

PREFACE

THESE SERMONS, LIKE the ones already published in English, were preached in the Fraumünsterkirche, Zurich. Although their Biblical texts are timeless, that is, true in all times and under all circumstances, it is my conviction that in order to reach the heart and mind of the present-day reader they must be interpreted in such a way that our time—this time of anxiety and apprehensions—must be reflected in them.

It is necessary that we be placed upon firm ground that does not waver even if the whole world is shaken at its foundation. In this age, when the bond between the nations of Christendom is so lamentably disrupted, it seems to me doubly necessary to remind ourselves of the common creed of the Christian churches. It is usually called the Apostles' Creed. Those versed in history tell us that it does not stem from the apostles but was composed in the first centuries after Christ. Even so, it is still a truly common expression of early Christendom and can therefore be valid as the confession of our faith in God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Its great merit is that it points to the basic facts of the life of Christ; its main weakness is that it does not speak of these facts as the apostles did, namely, as facts that only those who believe in Jesus Christ

can know and of which only they can understand the meaning. In this sense, however, the Christian faith remains bound to it, and we like to use it as the shortest catechism of Christianity. This creed runs:

I believe in God the Father Almighty,
Maker of heaven and earth;

And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; he descended into hell; the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy catholic church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.

For the theologians who raise the question, How far are we bound by it, how far not, and in what sense is it imperfect? my last volume of *Dogmatics*, which is soon to appear, tries to give an answer. But the average layman, who does not ask this question as much as he tries to hear through it the word of God himself, may be grateful for an interpretation that takes account of the difference between the working of our minds and that of the minds of the first centuries. Nothing is truly accomplished by regarding all that is

said in the Bible or in the creed as true. True Christian faith is not "to believe something," but to trust and obey the One who speaks to us in the Bible and through the creed, with our whole heart.

It is the intention of these twelve sermons to show in what sense faith in Jesus Christ includes the facts to which the creed refers and to show what this belief means in our life, both individually and socially.

May they lead many to that living faith in Jesus Christ, or strengthen and clarify it, and by so doing help to build his body as the light of the world and the salt of the earth within this generation, misled by illusions or beginning to doubt all meaning in life.

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