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I.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF FAITH.

EVERY intelligent reader of the Scriptures has observed how much they have to say about faith; how prominent a place they give it amongst the other graces of the Spirit. They say we are united to Christ by faith; that we are justified by faith; that we live by faith; that we walk by faith; that we are sanctified by faith; that we are saved by faith. They thus give to faith a prominence and ascribe to it an efficiency such as are asserted of no other grace in the long catalogue of the graces. As grand summaries of their teaching on this subject, they say, "According to your faith be it unto you;" "without faith it is impossible to please him;" "he that believeth shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."

There are many, however, who do not understand why it is that so much is thus said about this grace, and why there is ascribed to it so much importance in the plan of salvation. They think there is something strange about it; something arbitrary; something that needs explanation; something that very much needs explanation; something that is derogatory to religion in the view of the intelligent; for, as they suppose, the faith so much insisted on is, to some extent at least, a blind faith, an unintelligent faith, an unreasoning, and therefore an unreasonable, faith; and so a faith that inevitably brings about a conflict between itself and reason, and thus forces the intelligent into the dilemma of choosing in religion whether they will be controlled by knowledge or by ignorance; by reason or by mere credulity. There can be no doubt that there are many who

imagine that this is the issue with which they are confronted by what religious teachers usually inculcate on this subject. The writer once heard a distinguished lawyer say, in a public religious meeting, that a brother lawyer had expressed to him a wish that he could believe what Christians believe, and had asked him how he might do it; and that he had answered him, "You must just swallow it down."

But while many entertain this notion, the fact is that the Scriptures make no arbitrary demands in connection with faith, and teach nothing that brings about the slightest conflict between faith and reason.

They do not require us to believe anything that is contrary to reason. Reason is a revelation from God as truly as the Scriptures are, and since both these revelations come from the same divine source, they must be in harmony with each other; and, therefore, reason, rightly used, can never come into conflict with the Scriptures, rightly interpreted; nor can the Scriptures, rightly interpreted, ever come into conflict with reason, rightly used.

Not only is it true that the Scriptures never require us to believe anything contrary to reason, but it is also true that they never require us to believe anything without reason — without sufficient reason. We are required, indeed, to believe a number of things that are above reason; above the comprehension of our limited faculties; such as the doctrine of the creation of the universe out of nothing; the doctrine of the Trinity; the doctrine of the union of the divine and human natures in the person of Christ, and similar doctrines; but we are never required to believe anything without reason; without the best reason that can be given for believing anything. That reason is given us in the form of conclusive evidence that the Scriptures are an infallible revelation from God. In the history of the book as recorded in the annals of time, in which we can trace it back to its origin, in inspired prophets and apostles; in "the heavenliness of the matter"; in "the majesty of the style"; in "the scope of the whole, which is to give all glory to God"; in the unity of its teaching, although written by so many different authors, at so many dif-

ferent times, in so many different places, in so many different circumstances, with so many different qualifications and under so many different influences—the only instance of such perfect unity of teaching to be found in all literature; in “the full discovery it makes of the only way of man’s salvation”; in the efficacy of its doctrines as demonstrated by the mighty transforming and elevating moral influence they have brought to bear upon men, and institutions, and nations, wherever they have been sincerely received; in the absolute perfection of the moral law which it inculcates; in the results it would accomplish if its truths were universally accepted and its commands universally obeyed, since, as every candid person must admit, it would then make the race a perfect race and the world a perfect world;—in these, and in many other ways, God furnishes conclusive evidence that the book is a revelation from himself, written by “holy men as they were moved by the Holy Ghost”; “an infallible rule of faith and conduct”; and it is on this ground, and on this ground only, that he requires us to believe what it contains. Are we not thus required to believe for the very best reason that can possibly be given? And can such a faith as this bring about any conflict between itself and reason? Why, if there is anything on which the clearest reason most imperatively insists it is that such a faith as this shall be exercised. It may be well, then, to add just here, that notwithstanding all that has been said and written about “the great conflict between faith and reason,” there is in fact no such conflict, and never has been, and in the nature of the case cannot be. Reason and faith are in perfect harmony in the plan of salvation, faith doing only that on which reason imperatively insists, and reason doing only that which perfectly accords with all the requirements made of faith. Conflict occurs only when the divinely-appointed functions of one or the other are disregarded. When the Romanist, for instance, asserts that the bread and wine in the Lord’s Supper are completely changed in their substance in and by the act of priestly consecration; that nothing of the substance or essence of either remains; that their accidents, or sensible properties, however, continue the same; that their form, color, taste, odor, specific

