SELECTED ARTICLES on OBJECTIVE JUSTIFICATION

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Conference Paper on Romans 4:5

By H. J. BOUMAN

A very personal reason prompts the selection of my topic. In my senior year at the Seminary, I had not yet really learned what Christianity really is. To be sure, I was not a scoffer. Far from it. I yearned for the honor of being a Christian, but I did not dare. The sainted Dr. Bente had succeeded in crushing all my pride in human wisdom. In his lectures on the philosophical systems, ancient, medieval, and modern, he had shown us that human reason the moment it tried to explain transcendental problems disregards its own rules of logic in its deductive and inductive reasonings. And the reason for this phenomenon is not so much its inability to explain matters beyond its sphere, but its bias, its being prejudiced by sin, by its innate enmity against God. Thus all the thinking of natural man regarding sin, death, future life, God, etc., is characterized by utter failure. I had lost all pride of, and confidence in, the power of human wisdom.

54 Luther, Smalcald Articles, Triglot, p. 499.
The sainted Dr. Graebner, in his lectures on church history, showed us the miracle of the Church in this world. In the midst of hostile surroundings, despite all attempts to suppress it, that wonderful Church not only held its own but also grew and conquered; it marched victoriously across the lands and through the centuries. And its weapon was what to human reason appeared to be utter foolishness—the Gospel of salvation by Christ, who died for us on the Cross. From a human viewpoint it should have failed from the start, but it did not. Thus the story of the Church proved to me that a supernatural power is active in its existence and growth, and that caused to grow in my soul a profound admiration for it, and a great longing to be a member of this marvelous institution. But again I say, I did not dare. Despite all the exegesis and dogmatics and the sermons I heard and the reading I did I was held captive by the idea that I had to make myself worthy of that honor. I thought my Savior would not accept me unless my remorse over sin had reached a certain depth and the control and restraint of my natural desires had achieved a certain degree. Outwardly there was no difference between me and my fellow students, but inwardly I was thoroughly unhappy, unsure, and often on the verge of despair.

Then, one day in November of 1898, the sainted Dr. Stoeckhardt explained Rom. 4:5 to us. While I was listening to his words, something happened to me. It was as though a great light illumined my soul; unutterable joy and happiness filled my heart; going to my room, I walked on air. Now I saw what justification really is, now I understood the wonderful meaning of words like these: Jesus came to save sinners, to save that which is lost, etc. The real meaning of grace was revealed to me. True, the emotions I had on that day did not last and remain, but, thank God, the knowledge of what justification, grace, and forgiveness of sin mean, did remain. I am therefore glad to speak to you on this theme and to emphasize the immense importance of the doctrine of justification in our preaching and practical work.

I

Τῷ δὲ μὴ ἐγνωκόμενῳ

In the matter of obtaining righteousness before God there are only two ways thinkable, and these two ways exclude each
other. In verse 4 Paul points out one way and in verse five the other. Only one way can be the true, successful way, not both, neither the two combined. It is either—or. That is of what the adversative particle δὲ reminds us. What is stated here is in opposition to what is stated in verse 4 ("Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt"). If God calls a man righteous because he worked for it, then it is not grace, but a reward. But the opposite obtains, as is shown in our verse.

"To him that worketh not." That is one who has abandoned the idea of gaining the favor of God by his own works. An ἐργαζόμενος is one who tries to earn something by his own efforts, to become righteous before God. Paul flatly condemns that idea, but human reason opines it to be the only true way, a way to preserve human dignity. Natural man's thinking is thoroughly legalistic. We find this among all men, civilized and uncivilized. Even among people on the lowest plane of civilization the legalistic idea prevails that man must gain the favor of God or the gods or avert their wrath by his own efforts. All pagan philosophers knew of no other way. This idea dominated the thinking of the Pharisees of old.

The same idea prevails among the worldly wise. In the Critique of Pure Reason, by the famous philosopher Emanuel Kant, I found this statement: "Legality means that an act is done according to a law, but not because of that law. Morality means that an act is done not only according to, but also because of the law." That seems to be a fine statement. But that Kant does not define therewith Christian morality, which means that an act is done not only according to and because of the Law, but also because of gratitude for God's grace in Christ Jesus, is evident from his statements. His statement about the categorical imperative, which reveals that his morality is nothing more than the morality of a slave, teaches that the Law forces him to work to become righteous before God. This idea pervades also all our literature of fiction. The good wins in the end, and the bad fails. But there is more to say.

This legalism is so thoroughly dominant in human thinking that it has again and again poisoned and subverted the thinking and teaching in the Christian churches. There is
the Roman Church. To be sure, there is still essential Christian teaching. Christ is proclaimed as the Savior of mankind. In one Roman catechism I found an explanation of the Second Article which was beautiful, almost like our own. They speak about the grace of God, faith, etc., but the entire body of their teaching is vitiated by the idea that one must make himself worthy of the grace of God, that Christ will not accept the sinner, will not grant him forgiveness of his sins, unless he properly repents and conforms to certain rules established by the Church. Luther, the monk, believed this, and therefore he fasted and prayed and lashed his body to appease Christ and become worthy of receiving forgiveness. Something similar happened to our own Dr. Walther in his university days. That is the reason why serious-minded men and women sought refuge in the life in monasteries. This legalistic idea has crept into Protestant churches too; hence the widespread abandonment of the true Gospel of grace. To many Christ is the Savior not because He as our Substitute suffered the penalty for sin, not because by His active obedience and passive obedience He prepared the righteousness of God for us, but because He showed us the way back to God, because He became for us a Pattern to copy. We must become Christlike, they say, then we shall be God’s children again. Some go so far as to maintain that modern man is able to find his way back to God in his own way. And the result is the denial of verbal inspiration of the Bible and the scornful rejection of the substitutionary work of Christ.

In a widely disseminated address, delivered Jan. 31, 1946, John D. Rockefeller wants to unite all churches. He pronounces “ordinance, ritual, creed, all nonessential for admission into the kingdom of God, or His Church. A life, not a creed, would be the test. Not even Baptism or the Lord’s Supper are necessary for membership.” Why should they be? To him they are mere symbols anyhow. “If you want to observe them, good; if not, good too. You need no creed, individual belief; only be good and fight the evil. The essence of true religion is to live a Christlike life. To emphasize the responsibility of the individual to his Maker was Christ’s mission on earth.” “Means of grace are not necessary; they have nothing to convey.” If you boil down all he said, it comes to this: you must work to establish good
spiritual relation between the soul and its God. What this man wants is that Catholics and Jews and Protestants unite in believing in the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. It is pagan religion. “Has Christianity failed?” he asks. My answer is: “Yes, your kind of Christianity has failed and always will.” The theme of his lecture was: “The Christian Church—What of Its Future?” My answer is: “The future of your kind of Christian Church is disaster.”

The cultured professor of philosophy, the polished gentleman in the modernist pulpit, the betimbed so-called Holy Father in Rome, the whirling dervish, the self-torturing fakir, the flagellants of the medieval ages, the boomerang-throwing savage in Australia, the sun-worshiping Aztecs, the pipe-smoking Indian, the Mongolian with his prayer mills grinding out his prayers as long as the wind blows, the fur-clad Eskimo, the cannibal of Polynesia, the fanatic worshipers of Allah, Jews, and Gentiles, all, without exception, agree in the principle of work-righteousness. Human reason can rise to no higher plane than to think: I must be an ἐγγονέως, I must work for God’s favor.

But we must also look into our own heart. Make no mistake, also true Christians are made to feel the impact of this legalism. Why are they at times not fully tasting the joy of salvation? Why are they perturbed in the spirit by fear and uncertainty? Why are they so slow in trusting the Lord’s beneficent guiding? Why are they cast down in times of adversity? And this often happens to Christians whom we look upon as pillars of the church. It is the feeling of unworthiness. They would like to feel a remorse like David’s or Peter’s, but the penitential tears do not come. They would like to curb and control the desires of their flesh, but they often fail in this. They would like to show their gratitude for God’s grace in a spectacular manner, but their flesh is too strong. This shortcoming, this failure, causes them to doubt that they are accepted children of God. It is a sore affliction. But what is often behind all of this? The idea that their state of grace depends upon their worthiness. Legalism has corrupted childlike faith in the grace of God. Instead of not working they begin what their carnal reason suggests: they work. But the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write: “To him that worketh not! Worketh not!! Nor!!!
By that he condemns all attempts to gain God's favor by our own efforts as contrary to God's plan and wisdom.

That is a hard lesson to learn, and it cannot be learned in one sitting. It takes our whole lifetime, and then we shall not have mastered it. Let us watch and pray that legalism does not weaken or destroy the joy in our salvation. We must always remember the true purpose of the Law. That purpose is not to make us ἐργαζόμενοι, but to make us see and realize our great sinfulness and total helplessness, so that we become μὴ ἐργαζόμενοι in the matter of justification.

II

Πιστεύοντι δὲ ἐπὶ τὸν δικαιοῦντα τὸν ἁσβῆ

Δὲ is again adversative. Instead of trying to gain God's favor by his own efforts, instead of earning forgiveness of sins by working, man must believe. Πιστεύοντι ἐπὶ τὸν δικαιοῦντα τὸν ἁσβῆ. Let us first look at the word ἁσβῆς. It is translated "ungodly." An ἁσβῆς is one who does not honor God, does not worship God as his Lord. When Adam disregarded the command of his Lord, he became an ἁσβῆς. He no longer feared and loved and trusted in God. His fellowship with God was disrupted. Instead of being godly, he now was ungodly, and that describes all men. Everyone is born ungodly. We must not limit this term to so-called great sinners, gullible Leute. Ungodly is everyone who refuses to obey God in everything. We are by nature ungodly, every one of us. Natural man's thinking, his emotions, his volitions, are out of tune, are not in harmony with God, but separate from and against God. That is a terrible situation. It is a state of rebellion, a state of constant warring against the highest authority in the world. It means a separation from the Fountain of Life, from Him from whom all blessings flow. And that means an existence without peace, a life of ceaseless dread; it means a living death; it means to be under the curse at all times. And many who realize a little of this are driven into utter despair. Life becomes an unbearable burden to them.

That is not the point here, however. The point is that τὸν ἁσβῆ is generic; it denotes man in general; it means
every human being, including you and me. Now, what happens to a person when he is found to be a lawbreaker? He is punished, of course. We rightly expect that every honest judge will condemn and punish the evildoer. Indeed, it is his solemn duty to do so. God, the righteous Judge, has cursed everyone that sinneth. "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold the truth in unrighteousness." "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." This is not an idle threat; it agrees with man's thinking. But—and let us listen to it with the greatest attention—here God is said to be δικαιωμένος the ungodly. Δικαιωμένος is a judicial term used in court language. It means to declare just, the very opposite of what the ungodly must expect. God declares the ungodly to be the opposite of what he is. Let us in no wise detract from or weaken the force of this marvelous statement. The situation is this: The ungodly stands before God, his Judge; he expects to hear a sentence of condemnation, but the divine Judge declares him to be just, pronouncing the sinner to be holy, the guilty to be innocent, the foul to be pure, the wicked to be good. He completely ignores the sinfulness, the unrighteousness, and declares the sinner to be righteous, so perfectly righteous that he is fit to be received into heaven. What a remarkable statement this is: "God justifieth the ungodly!" How contrary to all human thinking!

But in the preceding chapters the holy inspired writer has amply explained how this marvelous action was brought about. God sent His own beloved Son into the world. Jesus willingly came, placed Himself under the Law, became our Substitute, was made the one great Sinner by imputation, was cursed and condemned in our stead, paid the penalty of the Law for us by suffering and dying on the cross. He even suffered the torment of hell for us. And when all was done, when divine justice was satisfied, He was released again. God resurrected Him from death, thus putting on His work the divine stamp of approval. And because of this saving work of His Son, God has justified the ungodly; He has pronounced every sinner to be guiltless and holy, or, in other words, He has forgiven all sins.

I say "has" although our text has "justifies," the present tense. Let us look at the words again: "But believeth in
Him who justifieth the ungodly." That justifying does not follow believing. If it did, it would be a conditional justification, and the meaning would be that if the ungodly believes, then God will justify him. But that is entirely foreign to this sentence. Besides, how can I depend or rely on anything that is not a fact, that has not taken place? No; first God justifies the ungodly, and then the ungodly has something to believe, to depend on. The statement "God justifies the ungodly" is not cumbered by any condition; there are no if’s or provided’s, none whatever. God justifies the ungodly regardless of his behavior or belief, even before he was born, and therefore the ungodly is justified whether he believes it or not. Justification is an accomplished fact; it is universal even as salvation is. Therefore Jesus uses the past tense: "For God so loved the world." "The Son of Man came." Paul uses the past tense: "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto us the Word of Reconciliation." So when the ungodly believes that God justifies him, he accepts an accomplished fact; he believes with David that with God there is forgiveness of sin.

Let us accept the grand syllogism of faith:

Major: God justifieth the ungodly
Minor: I am ungodly
Conclusion: Therefore God justifieth me

III

Ἀγίασται ἡ πίστις αὐτοῦ εἰς δικαιοσύνην

"And his faith is being counted for righteousness." Note the definite article. This faith, what faith? The faith that God justifies the ungodly. That is the faith of which the holy writer speaks, and this particular faith is being counted for righteousness. Ἀγίασται means is counted for, is accounted, is looked upon and taken for. "For righteousness"—that is the righteousness that God demands, the perfect righteousness that opens the door of heaven and guarantees the entry into paradise. He who believes that God justifies the ungodly and thus applies this pronouncement of God to himself is looked upon as having perfect righteousness and is being treated as a righteous person ought to be treated. Such faith brings him into possession of that perfect righteousness.
Therefore the Bible also says: "Faith justifies, makes righteous." The two statements "God justifies" and "faith justifies" denote the same thing, only from different viewpoints. God, on the basis of Christ's saving work pronounces and declares the ungodly righteous, and faith accepts that declaration. Thus he applies it to himself, and now faith has that righteousness for its own. So faith justifies.

It has been said that faith justifies because of its great moral value. True, faith revolutionizes man's life, changing him altogether. Indeed, faith has very great moral value, but it is not for that reason that it is being counted for righteousness. That is the legalistic view of faith. That view contradicts the word "faith" itself. Faith stands here in direct opposition to work. We are told here that we should not work, but believe. So faith cannot be taken here as an act of great moral value. It is nothing else than the hand that grasps the fact, the truth, that God justifies the ungodly and appropriates it. The righteousness of God, earned and prepared by Christ and intended for all, is accepted by the individual by his believing it. So objective justification becomes subjective justification.

Because of this it does not matter whether faith is strong or weak. Faith, strong or weak, lays hold on Christ, grasps the righteousness of God, and that is what counts. We must not build the certainty of being righteous on the state of our faith. Our being righteous does not depend on our feeling righteous. Thank God for that, because Christians often feel anything but being accepted children of God. Often their soul is filled with fear and thoughts of being rejected. No; faith clings to God's promise, faith clings to the fact that God justifies the ungodly, that HE HAS SAID SO! Faith turns away from all feelings, good or bad, and rivets its attention on what God said.*

Such faith is being counted for righteousness. God looks upon that which faith has taken hold of, and is pleased. As He said to Christ, so also He says to the believer: "You are My beloved child. You are the apple of Mine eye. You are My child, and I am your Father. I will give you anything you ask for if it is for your own good. I will place My

* Ich glaub', was Jesu Wort verspricht,
Ich fühl' es oder fühl' es nicht.
omnipotence, My omniscience, My eternity at your service. I will see to it that everything that happens, even sickness, war, death, anything and everything, turns out to your advantage. I will turn all sorrows into blessings. And finally I will deliver you from all evil and translate you into heaven. There I will give you to drink of the eternal waters of gladness."

Oh, what a glorious message this is that our faith in Him who justifies the ungodly is being counted for righteousness! And how honored are we who are commissioned to bring this message to the world of the ungodly, to stand before our congregations, to go into the highways and byways, into the hospitals, the prisons, the asylums, and tell each and every one: "God has declared you just. There is pardon, forgiveness, salvation, also for you. No matter who or what you are, no matter to what depth of vileness you may have sunk, the richness of God’s grace is sufficient and powerful enough to help you. Simply come, come as you are, come with all your sins and wretchedness, come to the God who justifies the ungodly.

Let us not forget that it is this truth that brings the life-giving power into our message. It makes our message not only a saving, but also a sanctifying message. All our instruction toward sanctification, all our exhortation to a holy life, will be in vain without the message that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. Therefore every sermon that does not contain this truth is a waste of time and labor and is not based upon the truth. You cannot make your people willing and grateful servants of God unless you make them see this glorious truth that God justifies the ungodly.

Minneapolis, Minn.
Walther, a Christian Theologian.

II.

