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CORDATUS' CONTROVERSY WITH MELANCHTHON.

The period of unrest at the university of Wittenberg during the year 1536 and the following years affords material for reflection to the psychologist, the historian, and the dogmatian. We behold men whose names have become household words in the Lutheran Church in a curious disagreement with each other. When righteous men differ, they expose not only their points of difference, but also themselves, their character, to public view. And when the matter at issue between them concerns the common faith of Christians, every believer has reason to take notice of the difference and to try to understand its weight. The study of a theological controversy, when rightly pursued, is very useful. It aids the student materially in fixing in his own mind both the $\tau\acute{\iota}$ and the $\pi\acute{\omega}\varsigma$ of a doctrine, the matter proposed for man's belief and the correct manner of proposing it. The personal features of a controversy — and what controversy was ever without such features? — may not be pleasant and delectable. But even from these features the student may draw wholesome lessons for his own conduct.

In the controversy before us we find a close friend of Luther arrayed against another very dear friend of the Reformer. Cordatus, the pastor of Niernekg, is usually represented as a narrow-minded, quarrelsome character, an orthodox verbalist, a self-seeking worshiper of Luther. His frequent changes of pastorate — Koestlin even speaks of his being driven out of Bohemia — seem to indicate a morose temperament. His

FAITH.

(Continued.)

When the subject-matter of faith is proposed to a person for his apperception and cognition, there is an appeal made not to the intellect alone, but to the will. The will of the carnal mind, this intensely hostile factor, is asked to surrender, to lay down its arms, to cease its attacks upon the strange truths pro-

posed for his belief. *Faith*, from the first moment of its existence, *is assent* to the new and exalted phenomena presented to the mind. It is the devout amen of the heart to the teaching of the Spirit of God. The divine economy of grace regulates its efforts toward the unbeliever accordingly. The preaching of faith proceeds not simply in the order of plain statements of fact, logical reasonings, stringent conclusions, but it is hortatory, pleading, persuasive. In its grammatical form it is presented not only in the indicative mood but also in the imperative and optative moods, thus conveying an earnest and authoritative appeal to the affections, to the will, rather than submitting merely a fact to the judgment of the intellect. Repent and believe the Gospel! Be ye reconciled to God! Come unto me! Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die? If Israel would repent, the cover would be removed, etc. — such urgings and requests as these are addressed to man with the aim to excite faith in him. Yielding to such calls, accepting the invitation that is being extended, willing to embrace that which is being offered, this is of the essence of faith. The activity of the apostles in preaching the Gospel is, accordingly, described as “*persuading* the things concerning the kingdom of God,” Acts 19, 8; “*persuading* one to be a Christian,” Acts 26, 28; “*persuading* men concerning Jesus,” Acts 28, 23. And the persuading efforts of the Gospel are continued also to such as had accepted its offer some time previous: these the apostles are still “*persuading* to continue in the grace of God,” Acts 13, 43. Cremer suggests as the proper rendering for *πειθειν* in all these places “to discourse on a matter with winning words.” (Woerterb., 7. ed., p. 726.) Again, those toward whom these persuasive efforts are directed and who yield to them, so as to accept them, give credence to them, or believe them, are said to *πειθεσθαι*, to suffer themselves to be persuaded, won over. The rich glutton’s brothers “will not be persuaded” (Luther: *glauben*), “though one rose from the dead,” Luke 16, 31. In the synagogue of the Jews at Thessalonica Paul on three Sabbaths “reasoned with” (*διελέγετο*) Jews and Greeks, “opening

and alleging (διανοίγων καὶ παρατιθέμενος) that Jesus is Christ;" and the result was: some of them "believed" (ἐπίσθησαν; Luther: *fielen ihm zu*), Acts 17, 3. 4. In Paul's lodging at Rome, when the apostle "expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading his hearers concerning Jesus," a division occurred: "some believed the things which were spoken (ἐπίθοντο τοῖς λεγομένοις), and some believed not" (Luther: *etliche fielen zu, etliche glaubten nicht*), Acts 28, 24. (Comp. Acts 5, 40: "to him they agreed," ἐπίσθησαν; Luther: *da fielen sie ihm zu*; Acts 23, 21: "do not thou yield unto them," μὴ πεισθῆς; Luther: *traue ihnen nicht*). Paul's enemies know not how to characterize the apostle's activity by a more befitting term than by charging him with "persuading men," and by pointing out the effects of his persuading, which seemed to them destructive of the old creeds, Acts 18, 13; 19, 26. People were observed to cast aside their former beliefs and to make a new choice, in consequence of Paul's preaching. In like manner the apostle himself speaks of his office 2 Cor. 5, 11; Gal. 1, 10.