gravity, chemical affinities and nutritive qualities remain unaltered; that the substance of Christ's body and blood are present without their properties, and the properties of bread and wine are present without their substance;—when the Romanist makes these assertions and insists that they shall be believed, reason rebels and refuses, because the assertions are absurd. They are contrary to the testimony of the senses, which affirm that the bread and wine still look, and feel, and taste, and smell like bread and wine. They are contrary to the testimony of science, for any chemical analysis to which these elements might be subjected, would show them to be still bread and wine; and they are contrary to fundamental rational intuitions of the mind, which distinctly assert that substances and their properties can never be so separated that a substance can be present without its properties, or properties be present without their substance. Thus a conflict is brought about between faith and reason. But it is only in such cases as these, where faith and reason are abused, and required to do what God has never enjoined.

The main object of this article, however, is to point out some reasons why the Scriptures have so much to say about faith, and why they attach so much more importance to it than they do to any other grace, giving it the first place in the plan of salvation.

1. Faith, in the broadest sense of the word, and as a controlling principle of human conduct, has the first place, not only in religion, but everywhere else.

It has the first place in the family. Suppose that the members of a family have no faith in each other; the husband no faith in the wife; the wife no faith in the husband; the parents no faith in the children; the children no faith in the parents; with what comfort, with what benefit of any kind, could the family relation then exist? If the husband had no faith in his wife, how could he love her even as Christ loves the church, as he is enjoined to do? If the wife had no faith in her husband, how could she reverence him, and be in subjection to him in the Lord, as the Lord requires? If the parents had no faith in each other, how could they agree together in a proper administration of the affairs of the household, and in training up their children

“in the nurture and admonition of the Lord”? And if the children had no faith in their parents, how could they receive such training at their hands with any spiritual benefit? In short, if the members of a family had no faith in each other, how could there be conjugal affection, and parental affection, and filial affection, and without such affection, how could there be that constant and faithful discharge of conjugal, and parental, and filial duties on which the welfare of the family is entirely dependent? How could there be any concert of effort to accomplish the numerous and important ends for which the family relation was divinely instituted? It is thus seen that faith has as conspicuous a place in the family as it has in religion.

But it has an equally conspicuous place in the business world. Suppose that business men had no faith in each other; merchants no faith in merchants; the merchants of one part of the country no faith in the merchants of other parts; sellers no faith in buyers; buyers no faith in sellers; employers no faith in employees; employees no faith in employers; lawyers no faith in clients; clients no faith in lawyers; physicians no faith in patients; patients no faith in physicians; teachers no faith in pupils; pupils no faith in teachers; man no faith in man, how much business could there be transacted? How many railroads could then be constructed? How many cities could then be built? How many fortunes could then be made? How much secular good could then be acquired and enjoyed? How much progress could then be made toward the highest forms of civilization? In such circumstances, how could there be any civilization at all worthy of the name? Destroy the faith of man in man, and then all those mighty energies of the race which are now so splendidly illustrating its annals with their wonderful achievements, would be as instantaneously and completely paralyzed as they will be in that day when “the trump of God shall sound and the voice of the Son of God” shall be heard, summoning them to the awful solemnities of the final judgment. Faith, thus, has as conspicuous place in the business world as it has in the scheme of redemption revealed in the Scriptures.