Dr. Walther gave undying allegiance to the sola Scriptura. The doctrine of the authority and inspiration of Scripture lay close to his heart. But there was another matter which lay — yes, we may put it thus — still closer. The one thing which he stressed above all things, which he had in view in all his theological work, and in the interest of which he fought so staunchly and persistently for the sola Scriptura, was the Gospel of the grace of God in Christ. He fought for the verbal inspiration not merely in order to fulfill a duty laid upon the Christian theologian by Scripture. No; Scripture was so sacred to him because it bears the Gospel of salvation. Scripture took him captive by this, that the Gospel of grace took him captive. Dr. Walther was a Gospel theologian. His chief interest lay in bringing the Gospel of grace to the sinner and in training men for this one great work of the Christian Church.

Dr. Walther was a Christian theologian. The theology of the Christian Church is the theology of grace. The Christian people live on the Gospel of grace. Those who base their hope of salvation on their own work and worth, and those who teach and encourage them to do so, "are either Jews, or Mohammedans, or papists, or heretics; for there is no mean between these two righteousnesses, the working righteousness of the Law and the suffering righteousness of Christ. Whoever therefore strays away from the Christian righteousness must fall back into the working righteousness; that is, he has lost Christ and must have recourse to his own works and put his trust in them...They are not Christians, but are and remain work-saints, whatever other name they may bear, Jews, Mohammedans, papists, or Anabaptists, etc." (Luther, IX, 24 f.) The ministry which the Christian theologian has received of the Lord Jesus consists in testifying the Gospel of the grace of God, Acts 20, 24. And that was the ministry of Dr. Walther: faithfully and powerfully he testified the Gospel of the grace of God.
He preached the Gospel of grace in its fulness. He presented to
the sinful world and the Christian people all the elements of saving
grace—saving grace in that it is for all, saving grace in that it
does all. He presented the doctrine of universal grace in its full
import. “We know that God really and truly would have all men to
be saved. He has revealed that to us in His Word. And we can
never sufficiently praise God for this, that He is such a tender Father,
that He would have mercy even on the most depraved of men.”
(Proc. West Dist., 1874, p. 31.) For this he loved the Gospel: “Since
all men are reconciled to God and the Gospel is the message thereof,
it is such an ineffable grace to come within the sound of the Gospel”
(Lehre u. Wehre, 1890, p. 46), and denounced the denial of it as
a crime against God and humanity: “Nowadays all Lutheran people
know that according to the Holy Scriptures the saving grace of the
Father is universal; so is the redemption of the Son and likewise the
effective calling of the Holy Spirit through the Word, while the
teaching of the Reformed Church on these three points is particular-
istic; for the Reformed most emphatically contend that God has
created the greater part of the human race unto eternal damnation
and has accordingly assigned them even in eternity to everlasting
death. In the clear light of the precious, saving Gospel this is an
appalling, a horrible doctrine.” (The Proper Distinction between Law
and Gospel, p. 126.) It is a horrible doctrine, for it robs God of His
honor and deprives the sinner of the needed comfort. “What rich
comfort flows from this doctrine that God is Love and would have all
men to be saved, to enjoy His love in all eternity! Serious misgivings
so often oppress the heart. It deeply feels the wrath of God. It asks,
Does God’s love extend to me, too? Am I, too, miserable creature
that I am redeemed? In such afflictions we must show that these
thoughts dishonor God, who is the eternal Love. But when we over-
come these doubts in this way that we constantly keep before our
eyes the universal gracious will of God and clinging to that in faith,
we give God all honor. . . . Satan’s chief object is to keep us from
trusting in the love of God and thus becoming divinely assured of
our salvation. So we see of what inestimable importance and how
precious and salutary the doctrine of the universality of God’s
grace is.” (Proc. West Dist., 1874, p. 38.) Faithfully Walther guarded
this priceless treasure. He warded off the Calvinistic speculations on
the “sovereignty” of God. He did not yield to the argument of carnal
reason that, if it is due to God’s gracious will alone that I am saved,
it must also be due to God’s will that another is not saved. Walther
took his stand on Scripture and thus was enabled to acquit himself
as a Christian theologian, a faithful witness of the grace of God, to
proclaim the glorious message: “The grace of God that bringeth
salvation hath appeared to all men.” Oh, the height and depth, the
breadth and length, of it! Oh, the inexhaustible riches of grace! Rejoice, O my soul; not one, of all that belong to the human race not one is excluded, for the saving grace of God hath appeared to all men; it brings salvation to all, to all of them; God would save all, all of them, despite their sin and unworthiness, freely and without cost, as grace is wont to deal. . . . As the vault of heaven encloses the whole terrestrial ball, every portion and point of it, so the heaven of God's grace encloses the whole world of sinners that inhabits this earth. A man can so harden himself that he does not care for grace; but he cannot sin so grievously that grace does not care for him."

(Brosamer, p. 24 ff.) 1)

Just as clearly and forcefully he proclaimed the sola gratia. We owe our salvation to grace alone. First, we obtain the forgiveness of sins as a free gift. God does not offer to justify the sinner on condition that he do something to make himself worthy of the forgiveness of sins. God is not waiting for us to reconcile Him to us. Christ has fully taken care of that. God is reconciled, the sins of the world are already forgiven, a free pardon is offered to all. The Jew, says Walther, offers to buy his pardon by observing the Law of Moses; the Mohammedan, by living according to the Koran; the papist, with his contrition and satisfactions; “the Lutheran Church, however, tells the sinner, as the Word of God tells him: Es ist schon alles getan; you are already redeemed, you are already justified before God; you need not therefore do anything to redeem yourself, to reconcile God to you, to earn your salvation. All that has already been accomplished. Only believe! Believe that Christ, the Son of God, has already gained all this for you; through this faith you obtain all this and are saved.” (Proc. West. Dist., 1874, p. 43.) Forgiveness of sins as a free gift, gained by Christ on the cross once for all (objective justification) and accepted by the sinner by faith (subjective justification) — that is the Gospel in which Walther gloried; for that is the only message that can bring joy to the sinner’s heart. “Since all men are reconciled to God and the Gospel is the message thereof, it is such an ineffable grace to come within the sound of the Gospel.” “God is reconciled. Accordingly, the Apostle Paul calls on us: ‘Be ye reconciled to God.’ That means: Since God has been reconciled to you by Jesus Christ, grasp the hand which the Father in heaven holds out to you. . . . Righteousness lies ready; it must not first be achieved by man. If man were to attempt to do so, that would be an awful crime, a fighting against grace and against the reconciliation and perfect redemption accomplished by the Son of God. . . . Having this doctrine, what exceedingly happy and blessed people we Lutherans

1) In the days of Walther men were telling one another, and some believe it to this day, that Walther was a Calvinist in disguise. It is one of the saddest chapters in church history.
are! This teaching takes us to Christ by a straight route. It opens heaven to us when we feel hell in our hearts. It enables us to obtain grace at any moment, without losing time by following a wrong way, striving for grace by our own effort, as we sometimes do with a good intention. We can approach Christ directly and say: 'Lord Jesus, I am a poor sinner; I know it; that has been my experience in the past, and when I reflect what is going on in my heart now, I must say, that is still my experience. But Thou hast called me by Thy Gospel. I come to Thee just as I am; for I could come no other way.' That is the saving doctrine which the Evangelical Lutheran Church has learned from Christ and the apostles." (The Proper Distinction, etc., p. 136 f.)

We owe our salvation entirely to God's grace; for, in the second place, this faith by which we accept the forgiveness of sins as a free gift is itself God's work, God's gift. Grace carries through the work of salvation; grace accomplishes it from beginning to end; at no stage is the sinner called upon to contribute something of his own. Conversion is solely and exclusively the work of God. "God the Holy Spirit effects the sinner's conversion because of grace, for Christ's sake; man can hinder his conversion, but cannot cooperate towards it." (Proc. North. Dist., 1873, p. 43.) And what moved God to create faith in my heart? Was there anything in me to attract God's favorable attention? Did He see some spiritual change and improvement in me on the basis of which He could successfully carry on His work or for the sake of which He would bother with me? No, says Walther; He converted me "because of his grace, for Christ's sake." "Who among us, if he is a true Christian, will not declare: I would never have sought the dear Lord if He had not sought me; I would never have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ if the Holy Ghost had not granted me this great gift of faith; I have not earned it through my conduct, through my prayers, through my struggling and striving! . . . Every one who is really converted will speak thus, and one who thinks he has acquitted himself so well in this matter, he has been so willing, he has helped along, and his many labors, many tears, many prayers, counted for something, he is a miserable hypocrite, who is blinded by the devil. Man can do nothing, nothing; God must do all. . . . That is the Scriptural teaching, that is also the Lutheran teaching, and it gives all honor to God, though it is an abomination and offense to all Pharisees." (Proc. West. Dist., 1876, p. 65.) "Wir wollen dem Menschen keinen Anteil geben an seiner Seligmachung. . . . Das ist unser Interesse." (Proc. Sec. Gen. Pastoral Conf., Fort Wayne, 1881, p. 25.) For to have man cooperate towards his conversion or produce the necessary conditions for his conversion would be demanding the impossible of him; for he is spiritually dead, and it would cast him into despair; or it would make of him a self-satisfied Pharisee.
Tenaciously Walther clung to the article that man can do nothing, that God does all in converting, saving, the sinner. He, too, was tempted by his flesh to embrace the Pelagian creed, that man can effect his own conversion, or the Semi-Pelagian creed, that man can claim half the credit, or the synergistic creed, that man can at least make the beginning and give God a chance. He trampled the satanic delusion under foot. Nor would he yield to the arguments of his rationalistic flesh. The synergists told him—and his synergistic reason told him—that, if salvation depends entirely on God, God must also be made responsible for the perdition of men; that, since God’s grace is universal, the reason why some are saved and not others must lie in man, the reason being that the saved were made of better stuff than the others; that, therefore, in order to save the gratia universalis, the sola gratia must be qualified, restricted, reduced; if you do not so qualify it, if you exclude man’s part in his conversion, you lay yourself open to the charge of Calvinism. Walther trampled the temptation under foot. He was a Bible theologian and said: “Our reason will at once raise the objection: If that is so, if man cannot do the least thing towards his conversion, it must be God’s fault that so many are not converted; if God does all, if He must take away our resistance; if the cause of man’s non-resisting, of his conversion, does not lie at all in him, God must be the cause why so many are not converted. Thus reason argues; and, in truth, we have here an absolutely incomprehensible mystery. But let it be ever so incomprehensible, ever so contradictory, that does not bother us Lutherans.” (Proc. West. Dist., 1876, p. 63.)

It does seem that you cannot retain universal grace if you maintain sola grace. But what does a Christian do in such a case? You have read Walther’s article in Lehre u. Wehre, 1880, p. 257 ff.: “Was soll ein Christ tun, wenn er findet, dass zwei Lehren, die sich zu widersprechen scheinen, beiderseits klar und deutlich in der Schrift gelehrt werden?” Walther had learned the great art of the Christian theologian to set Scripture above reason, and so he had learned the greatest of all arts: to comfort men with the gratia universalis and to glory in the sola gratia. And how he gloried in it to the glory of God! “When we enter heaven, we shall have no reason to take credit unto ourselves. We shall not say: Well, I am now in glory, but I certainly did all that was in my power to achieve that! No, this cursed self-praise will never be heard in heaven. All the elect and all angels of heaven know nothing but to praise God’s grace. It is all, altogether, grace—that, dear brethren, must be the guiding star of our present discussion. We must shudder at the possibility of tolerating any teaching here which robs God of the glory that it is all, all, pure grace and nothing else. I do not hope to be saved because I imagine that I am better by a hair’s breadth than the vilest sinner,
but because God has revealed in His Word that it was the good pleasure of His will to make of me, a poor, lost sinner, an everlasting monument of his eternal grace.” (Proc. West. Dist., 1877, p. 26.)

Walther, the faithful witness of the Gospel of grace, gave himself up to it entirely. The article of saving grace reigned in his heart. First, it ruled and shaped his theology. He understood and stressed its supreme importance. The only hope of the sinner lies in the article of the grace of God in Christ. Deny this article, and you destroy the comfort of the Christian; violate it in any way, and his comfort is shaken. The insistence on the absolute need of the full grace of God in Christ for salvation is the characteristic of Walther’s theology as it is the characteristic of the theology of the Bible. Hear him speak, for instance, of this one phase of saving grace, of the sola gratia. The teaching that a man’s salvation depends on his self-determination “subverts the whole Christian religion, denies Christ as the sole foundation of our salvation and the only Savior of mankind, repudiates thus the Gospel, disavows the power of the blood and death of Christ and His redemption, takes from God the glory that He alone saves us, and gives this glory partly to man; yea, since salvation and the mercy of God are made to depend ‘at bottom and so solely and entirely’ on the conduct of man, on his free personal self-determination, it is given to man entirely.” (Lehre u. Wehre, 1873, page 322.)

Furthermore, the importance of the article of saving grace lies in its relation to all the other doctrines of Scripture. It gives them their importance. They would be meaningless without the article of salvation by grace. When, therefore, this article is denied or vitiating, all other articles must be given a new, an unscriptural, meaning. And where this article is honestly held, it will ultimately rectify the error that has crept in elsewhere. “For the devil at all times assails the grace of God; no heresy can bear the teaching of divine grace.’ (Luther, 3, p. 163.) . . . Every heresy that has sprung up was caused by the heretics’ inability to believe that man becomes righteous in the sight of God and is saved by grace alone. That is the real rock of offense against which all heresies, all false teachers, dash their head.” (The Proper Distinction, etc., pp. 100-163.) “On the other hand,” says Luther (VIII, 628), as quoted by Walther, “this power inheres in this article, that, if you give yourself to it whole-heartedly and earnestly, it will not let you stray into heresy and fight against Christ and Christendom.” (Die luth. Lehre v. d. Recht., p. 11.) “This made Luther the invincible Reformer. If he had not stood on this rock, a man like Erasmus could have thrown him easily. But standing on this rock,—in my heart there reigns, and shall ever reign, this one article, namely, faith in my dear Lord Christ, which is the sole beginning, middle, and end of all spiritual
and godly thoughts which I may have at any time, day or night' (IV, 8), — he laughed at the Pope's doctors, and at Zwingli, too. As often as new deceiving spirits confronted him, he tested them with this article, and if they did not agree with it, he said: Depart — to him who sent you.” (Proc. Syn. Conf., 1872, p. 37.) Walther understood the interrelation of the articles of the Christian religion. He put the doctrine of saving grace into the center.

There is the article of justification by faith, the chief article of the Christian religion, and at the center of this article lies the sola gratia — "being justified freely by His grace." Since the grace of God culminates in the justification of the sinner, the greatest blessing and the source of all blessings, the article of justification is the chief article, the heart of the Christian religion; but since justification is by grace alone, you can say just as well that salvation by grace is the chief article, the heart of the Christian religion. Says Walther: “The Evangelical Lutheran Church assigns to every doctrine of Scripture the position and importance which Scripture gives it. A. The fundamental and chief doctrine, from which all other doctrines derive their importance, is the doctrine of Christ, or of justification.” (Die Ev.-Luth. Kirch. die wahre sichtbare Kirche, Thesis 18, p. 108.)

There is the article of the distinction between the Law and the Gospel. That is nothing else than the article of salvation by grace alone, applied to the need of the terrified sinner. Walther indicates the close relation of these two doctrines when he points out that the Lutheran Church, understanding the relative importance of the various Bible doctrines, places first (A.) the doctrine of Christ, or of justification, but then urges at once the supreme necessity of distinguishing between the Law and the Gospel. “B. The Evangelical Lutheran Church distinguishes sharply between the Law and the Gospel.” (Die Ev.-Luth. Kirch., etc., p. 111.) Both doctrines are of the same importance, — “This distinction between Law and Gospel is the highest art in Christianity, which all who boast or accept the Christian name can or should know. For where there is a defect on this point, a Christian cannot be distinguished from a heathen or a Jew, for it is just here that the difference lies” (Luther, IX, 798, quoted by Walther, op. cit., p. 113), — for both treat of the same matter; the Christian has learned this highest art and declares: “According to the Law, which charges me with my guilt, I am indeed a lost, condemned sinner; but I appeal from the Law to the Gospel, for God has given, besides the Law, another word, that is, the Gospel, which gives us this grace, the forgiveness of sins, eternal righteousness and life; frees me from my terror and damnation, and assures me that all guilt is paid by the Son of God, Jesus Christ Himself.” (Op. cit., p. 113.) And, besides, this highest of all arts is not the
Christian's own achievement, but, again, God's gracious gift. Says
Luther, says Walther: "Without the Holy Ghost it is impossible to
grasp and make this distinction." What place do the means of grace
occupy in the divine scheme of salvation? They derive their
importance from their relation to the article of saving grace: they are
the means which bring to us the grace gained by Christ, confer upon
us the forgiveness of sins. And it is of vital importance that the
sinner make such use of them. "The Lutheran Church teaches, not
only that we are saved by grace alone, that this grace has been gained
for us by Christ, the Son of God and Redeemer of the world, that
we lay hold of this grace by faith alone, but she teaches also that the
good God has instituted certain means into which He has placed this
grace and through which He places it into our hands; and these
means are the Word of God, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper. They
contain the grace which was in God's heart from eternity towards us
poor sinners, which Christ gained for us; they are the hands by which
God bestows it upon us, so that He is all in all and we have nothing
to glory in." (Proc. West. Dist., 1876, p. 21.) "It is a useless tale
when I am told about a precious treasure which I am to fetch if the
way to the treasure is not shown me and the means for lifting it.
Such talk will seem sheer twaddle. But that is exactly the fanatics'
way of talking about the great treasure that lies concealed in the
Christian religion. When they are asked about the way to get it,
they cannot tell it. . . . Whoever does not go to these places (Word,
Baptism, Lord's Supper) to lift it will not fetch any gold. What he
gets may look like gold, but it is mere tinsel. Would that I could
press this truth deeply into your hearts and that the sound of my
words would not simply sweep past your ears, but bring energy and
life to you! Oh, what witnesses you would become by refusing to
deny the grace of God in Christ as the fanatics do!" (The Proper
Distinction, etc., p. 163.)

