

XL.

**Faith in the Saved Sinner Alone.**

“And they believed in the Scripture.”—*John ii. 22.*



Faith is not the working of a faculty inherent in the natural man; nor a new sense added to the five; nor a new soul-function; nor a faculty first dormant now active; but a disposition, mode of action, implanted by the Holy Spirit in the consciousness and will of the regenerate person, whereby he is enabled to accept Christ.

From this it follows that this disposition can not be implanted in sinless man, and that it disappears as soon as the sinner ceases to be a sinner. The saint believes until he dies, but no longer. Or more correctly: faith disappears as soon as he enters heaven, for then he lives no more by faith, but by sight.

The importance of this distinction is obvious. The Ethical theologians, denying that faith is a specially implanted disposition, but rather a sense or its organ, first dormant then awakened, can not admit this, but repeat that faith is perpetual, basing their opinion upon *1 Cor. xiii. 13*. According to their theory, there is no absolute difference between the sinner and the sinless; they do not believe that to save the sinner the Holy Spirit introduces an extraordinary expedient into his spiritual person. Hence their persistent effort to make us understand that Adam believed before the fall, and that even Jesus, the Captain and Finisher of our faith, walked by faith.

But this whole presentation is opposed by the apostolic words: “We walk by faith, and not *by sight*” (*2 Cor. v. 7*). And again, “Now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known” (*1 Cor. xiii. 12*), in connection with the preceding: “When that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall *be done away*” (*vs. 10*). And not less by the word of our Lord, that we shall see God as soon as we are pure in heart (*Matt. v. 8*).

And starting from this point, we know positively that faith in the sense of saving faith is not perpetual; that it did not exist in Paradise, but can only be found in a lost sinner. To be endowed with saving faith, he must be a sinner, just as much as relief from pain can be given only to one suffering pain.



Very well,” say the Ethicals, “we accept this. But when the physician tries to improve the breathing of the asthmatic by making him inhale fresh air, it does not follow that a healthy person does not inhale. On the contrary, a healthy man inhales strongly and deeply, and it is the physician’s purpose to *assist* the *normal* function of breathing. And the same applies to faith. True the Holy Spirit can give faith only to the *sinner*, but a healthy saint, like Adam before the fall and Christ, did most assuredly believe; for faith is but the breath of the soul. In Adam and Christ this breathing was spontaneous; in sinners like ourselves it is disturbed. Hence we need help to be healed. But when our souls once more freely inhale the breath of faith, we have received only what Adam and Jesus had before us.”

And this we oppose. Saving faith is not the ordinary breath of the soul, first disturbed, then restored. No; it is the specific remedy for one lost in sin; an expedient extended to him because he *became* a sinner; retained as long as he *continues* a sinner; withdrawn as soon as he *ceases* from sin. When the expedient is no longer needed, and the soul redeemed from sin can breathe freely toward God without the expedient of faith, wholly restored, entirely redeemed, then only he receives once more that natural, spontaneous communion with the Eternal which needs no intervening aid, but which is like that of holy Adam and Jesus.

Faith is like a pair of glasses, not only useless, but hurtful to good eyes; very helpful for diseased or weak eyes. So long as eyes are abnormal, glasses are indispensable; before they became abnormal, glasses were useless (Adam before the fall). Eyes never abnormal never needed them (Jesus). As soon as wholly restored, they are laid aside (the redeemed in heaven).

Next in order is faith in connection with Sacred Scripture; and here the error of the Ethicals becomes very apparent. Their theory, that sinless Adam and Christ exercised faith, and that the redeemed, in heaven still believe, leads away from Scripture. In Paradise, sinless Adam had no Scripture; neither has Christ on the throne; and in death the redeemed forever lose their Bible. Hence it is the logical consequence of this error that the faith of the Ethicals is possible *without Scripture*, and is not necessarily intended for Scripture. According to their theory, to believe is the soul's breathing, but little more than another name for prayer. Indeed, there should have been no Scripture, and in the absence of *sin* there would have been none; hence faith, which is only the restoration of a soul-function disturbed by sin, is possible without Scripture.

This theory is far-reaching. They believe that even among the heathen the Lord had His elect, tho they never had heard of the Scripture. The heathen of classic times were a sort of unbaptized Christians, entering the Kingdom of heaven under the leadership of their patriarch Plato. Tho modern rationalists reject Scripture, yet they are such lovely and devoted people that faith can not be denied them. Reasoning in this way, they arrive at the following conclusions:

1. Not the Confession, but the *motive* of the heart is the main thing; and
2. Tho men claim to have discovered intentional frauds in Scripture, and therefore reject it, they are still "brethren beloved."

The consistency is evident. Wherefore ministers loyal to the Word should be careful how they speak of the being of faith, lest they feed the evil which they seek to restrain. All that vague and flowery talk about faith as the breath of the soul, as the soul's sweet trust of love, etc., has a direct tendency toward Ethical error. For the line is a dividing-line. Do you acknowledge or deny it?



The Ethicals deny it. There is no settled boundary between God and man, but a certain transition between the finite and infinite in the God-man; no absolute separation between the elect and the lost, but a sort of gradual transition in the presentation of a universal redemption; no absolute separation between sin and holiness, but a certain conciliation in the sanctification of the saints, no absolute separation between life before and after death, but a bridge across the chasm in the state of believing. Nor is there between the Bible and the books of men, but a kind of affinity in the legends of Scripture; and, finally, not between the condition with or without faith, but a transfer from the one into the other in the preparatory workings.