It has a place no less conspicuous in the civil sphere. Suppose

that the different members of civil society had no faith in each other; neighbor no faith in neighbor; citizen no faith in citizen; the rulers no faith in the people; the people no faith in the rulers; how, then, could men come together and form those plans on which the comfort and general welfare of society are so dependent? And if such plans could be formed, how could they be carried out? How could governments be organized; and if organized, how could they be successfully administered? How could laws be enacted; and if enacted, how could they be enforced? How could rulers be chosen; and if chosen, how could they efficiently discharge the functions of their respective offices? How could there be organization of any kind whatever, for any purpose whatever—social, civil, political or religious? Why, instead of organization and a well-ordered society, there would be nothing but confusion, conflict, chaos. Every man would be an Ishmaelite—his hand against every man and every man's hand against him. Society, in any desirable sense of the word, could not exist. It is plain, then, that faith has as prominent a place in the civil sphere as it has in the plan of salvation.

But it has a place equally prominent in what I may call the more purely intellectual provinces of life. Suppose we had no faith in historians, how much history could we learn? No faith in philosophers, how much philosophy could we learn? No faith in scientists, how much science could we learn? No faith in linguists, how much of the dead languages of the world could we learn? No faith in teachers of any sort, how much benefit could we derive from their instruction? The broad assertion may here be confidently made, that all our knowledge of every sort rests at bottom on faith, and on that alone. Why do we say, for instance, that we know that in past times there lived such military heroes as Alexander, Cæsar, Napoleon; such philosophers as Socrates, Plato, Aristotle; such orators as Pericles, Demosthenes, Cicero; such historians as Herodotus, Thucydides, Livy; such poets as Homer, Milton, Shakespeare? It is because we have faith in history. Why is it that we say that we know that in the fields of space above us there are certain worlds that have certain magnitudes, that move with certain velocities, that accom-

plish certain revolutions? It is because we have faith in astronomy. Why is it that we say we know that deep down in the earth's crust there are certain rocks that belong to one age of the world's history and certain other rocks that belong to other ages of its history? It is because we have faith in geology. Why is it that we say that we know that certain words derived from certain dead languages have a certain meaning? It is because we have faith in the science of etymology and philology. And so it is universally. All our knowledge of every kind rests at last on faith, and on that only. In confirmation of this fact, we may here be reminded that our knowledge of a material world external to ourselves rests on faith. Some philosophers have undertaken to prove that there is no such world. Amongst other things, they have said that our seeming knowledge of such a world comes to us through the avenues of our physical senses—the senses of vision, hearing, touch, taste and smell—but that, for different reasons, this apparent information is wholly unreliable. Why is it, then, that the great mass of men so confidently believe in the existence of such a world? It is only because they have faith in this testimony that a few would reject. Vision says that there is such a world, and so do all the other senses, and we are naturally so constituted that we cannot but believe the testimony thus given. Even those who theoretically deny that there is such a world, are constrained by the very constitution of their minds so to confide in the testimony of their senses as to its existence, that they always act—and are always obliged to act—as if their theories were discredited even by themselves. Do they not always act just as those do who believe there is such a world? Do they not go out into it just as others do; and move up and down in it, just as they do; and engage in its pursuits and seek its secular good, just as they do? Do they not write their books to prove that there is no such world, because in fact they secretly believe there is such a world, and that their books will go out into it, and be read in it by others just like themselves? Why else should they write them? Our knowledge, then, of the existence of an external material world is rooted ultimately in faith; in faith in the testimony of our senses. If we should

give up that faith, then, indeed, we should not know whether there is such a world or not, for we have no information in regard to it except what the senses give. But it is naturally impossible to give up that faith.