What is faith, and why does faith justify, faith alone? Unless
you teach that grace alone saves, you will harbor and spread Jewish
and Gentile opinions concerning faith. Why can faith save? "When
Christ says: 'He that believeth . . . shall be saved,' He is telling us:
You have fallen away from God through sin, fallen into an eternal
debt, which you cannot pay. But be comforted; I, the Son of God,
have paid your debt and thereby regained for you the grace of God
and eternal salvation, and I offer you all this as a free gift. Now,
then, accept this gift, and all will be well. And it is just this ac-
teptance which constitutes the faith of which the Christian religion
speaks." (Lutherskunde. See Lehre u. Wehre, 1890, p. 183.)

And this faith by which the sinner obtains the treasures of God's
grace is itself a gift of pure grace. Conversion is in no wise the
achievement of man, but altogether and in every respect God's work
in us. Take the sola gratia out of the article of conversion, and you will be teaching nothing but Jewish, Gentile opinions on conversion. Was Walther a Christian theologian? You have read above what he had to say on this matter. He was raised up by God to keep the sola gratia in the article of conversion. For that he lived and labored. That was the crowning glory of his work.

Walther preached powerfully on sanctification. Powerfully—because he knew, and led men to, the only source from which personal holiness and all spiritual life and power flow. "'The grace of God... teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.' As soon as a man really comes under the grace of God in Christ, this grace takes him in hand and like a faithful mother nurturing her child trains and rears him in the hatred of all ungodliness and worldly lusts... Such a one guards his body as a temple of the Holy Ghost lest it be defiled by sin and watches over his soul as belonging to Jesus Christ, bought with a great price, that it may remain His. He is impelled to do for his neighbor what God did for him, lovingly, gently, humbly; and he finds the happiness of his life in this, that it is spent in the service of God. Finally the grace of God teaches and trains us to look for the glorious appearing of the Savior Jesus Christ. When a man once knows what God's grace in Christ means, his whole nature and life are changed. Without grace a man clings to this life, the life on earth. Under grace, he looks forward to the appearing of Christ, at death or at the Last Day, waiting for it with the eager expectancy of our children at the approach of Christmas Eve." (Brosamen, p. 26 f.) Where the grace of God is preached, "people will furthermore notice that wonderful things are happening among them. Alas! many ministers do not meet with these wonderful experiences; their hearers remain sleepy; their misers stay stingy. What is the reason? Not sufficient Gospel has been preached to them." (The Proper Distinction, etc., p. 406.)

The uncompromising stand which Walther took in the long controversy on the Church and the Ministry was due not only to his zeal for purity of doctrine in general, but also and chiefly (and at bottom it amounts to the same thing) to his passion for keeping the article of saving grace inviolate. He points out, for instance: "When men make salvation dependent on the communion with any visible Church, they subvert the article of the justification of a poor sinner before God by faith alone." (Die Stimme unserer Kirche, etc., under Thesis IX.) "Clearly the teaching that there is a visible Church outside of which there is no salvation and that the validity of absolution depends on the ordination of the administrant, etc., is in conflict with the truth that faith alone saves." (Die lutherische Lehre v. d. Recht., p. 93.) "As soon as you add the qualification 'alone-saving'
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to the Lutheran Church, you detract from the doctrine of justification by grace through faith in Jesus Christ and confound Law and Gospel." (The Proper Distinction, etc., p. 343; cp. pp. 345, 397, 399.) The false teaching on Church and Ministry is not a small matter. When Walther and his brethren had fought their way through to a clear understanding of this doctrine, he declared: "There is no doubt in our mind that, if God in His infinite mercy had not come to our aid, making us to see the Romanizing features of our former doctrine and practise, we should not only have been working towards the destruction of Christianity, but also ourselves should have been lost eternally." (Lutheraner, 1857, p. 2; cp. Lutheraner, 1845, p. 76.) Note also this angle: When the ministry sets itself above the common Christians, it makes light of the surpassing dignity and glory which saving grace, justifying grace, has conferred upon these common Christians. "The minister administers his office and absolves in the name and behalf of the congregation." Our moderns are horrified at hearing this. Administer our office in the name and by authority of peasants and tradespeople! We are royal-Prussian and royal-Bavarian pastors—that is our glorious office! In their blindness they find their glory in their shame, and are unable to realize what a great honor it is to administer the office in the name of the Christians. There are no people on earth more distinguished than they; the angels serve them; above them is the open heaven; God has come down to them; they are clothed with the priestly robe of Christ's righteousness." (Lehre u. Wehre, 1876, p. 66.) The following, too, is worthy of note. Replying in 1843 to Grabau's Hirtenbrief, G. H. Loeber, Walther and their associates stress this point among others: "Let us, dear colleague, devote our attention above all things to this, thoroughly to search out and to preach in its fulness the pure Gospel of the free grace of God, and let us trust God that through this Word He will mightily protect His Church in these last perilous times against all the gates of hell. If His Spirit and power were not with the Word, we ourselves could not accomplish anything, not even with our preaching of the pure Word, much less through the weight of our office or the scaffolding of order and ordinances." (See Hochstetter, Geschichte der Missouriynode, p. 193.) Nothing, nothing, must take the place of, or interfere with, the preaching of saving grace.

2) Dr. H. E. F. Guericke, siding with Walther, uttered his warning in these words: "The papistical mischief begins inconspicuously and innocently by exalting indifferent ceremonies, then little by little puts the 'succession of the means of grace,' by which alone the Church is built, into the background, stressing the 'succession of the ministers,' proceeds, consistently, to make 'order' and organization, not doctrine, the all-important thing, in consequence of which the Gospel is made light of and human ordinances and institutions are made much of, and finally reaches the papistical
Need we ask how the doctrine of election is related to the article of saving grace? Its very name tells us that — election of grace. Sola gratia is the heart of the article of election. We owe our conversion to the grace of God alone, 2 Tim. 1, 9, and this grace was bestowed upon us in eternity, in God's gracious election, 2 Tim. 1, 9. When Walther treated the doctrine of the eternal election, all his thoughts revolved about this one thing, the sola gratia. He made the statement, quoted above: "Wir wollen dem Menschen keinen Anteil geben an seiner Seligmachung. Das ist unser Interesse," while he was discussing the doctrine of election. Election was his theme when he uttered the words quoted above: "When we enter heaven, we shall have no reason to take credit unto ourselves. . . . It is all, altogether, grace." We owe our election to the sola gratia. . . . Thesis 10 of the Thirteen Theses: "We believe, teach, and confess that the cause which moved God to choose the elect is solely His grace and the merit of Jesus Christ and not any good thing which God has foreseen in the elect, even not the faith foreseen by God in them." And we owe our salvation to "His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." — Thesis 11: "We believe, teach, and confess that election is not the mere foresight or foreknowledge of the salvation of the elect, but also a cause of their salvation and what pertains thereto."

The rule applies to every other doctrine: Unless you know its relation to the doctrine of saving grace, you will distort or misapply it. Take the doctrine of eternal damnation — "The Lord never makes mention of hell except for the purpose of bringing men to heaven." (The Proper Distinction, etc., p. 404.) In the Christian theology all articles converge upon, or radiate from, the grace of God in Christ. "The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men." — that ruled and shaped Walther's theology.

form of the Middle Ages, which claims all divine and human rights and presses them into its service." (See Hochstetter, Geschichte, etc., p. 233.) — Walther's warning against slighting the Gospel was directed not only to those who placed the strength of the Church in the hierarchical "order." He condemned with the same vehemence every movement and tendency which would supplant the simple preaching of the Gospel with something more powerful. There are men who shun over the Gospel and stress "life and work," relying upon the activities of the Church, the legitimate and necessary activities, to put new life into the Church. Dr. Walther taught us that our first concern must be the study and the preaching of the Gospel of grace. That, and that alone, preserves and builds the Church. Nothing must interfere with, or take the place of, the Gospel. "Through the Word alone the mighty deeds which fill the history of the Church have been performed. Through the Word alone the Church will be preserved in these last evil days unto the end of the world." (Brosamen, p. 227.) Where the Gospel is preached abundantly, "people notice that wonderful things are happening among them." (The Proper Distinction, etc., p. 406.) Preach "the pure Gospel of the free grace of God in its fulness. Through this Word, God will protect His Church against all the gates of hell."
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Next, and necessarily so, it ruled and shaped his policy. As a Christian preacher he knew nothing but Christ crucified and knew that he could achieve the purpose of his ministry — the salvation of souls — in no other way than by preaching the Gospel of grace of God in Christ. And his sole aim as a teacher of Christian theology was to enable and train men to pursue the same policy. At the dedication of Concordia Seminary in 1883 he said: "In this house young Christians shall be fitted to become heralds of the Gospel of Christ, the Son of God and Savior of the world, who will confess with the holy twelve apostles: 'We are determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. By grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.'" (Hochstetter, "Geschichte," etc., p. 451.) And he said: "Any other teaching can produce great Pharisees, but not Christians. One becomes a Christian only in this way, that he hears from the Holy Ghost that he is really redeemed, that he has forgiveness of sins, a reconciled heavenly Father, the righteousness that avails before God, and so can cheerfully await his dying hour." (Proc. Syn. Conf., 1872, p. 28.) Do you want to reach men's hearts, win them for Christ? "In accordance with God's will it should be the preacher's aim to proclaim the Gospel to his hearers till their hearts are melted, till they give up their resistance and confess that the Lord has been too strong for them, and henceforth they wish to abide with Jesus." (The Proper Distinction, etc., p. 406.) Is the Church in need of a reformation? Is her spiritual life at a low ebb? What then is the remedy? There is only one. All other remedies may galvanize a Church into temporary activity. But this is what puts life into the Church: "The weakest graduate, if only he has grasped the doctrine that the grace of God in Christ Jesus has appeared to all men, to be received freely, by faith, can preach to men in such a way that they are assured of their salvation, and that is worth more than all the wisdom and all the possessions and treasures of the world. What is all erudition, as necessary as it is in its place, compared with the wisdom of God which is set forth when but the simple passage is expounded: 'God so loved the world,' etc.? Hearing this, all poor sinners rejoice, all the holy angels are filled with wonder, and the whole world should sink upon its knees and sing 'Gloria' and 'Hallelujah.' If our young preachers preach this, they are the men who can start a reformation in our country as indeed in this way a small beginning has already been made." (Proc. Syn. Conf., 1872, p. 28.) What the world needs and what the Church needs is the preaching of the Gospel of the grace of God in Christ. And that means a preaching in which the gracious forgiveness of sins forms the burden of the message and is continually in the mind of the preacher. The Gospel-preacher treats all the doctrines of the Bible fully, exhaustively, but
he is always hastening towards his real subject, the gracious forgiveness of sins. He does not treat this article only occasionally, when he might feel that now its turn has come in the series of Christian teachings. No, it is always before him, he is always presenting it. He is obsessed with the fear that there might be too little Gospel in his preaching. He does not fear that people might say, as Luther puts it, "he is always harping on one string, he knows only one tune" (IV, 1741). No, says Luther, "a preacher of the right sort puts this article above everything else and preaches it continuously, this article, on which the true knowledge of God and our salvation hinges — this article that whoever has Christ has the Father and all grace, all divine blessings, and eternal life." (VIII, 708.) Says Walther: "The Word of God is not rightly divided when the person teaching it does not allow the Gospel to have a general predominance in his teaching." (Last thesis in The Proper Distinction, etc., p. 403.)

That ministry is bound to be successful which makes the Gospel of grace the center of the preaching and of all church-work. There people "see wonderful things happening." And: "If you preach the Gospel abundantly, you need not fear that your people will leave your church when some spiritual mountebank comes along and starts an unseemly exhibition in his pulpit. Your people will say: Our minister has given us what we could not get anywhere else. He is a true Lutheran minister and pours out a great treasure for us every Sunday." (Op. cit., p. 408.) Any other kind of ministry, the substitution of any other kind of work for the preaching of the Gospel of grace, will not satisfy your people — nor yourselves; it gets no lasting results. "If you had to preach nothing else than sterile ethics, you might consider that a tedious task, yielding meager results. But if you have experienced in your heart what it means to convey to poor, lost, and condemned sinners the consolation of the Gospel and say to them: 'Do but come and believe,' — I say, if you believe this and ponder the full meaning of this, you cannot but look forward with joy to the day when you will stand for the first time before your congregations to deliver this august message." (Op. cit., p. 137 f.)

The article of saving grace was the one important thing to Walther. That ruled and shaped his policy throughout, for instance, also in his dealing with those who differed from him in doctrinal matters. Says Dr. Pieper: "Walther was disposed to recognize as orthodox not as few, but as many persons as possible. He is stern in passing judgment on people whom he beholds sacrificing sola gratia. But people who hold fast this central doctrine gain his cordial good will, and he is confident that this truth which they hold will lead them to put away their error." (Conversion and Election, p. 83.)

Finally, the article of saving grace shaped and ruled his life. We heard him say, above: "It is such an ineffable grace to come
within the sound of the Gospel." To it he owed the greatest happiness that can come to a human being. You know the story: "They [Walther's associates at the university] founded their hopes of salvation not so much on the grace of God and the merits of Christ as on a certain degree of contrition and repentance to which they must have attained. This brought Walther into deep distress; terrible conflicts of soul resulted. Doubts and uncertainty concerning his salvation brought him to the verge of despair. He says: 'Praying, sighing, weeping, fasting, struggling, was of no avail; the peace of God had departed from my soul.' He was rescued from this awful torment by a pastoral letter from Rev. M. Stephan, to whom he had written for advice. Stephan advised him to 'hasten to the saving arms of Jesus, and he would find healing under His wings. This Walther did, and the peace of God returned to his heart.' (Pastor J. A. Friedrich, in Ebenezer, p. 24.) To the unmerited grace of God he ascribed his understanding of the article of saving grace in its full import. (See, for instance, Lutheraner, 1857, p. 2.) Whatever success he and his Synod had in the work of the Church "was solely and entirely the work of God's great, free grace." (Brosamen, p. 564 f.) And the grace of God that brought him salvation and assured him of his eternal salvation was the breath of his life and his stay in trial and tribulation. "All my hopes have come to naught; this one hope, however, sustains me, that our Father in heaven will soon deliver me from every evil of body and soul, property and honor, and finally, when my last hour has come, grant me miserable sinner for my Lord Jesus' sake a blessed end and graciously take me from this vale of tears to Himself in heaven. 'Eia, waer'n wir da! Eia, waer'n wir da!'" (From a letter to a friend. M. Guenther, Dr. C. F. W. Walther, p. 230.)

Walther lived on the Gospel of grace, and he lived and labored for it. And his labor was not in vain. The Gospel of the grace of God is the Church's one treasure, and the Christian people of this land and throughout the world owe him undying thanks for guarding it so faithfully. "It was due to him [Dr. Pieper] and Walther that the sola gratia, in which and on which the Lutheran Church has ever lived and which she always preached, has now come to be comprehended in the Lutheran Church of our country, also theoretically, in its full import and that thereby clear and clean theological thinking has been promoted." (Dr. M. Reu in Kirchliche Zeitschrift. See Lutheraner, 1931, p. 362.) Dr. Pieper, Walther's foremost pupil, voices the thanks of the Church in these words: "We cannot but say: As the doctrine of the Church, which had been nearly forgotten also within the Lutheran Church, was again brought to light chiefly through Walther, so it is owing primarily to his testimony that the Biblical doctrine of conversion and election has not been entirely swept away
by the torrent of the adverse teaching.” (Lehre u. Wehre, 1890, p. 243.) While Pelagianism and synergism have spread far and wide in the modern churches, a great host is proclaiming with a loud and glad voice what all Christians are saying in their heart: We owe our salvation solely to the grace of God.

