

CHAPTER V

THE CRITERION OF FEELING

‘NOT being Christians, they have acquired no right to the Christian Scriptures; and it may be very fairly said to them: “Who are you? When and whence did you come? As you are none of mine, what have you to do with that which is mine? Indeed, Marcion, by what right do you hew my wood? By whose permission, Valentinus, are you diverting the streams of my fountain? By what power, Apelles, are you removing my landmarks? This is my property. Why are you, the rest, sowing and feeding here at your own pleasure? This is my property. I have long possessed it; I possessed it before you.”’¹

These words of Tertullian may be cited as an expression of the resentment with which Christian piety has been wont to regard the attempts of Rationalism to amend Christianity, and in amending it to transform it. In particular they represent the attitude of the school of Schleiermacher towards the rationalistic schools of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

I

A new epoch in German theology was opened by Schleiermacher, who, besides exercising a penetrative influence in almost every department of theological science, sought to establish dogmatic theology on a new and independent basis. His distinctive standpoint was

¹ Tertullian, *De Praescriptione*, cap. 37. E. Tr. Ante-Nicene Library, vol. xv. p. 44.

first disclosed in his *Discourses on Religion*,¹ in which he attempted to reconcile the world of culture to religion by showing that its reason for despising religion was that it did not understand it, and that on discovering its essential nature it would revert to its allegiance. He gives a sombre picture of the new paganism which dominated the golden age of German literature. 'I know,' he says, 'that you have not only deserted the temples of the Highest, but that you have also ceased to worship Him in secret; and that you look on religion as if it were an old-fashioned costume such as often continues to be worn among the common people after it has been discarded by the upper classes.' This scornful attitude, he proceeds, was no mark of enlightenment. They supposed, in accordance with current views, that religion consisted partly in assenting to certain theological doctrines, partly in rendering obedience to the precepts of the moral law; and as they did not believe the doctrines, and had a science of morals to concern itself with conduct, they could regard religion as superfluous. The true conception of religion, he contended, is that it is an affair, not of the intellect or of the will, but of the heart. It is a state of devout feeling, describable as a sense of absolute dependence upon God. It is far more nearly akin to æsthetic feeling—such as the poet's feeling for nature, than to metaphysical thought or to moral conduct. The professed aim of the world of culture was the complete development of human powers and capacities; but a culture which left out the most elevated and refined of human feelings—a feeling expressive of man's relation to the Supreme Being, and of the essential

¹ *Sämmtliche Werke*, 1836, Bd. i., *Reden über die Religion*. E. Tr. with Introd., Oman, 1893.

condition of human existence—was unfaithful to its own ideal of perfection.

The essence of Christianity, in Schleiermacher's view, had been somewhat misapprehended by all schools of theology, but chiefly by the contemporary Rationalism which sought to reduce it to the doctrines of natural theology and of moral philosophy. He described this amended Christianity as 'a badly stitched patchwork of metaphysics and ethics.' 'They have transformed the fair temple,' he says again, 'into a ruin, and they are never happy save when they are further altering and defacing it.' His quarrel with Rationalism was based on various grounds. He had been touched by the romantic movement, which sought to understand and re-expound the chivalries, the splendours and the dreams of the great days of old; and to this type of mind the critic who reduced the beatific visions of Christian faith to a few common-sense propositions was on a level with the vandal who builds himself a house or a sheep-fold out of the stones of an ancient cathedral. But his opposition to deistic thought was chiefly dictated by his conception of the Christian religion as consisting in a complex of sacred feelings which the rationalistic doctrines did little to explain, and still less to foster and sustain.