It may be added here that not only does our knowledge of an external material world rest on faith, but our knowledge of our own existence does also. A few philosophers have undertaken to show that nothing is certain, not even our own existence. Of course their argument is inherently absurd; for if nothing is certain, then there is one thing at least that is certain, and that is, that nothing is certain. But if the human mind can arrive at this certainty, why not at others? Augustine, in *The City of God*, Book XI., Chap. 26, long ago exploded this kind of agnosticism: "I am most certain that I am, and that I know and delight in this. In respect of these truths, I am not at all afraid of the arguments of academicians, who say, 'What if you are deceived?' For if I am deceived, I am; for he who is not, cannot be deceived; and if I am deceived, by this same token I am. And since I am, if I am deceived, how am I deceived in believing that I am; for it is certain I am, if I am deceived. Since, therefore, I, the person deceived, should be, even if I were deceived, certainly I am not deceived in this knowledge that I am. And, consequently, neither am I deceived in knowing that I know; for as I know that I am, so I know this also, that I know." But why is it that we have the profound and unalterable conviction that we have this knowledge and other kinds of knowledge of the utmost importance? It is because we have a natural, intuitive, irresistible and indestructible faith in the informations of our own mental faculties.

But enough has now been said to show that faith, in the most comprehensive sense of the word, and as a controlling principle of human conduct, has the first place, not only in religion, but everywhere else, and that it constitutes the foundation of all human knowledge. In view of this important fact, it is manifest that the great popular objection to religion, that it, to so great extent, appeals to faith and rests on faith, is destitute of force. Many imagine that, because religion has so much to say about

faith, and makes so much depend on it, it thereby discredits reason and depreciates knowledge, and so is unworthy of the consideration of the intelligent; and they often regard with amusement and pity the credulous dupes who allow themselves to be so much concerned about its teachings and to be put to such pains to secure its offered rewards. But we now see that reason itself inflexibly demands all the faith for which religion calls, and that, instead of its being a peculiarity of religion that it makes much of this mental exercise, equally as much is made of it everywhere else. If religion must go because faith is given so large a place in it, then every pursuit of life and every relation of life must go also, because faith has an equally large place in them. If religious knowledge must be rejected because it rests on faith, then must all other knowledge also be rejected, because it rests on exactly the same basis!

Of course it is true that faith, in the broad sense in which the word is used in the preceding remarks, differs from religious faith. They differ as to their origin. One originates in nature; the other in grace. They differ as to their objects. One has for its objects the truths of nature; the other the truths of revelation. They differ as to their ends. One is intended to secure secular ends; the other spiritual ends. And because they thus differ, it may be supposed that the foregoing argument is invalidated. As to the point essential to the argument, however, they are precisely alike. That point is that men, in all the secular relations of life, and as to all secular interests, act on faith—on faith in one another, and in the trustworthiness of their senses and of their mental faculties, and of the knowledge secured through them; and that, therefore, it is absurd to object to religion that in its sphere, and in regard to its objects and interests, it requires them to do the same thing.

2. Another reason why faith is given so important a place in religion is that there is so much in religion that cannot be understood, and, therefore, cannot be received through the understanding; hence, if received, if at all, must be received through faith. It should be remarked at once, however, that this is not a peculiarity of religion. It is true of all subjects, even of those with

which we are most familiar. There is much about them all that we cannot understand. We cannot understand, for instance, how we ourselves exist; how our bodies and our souls are so united as to constitute our persons, and how they constantly act and react on each other. We cannot understand how an impression made on our senses is carried within and announced to the soul in its secret dwelling-place, and how the edicts of the soul come forth and execute themselves through the nerves and muscles and limbs of the body. We cannot understand in what that principle consists whence all our physical activities proceed—the principle we call life. No anatomist has ever discovered it, and held it up in his laboratory on the point of his scalpel, to the admiring gaze of his students. We cannot understand how our bodies are nourished and sustained; how food is received and digested, and taken into the circulation of the blood, and carried about over the body, and some deposited in one place to make bone, some in another to make muscle, some in another to make nerve, and some in another to make flesh. Some things about the wonderful process we can approximately understand; but, after we have gone as far as is possible for our limited faculties, there still remains a vast domain of profound mystery that utterly baffles all our attempts successfully to explore it. There are mysteries in nature as well as in revelation. There are insoluble problems connected with our own being as certainly as there are with God's being. Mr. Huxley, in a letter to the Dean of Wells in 1877, went so far as to say, "The mysteries of the church are child's play compared with the mysteries of nature. The doctrine of the Trinity is not more puzzling than the necessary antinomies of physical speculation." The fact is, that we cannot fully understand anything. We cannot fully understand that fundamental fact that underlies and makes possible all other facts—we cannot understand existence itself. Those who so much object to the mysteries of religion cannot explain how it is that they are able to stand up on their feet, and so to make use of their vocal organs as to express their objections. That is as much a mystery as the mysteries of religion at which their objections are aimed! In how sorry a light, then, do their objections appear!