The Church possesses two great treasures: the Gospel of saving grace and the inspired Word of God. Which is the greater? They go together. The Church needs both of them. And we prize the one because of the value of the other. We love the Bible because it brings the Gospel of grace to us, the one thing needful. But we lose the assurance of the truth of the Gospel if the certainty of Scripture is gone. “The validity of the Christian’s hope in the several promises of the Gospel rests on the trustworthiness of the Bible.” Let us faithfully guard the treasures of the Church. A grave responsibility rests upon us. The Lutheran Church holds these treasures in trust for the Church. Dr. C. E. Macartney (Presbyterian) wrote the other day: “The two great doctrines which Luther rediscovered and loosed upon the world were, first of all, the Scriptures as the final authority for the Christians and, secondly, justification by faith alone. . . . To-day the Protestant Church stands in sore need of a reemphasis and rediscovery of these two great Reformation propositions. . . . Protestantism, born out of the doctrine of salvation by grace, by faith alone, has been turning more and more back again to the weak and beggarly elements, the ill-favored doctrine of salvation by works, . . . works of charity and philanthropy, and personal character and integrity. . . .” (See Luth. Witness, 1934, p. 337.) A grave responsibility rests upon us who have come into the heritage of Dr. Walther. He reemphasized, for our day, the two great Reformation propositions and transmitted the treasures of the Church to our care with the solemn deposition: May the mouth of that teacher who shall at any time utter one word “against Christ’s free grace and against His alone true Word be smitten by God and stopped forever!” (Address at the corner-stone laying of Concordia Seminary, 1882. See Hochstetter, Geschichte, etc., p. 445.) Let us acquit ourselves as faithful pupils of Dr. Walther. And “may God grant the whole Lutheran Church, in this land and throughout the world, the grace that she may stand before the world with her escutcheon unsullied and fulfill, for the good of the whole world, her God-appointed mission: to confess the sola gratia on the basis of the sola Scriptura!” (Dr. F. Pieper, in Lehre u. Wehre, 1927, p. 11.)

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3) The reader is advised to read the series of articles by Dr. F. Pieper: “Dr. C. F. W. Walther als Theologie,” in Lehre u. Wehre, beginning with Vol. 34, p. 97; “Walthers Verdienst um das sola Scriptura,” by Dr. F. Bente, in Lehre u. Wehre, 57, p. 97 ff.; and “Walther the Lutheran,” a series of articles by Dr. A. Graebner, in Theological Quarterly, beginning with 15, p. 66; and, in addition, Walther’s own articles, essays, and books.
Reconciliation and Justification

By Martin H. Franzmann

Since the Fall the original relationship between God and man is destroyed. The free communion of Paradise, sustained by mutual love, has been changed to enmity. Man henceforth lives in an estrangement from God and in enmity toward God. The whole bent of his mind is diametrically opposed to God, and the whole course of his life is a progressive and climactic contradiction to his Creator. Of and by himself he cannot get back to his God, nor does he want to. If he is to be helped in his blindness and his perversity, he must be rescued, saved. Our help must lie extra nos, for sin and guilt are henceforth our lot, are the given fate of humanity.

In His holiness and righteousness, God can have nothing in common with sin. God can only be wrathful and punish. The express will of God, the Law, demands of man a complete agreement with itself: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind... Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." (Matt. 22:37, 39.) God's Law demands, and God's Law punishes (Gal. 3:10): "... it is written: Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the Book of the Law to do them." This demanding and punitive will of God is addressed personally to every individual man ("thou," "everyone"), and His wrath inexorably strikes every transgression: "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men" (Rom. 1:18). Consequently all men are sinners, accountable to God, and under His wrath, under the curse of His Law. All the world is guilty before God (Rom. 3:19). We are "by nature children of wrath" (Eph.
2:3). "Lex enim semper accusat" (Apology IV, 38). The Law is the letter that kills.

The way from man to God therefore is blocked, and every attempt on man's part to ascend to God is only an intensification of his revolt against God. For the wrath of God, God's punitive will against sin, must be satisfied. And this satisfaction no man can render, and no man wills to render. The initiative, impossible and incredible as it may sound, must lie with God. "Item, es wird gelehrt, dass Gott der Sohn sei Mensch geworden ... dass er ein Opfer ware ... und Gottes Zorn versoebnte" (Conf. Aug. III).

The Atonement is the high-priestly work of Christ, true man and true God. The Atonement, accordingly, is an act of God, who is therefore both the wrathful One and the Expiator, both the insulted One and the Propitiator. Both the initiative and the carrying out of the work of the Atonement are His.

This indissoluble unity of God and Christ is clearly expressed by St. Paul in 2 Cor. 5:18-21: "And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto us the Word of Reconciliation. Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead: Be ye reconciled to God. For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." It is God who hath set forth Christ Jesus to be a Propitiation in His blood (Rom. 3:25). The Lamb which takes away the sins of the world is the Lamb of God (John 1:29). It is the blood of the Son of God that cleanses us from all sin (1 John 1:7). It was God's eternal counsel before the foundation of the world that "predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself" (Eph. 1:5). Perhaps the most incisive expression of the fact that the Atonement, and redemption generally, is the work of God is to be found in the words of St. Paul to the elders of Ephesus, where he speaks of the "church of God which He hath purchased with His own blood" (Acts 20:28).

It is not a matter of redispersing an angry deity as in paganism.
The grace of God meets us in Christ Jesus. This grace is the cause and the origin, not merely the result of the incarnation of the Son. But the holiness and righteousness of God are nevertheless full reality. The Law of God is His serious will. His wrath is not a mere illusion on the part of guilty man, but a divine reality—the inevitable reaction of His holiness and righteousness against sin and the sinner. And this wrath had to be satisfied: "Even God's grace proceeds on holy ways" (Althaus).

Our Confessions do not expressly emphasize the fact that the Atonement is God's deed; and yet there is no real shift in emphasis over against the witness of the New Testament. For the First Article of the Augustana speaks of "Gott Vater, Gott Sohn, Gott Heiliger Geist, alle drei EIN goetllich Wesen." The Third Article of the Augustana, just quoted, is very explicit on this point. And in the Apology Christ is spoken of as "qui DATUS EST pro nobis... et POSITUS EST mediator ac propitiator."

No dogmatic formulation has absolute value. None is really indispensable, and every formulation of a fact of Biblical revelation necessarily involves some loss; some of the fullness and of the living freshness of the Biblical proclamation is sacrificed. What is gained in sharpness and clarity is gained at the cost of warmth and life. One might think of the relationship between formulated dogma and Biblical proclamation as that which exists between a map and a landscape. With these reservations, however, one is inclined to call the formula satisfactio vicaria truly a classic one, for it so emphasizes the manner of atonement that the central and decisive aspects of the manner of the atonement are clearly seen and felt. The formula cannot and should not replace Scripture, but it can serve to summarize and recall Scripture.

The formula satisfactio vicaria takes seriously the presuppositions of our atonement. It takes cognizance of the fact that man is altogether a sinner, that he is guilty before God, that he is a debtor, burdened with an impossible debt; a debt, moreover, owed to One who has every right to say: "Pay Me that thou owest."

The formula also deals seriously with the nature of God, the Holy and Righteous, who has nothing in common with sin, who cannot compromise with ungodliness and unrighteousness, whose
wrath is a dreadful reality, a reality about which man dare not have any illusions, a wrath which is revealed "from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men" (Rom. 1:18). This formula does not evade the Law of God, God's exacting and punitive will, the Law that reveals sin, provokes and intensifies sins, and curses and condemns the sinner; and therewith the formula remains true to the testimony of Scripture, the testimony that God came to man and in coming to man dealt punitively with sin. In the light of satisfactio God is no "good-natured old man." His righteousness is not called into question, and the bright beams of His holiness remain unclouded. He is both "just and the Justifier" (Rom. 3:26).

The satisfactio formula is also a faithful confession to the manifold Biblical utterances concerning the life, sufferings, death, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Although the many figures in which the redemptive act is pictured cannot be all reduced to one formula, yet the satisfactio thought is true to most of them and to the more central of them.

It is true to the figure of redemption, of ransom. "For even the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). The thought of the price paid and of its value is especially emphasized in 1 Pet. 1:18-19: "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot." Compare also Titus 2:14, where "gave Himself for us" and "that He might redeem us," standing in relation of cause and effect, are mutually explicatory; and the very precise ἀντίλυτρον of 1 Tim. 2:6: "οὐ δοθή ἐκατόν ἀντίλυτρον ὑπὲρ πάντων. The idea of "price" or "payment" is clearly associated with λύτρον, ἀντίλυτρον, and the simplex λυτρόν; the context in Heb. 9:12 strongly suggests that it is also associated with λύτρωσις. The flat statement, so often met with in commentaries, that ἀπολύτρωσις means simply "emancipation, release," with no suggestion of "price paid," is, in view of the associations of the whole word group, startling; the context of Rom. 3:24-25, Eph. 1:7, and Heb. 9:15 makes the association of "price" and "payment" with ἀπολύτρωσις almost inevitable.
And the many passages in which ἀγοραζω and ἐξαγοραζω are used to describe Christians as "bought with a price" (1 Cor. 6:20; 7:23; Gal. 3:13; 4:5; 2 Pet. 2:1; Rev. 5:9; Acts 20:28) leave no doubt in the matter.

The same holds for the figure of the high priest and sacrifice, which is often closely connected with that of the payment of a ransom, although this is no longer, strictly, a figure, but rather the reality, to which the type of the sacrificial cultus pointed. This thought is so central that the redemptive work of Jesus has been called His high-priestly office; and rightly so, for the whole New Testament takes up the Old Testament idea of sacrifice and sees it realized and fulfilled in Christ. John the Baptist points to Jesus as the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29). At the institution of the Lord's Supper, John Himself interprets His death as a sacrificial death, Mark 14:24. So also Paul in 1 Cor. 10:16; 11:24-26. In the Gospel according to St. John (17:19) we read: "For their sakes I sanctify Myself."  

According to St. John, Jesus is Himself the "Propitiation for our sins" (1 John 2:2). God "loved us and sent His Son to be the Propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10). And in the Apocalypse the exalted Christ is the Lamb that has been slain (Apoc. 5:6), whose worthiness consists in this: "Thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation" (Apoc. 5:9).

In St. Paul, besides the references to the Words of Institution and their sacrificial import, 1 Corinthians 10 and 11, we find Christ in His atoning death pictured as the Passover Lamb (1 Cor. 5:7), as the propitiatory sacrifice provided by God (Rom. 3:25); the deed that shows His love is this: "Christ... hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God..." (Eph. 5:2).

In the Epistle to the Hebrews, Christ is the High Priest ἐκατονταπλωμάτων, and the term is used figuratively only when applied to God (Heb. 9:11). The analogy of the Old Testament tabernacle and its worship is made to bear upon the Christian Priesthood. The Eternal Priesthood of Melchizedek is pictured as the type of Christ's Priesthood.

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1 Cp. Deissmann, Light from the Ancient East, p. 327: "When anybody heard the Greek word λύσθη, 'ransom,' in the first century, it was natural for him to think of the purchase money for manumitting slaves." On the following page Deissmann dryly observes: "I refrain from entering into a criticism here of the remarkable obscurations and complications which this whole circle of ancient popular metaphors has undergone at the hands of modern dogmatic exegesis."

2 For the sacrificial implications of ἀγοραζω see Ex. 13:2; Deut. 15:19 (LXX).
exochen, who as Priest and Sacrifice performs the expiation of our sins once and for all. The sacrificial-expiatory note is sounded by St. Peter, too, who speaks of Christ as of a "Lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Pet. 1:19); as one "who His own self bare our sins in His body on the tree" (1 Pet. 2:24). Now, the general concept of expiation is that of a performance that makes good (gutmachende Leistung). Thus the sacrificial aspect of the redemptive act comes under the general head of satisfactio. The image of purification, too, belongs to the sphere of sacrifice and expiation and so can without violence be brought under the heading of satisfactio. In Titus 2:14 we note the close connection between "gave Himself for us" and "purify"; in Hebrews the cleansing is by blood (Heb. 9:14, 22-23); so also in 1 John 1:7: "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin"; and even in Eph. 5:26, the bridal metaphor leads to the idea of cleansing.

Where Christ's death is viewed as a penal death, the satisfactio idea is paramount and obvious. The Word of the Cross is a Word concerning One who, having become sin and a curse for us, died as a criminal, under the wrath of God and forsaken of God. Here the punitive will of God is satisfied. Similarly, the life and death of Christ, viewed as obedience, point in the same direction (Rom. 5:19; Phil. 2:6 ff.; cp. also Heb. 5:8; Gal. 4:4; John 4:34; Matt. 3:15). Here satisfaction is rendered to the exacting or demanding will of God.

Accordingly, when the Augustana defines "propter Christum" more closely with the sentence: "qui sua morte pro nostris peccatis satisfecit," it has found and pregnantly expressed the heart of the Atonement (Augustana IV). When the Formula of Concord adds the active obedience of Christ (Epitome III, 3; Solida Declaratio III, 9), that is an expansion of the thought, but no distortion of it, for the whole life of Christ was a life of obedience "even unto death" (John 4:34; Phil. 2:6 ff.).

In the satisfaction the redemptive work of God meets us in all its comforting severity; it is a comforting severity, for "the terrified conscience could not understand the good news of the Atonement if that good news were not at the same time a testimony to this concrete way in which God has effected the Atonement. Every other form of atonement would evoke no response, would not be
understood by man in his need.” In the little word vicaria, on the other hand, we see all the sluices of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God opened for us in their surpassing fullness. This word recalls for us those words of Scripture which attest the death of Christ as the spontaneous act of His love: “I am the good Shepherd. . . . I lay down My life for the sheep. . . . No man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself.” (John 10:14-18.) “Christ hath loved us and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor” (Eph. 5:2).

The thought of the vicarious nature of Our Lord’s suffering and death needs no detailed demonstration: in redemption, in sacrifice, in the thought of Jesus’ death as a penal death, wherever the blood and the life of Our Lord and Savior are spoken of, the pro nobis is heard again and again. Werner Elert has expressed it more chastely and more beautifully than is given to most of us to express it: 4

When Christ carried His voluntary humiliation even to the deeps of death (Phil. 2:8), a death in which the wrath of God spent itself upon all that is man, He was acting “even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings” (Matt. 23:37) to turn the threatening peril away from others upon Himself, as the shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep (John 10:12). In so acting it was His wish to die for others (Mark 10:45), and the whole New Testament with consenting voice declares with grateful recognition and in manifold metaphors that He has done so.

The effect of the death of Christ consists, then, in this, that the wrath of God is thereby, by His death, turned from the others: ἐν τῷ αἵματι αὐτοῦ σωθησόμεθα δι’ αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ τῆς δογής (Rom. 5:9).

The vicaria thought is clear in the whole realm of imputation, as in the use of the prepositions ἐπὶ (e.g., 2 Cor. 5:21) and ἁπλά, and in the thought embodied in “Son of Man” and that of Christ as the antitype of Adam, Christ as the representative of all humanity, whose death is the death of all: “If one died for all, then were all dead” (2 Cor. 5:14). Therewith we have already touched upon the completeness and sufficiency of the redemption.

The completeness and all-sufficiency of the atoning work of Christ cannot be stated too strongly. The work of Christ is exten-

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4 Die Lehre des Luthertums im Abriss, Section 25.
sively complete: in all that He did and suffered, Christ acted and suffered for the whole world, for all men. His work is intensively complete: by Christ's suffering and death the world was actually reconciled with God; that is, God's wrath against the world was actually done away with, was satisfied and removed. God no longer imputes to men their transgressions. And finally God has ratified the whole of His work, has declared it perfect and complete by raising Jesus from the dead. For if Christ was delivered up for our offenses, He was raised for our justification. To put it crassly, "the account is closed." 

Scripture designates as the recipients and beneficiaries of salvation "the world" (John 3:16; 2 Cor. 5:19), "the whole world" (1 John 2:2), "all" (2 Cor. 5:14; 1 Tim. 2:6); and when St. Paul in Eph. 2:16 speaks of "both" (Jew and Gentile), he is indicating the same universality of salvation. The all-inclusiveness of the atoning work of Christ is most strikingly seen in a passage like Col. 1:20, where "all things . . . whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven" are mentioned as the object of "reconcile unto Himself." Reconciliation involves the whole universe, man and his world (cp. Rom. 8:19 ff.). This universality of salvation is by no means abridged or called into question by the fact that occasionally "many" are spoken of as the recipients thereof instead of "all." For on the one hand, "many" is used to point the contrast with "one" (Rom. 5:19); on the other hand, "many" is often used in distinction from those who by unbelief and disobedience shut themselves out from the actually realized and universally offered reconciliation. The Latin of Augustana III is especially emphatic in expressing the universality of the scope of Christ's work: "ut reconciliaret nobis patrem et hostia esset non tantum pro culpa originis sed etiam pro omnibus actualibus hominum peccatis."