I

It might be supposed that the general conception of religion entertained by Schleiermacher involved the doom of dogmatic theology. If religion is not a doctrine, theoretical or ethical, but a feeling, it is not at first glance evident that there is any longer suitable material to work upon. But in his view the feelings have a reflected or secondary existence in affirmations

which are made about them or to which they give rise, and it is this intellectualised matter which is the starting-point of dogmatic theology. It has first to essay the historical task of collecting the doctrines prevalent in a particular Church at a particular time; it has further to deal with the genetic problem of tracing them to their source in the varieties of Christian feeling; it has to define them with a scientific precision that does justice to their essential content of feeling; and finally it has to articulate the surviving material into a consistent and balanced whole.¹

1. The task of dogmatic theology, as viewed by Schleiermacher, involved no preliminary assumption as to the derivation of the subject-matter from revelation. The data were described as the doctrines prevalent or valid in a particular Church at a particular time. By this was meant, not so much the doctrines owned by a Church in its Creeds and Confessions—though these necessarily count—as the living and operative beliefs which are voiced in the stated preaching of the Word, in the proceedings of Church courts, and in the typical theological and devotional literature of a particular period. This procedure, it is obvious, has its difficulties. It is not easy under modern conditions to obtain a trustworthy report upon the doctrines which are really alive and doing work, and which are expressive of the detailed beliefs of a particular Church. Nor does the method seem to promise what is looked for in theology. The question which theology is expected to answer is—‘What is truth?’—and it has the appearance of an evasion to proceed to report what men are teaching for the time being in a single branch of one division

¹ *Sämmtliche Werke*, 1836, Bd. 1., *Kurze Darstellung des theologischen Studiums*; Bde. III. IV., *Der Christliche Glaube*. See App. H, *The Theological Principles of Schleiermacher*.

of Christendom. But the method of Schleiermacher does not in effect reduce the theologian to the rank of a reporter. For he lays down the condition that none may undertake to expound the doctrine of a Church unless he be in sympathy with it and share its faith; and he adds that the thinker who should attempt the task without possessing the faith which he described, would be wanting in the essential qualification for doing the work with an elementary measure of success.

2. In the second place, theology has the genetic task of tracing the doctrines prevalent in a particular Church to their original source. The primary source, as has been said, is devout feeling. Every doctrine which finds a place in the Christian system, every article at least which is entitled to a place, is an attempt to describe or interpret some form of religious feeling. It is a necessity of feeling that it should express itself in some fashion. In the lower stages of culture it seeks vent in ejaculations and gestures. At a higher stage it finds utterance in symbolical acts, and also in devotional and rhetorical speech. At the highest stage it attempts to give an account of itself, and of the objects with which it is connected, in didactic discourse, and in the clear-cut balanced statement of the dogmatic proposition.

In reflecting upon their experiences, men have been forced to reflect upon the causes by which they have been produced. And the source of the feeling of redemption is readily identified. It is matter of history and experience that the feeling is owed to Jesus Christ, who Himself was the prototype of the experience of intimate and sustained communion with God, and who has continued to reproduce it—through the agency of the Church and the means of grace—in those who are

knit to Him by faith. From this accordingly has sprung the doctrine of the Person and Work of Christ as the Mediator, by whom the blessings of redemption have been procured for believers, and also a set of doctrines concerning the Church, the means of grace, the last things and the Triune God.

3. The raw material of theology, then, is the system of doctrines prevalent in a particular Church; the source is Christian feeling pointing back to Christ; and we have next to advert to the criterion which was used in the final task of defining and systematising the doctrines. This does not take the form of an unthinking reproduction of the ecclesiastical definitions. The reproduction is done in the light of the theory that the doctrines are a reflex of pious feelings. This entails two obligations—to exclude from the system of doctrine whatever intellectual material is not traceable to a spring in pious feeling; and to re-state doctrines, if necessary, in the terms which shall make them the best possible expression and interpretation of the feelings from which they have been derived. In regard to the former of these tasks, Schleiermacher conceived that the traditional systems of doctrine, Protestant as well as Catholic, contain articles which have no root and warrant in devout feeling, but are a pure product of philosophical speculation; and he urged that when this foreign origin can be proved—as in the case of certain tenets of natural theology—the propositions are to be thrown aside as spurious and irrelevant matter. Again, he conceived that a doctrine may be rooted in feeling, while yet it is an imperfect expression of the religious datum—as in the orthodox doctrines of the Trinity and of the Person of Christ—and in this case deference to the current teaching of the Church will not debar