Πείθειν implies indecision, unwillingness, resistance in the person to whom it is being applied, and its aim is to remove that resistance and to create willingness in the place of reluctance, firmness in the place of wavering. A few instances from secular affairs recorded in Scripture may serve to illustrate this force of the verb. In their effort to avert the threatened invasion of Herod the delegation from Tyre and Sidon proceeded to gain the good-will of the king's chamberlain, Blastus, whom they "made their friend" (πίσαντες; Luther: *ueberredeten*), Acts 12, 20. A declared enemy was on this occasion prevailed upon to abandon his hostile attitude, and converted into a friend. The Authorized Version in this place has hit upon a most happy rendering. When Pilate proposed to the Jewish populace the customary release of a prisoner at the time of the Jewish pass-over, the people seem not to have been quite ready to demand the death of Jesus. The choice of Barabbas in the place of Jesus was not made until after the chief priests had pleaded

with the people. And it appears also that the object of the pleading was not so much the liberation of Barabbas, who may or may not have been a political partisan of the leaders of the Jews, as rather the destruction of Jesus, so that it was not love for Barabbas but hatred of Jesus that actuated the priests, Matt. 27, 20. And we may incidentally note that under the peculiar circumstances under which his release was proposed Barabbas owed his life directly to the death of Jesus, and his release is a fit type of the sinner's justification. — Now, the word which declares the things of the Spirit of God meets a like hostile attitude in the natural man. What the Gospel proposes for the sinner's acceptance is repulsive to the sinner's natural affections and is, therefore, resisted with more or less energy. The degree of intensity with which the Gospel is being resisted, and the form in which such resistance is manifested, vary. From the malicious scoffer who begins to foam at the mouth at the mere mention of the divine Name to the politely indifferent who decline the Gospel with specious excuses, there are numberless varieties of spiritual repugnance to grace. In fact, no two persons are absolutely identical, in this respect as little as in any other. Resistance, like every other manifestation of a person's mind toward God, is individual and peculiar. But these differences are of no moment, because they are all essentially exhibitions of that unwillingness which is natural and congenital to all who are born of flesh. And this resistance stamps a person an ἀπειθής, a person who will not suffer himself to be persuaded. The mission of the forerunner was "to turn the disobedient (ἀπειθεῖς) to the wisdom of the just," and in this way "to make ready a people prepared for the Lord," Luke 1, 17. John preached the remission of sins, Luke 3, 3. His preaching was received by some, rejected by others, Luke 7, 29. 30. There was either assent or dissent among his hearers, and on these lines his hearers divided into believers and unbelievers. It was not owing to some intellectual deficiency in John's preaching that some rejected him; for John had come "to give *knowledge* of salvation, to give light to them that sit

in darkness," Luke 1, 77. 79. There is every reason why we should believe that John was very well understood by his hearers. Hence the great sensation which his preaching created. Nor was it the lowly, the simple folk only that were attracted to him; the meaning of his words and the import of his mission were understood by the doctors, and he could gather an interested audience at Herod's court. No, it was not because their intellect had not been offered the necessary data for the knowledge of faith that these people rejected the Gospel: they knew, but did not want to know; they had been ushered into the saving light of grace, but had shut their eyes. The Master, coupling His own mission with that of John, explained the real cause of the Pharisees' unbelief, when He charged them after the miracle at Bethesda: "Ye sent unto John, and he bare witness unto the truth. . . . He was a burning and a shining light: and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light" (namely, if they had succeeded in allying John with the Jewish church council). "But I have greater witness than that of John. . . . And ye have not His (God's) Word abiding in you: for whom He hath sent, Him ye believe not. . . . And *ye will not* come to me, that ye might have life. . . . I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you. . . . How can ye believe, which receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that cometh from God only?" John 5, 33 ff. These words of Christ plainly charge the Jews with insincerity, and declare their insincerity to be the cause of their unbelief. Their affections remaining perverse and their will obstinate, the knowledge which was conveyed to them through the wonderful preaching in their day only served to increase their guilt, so that Christ had to tell one of them: "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil," John 3, 19. Unbelief has its seat not in the intellect but in the will and the affections. The preaching of the grace of God creates the great spiritual crisis in the sinner's life. The proffered pardon calls for a decision for or against accepting it. The sinner must make up