An old (1883) Report of the Southern District of the Missouri Synod has expressed the intensive sufficiency of the Atonement with unusual vigor: "The Holy Spirit writes through St. Paul, 2 Cor. 5:14: 'We thus judge, that if one died for all, then were

5 Cp. Fieper, Dogmatik, II, 410—411, of which the above is a free reproduction.
all dead." By the sufferings and death of Christ the sins of all men are as completely and perfectly expiated as if all the thousands of millions of men had themselves endured the eternal pangs of hell. The result is: God is perfectly reconciled with all men and with each one of them. No man need do or suffer anything additional in order to reconcile God, to obtain righteousness and salvation. And Holy Scripture testifies to this expressly; we read 2 Cor. 5:19: "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." That is, at that time, 1,900 years ago, when Christ fulfilled the Law for men and suffered the penalty of their transgressions of the Law for men, God reconciled man to Himself. We must fix our eyes upon these simple, clear words of Scripture and let them work on us."

Therewith we have touched upon, and in part anticipated, the question sometimes raised concerning the equivalence of Christ's sufferings and death, the question whether His sufferings and death are really sufficient to atone for the sin and guilt of all mankind, or rather, how they can be deemed sufficient. This question is touched upon in Scripture only insofar as the only other conceivable way to righteousness and salvation, the way of the Law, is declared to be excluded by the death of Christ: "If righteousness come by the Law, then Christ is dead in vain" (Gal. 2:21). In general, the question is dangerously close to that other question, which St. Paul never answers, but always indignantly rejects: "Is there unrighteousness with God?" (Rom. 9:14.) When, for instance, Elett seeks to solve the problem by stressing the fact that God in His grace acceptet (laestet gelten) the expiation, or when Jelke emphasizes the voluntary character of the sufferings of Christ, they are both emphasizing aspects of Scriptural truth, and they have safeguarded the spontaneity and graciousness of God's act, but they have not gone any farther toward explaining the equivalence of Christ's suffering and man's guilt. It is better to rest content with the revealed fact that Christ, in what He has done and suffered, has actually taken the place of all mankind and that God has thereby actually been reconciled, that Christ's work as our High Priest is extensively and intensively complete, and to draw the obvious inference that the question of equivalence dare not be a question for us. The holiness and righteousness of God, which are involved
in that question, are ultimate mysteries before which the believer bows down to adore.

According to the "simple, clear words of Scripture" the Atonement is a present fact, "is there before all activity on man's part and independently of it. It is an accomplished fact, like the creation of the world. Rom. 5:10: 'We were reconciled to God by the death of His Son'; then, when Christ died, the Atonement came to be. As the death of Christ lies behind us in time, so also the effecting of our atonement." In Christ God is so disposed toward men that the fact that they have provoked Him to wrath is as if it had never been; it is as if God and man had never been at variance.

If God no longer imputes our sins to us, He has acquitted us, He has absolved us of our sins, He has forgiven us, He has justified us. We speak of objective justification as well as of objective reconciliation. The expression, if not the thing itself, has often been questioned. To insure mutual understanding, two things should be noted in this connection.

First, our point of departure is the thought that no sharp line is to be drawn between Reconciliation and Justification, that both terms refer to the same act of God in Christ. For Pieper, for instance, "objective reconciliation" and "objective justification" are practically interchangeable terms. And Althaus' note on Vergebung in his Roemerbrief has the same tendency: "The two terms correspond to each other and designate the same event. The term 'justification' is taken from the sphere of law, the term 'reconciliation' from the domain of personal relationships. Their material identity is clear from the fact that Paul at one time (2 Cor. 5:14-21) can proceed from reconciliation to justification and at another time from justification to reconciliation." He concludes: "Reconciliation is actualized as justification; justification involves (bedeutet) reconciliation." We go one step farther and say that with the reconciliation the actual absolution of the world's sins has taken place. And we feel sure that we are not exceeding the bounds of Scripture or of our Confessions in so speaking. How closely the two terms are related in the Epistles of Paul has

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already been noted. We should note further that the great lapidary statement of objective reconciliation in 2 Cor. 5:19: "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself," is followed immediately by "not imputing their trespasses unto them." A comparison with Rom. 4:6-8 makes it clear that "not imputing sin" is equivalent to "imputing righteousness," i.e., to justification, so that justification is given in and with reconciliation; the one is as real and objective as the other.  

Secondly, it is not our intention, in speaking of objective justification, to make the concept "static," to relegate justification to some cool region beyond the humanity that is to hear and receive it. We are thinking and speaking no more "statically" than Luther speaks when he says: "The work is done and accomplished; for Christ has acquired and gained the treasure for us" (Large Catechism, III Art., 38). Our concern in speaking of objective justification is rather to keep justification altogether personal. Teachers like Stoeckhardt, Engelder, and Schaller emphasize the comforting character of objective justification: the sinner is to know of a surety that God had him, just him, in mind and in heart when He delivered up His Son for the sins of the world and pronounced His judgment on the sins of the world; universal grace, universal salvation, objective justification are not to be so thought of or so preached that the individual appropriation of that salvation be left out of sight; Christ, they insist, has not died for the world in abstracto, but for each individual in the world. Though we distinguish between objective and subjective justification, it does not occur to us to separate them. We can subscribe to the words of Schrenk when he speaks of the "Heilsobjektivität" as "rettende Beziehungsobjektivität." And we agree with him when he says: "To be justified once and for all in the cross and to be personally justified, these two facts are not to be separated." We do not speak of two justifications; objective and subjective justification refer to the same act of God.

"The work is done and accomplished; for Christ has acquired

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7 Windisch speaks in his commentary on 2 Corinthians (ad 5:19) of "die Versöhnung als Erlass einer umfassenden 'Generalamnestie.'"

8 In Kittel, Theologisches Woerterbuch zum N. T., s. v. δικαιωμα.
and gained the treasure for us. . . . That this treasure . . . might not lie buried, but be appropriated and enjoyed, God has caused the Word to go forth and be proclaimed, in which He gives the Holy Ghost to bring this treasure home and appropriate it to us."9 This Word is brought home to me and is appropriated to me by the fact that the Holy Ghost creates faith in me. God's verdict of acquittal upon the sins of the world becomes God's verdict upon me by the fact that I believe it. So it is that I am justified by faith.

Our dogmatically exact definitions of faith are intended solely to establish the meaning of faith as the receiving and accepting of the gracious acquittal pronounced by God, to safeguard the δωρεάν, to give τι αὐτοῦ χάριν τῷ αἰώνιῳ. Thus, even "dry" formulations become a song in praise of God the Reconciler and God the Justifier of the ungodly.

Saving faith has as its object the Gospel. That means, since the Gospel is God's good news "concerning His Son Jesus Christ, our Lord," that faith is faith in Christ, in His work of vicarious atonement. Faith in the Gospel is not faith in a thing, be it idea, principle, or teaching, but faith in a Person and an event of continuing, world-changing power and significance.10

Saving faith is fiducia cordis. Since the content of the Gospel is not only historic past, but a continually redemptive present, a living relationship to it cannot be a mere notitia historiae, but it is a mere acceptance of the history as true history. "Fides est non tantum notitia in intellectu, sed etiam fiducia in voluntate, hoc est, est velle et accipere hoc, quod in promissione of tert, videlicet reconciliationem et remissionem peccatorum" (Apology IV, 183).

Saving faith is fides specialis. The Man upon the Cross, the Atonement, concerns me. "Haec igitur fides specialis, qua credit unus quisque sibi remitti peccata propter Christum, et Deum placatum et propitiatum esse propter Christum" (Apology IV, 45).

Saving faith is fides actualis: "a continuous act, whereby the Christian, asleep or awake, seized upon the forgiveness of sins in

9 Luther, Large Catechism, Art. III, 38.
the Gospel" (Luther). And yet this faith is no work, no performance on man's part: "Faith carries us outside ourselves, outside our own heart, and leads me to Christ" (Luther). Faith is the utter renunciation of all performance, the worship which receives, as our Confessions put it.

As such, the faith which justifies is solely instrumental. Faith is, in the telling formulation of Schrenk, "lauter Bezogenheit auf die Heilstat." Faith is accounted righteousness in virtue of its content, in virtue of what it receives. This *vis receptiva* of faith is especially evident in the use of the prepositions that connect διὰ and πίστις: St. Paul speaks of righteousness ἐκ πίστεως and διὰ πίστεως and ἐκ θεοῦ ἐκ τῆς πίστευς, but never of a righteousness διὰ τῆς πίστεως. Faith is an instrument, an ὄργανον, but an instrument of passivity and receptivity, an ὄργανον ἐμπιστεύω.

If justification is by faith, it must be by faith *alone*. Even if the *particulæ exclusivae* were not in the Bible, even if the Scriptural polemics against the "works of the Law" did not underlie the free grace of God in justification, even so, from the very nature of faith, the *sola fide* would be justified. For the only possible correlative to the gift of God is receiving and accepting; the only possible correlative to *χάρις* is *πίστις*. 
Objective Justification

The doctrine of justification is rightly regarded to be the central doctrine of the Scriptures. All other teachings of the Bible either point to it, or they radiate from it. We can understand neither the work of Christ’s redemption nor the work of the Spirit’s sanctification if we do not understand the doctrine of justification. Luther calls it “diesen einigen und festen Felsen,” and says: “In meinem Herzen herrscht allein dieser Artikel, naemlich der Glaube on Christum, aus welchem, durch welchen und zu welchem alle meine theologischen Gedanken fließen und zurueckfließen.” (Luthers Vorrede zum Galaterbrief, St. Louis, IX: 9.) Let no one, then, count it time lost which he spends in the study of this fundamental doctrine of our faith.

By his own works no man is justified before God. — According to the teachings of the Bible “there is not a just man upon earth that doeth good and sinneth not,” Eccl. 7: 20; “they are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one,” Ps. 14:3. Therefore “the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men,” Rom. 1: 18, and all the world is guilty before God, Rom. 3: 19. By sin, man departed from God, the source of all his joy and happiness, and brought upon himself misery and unspeakable woe.

The reason of natural man now argues that, as by his own fault he became guilty before God, he must and can by his own efforts also become righteous before Him; all that is necessary for him to do is to keep the Law, for it is written, “The doers of the Law shall be justified,” Rom. 2: 13. Indeed, the Law is holy, just, and good, Rom. 7: 12, and he that keeps its commandments shall surely live by them, Rom. 10: 5. The Law shows a perfect way to righteousness and life. Still Paul tells us, “By the deeds of the Law there
shall no flesh be justified," Rom. 3:20. The fault, however, lies not with the Law, but with us. For the Law is made weak through our flesh, Rom. 8:3. Our carnal mind is opposed to the Law, and therefore we cannot please God, Rom. 8:7, 8; even our righteousnesses in the eyes of the Holy One are as filthy rags, Is. 64:6. Only if we could rid ourselves of the guilt inherited from Adam, Rom. 5:19, could eradicate from our nature the original depravity, Rom. 7:18, could keep the whole Law, and not offend in one point, James 2:10, only then could we be declared just according to the Law. But as no man on earth is able to render such perfect obedience, the words of Paul remain true, "By the deeds of the Law there shall no flesh be justified."

Yet God is not willing that any should perish, 2 Pet. 3:9. Therefore He provided a way by which all sinners can escape from the wrath to come and inherit eternal life.

God reconciled the world unto Himself. — We read 2 Cor. 5:19, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself." God did not reconcile Himself to the world by simply overlooking the sins of men and receiving them back into communion with Himself without full atonement being made. However, it was not man that made an atonement for his own sins, but God did it for man. God reconciled the world unto Himself by setting the world right with Himself, in exacting full satisfaction for the shortcomings of man. This He did in Christ, 2 Cor. 5:18; Rom. 5:10, who by His active and passive obedience made full amends for the trespasses of all men, 1 John 2:2, and thus satisfied all demands of God’s holiness and justice against sinful mankind. While the wrath of God against sin itself continues as before, Ps. 5:4, there was by this reconciliation effected a change in the mind and attitude of God towards sinners. His righteous wrath was appeased by the blood of His Son, 1 John 2:2 (ἐλαυνεῖν, from ἐλάυομαι, which means to appease the wrath, to conciliate). Because of the redemption by Christ there is now in God “good will toward men.”

Nonimputation of sin the immediate effect of reconciliation. — Accepting the sacrifice of His Son for the reconciliation of the world, God did not impute their trespasses unto them, 2 Cor. 5:19. The reconciliation by Christ did not merely dispose God, or make Him willing, not to impute sins at some future time and under certain conditions; the nonimputation of sins is in our text not presented as merely purposed and intended, but as a fact which took place right then and there; it was the immediate effect of the reconciliation. It is definitely contrary to the words of our text to make them say that by the reconciliation the nonimputation of sins was made possible and that man must repent and believe before this possibility becomes an actuality. This nonimputation
of sins was not merely planned for the future, but it is a finished act of God, which does not repeat itself every time a sinner comes to faith. For in the main clause, "God was in Christ," the verb is in the past tense; hence the following participles, "reconciling the world," and "not imputing their trespasses unto them," must also be understood as having happened in the past. Therefore we are justified in saying that when God accepted the redemptive work of His Son, He did not impute to men on earth their trespasses. The nonimputation is an accomplished fact. Furthermore, this nonimputation did not pertain to certain individuals only, e.g., only to those who would believe; for the pronoun "them" refers to the world, to all people in the world. This nonimputation therefore is universal in its scope; it includes Jews and Gentiles, Christians and infidels, Peter and Judas, you and me.

In our thinking we indeed differentiate between redemption, reconciliation, and justification, as Paul does in 2 Cor. 5:19. But we may not separate them nor change the order in which they are named, for they are as closely related to each other as cause and effect. By the work of redemption Christ achieved our reconciliation unto God, and the immediate effect of this reconciliation was the nonimputation of our sins, or our justification. Thus without the redemption by Christ there could be no reconciliation and no justification, and justification presupposes the reconciliation and the atonement by Christ. We may not think of one and forget the other two, for they are connected as three links in a chain. When Paul tells us that we are justified by the blood of Christ, Rom. 5:9, he includes the reconciliation; and when he tells us that we are reconciled by His death, Rom. 5:10, this includes our justification. Because Christ lived and died for us, that is why we are reconciled to God, and because we are reconciled to God, that is why He does not impute our trespasses to us.

Not to impute sins means to forgive sins, to justify. — According to Webster "to impute" means "to charge, as a fault; theologically, to ascribe vicariously." As men had sinned, their trespasses should have been charged against them; but vicariously God imputed them to Christ, whom He made to be sin for us, 2 Cor. 5:21. Not to impute trespasses, then, can only mean that the sins are not charged against a person. But an offense that is not reckoned, charged, and held against one is forgiven. Not to impute sins therefore means to forgive sins, to acquit, to absolve. This fully agrees with the Scriptures, for in Rom. 4:7, 8 we read: "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." Here Paul uses the terms "to forgive iniquities" and "not to impute sin" as synonymous, both terms describing the identical act.
When, therefore, Paul in 2 Cor. 5:19 tells us that God did not impute their trespasses unto the men in the world, this can only mean that God forgave the sins of all men and absolved them from all their transgressions. It has been argued that we may possibly say that God forgave all sins, but that we may not say that He forgave all sins to all men, may not say, “dass Gott den Sünderm insgemein die Sünder vergeben hat,” because that would imply that forgiveness is also imparted to, and bestowed on, all sinners. We answer, in the first place, that is not the necessary connotation of this term; in the second place, Paul uses a similar term, saying, “not imputing their trespasses unto them.” The question of the offer, the acceptance, and the bestowal of forgiveness does not enter in at this stage of the discussion. Of these we shall speak later. Here we wish to point out that “not to impute sin” means “to forgive sin”; and since the nonimputation of sin took place when God reconciled the world unto Himself, the forgiving of sins also took place at that time.

But Paul uses another term as synonymous with “forgiving iniquities” and “not imputing sin,” namely, “to impute righteousness without works.” We see this from 2 Cor. 5:21, where we are told that our sins were charged to Christ for the purpose that in Him we might be made righteous. Thus we have this blessed exchange that our sins were laid on Jesus and His righteousness is credited to us. But if God imputed to men “righteousness without works,” then He certainly regarded, accounted, and declared them righteous and just; in other words, He justified them.

This also appears from Rom. 5:9: “being now justified by His blood.” Here the same word and form is used as in v. 1, “being justified by faith.” Yet both verses do not speak of the same matter. In v. 1 we are told how we obtained this righteousness and entered into personal possession of what Christ achieved for us. But in v. 9 we learn how Christ achieved righteousness and justification. Christ died for the ungodly, v. 6. He shed His blood for many for the remission of sins, Matt. 26:28, and ἐν τῷ θανάτῳ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν we are justified; that means, because by His blood and death He made full atonement for all our sins, God has in view thereof declared and pronounced all of us just and righteous. To be sure, in our thinking we can differentiate between the suffering and death of Christ and the resultant reconciliation and the nonimputation of sins, or the justification of the sinner. But these are so closely and intimately connected that we may not separate them. And as the blood of Christ is the causa efficiens of it all, Paul can very properly say that we were justified by His blood. Now, all this did not happen during our lifetime. It does not happen only then when a man comes to faith; but “while we were yet sinners,” “when we
were enemies," vv. 8, 10, Christ died for us and justified us by His blood. This justification by the blood of Christ therefore took place before we came to faith, before we were born. Moreover, as Christ died for all men, 2 Cor. 5:15, the power and efficacy of His blood and death resulted in the justification of all men. "Christus ist fuer alle gotlосen Menschen gestorben, hat sie alle durch seinen Tod gerechtfertigt." (Stoeckhardt, Roemerbrief, p. 227.) Accepting the precious blood and innocent suffering and death of His beloved Son as payment in full for the sins of men, God adjudged and accounted all men just and righteous in His sight. It is true that by faith man must apply and appropriate to himself this forgiveness and this justifying sentence of God; yet this is impossible if forgiveness and justification are not accomplished facts before he can by faith apply them to himself.