the theologian from seeking formulas more adequate to the discharge of the scientific obligation. The conditions of this critical and scientific work ensure the operation of a principle of progress; and progress is further facilitated by sporadic movements of the living thought of a particular period, in which the theologian finds encouragement to move in advance of the general mind of the Church. On the other hand, theology gives guarantees of conservatism and of continuity. It is concerned with historical data—viz. the peculiar modifications of feeling which constitute the genius of the Christian religion, and the work of the Redeemer by which they have been engendered. A theology which like Rationalism detached itself in large measure from the history and experience of the Church, which left out doctrines with which Christian feeling was vitally bound up, and which laid all the stress upon speculative and ethical tenets that left the heart unaffected and cold, was conceived to be a scientific blunder as well as a crime against Christian piety. The orthodox tradition of theology, Catholic and Protestant, though held to be subject to revision in detail, was found to be faithful to the guidance of Christian feeling in assigning a central position to Christ, and in its laudable attempt to fix His unique and abiding significance in the doctrines of His Person and Work.

II

The fundamental questions raised by this theological method are—first, is it a fact of psychology and history that the religious ideas of Christianity are a deposit from devout feeling? Secondly, can we accept Schleiermacher's conception of the criterion of Christian doctrine?

1. As regards the derivation of doctrine from religious feeling, it is a just observation that all emotion seeks expression, and that it compels reflection upon its own nature and upon the causes which have produced it. It is observable that an exceptional period of religious excitement is usually accompanied by an intensification of doctrinal belief, and by a realisation of previously neglected aspects of truth. Further, it is evident that a considerable portion of Christian doctrine is an attempt at the analysis and description of states of religious experience. Such are the doctrines of the nature and forms of sin, of spiritual inability, of faith and repentance, of regeneration and sanctification. But the facts are far too complex—the interaction of thought and feeling in religious experience is too clearly operative, to allow the generalisation to pass unchallenged that religious doctrines are to be estimated as a mere reflex of religious feelings. In the normal life of the Christian Church, the preponderance of evidence is greatly in favour of the priority of ideas. In the case of an individual conversion it would be generally recognised that it is the group of ideas, impressively presented as a gospel, which is the instrument that produces the change of heart, rather than that a new state of feeling supervenes which leads to the discovery of a new set of ideas. It was on the whole the same in the epochs of religious ferment and movement which have been stamped with the character of a spiritual revival or a reformation. It is undeniable that in these periods a mysterious spiritual influence was at work, which created a general temper and receptiveness that were needed to explain the extraordinary character of the effects; but on the other hand there was a spoken or written message, embodying

a group of ideas, which was the principal means by which the movement was sustained, invigorated and perpetuated. At the Reformation, in the Puritan upheaval, and in the Wesleyan revival, it is much clearer that the preaching of a gospel was a cause of the spiritual convulsion, than that the constituent ideas of this gospel were a description and interpretation of the emotional phenomena. Was it then otherwise in the two stages of origins—in the preparatory phase of the Old Testament, and in the period of the foundation of the Christian religion?

(a) Beginning with the Old Testament we ask whether it is a tenable view that the message of the prophets was a mere reflex and attempted expression of their own religious feelings. It is, of course, true that in almost every case a profound religious experience was the presupposition of the prophetic activity. In this experience they had a feeling of being apprehended by God, of undergoing a spiritual purification, and of receiving an enduement of power. It was undoubtedly a part of their message to tell what God had done for them, while their personal experiences were to some extent the occasion and condition of their being able to see more deeply than they would else have done into the heart and purpose of God. At the same time it is clear that the principal object of their reflection was, not their own feelings, but the doings of God in the history of Israel. That history consisted of a series of divine acts—of election, of righteous retribution, of unmerited mercy—which were a disclosure of the nature and the purposes of God; and the prophetic teaching was to a far less extent a reflex of their own experiences, than a proclamation of the truths thus historically disclosed, and the application of these, by way of

menace and promise, to the minds and consciences of their people.