But we have said that there is much in religion that cannot be understood, and that, therefore, it cannot be received through the understanding; and hence, if received at all, must be received through faith; and that this is one reason of the importance ascribed to this grace in the Scriptures. This statement should be made more definite. We may say, therefore, that we cannot understand how an infinite Being exists without ever having begun to exist; how he possesses infinite knowledge without ever having learned; how he possesses infinite power without ever having undergone any process of growth or development; how he possesses every excellence in infinite degree underived, unacquired. We cannot understand how, in the infinite amplitude of his divine nature, there are three Persons, each God; each equally God; "the same in substance and equal in power and glory;" and yet how, notwithstanding, there are not three Gods, but only one, "over all, blessed forever." We cannot understand how, by virtue of his omnipresence, God is, at every moment, in all the fullness of his infinite attributes, equally present at every point in the wide extent of his vast dominions. We cannot understand how, by the mere word of his power, he called into existence this world, and all the worlds we see in the fields of space above us, and how, just as easily, he could repeat the wondrous achievement; how, indeed, every moment throughout eternity, he could bring into existence a system of worlds as vast and glorious as this. We cannot understand how he so united the divine and human natures as to constitute the Person of Christ—a Person so wonderful that it was at the same time both divine and human; both infinite and finite; both God and man; both creator and creature; both immortal and mortal; both incapable of death and yet capable of the death of the cross; both the great God, ruling over all beings and all worlds, and yet at one time a little helpless babe, wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in the arms of his mother. We cannot understand how he so presided over the composition of the Scriptures, that, while they were written by fallible men, in fallible human speech, they are at the same time the infallible word of life, able to make us wise unto salvation and to guide our feet safely along the straight and

narrow path that leads to his kingdom. These and many other facts and truths connected with religion we cannot understand, and, therefore, cannot receive through the understanding. If we receive them at all, we must receive them through faith—through faith in the Scriptures, which come to us as a perfectly-attested revelation from God; that is, as has already been said, receive them for the very best reason that can possibly be given for receiving anything. Hence so much is made of this grace.

3. Still another reason why so much importance is given to faith in religion is found in the fact that it is the parental, the fountal grace; the source of all the other graces; the grace we must have before we can have any others. This fact is overlooked by those who object to the prominence given it in the Christian system. They think it is strange that this grace should be put first; they imagine there is something arbitrary about it. "Why not put love first; love to God, which prompts us to meet all our obligations to him; love to our fellow-men, which prompts us to meet all our obligations to them; 'the love that is the fulfilling of the law?' Or, why not put obedience to the law first, which manifests itself in the form of all kinds of good works? Why is it that you attach more importance to creed than you do to conduct; to what a man thinks than you do to what he does? Does not this fact show that your religion is, in this respect at least, somewhat whimsical and unpractical?" Those who thus object, however, fail to see the relation in which faith stands to the other graces of the Spirit. What is that relation? How are the other graces brought into existence? How, for instance, is the grace of love to God brought into existence? Why, we first believe what the Scriptures say about God; about his infinite excellence and glory; about his infinite knowledge, and wisdom, and righteousness, and goodness, and power; about the many and great temporal and spiritual blessings he has already bestowed on us, and the innumerable and still greater blessings he offers to bestow on us in the future; and sincerely believing what they thus say, our affections are excited, and begin to rise up, and to fix themselves on him; and thus the grace of love to him comes into existence; and it is plain it could not