The practical result of this false standpoint is the belief in a *medium* between believers and unbelievers, viz., a *third* state for troubled souls. Or we may call it philosophy; but then it is earthborn, in its pantheistic obstinacy refusing to admit the absolute contrast between the Creator and the creature, and boldly interpreting Scripture's ministry of reconciliation in the sense of an essential system, *i.e.*, the blending of one being with another.

Scripture is diametrically opposed to this: "And God divided the light from the darkness"; (Gen. i. 4) "And God divided the waters from the dry land"; "And God divided the day from the night." Hence all who acknowledge the absolute separation between faith and unbelief must array themselves in direct opposition to the Ethicals. This explains the cause of our ecclesiastical conflict.

They that deny the contrasts and efface the divinely ordained boundaries *must* be irenic; *i.e.*, they must contend that a breach in the Church can not be allowed. The fatal inference of their pantheistic tendency is "No *breaches*, but *bridges*." Hence our position antagonizes this standpoint along the whole line of our ecclesiastical and theological life, with definite, stern, and absolute consistency: particular grace, or Christ *pro omnibus*; only two states, or three; direct regeneration, or universal, preparatory operations; no divided Church, or a Church loyal to the Word of God; a God-man, or a Mediator between God and man; a Scripture absolutely inspired, or full of enlightened human opinions; and regarding faith, a disposition expressly brought into the sinner, or the restoration of a soul-function. Hence there is opposition all along the line.

From this the relation between Scripture and faith is easily ascertained. Both exist for the sake of the sinner by virtue of sin, and to remove sin; the one not without the other, both belonging together. Without Scripture faith is an aimless gazing. Without faith Scripture is a closed book.

Experience proves it. Persons endowed with the faculty of faith, but ignorant of Scripture or wrongly instructed, make no progress; once instructed, they live and gain strength. On the contrary, to persons familiar with Scripture from their youth, but without faith, the Bible is a closed book; the Word can not enter them. But when both Scripture and saving faith



bles the soul, then the glory of the Holy Spirit appears; for it was He who first granted the particular grace of Scripture, and then also that of faith.

This is the reason why the arguments for the truth of the Scripture never avail anything. A person endowed with faith gradually will accept Scripture; if not so endowed he will never accept it, tho he should be flooded with apologetics. Surely it is our duty to assist seeking souls, to explain or remove difficulties, sometimes even to silence a mocker; but to make an unbeliever have faith in Scripture is utterly beyond man's power.

Faith and Scripture belong together; the Holy Spirit intended the one for the other. The latter is so arranged as to be accepted by the sinner endowed with faith. And faith is a disposition, completely reconciling the consciousness and the Scripture. Hence the "testimonium Spiritus Sancti" should be taken, not in the rationalistic or Ethical sense of being the operation upon a certain universal disposition, but as a real testimony of the Holy Spirit, who dwells in the consciousness, and gives us to experience the adaptation—like that of the eye to color—of Scripture to faith.



## XLI.

## Testimonies.

“Without faith it is impossible to please God.”—*Heb. xi. 6.*



In order to prevent the possibility of being led into paths of error, faith is directed, not to a Christ of the imagination, but to “the Christ in the garments of the Sacred Scripture,” as Calvin expresses it.

And therefore we must discriminate between (1) faith as a *faculty* implanted in the soul without our knowledge; (2) faith as a *power* whereby this implanted faculty begins to act; and (3) faith as a *result*,—since with this faith (1) we hold the Sacred Scripture for truth, (2) take refuge in Christ, and (3) are firmly assured of our salvation in inseparable love for Immanuel.

To which must finally be added that this is the work of the Holy Spirit alone, who (1) gave us the Holy Scriptures; (2) implanted the faculty of faith; (3) caused this faculty to act; (4) made this faith to manifest itself in the act; (5) thereby witnessed to our souls concerning the Sacred Scriptures; (6) enabled us to accept Immanuel with all His treasures; and, lastly, made us find in the love of Immanuel the pledge of our salvation.

Wholly different from this is the *historical* faith, which Brakel briefly describes as follows: “Historical faith is thus called because it knows the history, the narrative, the description of the matters of faith in the Word, acknowledges them to be the truth, and then leaves them alone as matters that concern it no more than the histories of the world; for one can not use them in his business, neither does it create any emotion in the soul, not even sufficiently to cause man to make a confession: ‘Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well, the devils also believe and tremble’ (*James ii. 19*). ‘King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest’ (*Acts xxvi. 27*).”

Next comes *temporary* faith, of which Brakel gives the following description: “*Temporary faith* is a knowledge of and a consent to the truths of the Gospel, acknowledging them as the truth; which causes some natural flutterings in the affections and passions of the soul, a confession of these truths in the Church, and an external walk in conformity with that confession; but without a real union with Christ, to justification, sanctification, and redemption. ‘But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the Word, and anon with joy receiveth it; yet, hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while; for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the Word; by and by he is offended’ (*Matt. xiii. 20, 21*). ‘For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift; and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good Word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance’ (*Heb. vi. 4, 5*). ‘For if, after they have escaped the pollution of the

