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FAITH AS CONFIDENCE.*

When the concept of faith is studied as a soteriological factor, as *fides salvifica*, saving faith, the conventional divisions of its aspects: knowledge, assent, and confidence, merge into one another. In any true act of saving faith, none of these three aspects ever exists without the other two. In those Scripture-passages which express the act of faith in terms of knowing or of approving, we recognize merely metonymical statements, the element of confidence, or trust, always being connoted. So Baier, who describes saving faith as "assensus cum fiducia, seu fiducia cum assensu conjuncta." From what he has stated in the preceding paragraphs concerning the knowledge of faith, we are justified in extending this description, so as to include the element of knowledge, which Baier presupposes, and describing faith in Christ as "notitia cum assensu et fiducia, seu fiducia cum assensu et notitia conjuncta." Saving faith consists of all these acts "in their union" ("velut unitis"), says Baier, and is now called knowledge, now assent, now confidence, the other parts, however, being implied in each case. (III a, 145.) Savingly to know Christ, savingly to assent to His evangelical offer of grace, is not possible without an act of the will which places reliance on the facts apprehended by the intellect when knowing and assenting to them. Strictly speaking, there are no parts of faith. "Faith," says Quenstedt, "viewed in its entirety (materialiter considerata) is divided into certain parts,

* Conclusion of the study in THEOL. QUART. X, 1 ff. 65 ff.; XI, 219 ff.

THE PROOF TEXTS OF THE CATECHISM WITH A PRACTICAL COMMENTARY.

THE LORD'S PRAYER.

PRAYER IN GENERAL.

Ps. 19, 14: *Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, my Strength and my Redeemer.*

This verse forms the conclusion of the psalm. What words did the psalmist's mouth utter? Words composing a noble hymn of praise for the glorious Gospel, interwoven with some petitions, vv. 12. 13. These "*words of his mouth*" are but an expression of "*the meditation of his heart.*" God is worshiped by hymns of praise, thanksgiving, and by petitions. This is prayer. The "*words of the mouth,*" however, to be a true prayer, must come from the heart, must be a "*meditation of*

the heart," otherwise the "words of the mouth" are but lip-service. — Prayer need not always be formulated in words, it may be simply "a meditation of the heart." God understands our thoughts afar off.

In this act of worship—prayer—we Christians must remember that, coming from sinful beings, it is not perfect, faultless *per se*. "Let the words [the meditation] be acceptable in Thy sight," says the psalmist. The pious Israelites, when offering sacrifices to God, prayed: "Let them meet with favor in Thy sight"; and so the pious Christians, when offering the sacrifices of their hearts and lips, pray: "Let them be acceptable in Thy sight." And the Old Testament believer was assured that his sacrifices were acceptable since they were offered to Him who is *Lord, i. e., Jehovah*, the covenant God, who looked with favor upon the pious Israelites and their sacrifices for the Messiah's sake. To the same Lord, *Jehovah*, the New Testament believers direct the meditations of their hearts, and they, too, know that for the Redeemer's sake they are graciously heard. Only in His name dare we approach *Jehovah's* throne in hymns of praise or in prayers of supplication; but in His, our Advocate's, name they are acceptable and heard.

Ps. 10, 17: *Lord, Thou hast heard the desire of the humble: Thou wilt prepare their heart, Thou wilt cause Thine ear to hear.*

The topic of this psalm we find in verses 1 and 2: "Why standest Thou afar off, O Lord? Why hidest Thou Thyself in times of trouble? The wicked in his pride doth persecute the poor: let them be taken in the devices that they have imagined."—The character and conduct of the wicked, the "times of trouble" caused by "the wicked," the enemies of the afflicted pious Israelites, are, as it were, photographed from life vv. 3—11. Next follows a prayer of deliverance, ending with a strong consolation.

The believing Israelites do not and cannot cry in vain. It is to the "*Lord,*" *i. e., Jehovah*, their Helper, to whom they have lifted up their voice. "*Thou hast heard*"—this is their

heart's confidence, and so their troubled soul is calmed; the peace of God that passeth all understanding quiets their hearts. And though their prayer be but a "*desire*," a longing, an unspoken thought, of the soul, "*the humble*," the meek, the faithful, know: "*Jehovah, Thou hast heard*." — What great comfort for believers: God hears even the *desires* of our heart! "*Thou wilt prepare*," establish, "*their heart*," make it firm, Ps. 51, 12, in the assurance that "*Thou hast heard*," either by answering their prayer, or by a firm, unwavering reliance of the heart upon the gracious promises of Thy Word, Rom. 8, 26; 1 John 3, 19—22, "*that Thou wilt cause Thine ear to hear*," and that "Thou carest for them that cast their cares upon Thee. 1 Pet. 5, 7.