It must therefore be admitted that "not to impute sins," "to forgive sins," "to impute righteousness," "to justify," are synonymous terms. They all describe the same act of God, though they view it from different angles. If sins are not imputed, they are forgiven; and if they are forgiven, then man is accounted just and righteous. And all this happened in the court of heaven when God accepted the sacrifice of His Son for the reconciliation of the world.

**Justification a judicial act of God.** — Justification is not a moral transformation, a renewal of life, meaning that a wicked man by a change of conduct becomes a good and just man; justification is not sanctification. The Greek word δικαιοσύνη is a juridical term and means "to make just, to pronounce and treat as righteous, to justify," (Liddell & Scott). Such judicial action may be based on the works a man has done, as in Rom. 2:13: "The doers of the Law shall be justified." This means that if a man has complied with the demands of the Law, he will be regarded and declared just. But it may also be based on what someone else has done for us and in our place, and whose merit is imputed and credited to us, as in Rom. 3:24: "Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus," and in Rom. 5:9: "Being now justified by His blood." Here man is made and declared just not because of what he has done, but because of the vicarious atonement of Christ. What Christ, his Substitute, has done for him is reckoned to him for righteousness, and thus he is made and becomes righteous by imputation. In view of what Christ, whom God had made to be sin for us, 2 Cor. 5:21, had done and suffered for all mankind God no longer imputed their sins to them, but forgave them and imputed to them the merits of their Substitute; He adjudged all men righteous, He justified them. This justification therefore is an act of God that takes place outside of man. It pro-
duces no change in the individual, does not make him personally more righteous in his life; it simply alters his status before God. Man is not declared just after he himself has become just in his life; but while he was yet a sinner, Rom. 5:8, while he was yet ungodly, Rom. 4:5, God justified him by grace for Christ's sake. Justification is a judgment, a sentence, of God regarding man, a sentence which is not in the least based on any merit or worthiness in man, but solely on the grace of God in Christ; a sentence which, while it pertains to man, lies, up to this point, outside of his knowledge and experience, for it was passed in the privacy of God's council. And only when God reveals this gracious judgment to us, as He does in the Gospel, may we know of it and trust in it for our salvation.

Universal, or objective, justification.—This justifying judgment of God described above covers all men. Again we call attention to 2 Cor. 5:19, where we are told that in Christ God reconciled the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, which means that for Christ's sake He adjudged all men righteous. From Rom. 5:8, 9 we learned that Jesus died for us while we were yet sinners and that by His blood we are justified. As Christ died not only for the believers but for all the “ungodly,” v. 6; 2 Cor. 5:15, all the ungodly were by His blood justified before God. As little as we may limit the redemption of Christ to certain individuals, so little may we limit the immediate effect of this redemption, namely, justification, to these individuals; by the blood of Christ all men were justified.

In Rom. 4:25 we read: “Who [Christ] was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification.” In the preceding verses, 9-24, Paul speaks of those whose faith is reckoned for righteousness; but what he says there is based on what he says in v. 25. For if Christ had not been raised for their justification, their faith could not be reckoned unto them for righteousness; they would still be in their sins, and their faith would be vain, 1 Cor. 15:17. We may not limit v. 25 to believers only, and the word “our” in our text does not refer to those people only to whom these words were addressed, including Paul himself. For we know from the Bible that Christ bore the sins of the whole world, John 1:29, and that He is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world, 1 John 2:2. If, then, He was delivered for the offenses of all men, then His resurrection also must mean something to all men. And what does it mean? “Our justification.” The resurrection of Christ is positive evidence that by His blood and death He reconciled all those to God for whose offenses He was delivered, Rom. 5:10, and justified all those for whom He died, Rom. 5:8, 9. This text therefore proves the universal justification of all mankind. It is true,
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if the individual is to have and enjoy the blessings and benefits of this justification, he must in faith trust in, and accept for himself, what Christ has achieved for him. Yet it is apparent that before he can believe that he is justified before God, he has been justified.

Let us also look at Rom. 5:12-19. Running through this entire section there are two principal thoughts that are contrasted to each other. The one is that by the disobedience of one, of Adam, all men were by imputation made sinners, v. 19 a, and that because of Adam’s sin the condemnation of death came upon all men, v. 18 a. The other thought, parallel to the first, is that “the grace of God hath abounded unto many,” v. 15. Let us note the tense of the verb: not “shall abound” or “may possibly abound,” but “hath abounded.” Now, in what way? By Christ’s obedience many were by imputation constituted, set down, as righteous, v. 19 b, and because of His righteousness, justification of life came upon all men, v. 18 b. The word “many” in this section refers to all, as may be clearly seen from vv. 12 and 15, and vv. 18 and 19, where both words are used interchangeably. Neither should the future tense in v. 19 b disturb us; for this is not a temporal future, meaning that at some future time many shall be made righteous, but it is a logical (gnomic) future, meaning that if it is true that by the disobedience of one many were made sinners, then it will follow that by the obedience of Christ many shall be made righteous. And this “much more” so since the grace of God “hath abounded unto many,” v. 15. If the offense of one had such far-reaching effect as to bring the judgment of death upon all men, much more will the righteousness of Christ result in the justification of life unto all men. It is absolutely arbitrary and without foundation in text and context if we restrict “all men” and “many” to the believers and read v. 18 “By the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men ‘that believe’ unto justification of life,” and v. 19: “By the obedience of one shall many ‘that believe’ be made righteous.” This would simply destroy Paul’s entire argument in this section; for the parallel thought, namely, that by Adam’s sin all men were constituted sinners and were subject to the judgment of death, would have no meaning, no counterpart, if by the obedience and righteousness of Christ not all men were constituted righteous and justified. We know full well that man is justified by faith, Rom. 3:28, and we shall discuss that later, but that does not give us the right to restrict the words “upon all men unto justification of life” in v. 18 to the believers alone. Nor may we weaken the statement in Rom. 5:18 to mean that “according to the intention” of God the righteousness of Christ was to result for all men unto justification of life, but that actually it does so only in case of the
believers. For as it is a fact that the offense of Adam resulted in the condemnation of death for all men, even so it is a fact that the righteousness of Christ resulted in the justification of life to all men. What Paul, therefore, teaches in this section is briefly this, that, as the sin of Adam brought upon all men the condemnation of death, so, and much more so, did the righteousness of Christ bring upon all men the justification of life.

These texts prove conclusively that the real and original gracious judgment of God by which sinners are absolved and accounted righteous is not limited to the believers, but covers all men. For this reason it is called universal justification. But it is also called objective justification. For though thereby all men are freely justified through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, still not one sinner is, so far, personally benefited thereby in the sense that he has and enjoys what this justification implies. In fact, up to this point no one knows of it; much less can he trust in it. It all happened in the court of God in heaven. "Bei sich selbst, in seinem eigenen Forum, hat Gott aus Gnaden um Christi willen die gesamte Suenderwelt absolviert und fuer gerecht erlautert." Because this act of God is here considered by itself, irrespective of how man would react to it, whether he would accept it and have and enjoy its blessings or whether he would reject it in unbelief, it is called objective justification. Even as we can present the doctrine of redemption objectively, stating exactly what Christ has done and won for all men, without pointing out that all this is ours by faith, so the Bible also presents objectively what God has done with all men because of this redemption in Christ, namely, that He no longer imputes their trespasses unto them, but has declared them all just and righteous. It is one thing what God for the sake of Christ has done with the whole world, and it is another thing what happens when the individual in faith apprehends this.

Objective justification the basis of subjective justification.— In his letters Paul stresses justification by faith, or, as it is commonly called, individual, or subjective, justification. And this is perfectly proper, for it is by faith, and by faith alone, that the individual applies to himself the gracious judgment of God, and thus gains personal possession and enjoyment of all it implies. Yet in the background of this justification by faith there is with Paul, and there must be with us, the doctrine of universal, or objective, justification.

The Gospel the official proclamation of God’s pardon and absolution to a sin-cursed world.— In order that we may see more clearly in this matter, it may be helpful to distinguish between (a) the justifying act of God, (b) the proclamation of the gracious
judgment of God in the Gospel, (c) the acceptance of this proclamation on the part of the individual through faith.

In the preceding paragraphs our chief purpose was to establish the fact that God justified all sinners freely by grace through the redemption in Christ. This act of God happens not when a man comes to faith nor after he has come to faith, but it happened the moment that God accepted the sacrifice of His Son for the reconciliation of the world; it happened in the court of God in heaven, without the knowledge and experience of man, and irrespective of the attitude of man toward it. This act of God is not repeated, even as the redemption by Christ, on which it is based, is not repeated. The justifying sentence of God, by which He did not impute the sins to the people in the world but declared them just, stands and remains in force, even as a law once passed remains in force until it is abrogated.

Another matter is the proclamation of this sentence and the offer of all it implies. If nothing more had happened than this, that God by grace for Christ’s sake had justified all sinners, if He had kept this judgment in the secret of His heart, then no man on earth could have any knowledge of what God had done for and with this sin-cursed world, nor could any man in this life ever be benefited thereby. What, in that case, God would hereafter have done with those whom He justified we do not know. However, God did not forgive the sins of men and justify the ungodly just for His own pleasure and satisfaction, but sinners were to be saved thereby. A governor does not pardon a convict to please himself, but to benefit the prisoner, and to this end he makes the pardon known to him. So also God makes known to the world what in His secret counsel He has resolved; He publishes His gracious judgment of justification. He not only reconciled the world unto Himself, but He “hath committed unto us the Word of Reconciliation,” 2 Cor. 5:19. In the Gospel He reveals what otherwise would forever remain hidden from us, 1 Cor. 2:7-10. Here He tells us that He is not merely inclined and ready to forgive our sins and that He will do so if and when we believe; but He tells us that, since Christ has atoned for the sins of all men, 1 John 2:2, He does not impute them to the world, but has forgiven them for Christ’s sake, who was delivered for all men’s offenses and raised again for their justification, Rom. 4:25. For this reason Paul tells us that in the Gospel “is the righteousness of God revealed,” Rom. 1:17, that is, the righteousness which Christ achieved for us, 2 Cor. 5:21; for this reason Christ tells us “that repentance and remission of sins should be preached among all nations,” Luke 24:47; for this reason Paul said in his sermon at Antioch “that through this man
[Christ] is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins,” Acts 13:38. As far as the sins of men are concerned, the Gospel does not tell us that God is ready and willing to forgive them if and when a man believes; it does not offer a potential forgiveness of sins; it does not tell us that the actual forgiving on the part of God takes place not before the believing takes place on the part of man; but the Gospel tells us that when God in Christ reconciled the world unto Himself, He then did not impute the trespasses unto men, He then forgave all their sins to all of them. The act of forgiving is not held in abeyance, but it is finished, it is accomplished, the sins are forgiven to all men. Therefore we do not preach of and about forgiveness of sins, but we preach forgiveness itself; we offer to men a finished product, not a future possibility.

It is quite incomprehensible how any man can say that the Gospel indeed proclaims and offers forgiveness of sins to all the world and yet deny that the sins of all men are already forgiven. No prison warden may tell the convict that he is free unless the governor has previously pardoned him. If this has not yet happened, the warden may perhaps talk of the willingness of the governor to pardon and about the possibility that he will do so, but he cannot “talk pardon,” cannot tell the prisoner, “You are pardoned, you are free.” Even so here. If the sins of men have not yet been actually and really forgiven, the forgiveness of sins is not yet ready to be offered as a free gift; then we cannot speak of forgiveness as of an accomplished fact, but only as of an eventuality contingent on something else besides the grace of God in Christ. This opinion finds support neither in the term “forgiveness of sins,” which means that the sins are forgiven, nor in the teaching of the Bible, which definitely tells us that God did not impute sins to men, when He reconciled the world unto Himself. “Dass Gott den Sündern insgemein die Sünden vergeben und die ganze Welt fuer gerecht erklärt hat” is a fact that is not affected by the faith or the unbelief of man, Rom. 3:3; 2 Tim. 2:12. As little as the acceptance or the rejection of the invitation had anything to do with the preparation of the great supper, Luke 14:16-24, so little has the belief or unbelief in the Gospel promise anything to do with the preparation of the things that are now ready for all.

If the real forgiving and justifying act of God does not take place until the moment a person comes to faith, then we shall have to change our entire mode of preaching. Then we cannot assure our people that their sins are forgiven, not even in absolution; all we could say is that God is very anxious to forgive their sins, but that they must first believe, and then He will surely do so. And if a person were in doubt as to whether he believes—and this is
sometimes the case—we should have no way of comforting him, since the fact of his believing would first have to be established before the act of forgiving could take place. If this theory is correct, it will also affect the merits of Christ’s redemption; for then Christ did not actually justify us by His blood, Rom. 5:9, but only made our justification possible, pending our faith; then He achieved for us not an actual forgiveness but only a potential one, which becomes actual only if and when we believe. This theory will also change the object of our faith. For if God has not yet forgiven the sins of man, the penitent sinner can at first only believe that God will forgive; believing this, God does forgive; and thereafter the sinner believes that his sins are forgiven.

But thanks be to God, in His Gospel He does not merely hold out to us a possible, potential forgiveness of sins, which becomes a reality only in the event that a sinner believes, but here God proclaims an actual, factual, accomplished forgiveness. “All things are now ready.” In the Gospel we learn, that God reconciled the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, 2 Cor. 5:19; that all that have sinned are freely justified by grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, Rom. 3:23, 24; that the righteousness of Christ resulted for all men unto justification of life, Rom. 5:18. In the Gospel we have God’s own official and authoritative declaration of what transpired in the court of heaven when He accepted the sacrifice of His Son for the reconciliation of the world. “Im Evangelium wird den Menschen nicht nur bekanntgegeben, dass, wenn sie glauben, sie gerecht und selig werden koennen, sondern dass fuer sie schon Gerechtigkeit vorhanden ist, dass Gott ueber sie schon ein guenstiges Urteil gefaellt hat, dass Gott in Christo die Menschheit mit Augen des Wohlgelangens ansieht, dass die Suender einen gnadigen Gott haben.” (Stoeckhardt, Roemerbrief, p. 46.)

If, therefore, we tell any man that God for Christ’s sake has forgiven his sins, we are simply stating a fact that is revealed in the Bible by God Himself. This, however, does not mean that he also has forgiveness of sins. Full well we know that no man will and can accept this forgiveness in true faith if he does not repent of his sins. Yet his unbelief does not invalidate the fact that his sins are forgiven, Rom. 3:3. Whoever hedges in this gracious declaration, free promise, and outright offer of an accomplished forgiveness of sins with all manner of conditions that must be fulfilled before this forgiveness becomes an actuality, simply does not understand the quintessence of the Gospel. Even faith, of which we shall speak below, is not a condition in the sense that the forgiving act of God or the promise and offer of forgiveness is contingent upon it. God neither forgives sins, nor does He—
offer forgiveness of sins, in view of faith, for both forgiveness itself and the offer of forgiveness in the Gospel are there before man believes. Faith is only the means, *medium apprehensio*, by which we accept what is offered as a ready gift.

**Personal justification by faith.**—In sketching the doctrine of Paul in an earlier paragraph we have shown that on the basis of objective or universal justification he teaches a subjective or personal justification by faith. We have also called attention to the fact that for the sake of clarity we must distinguish between the original act of God, by which He forgave all sins to all men and thus justified them, between the publication of this fact in the Gospel, and, finally, the acceptance of the Gospel offer by faith on the part of man. This last point must now engage our attention.

The fact that the Gospel reveals God's gracious judgment of justification and offers to all men, free and without charge, full forgiveness and perfect righteousness, does not mean that all men, or at least all that hear the Gospel, will also receive and have all these blessings. They are not forced on us, as the weather is, whether we like it or not. From Heb. 4:2 we learn that the Gospel does not profit some, not being mixed with faith in them that hear it. A present that was prepared at great cost and is sincerely and freely offered to a person will not benefit him if he refuses to accept it. Even so here. The great spiritual blessings which Christ prepared for all men by His holy life and His innocent suffering and death, and which are so freely offered to all in the Gospel, will not help those who reject them in unbelief, 2 Pet. 2:1; Luke 7:30. So objective or universal justification must not be construed to mean that *ipso facto* all men now also enjoy forgiveness, are personally justified, and will be saved.

