

On Certainty, and Rightly-Founded Assurance, in Matters of RELIGION

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THERE is a witness of and from God in every conscience; which, in his light, power, and authority, witnesses for Him, and against that which is contrary to Him.

From this witness proceeds the true and well-grounded religion in the mind towards God: for this witness both testifies and demonstrates that there is a God, and also inclines the mind to desire and seek after the right knowledge and true worship of Him.

And those who keep to this witness, and wait upon God therein, are taught by it the true spiritual worship; the true and pure fear of the Most High; the faith which he gives to his saints; the love which is chaste and unfeigned; the hope which purifies the mind, and anchors it on the eternal rock; the meekness, patience, gentleness, humility, etc., which is not of man's nature, but rather the gift of God, and the nature of the heavenly Giver.

And then, as for the exercises of religion, such as praying to the Father of spirits, hearing the heavenly voice, reading in the Spirit, and with the renewed understanding, singing and making melody in the heart (and also with the voice) to the Lord, as His life is felt, and the spiritual blessings and treasure received; all of these, and whatever else is judged necessary for the soul, are taught by this witness of God in the conscience, as the soul grows up in the light, Spirit, nature, and holy power thereof.

But now, when the Lord reaches to His witness in men, and is teaching their hearts by it, then the enemy, the other spirit, whose seat is in the other part, makes a noise there, to overbear the voice of God's true witness. This enemy causes men to take up religion in another part, which is shallow, and reaches not to the depth and weight of truth, which is in the witness of God.

Thus the enemy stirs up reasonings, imaginations, and consultations about God and his worship; wherein he raises up the vain, shallow mind, which creates and brings forth something pleasing and suitable to the earthly understanding. The mind is then involved therein, and the heart also engaged in some such practices that may quiet and satisfy that part in men. For the religious ways that men take up in their reasonings and understandings, these satisfy their reasonings and understandings. And so they walk in their own light, and warm themselves by the fire of their own kindling. But none of this answers the witness of God in them.

Now from this part in man arises all the uncertainty, and doubts, and dissatisfaction about religion. And hence arise the opinions, and judgments, and reasonings, in the minds of men. Indeed, the best of men's religion here is but an opinion or judgment, which the breath of God's

Spirit will shake and dissolve everywhere, sooner or later. All flesh is grass; and all the beauty of men's knowledge, religion, and worship here, will wither like grass. All the buildings and churches that are raised here (however beautiful) are but Babylon, built by man's understanding, by man's knowledge, by man's comprehension, by man's wisdom, by man's skill, and indeed in man's will and time, and their standing, beauty, strength, and glory, is but from man, and in man's day, and will fade away like a flower.

But the true certainty is the Day of God, from the light of his Spirit shining into man's spirit, from God's inward reaching to the heart by his power, and testifying his truth there. And against this all the powers of darkness cannot prevail. No, nor against that man that is kept in this. For it is the rock (the only rock) upon which the whole church is built, and which cannot fail to preserve every member of the church which is built upon it.

You then, who desire to come to certainty in religion, observe the way which is made manifest from God, which is this: mind the witness of God in thy heart, and come to, and build upon, the light thereof. **Dwell not in reasonings; take not up your religion in reasonings of the mind; but pass through them, pass beyond them, into a light of a higher nature.** Wait to know the birth which is from God, and the light which he gives to that birth. What is the birth? Is not the birth of and from the second Adam? And what is the heavenly birth's light? Is it not the light of the second Adam? Is it not in nature and kind above the light of the first Adam? Where is the seat of reasonings? Is it not the earthly mind, the fallen mind? Here lies man's strength; here is man's wisdom; here is man's life. But the wisdom of Christ, the light of Christ, the life of Christ, the power of Christ, is a cross to man's strength, wisdom, and life. The light of Christ discovers in it the enmity against God, crucifies it, slays it, brings it to nothing. And he that will become wise unto God, must become a fool unto all this, a child, a babe, entering the kingdom without this. He must remain there naked as to man's life and light, and never more put it on.

Now observe (you that have understanding and true sense) the difference between the religion which God hath taught us, and led us into, and the religions of all men upon the earth besides.

Our religion stands wholly out of that which all their religion stands in. Their religion stands in the comprehension, in a belief of a literal relation or description. Our religion stands in a principle which transforms the mind, wherein the Spirit of life appears to, and witnesses in the conscience concerning the things of the kingdom. We hear the voice, and see the express image of the Invisible One, and thus know things, not from an outward relation, but from their inward nature, virtue, and power. Yes, here (we must profess) we so know things, that we are fully satisfied about them, and could not doubt concerning them, though there never had been a word or letter written of them. Although it is indeed a great comfort, and sweet refreshment to us, to read in Scripture the outward testimony of what we feel and enjoy inwardly. And in this our whole religion consists; namely, in the silence and death of the flesh, and in the quickening and flowing life of the Spirit. For he who is of the new birth, of the new creation, of the second Adam (the Lord from heaven), is as really alive to God, and as really lives to him in his Spirit, as ever he was really dead in trespasses and sins in the time of his alienation and estrangement from God.