

CONFESSION

by John L. Brandt

"Also I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God."—Luke 12: 8.

The object to be confessed is not our faith in human dogmas, church membership, good works and commendable desires, neither is it some remarkable experience, but Christ as the Son of God, as our Saviour and King, and our faith in him for redemption and our obedience to him as our lawgiver. The faith discussed in the New Testament refers to the act by which we lay hold of and appropriate the facts of the gospel of Christ to our personal salvation. It is this faith in Christ that saves; not faith in creeds, philosophies or any other gospel. Substitution is impossible. Efforts have been made to substitute other names and agencies, and in this substitution we apprehend one of the chief dangers of the present time. These substitutions would set at nought the chief cornerstone of our salvation. Moral: principles and examples, rationalistic criticism and socialistic theories, sophistical arguments and pretending philanthropy, no matter how plausible, are limited by the horizon of time; they pardon no sins, transform no souls, and have no effect upon the hereafter. They are a delusion and a snare. It is faith in Christ and obedience to him that saves. No man cometh to the Father save by him. He is the door into the sheepfold. Other foundations can no man lay. Salvation is in his name, and in his name only.

This faith must be confessed. No person has any right to withhold the knowledge of a fact that would be for the benefit of the public. Medical schools graduate their students under promise to make known any discovery in materia medica that would bless mankind. Great explorers and scientists have felt the moral obligation to make known their discoveries to help humanity. For example, Columbus in the discovery of the New World, Galileo in the discovery of the pendulum, Watts and Stevenson in the locomotive, Morse the telegraph, Fulton the steamboat, Howe the sewing-machine, Marconi wireless telegraphy, Bell the telephone, Edison the phonograph and other inventions, etc. These things being true, if a person discovers the Pearl of great price that comes to him as an ever-blessed truth, is it not reasonable that he should confess it? Nothing will open a man's mouth with more joy than the discovery of some great good. In Christ's day, notwithstanding he advised silence on the part of some whom he had healed, yet they were so happy in their discovery of Jesus and his powers to heal and save that they disobeyed his injunction and published abroad the glad news.

Throughout the Oriental countries it is a common thing to hear a man make a public confession of his religion. Some months ago I needed the service of a guide in the Holy Land. Three different guides were introduced to me in a hotel in Jerusalem. Without my asking, one man confessed to me that he was a Roman Catholic; another, a Syrian Christian educated in a mission school; and the other that he was a Mohammedan. When in the old city of Jaipur, India, several hotel-runners at the station solicited our patronage,

and each in turn confessed his religion. One man declared he was a Hindoo, and worshiped Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva; another confessed that he was a Mohammedan and boldly declared "that there is no God but Allah, and Mohammed is his prophet." In Columbo a tailor said, "I am a Buddhist and can not lie." Another tailor said, "I am a Christian and serve Jesus continually." After meeting with a number of such experiences, I began to realize, as never before, the importance of making a religious confession, in the mind of an Oriental. So it was in the time of Christ. Jesus confessed that he was the Christ before Caiaphas and Pontius Pilate. A careful study of the New Testament Scriptures teaches that the divinely authorized confession of faith is as follows: "I believe that Jesus of Nazareth .is the Christ, the Son of the living God."

It is a divine confession. When Simon Peter made this confession as reported in Matt. 16: 16, Jesus answered and said unto him: "Blessed art thou, Simon BarJona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven." This great fact was revealed at the baptism of Jesus, when the heavens were opened and the Father spake, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." And again when the angel announced to Mary: "Thou shall bring forth a son, and he shall be great, and he shall be called the Son of the Highest." And again when the angel announced His birth to the shepherds, as a Saviour who is Christ the Lord.

This confession is the logical argument of the gospel. "Many other signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing, ye may have life in his name" (John 20:30, 31). All the writing and preaching of the apostles were to enforce and prove that one thing, that He was the Son of God, and the promised Messiah. "Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly, that God hath made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified" (Acts 2 : 36) . "And Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and proclaimed unto them the Christ" (Acts 8: 5). Paul preached in the synagogues proclaiming Jesus as the Son of God. He confounded the Jews that dwelt at Damascus, proving that this was the Christ (Acts 9:20-22). "And Paul, as his custom was, went in unto them, and for three sabbath days reasoned with them from the scriptures, opening and alleging that it behooved the Christ to suffer, and to rise again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom, said he, I proclaim unto you, is the Christ" (Acts 17: 2, 3) .