come into existence in any other way. We are naturally so constituted that we must first believe that God is lovely before he can become to us an object of love. How does the grace of repentance come into existence? Why, we must first believe what the Scriptures say about our sins; about their number; their aggravations; their inexcusableness; their offensiveness to God; their heinousness in themselves; their destructiveness to the soul; and sincerely believing what they thus declare, we begin to regret that we have sinned, and to turn away from our iniquities with grief and hatred of them, and to seek after holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord; and thus the grace of repentance comes into existence; and it seems to be equally plain that it could come into existence in no other way. We must believe what the Scriptures say about sin, before we can have for it the godly sorrow for which they call. How do the graces of consecration and zeal in Christ's service come into existence? We must first believe what God's word says about his service; about its origin, its nature, its importance, its obligations, its objects, its rewards; and sincerely believing that, we begin to be interested in it, and to be willing to devote to it all we are and all we have. The same is true of all the other graces. They all spring out of faith. The reason, then, that faith is put first in religion is that, in the nature of the case, it comes first. It is by no means an arbitrary arrangement, but results from the very constitution of the soul.

It is only stating the truth just mentioned in a slightly different way to say that faith has so much importance attached to it because it controls the affections of the soul. In order that we may be Christians, we must love God, his law, and his service. But our affections are determined by our faith. If we believe an object to be beautiful, we admire it; if we believe it to be dangerous, we fear it; and so if we believe it to be lovely, we love it. Our natures are such, as we are conscious, that it cannot be otherwise. In order, then, that we may have towards God, and his law and his service, the affections for which the Scriptures call, we first have the faith for which they call.

What is true in regard to our affections is equally true in

regard to our consciences. In order that we may be Christians, we must have good consciences; "consciences void of offence toward God and men." But our consciences are controlled by our faith. If we believe an act to be right, our consciences approve it; if we believe it to be wrong, our consciences condemn it. The act we believe to be right, may not in fact be right; but if we believe it to be right, our consciences cannot do otherwise than approve it. The act we believe to be wrong, may not in fact be wrong; but if we believe it to be wrong, our consciences cannot do otherwise than condemn it. This is a fact of universal experience. It is plain, then, that if we are to have the consciences that God's word requires, we must first have the faith it requires.

Thus faith controls both our affections and our consciences; and so, of course, controls our characters and lives. Is it strange, then, that the Scriptures have so much to say about it, and that they give it so much prominence and ascribe to it so much power?

It may be thought that what is here said about the importance of faith is inconsistent with what the Apostle Paul says in his first epistle to the Corinthians, "Now abideth faith, hope and love; but the greatest of these is love." There is one respect in which love is greater than faith; greater in value. It is, as we have seen, the fruit of faith. As, then, the fruit of a tree may, in some respects, be of more value than the tree, so love, the fruit of faith, may, in some respects, be of more value than faith. This fact, however, leaves faith untouched in its primary and essential importance. The fruit of the tree may, for some purposes, be of more value than the tree; yet the tree is of primary and essential importance to produce the fruit, and to give it its value. The supreme necessity of faith is seen in the fact that it stands in this causal relation to all the other graces of the Spirit.

4. A further reason for the importance ascribed to faith in religion is found in such passages in the Scriptures as Heb. xi. 1: "Faith is the substance of things hoped for; the evidence of things not seen." There is difference of opinion, indeed, as to the precise meaning of these words; but a careful study of them,

