

FAITH

V.

The Confession of Faith

We have till now briefly considered the meaning of faith in its most important features. We have found that the very foundation of what the Scriptures call faith is the acceptance of Jesus Christ as the personal Savior of all men. Our blessed Savior Himself stated, in unmistakable words: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Mark 16:16.

This faith is indeed an activity of man, but one that has its origin in God alone, that is wrought by Him, so that, also in this respect, we are His workmanship. Upon this justifying or saving faith is based that firm trust in God, as the heavenly Father who has all our affairs in His hand, so that all things work together for good to them that love God. If we leave the guidance of our lives in His hand, firmly believing that He always has thoughts of peace for us, and not of harm, then we cultivate faith as trust. And we can do that on the basis of our trust in His Word. Whatever Holy Writ tells us we should accept without doubts and questionings, for such is the trust that He expects of us.

Now there have been teachers of the Church who connected the word "faith" in all cases with that fundamental activity which we considered first. However, we find that the Bible uses the word "faith" also in another sense, namely in that of the "confession of belief." It would seem that the context, that is, the connection of thought in certain passages, just about compels us to draw this conclusion. This seems to be the case even in Gal. 6:10, where the apostle speaks of men who are of the household of faith. Since we cannot look into the hearts of men, we can hardly refer this "household" to a visible manifestation of faith in the heart. We are led to believe, therefore, that

the apostle means those who profess the same belief that we do, who, as a matter of fact, form a definite household in the midst of which the Lord has His own.

We might, in this connection, also think of I. Cor. 13:13: "Now abideth faith, hope, charity." It is commonly assumed that we have here the three great Christian virtues, not the inner certainty of salvation, but the outward manifestation of faith in confession and good works.

The passage Romans 14:22.23 has caused some difficulty in this connection, where the Apostle Paul asks: "Hast thou faith? Have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth. And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith; for whatsoever is not of faith is sin." There does not seem to be any question as to what the apostle has in mind, for he is speaking, in most of the chapter, of the eating of meat which had been brought down from the heathen temple at Corinth and offered for sale in the meat-shops down town.

Now a strong Christian would think nothing of eating this meat, since he knew that an idol is nothing in the world. But if, on account of a weak brother, the strong Christian should lose his certainty that he is doing the right thing in partaking of such meat, then this fact should keep him from eating such meat, for this doubt would condemn him.

And another passage which requires careful study and application is Jude, v. 3, where the apostle bids all Christians: "Earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints." This is evidently the same as the "form of doctrine which was delivered to you." Rom. 6:17. In other words, we are here dealing with a body of doctrine, a confession of faith. This body of doctrine, as contained in the Holy Scripture, should not only be held by all true confessors for themselves, but should also be contended for over

against all attacks, no matter of what kind. What the Lord requires is a steady, courageous unequivocal acceptance and defense of the FULL TRUTH of the Word. By defending this body of belief we are at the same time safeguarding the faith of our hearts.

P.E.K.