Even if the data be extended to include the national experiences of Israel under the divine government, we do not establish the purely secondary character of the religious ideas. It is an important truth that the revelation of God to Israel was essentially a self-disclosure in history; that it is not identical with the inspiration of the sacred books; and that the Old Testament contains a large element which is properly estimated as reflection on and inference from the historical facts.¹ But although the revelation consisted primarily of divine acts on the field of a nation's history, we must recognise as part of it the form of divine activity which revealed God to a nation by giving to it great minds. It is, moreover, quite arbitrary to say that the influence of the Spirit of God upon the prophets made them more devout, and also more earnest, but that it did not make them wiser. The evidence is the other way. Extraordinary as is the history of Israel by reason of the impressive events by which it was guided and coloured, it is no less extraordinary by reason of the greatness of the religious thinkers who were raised up to penetrate to the meaning of these events, and who read from them for the benefit of after-ages the lessons which they suggested touching the divine being, purpose and government. The same God reigned in the history of other peoples—sending to them also prosperity and calamity—and they spelled out little, and that confusedly and uncertainly, as to the divine significance of their national discipline. The same God communed with those who in other lands feared Him and worked

¹ Rothe, *Zur Dogmatik*, 2 Auf. 1869.

righteousness, but they did not extract from their pious feelings a doctrine of the attributes and of the works of God which remotely compares in point of depth and moral purity with the prophetic teaching. It is, accordingly, a legitimate inference that ideas were an original and integral part of the unique self-disclosure of God in the history of Israel.

(b) In New Testament times we find ourselves in a period of intense religious feeling. But on the whole the recognition of facts and the acceptance of ideas preceded and conditioned the emotional experiences. The ecstatic states of the Corinthian Christians followed upon the reception of the Gospel as preached by St. Paul. The baptism with fire at Pentecost came upon those who had been instructed in the faith, and who believed the Gospel which was preached to them. The case of St. Paul might seem to illustrate the derivative character of ideas. His conversion and subsequent life in Christ undoubtedly contributed much to the apostle's conception and elaboration of the Gospel, so that it is not without reason that his Gospel has been described as an interpretation of his religious experience. But on closer scrutiny it is evident that in his case also there was an antecedent body of religious thought which was instrumental in his conversion, and which also gave him the clue to the interpretation of his new spiritual experiences. He was converted as the result of coming into contact with Christ, and with the ideas which had been derived from Christ, and which were testified to and circulated by the primitive Church. He added, indeed, to the stock of ideas, but he had first received at least as much as he gave. We are therefore carried back to the experience of the Founder of our faith. If we approach the question from

the point of view of His human development, it appears that the Old Testament ideas about God were an important factor in His education, and that they were also a factor in moulding and enriching His experience. For the rest, it seems clear that it was His unique knowledge of the Father which was the presupposition of the unique experiences of the inner life of Christ.

The theory that Christian doctrines were wholly a deposit from the devout feelings of Christian experience is also incompatible with the definiteness and consistency of the elements of Christian doctrine. To attempt to describe the significance of feeling is a difficult task—so elusive is the phenomenon dealt with, and so ambiguous its meaning; and if the position of matters had been that the original Christian circle merely experienced a feeling of realised harmony of soul, and was thrown on its own resources to frame a theory as to the implications, it seems certain that the resultant conceptions would have been extremely conflicting and even chaotic. When instead of this it appears that there is a very large stock of ideas which form the common intellectual possession of the Apostles and of apostolic men, the inference is warranted that the same Spirit which wrought the experiences of the converts and saints of the apostolic age also guided them in apprehending a set of truths which were explicitly or implicitly given in the revelation of God in Christ.