in connection with the context, cannot leave much doubt that Professor Davidson, of Scotland, is right in his commentary when he says, "The apostle means, faith is the giving substance to things hoped for; it is the act or state of mind which makes things that are, as yet, but objects of hope, as substantial as if actually possessed;" and it is "the conviction of things not seen." In other words, the apostle means that faith gives such reality, in the view of the mind, to the things addressed to hope in the Scriptures, that they exert a controlling influence over the soul, and it is so profound a conviction of the truth and importance of the things not seen, that they determine the character and the life. Accordingly, in the subsequent part of the chapter, he gives a number of historical illustrations of this power of faith, by pointing out the great achievements which it has wrought. Faith gives reality to the commandments of God and secures obedience to them; therefore "by faith the elders" (the saints of former days), "obtained a good report"—from God and men. Faith gives reality to the declarations of God concerning the plan of salvation, and secures compliance with its terms; therefore, "by faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and by it he, being dead, yet speaketh." Faith gives reality to the warnings of God, and prompts to the use of the needful means, divinely provided, to escape the dangers to which they point; therefore "by faith, Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith." Faith gives reality to the promises of God, and induces the soul to rely on them, and to fulfil the conditions on which they are to be fulfilled; therefore, "by faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise, for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." Faith

gives reality to the blessings and glories of God's eternal kingdom, and inspires the soul with courage and strength to do and to suffer anything that it may at last be found amongst those of whom the world is not worthy; therefore, by faith many suffered "trials of cruel mockings and scourgings; yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonment; they were stoned; they were sawn asunder; were tempted; were slain with the sword; they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented; they wandered in deserts and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth." Such is the power of faith! Such servants of the Lord can it make! Such battles can it fight! Such victories can it win! Such deeds of righteousness can it perform! Such purifying and uplifting and ennobling influences can it bring down upon men from the things that are "hoped for" and that are "not seen." Is it any wonder that the Scriptures have so much to say about it?

It is to be remembered, in this connection, that we may still more distinctly see the importance of this grace; that it not only thus so completely and so beneficially brings us under "the powers of the world to come"; but that it is the only grace in the long catalogue that can perform for us this necessary service. Since the chief blessings of religion are by us as yet unseen, and since they are remote in the future, and are only the subjects of promise to us, we cannot "walk by sight" in reference to them, but must "walk by faith." They can be brought to bear upon us in controlling and sanctifying power only by that faith in regard to them that gives them substance and reality in the view of the soul, and that consists in a profound conviction of their infinite importance and value. This grace, then, is exalted above all the other graces by the fact that it not only does this, but that it is the only grace that can do it.

5. The last reason there is space to mention why the Scriptures ascribe so much importance to faith is that it is the instrumental condition of salvation. In order that we may be saved, a number of things must be done for us that we cannot do for ourselves. Our sins must be pardoned. We cannot do that for ourselves. We must be made new creatures in Christ Jesus. We

cannot do that for ourselves. We must be adopted into God's family; kept through faith unto salvation; presented at last faultless before the presence of his glory. None of these things can we do for ourselves. They can be done for us only by our Saviour. But he will do them for us only when we receive him as our Saviour, and we can receive him as our Saviour only by faith in him, and in the offers of himself he makes to us.

Thus have some reasons been given why the word of God attaches so much importance to this grace; why it says, "According to your faith, be it unto you;" "without faith it is impossible to please him;" "he that believeth shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." And it is now seen, it is hoped, that this teaching of the Scriptures (as might be shown in regard to every other), may be completely vindicated against every objection that is made against it; that conclusive reasons can be given for all that the Scriptures say about this grace, and for all the prominence and power they ascribe to it.

This discussion may be concluded with this practical remark: Since faith is so necessary in the plan of salvation, the great practical question for every one is, "Have I faith? Have I faith in God's word? Have I faith in all of its essential teachings? Have I that true faith that responds to each one of these teachings according to its character? Have I such faith in the warnings that I heed them; in the threatenings, that I fear them; in the invitations, that I accept them; in the promises, that I rely on them; in the commands, that I obey them? Especially, have I such a faith in the Lord Jesus Christ that I receive him as he is offered to me in his word, and rely on him alone for salvation?" These are the questions on which eternal destiny turns. Let it never be forgotten that he who is the King of the kingdom of heaven; who carries its keys at his girdle; who opens its doors and no man can shut them; who shuts its doors and no man can open them; let it never be forgotten that he hath said (and we now see some of the reasons why he has said it), "He that believeth shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned."

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