his mind in regard to it, and take his stand with or away from Christ. There is no escape. Prior to his removal to the school of Tyrannus Paul had been allowed to preach in the synagogue at Ephesus for three months. He had been disputing and persuading, arguing and pleading, teaching and beseeching. At the end of this period it was manifest that his hearers had made their choice. Luke relates: "When divers were hardened, and believed not (*ἠπίσθουν*), but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus," Acts 19, 9. This separation is worthy of note. Both sides among Paul's hearers took action, not only those who followed Paul to his new quarters, but also those who refused. *Ἀπειθεῖν* is a negative term, but denotes a positive action; it signifies positively saying no to, it is a conscious and deliberate denial and refusal of, the proffer of God's pardon through the Gospel. The actor is henceforth held responsible for his action. His enmity has broken out in revolt. As his carnal heart had formerly hated the righteous and holy God who speaks through the Law, so this same carnal heart turns against the merciful and gracious God who speaks through the Gospel. The *ἀπειθής* is an open and declared rebel against the Lord (comp. Numb. 20, 10: מִרְיָב = *ἀπειθεῖς*, LXX); he allies himself with the adversary, speaking the devil's language and doing the devil's work in resisting both the highest truth and the greatest love. He is self-willed (Stoeckhardt in Rom. 2, 8); he does not *obey* the truth, but *obeys* unrighteousness. *Ἀπειθεῖν* and *πίθεσθαι* are the two verbs which the apostle employs in this place and which our Authorized Version has correctly rendered disobey and obey. Faith is subordination, submission; unbelief is insubordination. In both acts the will is operative. The believer is yielding, the unbeliever stubborn; the believer's will is merged in the will of the Lord, the unbeliever's will is set up in defiance of God's will. As the believer, by the knowledge of his faith, thinks the thoughts of God, so he desires, by the assent of faith, the good pleasure and wills the will of God. It is his own de-

siring and his own willing that is going on within him, and he is conscious of it and pleased with it. He does not act under compulsion* or like an automaton. His assent is a free and joyous act, of which his own conscience approves. The unbeliever, on the other hand, because he refused the knowledge of faith, refused to bring into captivity his thought to the obedience of Christ, continues to grope in spiritual darkness, evolving ever new errors and follies from his untutored mind, and because he clung to his natural appetites and desires and scorned the delights which the grace of God proposed to him, continues to be swayed by his selfish motives and passions and finds the Gospel offer of grace repulsive, because its acceptance implies acknowledgment that his natural desires and will are wicked and must be abandoned.

In presenting this aspect of faith we have employed the term "surrender." What is it that the believer surrenders? Faith has been defined as man's self-surrender to God. This view is not warranted by Scripture. Evangelical faith, faith in the Gospel, is not that trust in God which is demanded in the First Commandment. It is not the proffer to God of a heart that trusts in Him above all things, as it fears and loves Him above all things. Faith in the Gospel does not give anything to God, but receives from Him. What is surrendered is the natural animosity of the carnal heart which hinders the acceptance, on man's part, of what the Gospel offers. The surrender of which we have spoken is not the handing over to God of something that is valuable and that God regards as valuable, but it is the removal of something that is of no benefit to God or man, the attitude of defiance, the spirit of contradiction and rebellion against the grace of God and the mediation of God's Son. And this cessation of hostilities is not a work of man but of the Spirit. Gospel faith, also in this second aspect of assent to, and acceptance of, the grace of God in Christ Jesus, is divinely wrought. Paul thanks *God* for the faith of the Thessalonians (1 Thess. 2, 13) when he commends them for "receiving" (ἐδέξαντο) his teaching; for he adds these words: "which

effectually worketh also in you that believe." It matters little whether *λόγος* or *θεοῦ* is regarded as the antecedent of *ὅς*. If the former view is adopted, the apostle must be understood as expressing the instrumental cause of that faith which received Paul's teaching; if the latter, the apostle states the principal impelling cause of faith, God. We adopt the latter view and render "who" for "which." God, through the instrumentality of that Word which proposes faith, effectually wrought faith. He overcame that natural resistance in the Thessalonians to the teaching of the Gospel which would not permit them to receive (*δέχεσθαι*) the things of the Spirit of God, 1 Cor. 2, 13. He wrought in them, as He did in their countrymen in the neighboring city of Philippi, their willing (*ἐνεργῶν ἐν ὑμῶν τὸ θέλειν*, Phil. 2, 13; comp. 1 Thess. 2, 13: *ἐνεργεῖται ἐν ὑμῶν τοῖς πιστεύουσιν*). When God works, *ἐνεργεῖται*, the result is a work, *ἔργον*, with which He must be credited. And so Christ states to the Jews: *Τοῦτό ἐστιν τὸ ἔργον τοῦ θεοῦ, ἵνα πιστεύσητε κτλ.* "This is the work of God that ye believe," John 6, 29.

In the passages quoted last we have the verb *πιστεύειν*. The derivation of this verb from *πείθεσθαι* is easily traced through the verbal adjective *πειστός* = *πιστός*. A person who has become persuaded so as to accept the grace of God offered him in the Gospel is become a believer, *πιστός*. He acknowledges and confesses himself a recipient of God's favor. And the act of acknowledging this, and the state ensuing upon the first acknowledgment, the continuous acceptance of grace, is *πιστεύειν*. *Πιστεύειν* expresses the relation into which a person has entered to the God who wishes to save him. He does not flee from God, he does not hate and oppose Him, he does not receive God's overtures with suspicion, but he falls in with what God proposes for his good, he regards God's offer as something salutary and embraces it gratefully. It is worthy of note that the peculiar grammatical construction of *πείθεσθαι* has passed over to *πιστεύειν*. The matter or person concerning whom someone entertains a conviction in his own mind, to whom he yields and submits, is expressed by means of the dative.