The improbability of the view before us may also be illustrated from the contrast presented in an analogous case. Religious sentiment is akin to æsthetic sentiment, and the latter is subject to the same law that it seeks satisfaction in self-expression, and that it prompts to reflection upon its own nature and its objects. We

should therefore have expected, if feeling be the real spring of Christian doctrine, that æsthetic feeling would also have given rise to a body of doctrines corresponding to its varieties of manifestation, would have generated a conception of a Supreme Being dominated by interest in the beautiful and the sublime, and would have predicted a future history of the world, and pictured a heaven, in which the governing motive was the realisation and perpetuation of æsthetic ideals. That no body of doctrine exists in this field which is comparable in range and definiteness to systematic theology is not adequately explained by the fact that mankind is far less vitally interested in the beautiful than in the topics suggested by religion. It points to the conclusion that knowledge is integrally connected with religious experience as it is not connected with æsthetic experience, and that the religious mind has had data of positive knowledge to work upon, instead of having merely to wrestle with the obscure problem of explaining the doctrinal implications of its feelings.

2. The next point of cardinal importance is the criterion employed by Schleiermaeher to sift the mass of received doctrine, and to separate its authentic and valuable elements from those which were spurious or worthless. We have to notice first his proposal to exclude all doctrinal matter which represented a merely speculative interest. Not only did he condemn Rationalism for subjecting the Christian system to the control of a standard furnished by philosophical reflection, but he also professed the purpose of rigorously excluding all such material from the scheme of Christian doctrine. 'That the ideas of philosophy,' he writes, 'differ from those of religion in their origin and form, and that it is

unwarrantable to combine philosophical and dogmatic material, is the fundamental idea of my book.¹

It is now possible to hold that he was entirely right in repudiating the rationalistic principle, but that he rejected it with a rigorism which involved an unnecessary impoverishment of religious knowledge. There is a body of Christian truth with which philosophy is not entitled to tamper, any more than it is able—even if it be so minded, to involve it in discredit. The supremely valuable elements in the Christian system are derived from a specifically Christian source, and they constitute the basis and the regulative principle of the comprehensive thinking which is done in the crowning task of dogmatic theology. But it may still be true that there is knowledge derivable from other sources which is consistent with the Christian view of God and the world, and which is capable of being combined with the Christian material into a rounded whole that proves more completely satisfying to the intellectual curiosity which is a legitimate motive of theology. It is an instructive inquiry as to how much of our knowledge of divine things is derived from the revelation of God in Christ—it is indeed the all-important branch of the theological inquest—but it does not follow that, in its final exposition of ascertained religious truth, theology has to renounce the hope of utilising anything relevant from any other quarter. This would involve a consequence which Christian faith cannot accept without self-stultification—viz. that God, who is believed to be almighty and all-wise, as well as all-good, has shown no clear traces of His character and attributes in His works of creation and providence. It is not open to Christian faith to believe that God has

¹ *Der Christliche Glaube*, 1^{to} Auf. °2, note b.

created and governed the world in such wise that, instead of revealing Him, it radically misrepresents Him.

Further, as dogmatic theology of every school and type expounds a doctrine of Creation, it is difficult to deny that there has been a contribution of matter, which is both extremely relevant and extremely important, in the scientific discovery of the immensity of creation, and in the hypothesis of a progressive creation set forth as a scheme of cosmic and terrestrial evolution. Similarly the doctrine of Providence, including the divine government of the world, may conceivably be supplemented in weighty particulars when the revelation of God in the general history of mankind has been carefully investigated, and the philosophy of history has attained to greater clearness as to the goal, the stages and the laws of the whole movement. It is also clear that theology has learned something, and probable that it will learn more, from the philosophical discipline of psychology. The truth is that there are only two classes who have an excuse for isolating Christian knowledge of divine things from that derived from other sources—viz. those who are agnostic in their philosophy, and those who have misgivings as to whether their faith can stand the light of day.

As regards the religious knowledge which is derived from the Christian source, it was a great merit of Schleiermacher, and a permanent contribution to dogmatic method, to have emphasised the essence of Christianity as the assured datum which serves as the criterion of revealed truth, and which dominates the details of the doctrinal system. His conception of its essential content was given in a brief definition, which has been criticised, expanded and amended by many of his successors. The value of this definition and of his

conception of Christianity as a complex of devout feelings will be more profitably discussed after we have passed in review other interpretations of the essence of Christianity. Meanwhile it is sufficient to say that the presumption is against the view which he suggests—viz. that the chief blessings brought into the world through the perfect religion were of the nature of feelings, that the condition of pleasing God lies on the emotional plane, or that the supreme test of a Christian standing is one to which the attitude of the will seems to be irrelevant.