It is the foundation of the church. "Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18) . "For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 3 :11) . "Being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief corner-stone" (Eph. 2: 20). "Because it is contained in scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner-stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be put to shame!" (I Pet. 2 : 6) . It is the confession that Jesus made that resulted in his death. "Christ Jesus who before Pontius Pilate witnessed the good confession" (1 Tim. 6:13). It is called the good confession. "Whereunto thou wast called, and didst confess the good confession in the sight of many witnesses" (I Tim. 6 : 12) .

It's a definite command, oft repeated and enforced by example. "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall I confess before my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 10 : 32) . "And we believe and are sure that thou art the Christ, the Son of God" (John 6: 69) . Martha said: "Yea, Lord, I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, that should come into the world" (John 11:27). "The Jews had agreed already that if any man should confess him to be the Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue" (John 9: 22). "Nevertheless even of the rulers many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees, they did not confess it, lest they should be put out of the synagogue" (John 12:42) . "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God abideth in him and he in God" (1 John 4:15) . "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Rom. 10: 10). "Because if thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (Rom. 10 : 9) . If we are to judge by the records contained in the eighth chapter of Acts, it was the confession required before baptism. The above Scriptures are explicit enough, and until language shall cease to convey thought we shall have no doubt as to the meaning of these Scriptures. This was the confession required in the early days of the church, and if it was sufficient then, it is sufficient now. If it was broad enough then for the early disciples, it is broad enough now for the foundation of our faith.

It honors Christ. All true love delights to honor the object of its affection. The husband who maintains silence about his wife is almost ready to enter the divorce courts; the child who does not delight in bearing testimony to the faithful mother's memory is considered an ingrate; the brother who does not speak the name of a sweet sister is unworthy the affection she bestows upon him. The nine healed lepers who did not return the gratitude of their hearts to Jesus hurt the Saviour because they did not return to give God the glory. He asked the pathetic question, "Where are the nine?" When the blind man who was healed was cast out of the temple for confessing Christ, Jesus appeared unto him and revealed himself as the Son of God. In all ages great leaders of men have been honored by the public proclamation of their names by their devotees and followers.

Such a confession is helpful to others. Secret discipleship is discouraging to the church. It is not helpful in soul-winning. If it enters heaven, it will be empty handed. It is nihilism to the church. If one has the right to secret discipleship, then all have. If such be the case, what would become of the church? With all of its moral, educational, missionary and evangelistic agencies, surely the church would perish. Satan would triumph, for secret discipleship would never oppose the saloon, molest the devil's den or send the gospel to those in darkness. The secret disciple has no influence, he has no light to shine to help others. A clock may have excellent machinery, but it is of no service unless it has face and hands to tell the hours of the day. Christ demands public words and acts to tell the story of his love. If a sick man is made whole, others desire to know it and he is anxious to tell it. The redeemed soul was commanded by Jesus to go home and tell his friends what the Lord had done for him. Doubtless he was glad to herald the news, and his friends were equally glad to receive the tidings.

Such a confession is essential to one's safety. It seals his faith; it openly commits

him to Christ; it allies him with the forces of righteousness; it is a public declaration that he is turning from the world; to Christ. Many a soul doubtless would have fallen if 'it had not been they had openly made the good confession before so many witnesses. It therefore becomes the test of love and a public acknowledgment of faith in Jesus as the Son of God. The disciple who is not willing to make a public confession of his faith in Jesus as the Christ, who suffered and died to save the soul, is unworthy the Master's love and ownership.

The promise to those confessing. They shall be confessed before the Father in heaven. As the Norwegian boy confessed in a Boston public meeting: "It I tell the world about Jesus, then Jesus will tell the Father about me." It is no light thing to be acknowledged in heaven before God and the holy angels. Confessing him now may result in unspeakable blessings for the life that now is and a rich reward in the life to come, when every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess to God that Jesus is Lord, to the glory of God, which confession shall either be to the eternal joy and glory or sorrow and shame of the spirit that makes it.