God reveals and offers forgiveness, righteousness, and justification in the Gospel to the intent that men should hear it, trust in it, and accept it. For this reason Paul speaks not only of the reconciliation to God by Christ, not only of the Word of Reconciliation, but he adds, "We pray you in Christ's stead, Be ye reconciled to God," 2 Cor. 5:20. This does not mean that man must still do something to perfect the reconciliation inaugurated by Christ, nor does it mean that we must do something that will induce God to offer and bestow its blessings upon us, but it means that we should accept this reconciliation and all it implies; that, repenting of our sins, we trust in God who justifies the ungodly; that we personally enter into this new relationship with our God. And this can be done in no other way than by faith.

Again, in Rom. 1:16, 17 Paul speaks of the Gospel and tells us, "Therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith." This is not the personal righteousness of God, for that is not of
faith; but it is a righteousness that is intended for man. It is the righteousness Christ procured for us, 2 Cor. 5:21, a righteousness that avails before God, or as Luther puts it, "die Gerechtigkeit, die vor Gott gilt." It is revealed in the Gospel as a finished product; nothing need be or can be added thereto. It is a righteousness εἰς πίστιν, intended to be received through faith; and εἰς πίστιν, it is ours as a result of faith. This plainly shows that the righteousness which Christ wrought for us, which God imputed to us, and which is revealed in the Gospel is to be taken by faith and possessed in faith. Therefore only he who believes the words of God's promise has what they say and express, namely, the forgiveness of sins and the righteousness of God.

Objective, or universal, justification therefore does not mean that thereby all its blessings are willy-nilly bestowed on, and imparted to, the individual personally and that all men will now be saved. When Lincoln issued his proclamation of emancipation, all Negroes were thereby automatically, as it were, set free, irrespective of whether they wanted to be free or not; they simply were free. But when God issued His proclamation of emancipation, that gracious judgment of universal justification, there was added the stipulation εἰς πίστιν εἰς πίστιν; it was intended to be received by faith and to be held by faith. "Allerdings ist nun aber der Glaube ein notwendiges Annex dieser Gerechtigkeit, die im Evangelium offenbart wird, nur dass man das Verhältnis des Glaubens zur Gerechtigkeit richtig bestimmt. . . . So ist die Meinung des Apostels die, dass die Gerechtigkeit infolge des Glaubens (εἰς πίστιν) uns zuteil, unser eigen wird. . . . Δια καθοσύνη εἰς πίστιν, das heisst, eine solche Gerechtigkeit, welche fuer den Glauben bestimmt und vorhanden, auf den Glauben berechnet ist." (Stoeckhardt, Roemerbrief, pp. 46, 47.) Whoever, therefore, does not believe that God has justified also him, does thereby not invalidate the judgment of God itself, Rom. 3:3; 2 Tim. 2:12, but he makes it of none effect as far as it concerns him, Luke 7:30. Not accepting and applying to himself that gracious judgment of God, he shall remain and die in his sins, John 8:24; 12: 36. In order, then, that God's promise of forgiveness and justification may profit the individual, it "must be mixed with faith in them that hear it," Heb. 4:2. Faith is the means by which the individual enters into personal possession and enjoyment of what God reveals and offers in the Gospel.

In this entire matter the function of faith is purely receptive; it does not supply any deficiencies; it does not add an additional motive; it merely takes and holds what God promises and gives. Art. III of the Formula of Concord (Trigl., p. 919) says: "Concerning the righteousness of faith before God we believe, teach, and confess unanimously . . . that poor sinful man is justified
before God, that is, absolved and declared free and exempt from all sin and the sentence of well-deserved condemnation,” etc., . . . “because of the sole merit, complete obedience, bitter suffering, death, and resurrection of our Lord Christ alone, whose obedience is reckoned to us for righteousness. These treasures are offered us by the Holy Ghost in the promise of the holy Gospel; faith alone is the only means by which we lay hold upon, accept, and apply, and appropriate them to ourselves.”

“Man is justified by faith.” — From what has been said above it must be clear what it means, and what it does not mean, to be justified by faith.

a) It does not mean that “faith is so good a work and so fair a virtue” (Trigl., p. 919) that for this reason God declares a believer just. Faith is indeed an act of man; for while it is the Holy Spirit that creates faith in man through the Gospel, it is man that does the believing. Yet faith, considered as an act, or work, of man, has no justifying power whatever. Faith justifies not per se, but because of the object it has and holds.

b) It does not mean that faith is the organ through which means God declares a sinner just. The sentence by which God justifies the ungodly we have in the Gospel. By faith man merely trusts in this declaration, applies it to himself, as God wants him to do, and thus he personally becomes righteous.

c) What, then, does it mean that man is justified by faith? We have learned that by grace, for Christ’s sake, God once for all forgave all sins to all men, 2 Cor. 5:19, and adjudged them all righteous, or justified them, Rom. 5:18. This act of God is finished and need not be repeated and is not repeated. This gracious judgment of God is published in the Gospel, that all men might know of it and believe in it. This Gospel, offering to lost sinners such wonderful things, has the power to create in the hearts of penitent sinners that faith by which they trust and rely upon what God here declares, and thereby they apply and appropriate to themselves what God here offers. Thus it is that by faith the individual enters into possession and enjoyment of those blessings that were prepared for him and are here offered to him, and in this way he personally becomes righteous, becomes a justified man.

The text Rom. 3:28 has the words δικαιοσύνη πίστει διδόμενη. How shall we translate the word δικαιοσύνη? Liddell and Scott give the following definition for δικαιοσύνη: “to make just, pronounce and treat as righteous, to justify.” The English version has “justified.” The dative πίστει is the dativus instrumentalis or modi, and must be translated with “by means of.” The first meaning of διδόμενη, to make just, namely, by imputation, fits very well. In the passive it would mean to be made just or to become just. Our text
then would read: “We conclude that man becomes just by means of faith, without the deeds of the Law.” Because by means of his faith he apprehends the merits of Christ, he now becomes a just man in the sight of God; or, because by means of faith he applies to himself the justifying sentence of God, as God wants him to do, he now becomes personally a justified man before God. Faith is neither the cause why God declares the sinner just, nor is it the means through which He pronounces him just, but being the organon lepticon, it takes and lays hold of those things because of which he is accounted just. Luther brings out this fine point in his translation. He does not say, “dass der Mensch gerecht gesprochen oder erklärte werde durch den Glauben”—this might possibly be misunderstood—but he says, “dass der Mensch gerecht werde durch den Glauben,” certainly, by imputation.

In the Gospel God offers us sinners the riches of His grace, forgiveness of sins, the righteousness of Christ, justification unto life. All these things are now ready for me and for every other sinner. As they are offered to me in a promise, I can accept them in no other way than by faith. As I apprehend them by faith, they actually become my own, I have them, and thus I personally have become a just and righteous man in the sight of God. We speak of the justifying power of faith; yet in itself faith does not possess this power; the justifying power resides in the object to which our faith clings. It is not the act of taking, but the riches I take that make me rich. Therefore to be justified by faith means that by faith we trust in, and apply to ourselves, the gracious judgment of justification pronounced by God upon all men, and thus we personally become justified, and we remain under this gracious judgment as long as we continue in the faith.

The relation between objective and subjective justification.—We have spoken of objective, or universal, justification and of subjective, or personal, justification. These are not Biblical terms, but they are used by dogmaticians to distinguish between the twofold use made in the Bible of the word “justify.” There is a group of texts in which the terms “justify” and “justification” are used of all men before they come to faith, as in Rom. 3:24; 4:25; 5:10, 13. And there is another group of texts where the word “justify” is used of those who come to faith, Rom. 3:26, 28; 5:1; Gal. 2:16; Acts 13:39; and others. Likewise we find that in Rom. 5:19 the obedience, or righteousness, of Christ is imputed to many (all), and in Rom. 4:11 we learn that it is imputed to the believers. And in 2 Cor. 5:19 we are told that the trespasses were not imputed, hence forgiven, to the world, and in Matt. 9:2 we find that Christ forgives sins to an individual, and in Mark 11:26 He tells us that God will not forgive sins to those who do not forgive their neighbor. One group
of texts speaks of a universal justification, forgiveness, and imputation of Christ's righteousness; the other group speaks of an individual, personal justification, forgiveness, and imputation of righteousness. How shall we understand this? If the only justifying and forgiving act of God takes place the moment a person comes to faith, then the texts which speak of a universal justification are meaningless, and if personal justification is a repetition of objective justification, then the latter was superfluous and ineffective. But if the only forgiving and justifying act took place in the court of God before any man believed, and if this act covers all men, the world, what does it then mean that God forgives sins to the believer, imputes to him righteousness and justifies him which believeth in Christ, Rom. 3:26? In short, what is the relation between universal and personal justification?

The all-embracing justifying act of God, by which He forgave all sins to all men, accounted them righteous, and justified them intuvtu Christi, took place, humanly speaking, the moment He accepted the redemptive work of His Son for the reconciliation of the world, 2 Cor. 5:19; Rom. 3:24; 4:25; 5:10, 18. It was then that in the court of heaven He freely by grace for Christ's sake absolved all sinners and declared them just. And this act of God need not be repeated and is not repeated, even as the redemption by Christ, on which it is based, is never repeated.

What happens in the case of the believer, who trusts in, and apprehends, this gracious judgment of God, is that as he applies this justification to himself, God also applies it to him and confirms it upon him. With the believer the objective justification becomes effective, God declares him a recipient of the forgiveness offered to all.

By which of these, universal or personal justification, are the benefits of justification bestowed on man?—It has been said if God in Christ has forgiven all sins and declared all men just, what further need is there of faith? Does universal justification not give, bestow, and impart to all men forgiveness of sins, righteousness, and eternal life? From what has been said above it is clear that our answer is definitely, No. Objective justification has taken place in the mind and heart of God; in His own court He has adjudged all men just and righteous, Rom. 5:18, 19. This fact God revealed to us in the Gospel for the purpose that we should accept it in faith, Rom. 1:17. He who fails or refuses to do this, who does not avail himself of what God has done for him and what God offers to him, will certainly not be benefited, Heb. 4:2. To have and hold and enjoy them, it is necessary that the individual accept them in faith.

It is by what we call personal justification that all the blessings
settled upon us in objective justification are applied, conferred, bestowed, and imparted to us. To have and possess a gift that is prepared and intended for me, I must take it. And since these blessings are offered to us in an unconditional promise, there is positively no other means by which we can take them than faith. Thus it is by faith, and by faith alone, that man obtains the forgiveness of his sins, puts on the garment of Christ's righteousness, and becomes personally justified before God. And it will never happen that God will tell a believer that he appropriated something to himself that was not intended for him. By faith man possesses himself of what God wants him to have. It is in this way that faith is reckoned for righteousness, Rom. 4:5; in this way God is the Justifier of him that believeth in Jesus, Rom. 3:26; in this way He would justify the heathen, Gal. 3:8; in this way righteousness is imputed to the believers, Rom. 4:11, and forgiveness of sins is imparted to them, Matt. 9:2. Hence objective justification without subjective justification profits no man; yet subjective justification without objective justification is impossible.

The certainty of forgiveness of sins and of justification by faith. — The personal certainty that by faith we have the forgiveness of our sins and are justified before God is based on the objective fact that in Christ God has forgiven all sins and justified the ungodly. No one can personally be sure that by faith he has obtained forgiveness and is accounted righteous, as long as the least doubt attaches to this fact. Our sins must have been forgiven before we can be sure that they are forgiven; God must have declared us just before we can by faith be sure of this fact. The fact, as revealed in the Gospel, that God forgave all sins and declared all the ungodly just is the foundation on which the certainty of faith rests.

In this connection we would call attention to the Fifth Petition, “Forgive us our trespasses.” Does this mean that our sins were unforgiven before, and are only now forgiven by God in answer to our prayer? From 2 Cor. 5:19 we learn that when God in Christ reconciled the world unto Himself, He did not impute their trespasses unto them; that means that then already God forgave the sins to all men. What, then, can this petition mean? Does it mean that God should once more forgive our sins? The very fact that God commands us so to pray makes this petition a promise and assurance of forgiveness on His part. For He certainly would not tell us to pray for forgiveness if this forgiveness were not yet ready for us. He who sincerely prays this petition thereby shows that he realizes his need of forgiveness, and is certain that he shall get it.

But what does it mean when Christ says, “When ye stand pray-
ing, forgive if ye have ought against any, that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses,” Mark 11:25, 26. Does this mean that the great act by which God forgives sins to men has not yet taken place, but will take place only when and if we forgive our neighbor? that the forgiving act of God would depend upon the forgiving act of man? Such interpretation would be contrary to what God tells us 2 Cor. 5:19 and Rom. 5:18, 19. If God did not impute sins to the world, then He forgave sins to all men, including the person that will not forgive his neighbor. What Christ means to say is that he who is unforgiving in his heart cannot and shall not have the forgiveness, which is indeed ready also for him. For he who does not forgive his brother has no faith, and it is by faith alone that we can take and hold the forgiveness God offers to us in the Gospel. Whatever kills faith in the heart deprives us of all we held by faith. We have forgiveness and justification as long as we continue in the faith; faith lost, forgiveness, righteousness, and salvation is lost. This text therefore does not contradict 2 Cor. 5:19, for as little as the impenitence of man can nullify the redemption by Christ, can it nullify the sentence of God’s justification and forgiveness. What it does do is this, that as long as a person remains impenitent, it makes the gracious will and sentence of God noneffective and inoperative as far as it concerns this particular person.

Forgiveness of sins is the result and product of the forgiving act of God. The act of forgiving took place when God accepted the sacrifice of His Son for the reconciliation of the world; this act is never repeated. But the forgiveness of sins is continually being offered to us in the Gospel to be accepted by faith. The Gospel does not promise forgiveness to us as a future blessing we may hope for, as we hope for eternal life, but it is offered as an accomplished fact. The believer does not say, I hope that God will forgive my sins to me; but, trusting in the Word of God, he says, I know that God has forgiven me all my sins and “that He richly and daily forgives all sins to me and all believers.” And in this he is absolutely right. Because God has forgiven and justified me, therefore I am by faith sure that I am, and am being, forgiven and justified. Thus it is that objective justification by grace in Christ makes subjective justification by faith sure and certain to me.

We like to think of objective justification as the bank of God, in which is deposited for all men an inexhaustible treasure of grace and forgiveness. This treasure was prepared and earned by Christ and is sufficient for all the needs of all men. God does not forgive my sins only when I come to this bank, but the treasure is there, it is ready and waiting for me. This bank of God is open at all hours,
day and night, and as often as I penitently turn to God in faith to
draw on this treasure for my daily needs, He will not refuse me,
John 6:37; He will never tell me, No more funds for you, you are
overdrawing your account. For He tells me, “Though your sins be
as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like
crimson, they shall be as wool,” Is. 1:18. This bank never fails; it
is always solvent, no matter how many sinners come and how large
the amounts they draw; for “where sin abounded, grace did much
more abound.” Rom. 5:20, and with the Lord there is “plenteous
redemption,” Ps. 130:7. If a person, therefore, does not get what is
deposited for him, it is entirely his own fault; he has no faith
whereby he can draw on this heavenly treasure. Our chief con-
cern therefore is not what God will do with our sins, for that has
been settled long ago, Christ atoned for them and God forgave
them; but our concern must be, How shall we obtain and possess
ourselves of this forgiveness, how may we personally become right-
eous? And there is but one answer: “Believe the Gospel,” Mark
1:15; “Believe in Jesus Christ,” Acts 16:31; “Examine yourselves
whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves,” 2 Cor. 13:5.

The faith by which the individual accepts the forgiveness of his
sins and applies to himself the justifying sentence of God is created
in the heart by God Himself through the Gospel, John 17:20. Yet
a discussion of this point would lead us into the doctrine of con-
version, which lies beyond the scope of this essay. Nevertheless, we
are to teach this Gospel for the purpose that men might thereby
come to faith, and no one can do this effectively if he does not
understand the principal doctrine of the Gospel, the doctrine of
justification. For this doctrine is the very heart of the Gospel.
Without it the Bible could not make us wise unto salvation; without
it the life and death of Christ would have no meaning, and our
faith would be vain; without it our sanctification of life would lack
the proper motivation, and no penitent sinner could have the sure
hope of life eternal. Let us therefore guard this doctrine as the
apple of our eye, and may God preserve it in our midst pure and
undefiled.

River Forest, Ill. 

E. W. A. KOEHLER
"God Purposes to Justify Those That Have Come to Faith"

These words in the Declaration of the American Lutheran Church have aroused misgivings in some circles, and it may be profitable to spend a few minutes over them. The difficulty which people find here lies in the relative position given to faith and justification. Everybody can see that the sentence under discussion puts the creation of faith before the pronouncement of justification. The question is whether giving faith such a position does not militate against the cardinal truth that our salvation rests entirely on divine grace.