II

The standpoint and the method of Schleiermacher have been adopted by many modern theologians. These fall into two groups, according as they have adhered exclusively to the subjective principle, or have found that it was capable of justifying the recognition of an additional and objective authority that could be appealed to as a source and guarantee of Christian knowledge.

Of the first group the most prominent representative is Alexander Schweizer, who prefaces his exposition of the system of Christian doctrine by a clear and full discussion of the fundamental principles.¹ According to Schweizer, the function of dogmatics is the exposition of the faith of the evangelical Church at its present stage of development. It cannot derive its materials from the faith of the Church of a former age, and it is debarred from making statutory use of ancient creeds and confessions; while it may only utilise the Scriptures in so far as their contents have been appropriated by the believing mind of an existing Church. On the other hand necessity is laid upon Protestant theology

¹ *Die Christliche Glaubenslehre*, 1863, Bd. 1.

to show that it represents a sound doctrinal development—*i.e.* it must show sufficient agreement with the Scriptural testimony to justify its title to be called Christian, and sufficient agreement with the Protestant symbols and tradition to justify its title to be called evangelical. The task, now, which has been indicated—of delineating the theology of a branch of the contemporary Protestant Church—is admitted to be one which can only be accomplished with approximate accuracy, inasmuch as the dividing line between the living and the dead in the matter of doctrine is constantly changing. Besides, many different stages of religious development and enlightenment are found at the same time in the one communion. For the eventual valuation and criticism of this heterogeneous material Schweizer operates with a conception of the Christian religion as the final or perfect religion which rests upon the idea of grace, and which depends upon the revelation and mediatorship of Jesus Christ.

The task of exhibiting and systematising the beliefs which are living and operative in a definite section of the Protestant Church at a given time is one of great interest and importance; and it is no doubt useful to a particular Church to combine such an exposition with criticism based on the fundamental principles of the Christian religion. But when, as in Schweizer's system, the supernatural in Christianity is eliminated, and Christ is exhibited in strictly human dimensions, we must ask which of his principles justifies this result. If it means that this is the faith of a contemporary Swiss Church, we are entitled to much more evidence than he supplies to show that he is a trustworthy reporter as to its doctrinal beliefs. If it belongs to the critical and corrective side of his task, he has done little to show

the compatibility of his positions with the historical datum of the essence of the Christian religion.

The influence of Schleiermacher also dominates the work of the recent Parisian school, notably as represented by Auguste Sabatier.¹ He expresses his agreement with Schleiermacher that the religious phenomenon, and more especially the Christian phenomenon, is the subject-matter of theology, commends as the only scientific method that of observation and experiment, and explains dogmas and doctrines as the means by which 'the religious consciousness has manifested its content and explained to itself its origin and reason for being.' He also proposes to organise the system of doctrine in accordance with the analysis of a threefold religious experience which yields the ideas of the religion of nature, the religion of law, and the religion of love. 'Theology,' says Sabatier, 'can disappear only if the object of its study vanishes. And so long as the religious phenomenon of Christianity is repeated, so long it will continue to be necessary to study it, to determine its conditions, its nature, cause and significance.'² This is true; but what is open to doubt is whether the phenomenon of personal piety, which finds so fervent and beautiful expression in his own pages, would continue to be repeated if it came to be believed that religious ideas are thrown off as a by-product of the religious sentiment, and that they are mere symbols which we must beware of taking too seriously. The central idea of the book which has been quoted is that the human spirit has at length been emancipated from the principle of authority, and has become autonomous, which is explained to mean that 'the consent

¹ *The Religions of Authority and the Religion of the Spirit*, E. Tr., 1904. See also *Outlines of a Philosophy of Religion*, E. Tr., 1897.