Πείθεσθαι with the dative belongs to that class of verbs which express friendliness or hostility (Goodwin, *Greek Gr.*, 1160; Koch, *Griech. Gr.*, 85, 1b). *Πιστεύειν* is likewise found with the dative. And since we also find *πιστεύειν* followed by the accusative, this construction with the dative naturally rouses attention. While *πιστεύειν τι* denotes acknowledging the correctness, the truth of a matter, *πιστεύειν τινί* makes the relation into which the person acknowledging enters to the matter or person whom he acknowledges more prominent. *Πιστεύειν* with the dative means not only to consider something to be a fact and undeniably true, but to accept something for one's own person, to submit to the authority which one has recognized, to believe a person's words in deference to, and for the sake of, the person that is speaking those words. This force of *πιστεύειν* is strikingly seen in John 5, 46. 47. Jesus assumes as a fact that the Jews believed Moses (*ἐπιστεύετε Μωϋσεϊ*), not the fact that a person by that name had existed and that he had uttered certain truths, but the authority with which he had spoken, and the value of his utterances. They had yielded assent to his teaching, they had accepted his writings as the rule of their faith and conduct, and were submitting to them. Now, Moses was Christ's witness. Those who believed him ought to believe Jesus. If they acknowledged Moses' authority, they ought to have acknowledged the authority of Him whom Moses called his Lord. But the Jews did not really believe Moses; they did not truly accept what he had written, and therefore they could not believe Christ of whom he had written. They demanded a sign of Christ in order that they might believe Him, *ἵνα πιστεύσωμέν σοι*, John 6, 30, *i. e.*, in order that they might yield assent to His teaching, and accept Him as the Messiah sent to them by God. When Paul took up his labors, the work of Christ was finished. He preached Christ crucified, *i. e.*, he proclaimed to the caviling Jews and to the skeptical Greeks the salvation by the blood of the Mediator whom God had set forth as a propitiation. He demanded acceptance of this teaching and obedience to his gracious will of God, and that by a willing sub-

mission to the great love which God has manifested to the unjust and to His enemies, through His beloved Son. He speaks of his own yielding to the Gospel, *οἶδα ᾧ πεπίστευκα*, I know whom I have believed, 2 Tim. 1, 12. He still remembered the former struggle against Christ, and how he had finally bowed to this Christ. He points to the example of Abraham who believed God, Rom. 4, 3. The ancient patriarch had stilled the doubts which disquieted his heart by looking up confidently to the great and truthful God, who can do all things and who never lies, and had entrusted his fortunes and the fortunes of the race to His guidance. The Lord had spoken,—who would gainsay the Lord? He accepted the Lord's Word for the Lord's sake, and with that Word he received all that the Word promised to him. And in the same manner Paul characterizes the Christians who serve God by well-doing as people who have believed God, *πεπιστευότες θεῷ*, Tit. 3, 8, who have had God accredited to them as their friend and His offers as the great boon of their heart, and who now yield uncomplainingly to His teaching, ever affirming with their devout amen what He says to them and ever accepting gratefully what He bestows.

When Christ began His ministry in Judea, He demanded faith in God, faith in Himself as sent by God, faith in the words which the Father had given Him to speak. He commends the *πίστις* of those who come to Him for succor; He warns His followers to have faith, and inquires after their faith. In every instance of this sort His aim is not to emphasize the amount and the correctness of religious information which people possessed, but their expectation of help from Him. Their *πίστις* was the acknowledgment that He had pointed them the safe way out of all that oppressed their heart, the willing acceptance from His hand of God's pardon to their aggrieved consciences and God's aid to their afflicted bodies. And in the same sense Paul has preached among the Gentiles faith and the obedience of faith, *i. e.*, he has endeavored to induce in his hearers acknowledgment of Christ as their Savior and acceptance of His work as the basis on which their salvation must rest. The *ὑπακοή*

πίστεως, this familiar term in the New Testament, is the assent of faith.

Assenting faith is saving faith. Not only does it secure help for a moment, but for all time. When Paul preached the faith in Christ to Felix, he spoke in the same connection of the judgment that is to come. Assenting faith accepts from the hands of Christ the heritage of the saints, the life everlasting, and this assent secures the hearts against the doubts and terrors which harass the heart in hours of spiritual weakness. Again and again the believer turns to the Lord who has befriended him, and renews his allegiance to His gracious Word, affixing His glad endorsement to the blessed tidings: "Be of good cheer; thy sins are forgiven thee."

(To be continued.)
