian consciousness, without attaining an objective knowledge of God and Christ, Dorner adds: "This cannot be agreed to." He thinks it better to say, with Julius Müller, Hofmann,

Thomasius, Nitszch, Lange, and Frank, that "we must strive from the religious certainty of faith to an objective knowledge of God; but that it is to be done *retrogressively*, by inferring the cause from the effect." This birth of objective knowledge, *via causalitatis*, however, does not satisfy Dorner, and he allies himself with Liebner, Martensen, and Rothe by affirming that such objective knowledge is the essential content of Christian faith. Faith is declared, not only to have a knowledge of itself, "and thus a self-consciousness, but also a GOD-*consciousness*, a knowledge of God, which is in fact the final verification of the Christian consciousness." The condensed statement of the Dutch theologian Van Oosterzee, is so admirable and judicial a review of this universal German method, that it is here inserted without note or comment: "To the Christian truth, in accordance with the gospel believed and confessed by the church, the Christian consciousness gives a witness, with reason estimated highly. Only where objective truth finds a point of contact in the subjective consciousness does it become the spiritual property of mankind, and can it be thus properly understood and valued. So far, and so far only, does the Christian consciousness deserve a place among the sources of dogmatics. But since the doctrine of salvation can be derived neither from reason, nor from feeling, nor from conscience, and the internal consciousness only attests and confirms the truth after having learned it from Scripture, this last must always be valued as the principal source."

The present sketch has been confined to the influence of Schleiermacher's postulate and method upon the development of German theology, for the simple reason that only in Germany have they found congenial soil and steady growth. The subjective method, of which the phrase "Christian Consciousness" is sign and exponent, cannot be said to have become domesticated in Anglican and American theology. We have appropriated some of its processes and results, but we have not transferred the

standard of authority to the care of Christian faith. The latter is for us, at most, only interpretive and corroborative of what the Bible teaches; and only here and there has the leap been made to the position that nothing can be true for man "which has not passed through his self-consciousness, and verified itself before it." The phrases "world-consciousness, Christian consciousness, God-consciousness," are of foreign importation, and do not fit our habits of thought; and their philosophical postulates and implications are best studied among the people with whom the vocabulary is indigenous. For words are things, and these phrases indicate a theological method the very reverse of that which we have pursued and held in honor, the former being a method in which faith is regarded as "conscious of independence of all that is external, *the Scriptures not excepted.*" Contrast with this the definition of faith in the Westminster Shorter Catechism as a saving grace, whereby we receive and rest upon Christ alone for salvation "*as he is offered to us in the gospel*" and the difference in doctrinal attitude is apparent. The German method is subjective and philosophical, the English method is objective and biblical. The difference is constitutional and ingrained. It recalls the old story that when an Englishman would describe the anatomy and habits of a camel, he visits the countries where the camel is at home, while the Frenchman makes occasional excursions to a zoölogical museum, and the German shuts himself up in his study finding all the needed material in his consciousness. Not but that the German theology will always have attractions for a few quiet and contemplative minds, and remain a storehouse of the richest devotional literature, but its pronounced and extreme subjectivity will prevent its naturalization in the English churches, whose spirit is more practical than it is philosophical. It is our temper to demand the statement of truth in such a form as to make it practically serviceable. We want a theology that is not only evangelical, but evangelistic, and in this

latter quality the mediation theology is plainly deficient. It has been said by a keen, though somewhat rude, critic, himself a German divine, that "however weighty and thoughtful the sermons of Nitzsch, Steinmeyer, Sack, Müller, may have been, still they were only reflective, sapless, and bloodless, so thoroughly unsuited to the people that here may be found the reason, the explanation of what seems a riddle to many, that the young generation of theologians passed over unconditionally from the lecture-rooms of Müller, Nitzsch, and Dorner into the camp of the orthodox, and in the pulpit assumed the tone of Löhe and Harms." The criticism may be too sweeping, but it is not wholly undeserved. The theology crystallized in the moulds of the subjective method does not readily yield itself to aggressive evangelization.

It is true that the objective method, which starts from the New Testament, consults the history of Christian thought, and interrogates personal Christian experience, in the formulation of Christian doctrine, may seem to differ but slightly from the subjective method, which simply reverses the process. Upon such a description, the existing debate may be regarded as mainly verbal. What difference can it make whether I proceed from present and conscious faith in Christ, through history, to the New Testament, or travel from the New Testament, through the witnessing church, to present knowledge of salvation? Do I not traverse the same path in either case, a path of which Christ is starting point and goal? Granting all this, the subjective method can only claim hospitable treatment, side by side with the older, the objective method, and the superiority of the former must be surrendered. We do not read the subjective method out of court, nor deny its legitimacy and usefulness, but we claim that it is in no way superior to the opposite method, which begins where it ends,—a reverent reading of Holy Scripture. Nay, we press the claim that the subjective method must always be at a great disadvantage in dealing with unre-

generate men. For it postulates faith in the hearer. It begins with man, not with God. It is not simply a Christian theology, but pre-eminently a theology for Christians. It is excellent for edification, but it is weak as an instrument for awakening. It is good for the saintly retreat, but not for a world of sinners. It cannot be a theology of revivals and missions. It could not be preached in China and India and Africa. Here the opposite method has the unspeakable advantage. It begins with a "thus saith the Lord," for itself and for others, and makes the divine authority prominent. The processes of philosophical thought frequently need to be reversed in popular appeal. The conclusion must be announced with the emphasis of personal conviction, before the proofs can be presented in detail. Now Christianity is pre-eminently the religion of conquest. Its proper vestment is the soldier's armor, not the philosopher's cap and gown. It must be carried to pagan, imbruted, worldly, unregenerate men. The assault must be from the objective side, in the full assurance that every spear hurled into the hostile camp will quiver in the enemy's heart. The soul has an echo for the word of God, but the surest way of making men hear that inner echo, is to speak in the name of the Lord. So that, even granting the equal legitimacy of the subjective with the objective method, the latter is to be preferred because it gives us a theology that can be preached.