² *Ibid.*, p. xxiv.

of the mind to itself is the prime condition and foundation of all certitude.' But surely there is a tenable position intermediate between blind faith in an external authority and the repudiation of all authority. The mind may discover an authority which approves itself to it as supremely worthy of trust within a certain range of experience, and which it even feels justified in trusting when it seeks to conduct it further and deeper into a realm of spiritual truth.

In a scientific age it could not but occur independently to various thinkers that religious experiences lend themselves to investigation equally with other groups of phenomena, and that it is at least possible to describe and classify them, and to attempt to explain their origin and their meaning. It is therefore unnecessary to postulate a historical connection between Schleiermacher and the scattered voices of the English-speaking world that have pleaded for a theology which should be based, not on Scripture or on metaphysics, but on experience. The classic contribution from the psychological side is *The Varieties of Religious Experience* of Professor William James; but interesting and stimulating as James's work is, it can scarcely be said that the method has furnished materials for a theology. It would appear that the function of feeling is, not to furnish a theology, but only to make clear that application must be made in another quarter.

This latter standpoint may perhaps be best illustrated from the procedure of Frank of Erlangen in the development of his *System der Christlichen Wahrheit*.¹ After setting aside the earlier theories, including the old Protestant conception, Frank seeks a basis for dogmatic

¹ 1878, 3^{te} Auf., 1893. The link between Schleiermacher and Frank is Hofmann, *Der Schriftbeweis*, 1857-60.

theology in religious experience. This he finds, in the peculiar Christian experience of regeneration, and in the certainty by which it is accompanied. It is absolutely guaranteed to be a fact—as absolutely as a man's possession or recovery of bodily health, and it is attested by feelings of satisfaction, peace and joy. From this initial certainty the mind advances to the knowledge and assurance of three classes of objects of faith. There is immediately given a knowledge of certain subjective facts which are described as immanent objects of faith—yielding a doctrine of sin, a doctrine of faith, of justification and of sanctification, and also materials towards a doctrine of the world to come. Passing to reflection on the power by which these effects have been produced, Christian faith recognises a threefold divine agency as preparing, effecting and applying redemption; and this finds its interpretation as the work of the Triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—co-eternal and co-equal. In particular redemption rests on the Incarnation and Atonement of Christ, and it is made effective by the grace and power of the risen and glorified Christ. These are named the transcendent objects of faith. But further, God works through means, which are also objects of faith, and may be distinguished from the foregoing as transitive. They include the Church, which, like the individual Christian, is a mass of contradictions—very human as well as divine, but with this advantage over the individual, that it never dies, and that it goes on accumulating experience. With the Church is associated the Word, which contains also a human element, but is surely recognised as divine from the nature of the work which it accomplishes. Scripture is not absolutely identical

with the Word of God, nor is it inerrant. While the believer may not himself respond to all the truth which it contains, he will take it on trust out of respect for the larger consciousness of the Christian society. The third of the objects of faith of this group is the Sacraments, which however are subordinate to the Word.

The system of Frank, which had considerable vogue a generation ago, marks a considerable advance upon Schleiermacher. It starts from the datum of regeneration, which is rich and more distinctive than a state of feeling; and it makes it clear that the explication of this central fact of an authentic Christian experience yields no inconsiderable body of theological doctrine. But in the course of the exposition it becomes clear that the purely subjective point of view has been abandoned, and that on the basis of inward testimony sufficient grounds have been discovered for utilising objective sources in the testimony of Scripture and Church; and it may also be thought that more demands are made upon these recovered authorities than the witness of experience will justify.

The issue of the application of the method of Schleiermacher has thus been the discovery, either that it abides in the region of psychology with a great dubiety as to the significance of the religious feelings, or that it conducts to the discovery of an external factor which opens a door into wider realms of knowledge. The latter would appear to be the true result; and in that case the contribution does not amount to much more than was present to the minds of the Reformers, when they appealed to an inner witness, described as the *testimonium spiritus sancti*, as pointing to and corroborating an objective revelation which is attested in the Word of God.