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What Is Faith?

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In a recent issue of a well-known magazine an article described the faith of Bishop Brown, the Episcopal Modernist, as mental content regardless of its basis. It proclaims the acceptance of such views as a complete separation of religion and dogmatism, giving the freethinker the same standing in the Church as the orthodox Christian. Furthermore, it denies the ability of the Church to define the term "faith."

Such views are in harmony with Modernism. However, religion and dogmas cannot be separated any more than heat and light. Correct dogmas are necessary to create correct faith. If one has an erroneous dogma, false faith and a life displeasing to God will follow as a natural consequence. For example, a Catholic has an erroneous dogma about saints; therefore he has an unwarranted faith in the power of the saints and commits wrong acts in worshiping the saints. To have faith in the mercy of God because of the merits of Jesus and to lead a God-pleasing life, it is necessary to believe in the Christian dogma of Christ's divinity.

Mental content is not a guarantee of a God-pleasing faith. Many people are egoistic enough to live in perfect content regardless of God's Word. Their mental, physical, or material advantages create in them a superiority complex resulting in mental content. They may experience this satisfaction in spite of the fact that they live in error and have ideas of decency which are not even in conformity with social ethics.

Moreover, it is a ridiculous statement to accuse the Christian Church of inability to define the term "faith." Christianity has a definite declaration as to the elements which constitute faith. Our Lutheran Catechism defines it in the following manner: "To believe in God is to know and to accept as true what the Scriptures say of God and with firm confidence to trust and rely in God."

To have faith, it is necessary, in the first place, to know God's

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Word, as St. Paul says, Rom. 10, 14: "How shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard?" Then it is essential for the intellect and will to accept God's truth before the emotions are able to respond. A Christian always accepts God's Word, but he does not at all times feel its power. His emotions do not continually respond to his will as he desires that they should. Misfortune and grief may cause false imaginations to arise in his heart contrary to his will. David, for example, says: "My heart is sore pained within me, and the terrors of death are fallen upon me." Ps. 55, 4. According to our thought we are either happy or gloomy. The same David says: "But I am like a green olive-tree in the house of God; I trust in the mercy of God forever and ever." Ps. 52, 8. Any person who is superficial in his religion cannot receive any comfort from it since the emotions never respond to an insincere will. False imaginations may even weaken a Christian's faith and produce an apparent disappearance of faith's emotional qualities, such as loving trust and peace of mind. He continues to accept the mercy and power of God, but the emotional response is lacking because Satan has sent harmful imaginations into his heart. When a Christian's love and trust in the Savior are weak, the Holy Spirit, through the Word of God, recalls a feeling of security in the Redeemer and restores his peace of mind. Then the believer joyfully exclaims with St. Paul and Job, "I know." That is mental content based upon a sound foundation. It is not subject to starvation. It feeds upon the Word of God, which destroys the effects of Satan's darts in the hearts of God's children. It promotes and strengthens Christian thoughts, so that evil imaginations may more easily be overcome. The constant use of God's Word is therefore of the greatest importance to every Christian. Mental content based upon any other foundation than God's Word is content unto eternal death and will fail man in the hour of his greatest need. _____