It must be said, moreover, that the subjective method in Christian theology has been so associated with certain postulates or theories, as to justify hesitancy in accepting its leadership. In the first instance it was identified with the Kantian philosophy, according to which I can know only what is the immediate object of consciousness,— my own mental and moral states. All other knowledge is purely inferential, based upon the law of causality. Even God can make himself known to me only in certain states of which I am conscious, and for whose explanation I must

assume His action. Him I do not, cannot, apprehend; an objective knowledge of God is impossible, and therefore the psychological method is the only available one in theology. A theory of knowledge that shuts man up to the analysis of his own mental states, underlies the birth of the theology that limits Christian doctrine to the description of the Christian consciousness. The present article does not permit a criticism of this philosophical postulate, nor is the present writer competent to conduct it. But so much is manifest that this is only a higher form of a heresy that Kant himself riddled and that Sir William Hamilton exposed and demolished,—that sensation and perception are synonomous and equivalent. Sensation is the spring and concomitant of perception, the exciting occasion and permanent attendant of the same, but the *object* is viewed by the reason through the media of the conscious impressions. That is Hamilton's impregnable affirmation as demanded by the philosophy of common sense, an affirmation that he strangely abandoned when he touched the idea of God. Religion begins in feeling, as perception begins in sensation, but feeling is only the spur inciting to the search of truth, whose objective apprehension is the result, and for whose existence we must have objective evidence and warrant.

The main alliance, however, of the subjective method in theology, has been with the bolder philosophy of Hegel, according to whom all truth, God included, is the result of a process of thought. The reason of man has only to look within to find the absolute. This may not be pantheistic, but the difference between such a philosophy and pantheism is difficult of discernment and discovery. The significance of the Hegelian principle for dogmatics has been described by a loyal disciple to be in forcing the concession that "revelation authenticates itself as an eternal, continuous, internal energy, pervading universal history, as the immanent process of the life of God in the life of man. An external gave place to an internal, a soli-

tary to an eternal, a particular to a universal, a miraculous to a spiritually necessary, revelation." This is the philosophic atmosphere in which the theology built up on the data furnished by the "Christian Consciousness" has mainly lived, moved, and had its being. We will not repeat the charge of pantheism, which has so often and so earnestly been repudiated and termed the indictment of ignorance, but the theology certainly has had a pantheistic tinge. It has regarded God as pure causality. It has spoken of creation as eternal. It has gone so far as to say with Rothe: "*Ohne Gott keine Welt, und ohne Welt keinen Gott.*" It has identified revelation with reflection, and made inspiration equivalent to the gift of genius. It has made the "immanence of God" its watchword and test. The most thorough-going and consistent exposition of the theology based upon the "Christian Consciousness," from an American pen, boldly adopts this postulate of the Hegelian philosophy. The history of theological thought is represented as determined throughout by the idea of God as either immanent or transcendent. The first is declared to have been the philosophy of the Greek theologians; the latter is regarded as distinguishing the theology of Augustine and of the West. In Schleiermacher the older Greek thought is affirmed to have resumed its place, and before its expansive energy Christian theology must be radically recast. Revelation must be conceived of as operative only in the reason of man, and Christian doctrine must find its authentication in the believer's consciousness. Without criticising the argument, or examining its historical development, the principle so plainly announced—*the Immanence of God*—is the vital question involved in the debate. What are we to understand by the divine immanence? What is the scriptural conception of God's relation to the universe? Is God immanent in the world by necessity of nature and from all eternity, related to the world as the soul is to the body, as thought is to speech? If so, the argument is closed, for then rev-

elation is universal, and the divine thought articulates itself in man's reflection, requiring no objective standard for its authentication, and resenting its presence. But if the divine immanence must not be so held as to exclude God's eternal transcendence, if the divine indwelling in man does not preclude God's objective and absolute independence of man and of the world, it is evident that however true it may be that in the reason of man God speaks, there is room also for a divine address *to* the human reason. Reflection may be a form of revelation, and it may be always the necessary product of revelation, but if the divine personality is not diffused in the world and in man, if God retains His conscious and eternal independence, reflection cannot be the equivalent for revelation, and it must he possible for God to make Himself objectively known. If He be transcendent as well as immanent, then man's thought is one thing, and God's thought is another thing, however true it may be that God's thought is creative and controlling. And if this be true, then the truth which claims to be of God must find objective authentication, and the theological method which begins with the recorded word of God is the safest and best. Assuming this to be the vital issue underlying the debate, there can be little doubt as to the final verdict of sober Christian thinkers.