Is. 65, 24: *And it shall come to pass that, before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.*

"*Before they call, I will answer.*" How consolatory this truth! The heavenly Father often anticipates the prayers of His children. The Christians frequently receive blessings, help, comfort, for which they have not asked. Our Father knows our every need long before we realize it, and He is willing to meet it. When the three women, Mary Magdalene, Mary, the mother of James, and Salome, went to the grave of our Savior on that Easter morning to anoint the body of Him whom they loved, they had forgotten all about the great stone that was to guard the sepulcher. On their journey thither this thought of a sudden comes to them: "Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulcher?" But "when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away." So it is in our lives. Obstacles in our path, dangers that encompass us, are removed oftentimes ere we are aware of them. — Words full of cheer, these: "*Before they call, I will answer.*" How many a blessing we now enjoy we should lack if every one were conditioned upon a knowledge of the need thereof and our actual petition therefor! — Again: "*While they are yet speaking*," before the prayer has been fully uttered, "*I will hear.*" (Ex. 14, 15.) — God's readiness to hear prayer, which this text twice so em-

phatically asserts, should urge His children cheerfully to lay their wants and necessities before their dear Father in childlike faith with the full assurance that He "will answer," that He "will hear."

Matt. 6, 7: *When ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do; for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.*

"*Vain repetitions*" is the translation of the Greek word *battologesete*, "a word probably without any further derivation than an imitation of the sounds uttered by stammerers, who repeat their words often without meaning." (Alford.) Luther translated it felicitously with "viel plappern," and Tyndale rendered it "babble not much," both excellent translations. The transliterated word *battology* — a needless repetition of words — has found a place in our English speech.

The heathen, not knowing the true God, made of prayer an *opus operatum*. The greater the *opus*, the greater the reward; the longer the prayer, the more certain the answer. They employed *battology*, "vain repetitions," *i. e.*, repeating the same or similar words again and again for the purpose of lengthening prayer. Length, verbosity, "*much speaking*," was, according to their notion, an essential, a meritorious requisite of prayer. On account of their "*much speaking*," this laborious work, this mouth-work, they expected to be heard. And oh, how this *battology* appeals to the people of poor spiritual discernment! This or that revivalist prays a long prayer, and on his knees at that; *ergo*, no matter as to its contents, it is a "powerful" prayer and an unassailable evidence of his being highly spiritual. In Colonial times preachers often prayed for one whole hour, measured by the hour-glass. We are told that on one occasion, when a young minister could not offer up a long prayer, an older, more experienced brother got down upon his knees and asked the Lord, "Lord, open Thou this dumb dog's mouth." — "After a Mohammedan funeral, in some countries, devout men assemble and repeat, *Allah el Allah*,

'God is God,' three thousand times. A traveler in Persia tells of a man who prayed so loud and so long that he lost his voice, and then groaned out, in voiceless accents, the name of God fifty times." (Broadus.) — The priests of Baal continued from morning until noon to cry: "O Baal, hear us!" 1 Kings 18, 26. — Roman Catholics practise battology, "vain repetitions," by their frequent repetition of the *Ave Maria* (Hail, Mary), and the *Pater Noster* (Our Father), reeled off by means of the beads of the rosary. Thus the very prayer—*Pater Noster*—our Savior set in contrast to such evil practises is so misused by them. God does not measure prayer with a yardstick—so many yards of prayer, so much grace.

But just what does the Lord censure in our text? Let us observe that it is not *much praying* that is condemned, but "*much speaking.*" This thought is heathenish: that for making "*vain repetitions,*" "*for much speaking,*" for performing this laborious work, for this *opus operatum*, "much babbling," God will reward them.

Is a long prayer *eo ipso* improper? No. Our Lord Himself often spent whole nights in prayer. Luke 6, 12. Is it wrong *eo ipso* to repeat the same words? No. In Gethsemane Jesus "prayed a third time, saying again the same words." Matt. 26, 44. — What, then, is forbidden? The making a certain length a point of observance; "imagining that prayer will be heard, not because it is the genuine expression of the desire of faith, but because it is of such a length, has been such a number of times repeated." (Alford.)

But *cave!* Vain repetitions! Who of us has not been guilty of it? Who has not in chapel service, in church, in the family circle, repeated the well-known words of a familiar prayer, such as the greatest of all, the Lord's Prayer, without devotion? Was it not Luther who for this very reason said that the Lord's Prayer is "the greatest martyr"? — Lord, teach us how to pray!

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(To be continued.)