In seeking to arrive at a proper estimate of these words, one must not forget that they speak of subjective justification, that is, justification in which the general sentence of acquittal, in which the whole world has been declared righteous, is in a judicial act of God applied to an individual whose faith grasps the merits of Christ. It is the justification spoken of Rom. 3:28: “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law,” to mention but one of numerous passages. What I should like to point out, in the first place, is that the phraseology employed in the sentence of the Declaration is in keeping with that of our classical Lutheran literature. "Those that have come to faith" is, as everybody will have to admit, simply another expression for "those who possess faith," "those who believe," "believers." Now let the reader examine the following sentences from our theological literature and see whether they do not likewise let the creation of faith precede the declaration of justification. The meaning, of course, is not that there is an interval of time between the creation of faith and the verdict of acquittal, but that from the point of view of logical sequence the former is prior to the latter.

The Fourth Article of the Augsburg Confession, speaking of justification by faith, says in its last sentence, "This faith God impu tes for righteousness in His sight. Rom. 3 and 4." (Trigl., p. 45.) Faith comes to exist and it is imputed for righteousness. The German version is still more striking: "Denn diesen Glauben will Gott fuer Gerechtigkeit vor ihm halten und zurechnen, wie St. Paulus sagt zu den Roemern am 3. und 4." It is very true that in Article VI the Augsburg Confession says, "For remission of sins and justification is apprehended by faith, as also the voice of Christ attests: 'When ye shall have done all these things, say: We are unprofitable servants,' Luke 17:10." In this passage justification is spoken of as existing before the creation of faith; the term (the German version has Gerechtigkeit) evidently refers to objective justification, the great treasure which according to Rom. 1:16 f. is revealed and offered in the Gospel. Thus the Confession speaks of both acts of God, the general and the specific declaration, the objective and the subjective verdict of acquittal.

The language of the Apology agrees with that of the Augsburg Confession. In Article IV, Par. 45 (Trigl., p. 133), Melanchthon says, "This
special faith, therefore, by which an individual believes that for Christ's sake his sins are remitted him and that for Christ's sake God is reconciled and propitious, obtains remission of sins and justifies us." Faith is viewed as existing and "obtaining" justification for us. A special heading, prefixed to Par. 61 of the Apology (Trigl., p. 137), reads, "that faith in Christ justifies." Faith is the subject of the action which is denoted by the predicate. No one can deny that here the sequence: creation of faith — justification, is indicated. It would, I gladly add, be very easy to point out passages in the Apology where objective justification is taught, passages in which righteousness is viewed as existing and as being apprehended by faith; hence in this splendid work, too, both aspects of the doctrine of justification are set forth. The Smalcald Articles likewise declare that "Faith alone justifies us" (Trigl., p. 461), thus presupposing from the point of view of logical sequence the existence of faith before the sentence of acquittal is spoken. The Formula of Concord, in the Third Article of the Epitome, says, when speaking of the righteousness of faith before God, "We believe, teach, and confess that faith alone is the means and instrument whereby we lay hold of Christ, and thus in Christ of all that righteousness which avails before God; for His sake this faith is imputed to us for righteousness, Rom. 4:5" (Trigl., p. 793). Let the mode of speech be noted: faith is imputed for righteousness. Faith is viewed as existing, and with reference to it a great declaration is made; it is imputed for righteousness. The sequence here is the same as in most of the other passages that have been quoted.

In Walther's edition of Baier (III, pp. 265 ff.) are quoted utterances of the chief Lutheran dogmaticians on the role of faith in justification. Baier (§ 9) calls faith in Christ the minor motivating cause (causa impulsiva minus principalis) of justification, adding at once that faith moves God to justify man not through its own worthiness, force, or value, but through the value and worth of what it apprehends. His nomenclature sufficiently indicates that he views faith as preceding the verdict of justification. Baier admits, one ought to add, that some Lutheran teachers refused to call faith a motivating cause because they feared that such terminology might ascribe some merit to man in the matter of justification, but he evidently was convinced that his language was sufficiently guarded to ward off any such wrong notion. It would be better, of course, not to use such terminology. Quenstedt, too, uses the term causa in speaking of faith, calling it causa λόγου; (apprehending factor). To make certain that he would not be understood as if he ascribed any merit to faith, he says, Causalitas fidei consistat in apprehendendo et recipiendo, h. e., non est alia quam organica et instrumentalis. (Faith is a cause because it apprehends and receives, that is, it is a cause merely inasmuch as it is a means and instrument.) Continuing our way through the quotations submitted by Walther, we find that Carpzov calls faith organum apprehensionis. He compares faith to the hand of a pauper who receives an alms. Gerhard, prince of dogmaticians, emphasizes that we are justified not on account of faith, but through faith which seizes the merits of Christ — a distinction which is of highest importance. Faith in justification is not a meritorious, but merely an instrumental factor, he says. But even so, even if faith
is nothing but an instrument, it precedes justification, if the relations are logically analyzed, just as the instrument which is used in the performance of an act exists before such performance. It is impracticable to quote all the other writers whom Walther marshals in this connection. But one must not be omitted in this brief survey, sturdy Calovius. He is rather inclined to take issue with those who call faith a *causa impellens*. The paragraph cited from his *Systema* closes with these words, "Whatev-er there exists of activity on our part in the reception of Christ or the apprehension of divine grace as it is offered and conferred, namely, *after* (postquam) faith has by the Holy Spirit been created in our hearts: this feature of it certainly does not come before us when our justification is considered; yes, faith itself, as far as it is an instrument, is rightly said to be placed in antithesis not only to all works of obedience and piety, but to faith itself, in as far as it is a work or act of ours, and to its value. If this is not devoutly maintained, the Arminian heresy of faith as of a quality or work and act of ours, producing our justification, can easily creep in" (Balier, III, p. 270). This is a ringing declaration, seeking to prevent the conception that faith is given a meritorious role in the act of justification. For our present purpose the little word *after* (postquam) must be noted. Calovius literally places the apprehension of the merits of Christ, that is, our justification, after the production of faith.

Walther, after inserting the Antithesis of Quenstedt in which the opposing errors are noted, submits another group of quotations in which *objective* (or universal) justification is duly set forth and exalted. Balier, one must remember, in the paragraphs we are discussing, speaks merely of subjective justification. It makes a Christian's heart rejoice to read the warm, gripping testinomies of Lutheran leaders in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries praising God for providing justification for the whole world through the work of Christ. A word of Luther's, for instance, is adduced in which the Reformer mightily declares that Jesus in His victorious struggle with sin, death, and the devil has made all men just, alive, and blessed (selig). Certainly this justification precedes faith.

In Par. 12 (III, p. 285) Balier says that "the recipient (subjectum) of justification is sinful, but converted or regenerated man." Plainly, the creation of faith accomplished in conversion or regeneration is placed before the act of justification. In this connection Walther submits this quotation from Huelsemann, whom he esteemed highly (I give a very free rendering), "At least with respect to natural sequence a person to be ready for justification must first be provided with justifying faith before absolution or justification follows, for in point of time they are simultaneous" (opere, subjectum aequatum justificationis saltet ordine naturae prius esse instructum fide justificante, quam ipsa absolutionis fidei justificatio sequatur, etiam si tempore simul sint). The italization reproduced above is undoubtedly due to Walther. The passage very definitely states that when logical sequence is considered, the creation of faith precedes justification, although in point of time there is no interval between them.

In order not to extend this survey unduly, I shall now conclude it with quotations from two Missouri Synod theologians. Stoeckhardt
in his Commentary on Romans, discussing Rom. 4:1-5, says (p. 184), "In
the expression ἡ πίστις λογίζεται εἰς δικαιοσύνην faith is considered as
the logical prītus and man's becoming just as the logical posterius. This
does not contradict what we have said before about the relation between
ποτέτευχ and ἰδιαίτερον, thus God considers and views me in particular, me per-
sonally, in individuo, as righteous." I need not bring proof that in other
passages Stockerdt powerfully argues for the teaching we call that
of objective justification, making justification the prītus and faith the
posterius. In fact, his whole exposition of Rom. 3-5 becomes meaningless
if his espousal of this doctrine is lost sight of. Pieper, in his Christliche
Dogmatik (II, p. 606), states that "in the very moment in which a person
comes to believe in Christ or the Gospel, that is, in the remission of sins,
earned by Christ and offered in the Gospel, he through this faith is
justified before God." He adds, "This is the so-called subjective justifi-
cation, in distinction from the so-called objective justification, which is
in existence before faith." Thus Pieper stresses, on the one hand, that
in point of time the creation of faith and man's individual, that is,
subjective justification, are simultaneous, on the other, that objective
justification exists before faith is created. The reader should compare
another passage, found II, p. 686, where Pieper properly warns against
putting an interval of time between the creation of faith and the verdict
of subjective justification. However, he does not hesitate to use the ex-
pression "faith justifies," which from the point of view of logical analysis
puts faith before the act of justification (see, for instance, II, p. 524).

Now, if the question is asked, whether in addition to the passage
in Romans in which Stockerdt finds definitely that faith is given the
status of the logical prītus (Rom. 4:5) there are Scriptural pronuncia-
tions in which the same relation between faith and the act of justifica-
tion is expressed, I can think of no clearer one than Gal. 2:16, "Even we
have believed in Jesus Christ that we might be justified by the faith
in Christ." Here unmistakably, when a logical analysis is undertaken,
the conception is that when faith has been created, this act is followed by
the act of justification. Moffatt renders these words thus, "We ourselves
have believed in Christ Jesus so as to get justified by faith in Christ."
Goodspeed's translation is, "Even we believed in Christ Jesus so as to
be made upright [?] by faith in Christ." The Twentieth Century New
Testament has this rendering, "So we placed our faith in Christ Jesus
in order that we might be pronounced righteous as a result of faith in
Christ." All these translations recognize that in Paul's words the creation
of faith is given the position of the logical prītus. I shall content myself
with drawing attention to one more passage, Rom. 8:30. Here we have
the golden chain comforting to Christian hearts: Predestination—the
calling—justification—glorification. Since "calling" here signifies the
creation of faith, it is very evident that Paul gives to this act of God
the status of the logical prītus with respect to the other act, the pro-
nouncement of justification.

The above, I hold, has shown conclusively that the sentence under
discussion is acceptable and satisfactory. Certainly, if the Bible itself uses such terminology, we cannot say that the doctrine of pure grace is jeopardized by this mode of speaking; and that the Lutheran teachers of the past were not averse to using expressions identical with, or similar to, the one before us the quotations have demonstrated. W. Arndt

Variety in Gospel Preaching

"A minister of the Gospel is continually preparing bouquets of flowers from the garden of the Word," as Cyril of Alexandria says, "to delight and benefit those to whom he ministers. Such bouquets do not consist of the quickly wilting flowers of this earth, but of the enduring doctrines, perpetually in their native vigor. A gardener in the paradise of God's Word has therein a never-ending source of joy; but by his profession as a gardener he has a never-ending obligation also, that of turning over the soil, of keeping out the weeds, of planning his beds of various flowers, and of preparing the baskets and bouquets for the presentation."

"Preaching the Gospel" is a term signifying occasionally the entire ministry of the Word, including the preaching of the Law. For the purpose of this discussion, however, we shall restrict it to the proclamation of the glad tidings of salvation in Christ, which by common consent should be preached in every sermon.

It is not strange that expressions of despair have been heard regarding this task of ever presenting the Gospel in a new and original and effective manner to the same hearers. It is a difficult task; but one which the Holy Spirit renders grateful and agreeable.

A study of many texts and sermons will show that there is a great variety of ways in which the Gospel can effectively be introduced into the sermon, that is, from the homiletic viewpoint. The Gospel will remain effective at any time when it is preached, for it is the power of God. On the human side, however, we shall find that there are some ways which interest the mind and reach the heart better than other ways. Certainly, variety is desirable.

I

The texts which contain a statement of the Gospel present no great problem, for the sermon outlines based upon them will necessarily dwell on it. Such a text is the Gospel Lesson for Easter Tuesday, Luke 24: 36-47, in which we read, "Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name." Compare also the Quasimodogeniti Gospel and the Misericordias Domini Epistle. The Ascension Gospel mentions the Gospel by name, but does not contain a definite statement of the satisfactio vitæ. A Quinquagesima Gospel makes a direct statement: "The Son of man came . . . to give His life a ransom for many"; besides it is so rich in starting points for the preaching of the Gospel, that almost any method of handling it is bound to take the preacher to the heart of Christianity. This can be said of many texts.
General Justification

George Stoeckhardt

Translated by Otto F. Stahlke

Genuine Lutheran theology counts the doctrine of general justification among the statements and treasures of its faith. Lutherans teach and confess that through Christ's death the entire world of sinners was justified and that through Christ's resurrection the justification of the sinful world was festively proclaimed. This doctrine of general justification is the guarantee and warranty that the central article of justification by faith is being kept pure. Whoever holds firmly that God was reconciled to the world in Christ, and that to sinners in general their sin was forgiven, to him the justification which comes from faith remains a pure act of the grace of God. Whoever denies general justification is justly under suspicion that he is mixing his own work and merit into the grace of God.

The more recent theologians, and especially those who call themselves and are counted as Lutheran, want to know nothing about the general justification of the sinful world through Christ. There is no room for it in their system of doctrine, which they spin out from their own believing consciousness. If they accept this doctrine, then it seems that things do not fall into the right place. When they treat of justification they lay down approximately the following sequence of thought: God through Christ has reconciled the sinful world with himself through the sacrificial death of Christ. That salvation and reconciliation which is effected through Christ Jesus, Christ's obedience, suffering, and death, must be definitely distinguished from the actual forgiveness of sins. Through this reconciliation God has only made it possible for Himself to impart to sinful man further demonstrations of His grace. He has so far suppressed His wrath that He further concerns Himself with the sinners of the world. Reconciliation has opened the way for the possibility of the forgiveness of sins, of justification. As a consequence of reconciliation God pursues sinners further, calls them through the Gospel, and seeks to effect their conversion. And when a sinner is converted and believes on Jesus Christ, then that possibility becomes a reality; only then, as far as God is concerned, does it develop into justification, forgiveness of sins. One may look into the textbooks of Thomasius, Kahnis, Martensen, Luthardt, Frank, Philippi, and everywhere one will become aware of the structure of doctrine which has been briefly sketched here.
It is not difficult to recognize how the most questionable consequences arise from this theory. It is, then, the faith of the sinner which brings about justification as a reality, which also determines and moves God to speak a gracious judgment concerning him. Faith is, according to this concept, the adequate and moving cause of justification. The theologians named describe faith, to be sure, as a means which takes hold of the grace of God in Christ, and they speak of the receptive character and nature of faith. But Christ for Himself alone, Christ's redemption in contrast to the forgiveness of sins, is to them the object of faith. They deny unanimously that justifying faith takes hold of the justification which is valid before God, namely, the forgiveness of sins. The latter is, then, only the result and product of the believing attitude. Thus faith is not only a means, not only a hand which accepts the gift of God, but this very accepting and grasping of the merit of Christ is an action of man which effects something, which brings into being something that was not there before, namely, the forgiveness of sins. It is, then, basically a successful performance. In accordance with the Biblical concept of merit, it is a meritorious work. And precisely thereby the comfort of this justification is built upon sand. When a sinful man wants to become certain of this - that God counts him as righteous, that He forgives him his sins - then it does not help him if he looks to Christ and to the Gospel. For in Christ, in the Gospel of Christ he finds only the possibility of forgiveness of sins or of justification. Man must then look into his heart to see whether there he finds that behavior which translates possibility into reality. And if he is then anguished and tortured by his sins under a feeling of the wrath of God and he does not find that critical point within his inner consciousness, when that faith escapes from his feeling and his awareness, then woe, then the lifeline escapes and is torn from his hands, then he despairs and goes to ruin in spite of all possibilities of salvation.

It is evident how diligent the devil is to cheat Lutheran Christians out of the palladium of their confession, the true doctrine of justification, with Lutheran-sounding formulas and flowery phrases. We must be well on our guard that we do not lose what we possess. The article of justification remains pure, firm, and unshaken if we keep in mind the statement of doctrine and faith concerning general justification, if we hold firmly that the entire world of sinners has already been justified through Christ, through that which Christ did and suffered. This is a clear, certain doctrine of Holy Scripture. The locus classicus for this doctrine is the second half of the fifth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. What St. Paul has taught from Romans 1:16 on concerning justification he sums up in chapter 5, verses 12-21, as in a recapitulation. And the sum of this
section is again given in the two verses, 18 and 19. There we read: “Therefore, as by the offense of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so, by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.” Two men, Adam and Christ, are here held in juxtaposition. Of the one man, Adam, it is said - we translate literally: “Through the transgression of one man damnation has come about for all men.” “Through the disobedience of one man the many have been set forth as sinners.” Adam has sinned, has transgressed the divine commandment, has been disobedient. And thereby, by this act, the many who descend from Adam have all been set forth as sinners, transgressors before God. The transgression, the disobedience of the one has already been accounted to the many, to all people. All men are now accounted before God as transgressors, as disobedient. They have all sinned in and with Adam, verse 12. And in consequence of the disobedience of the one, which is now the disobedience of all, the many - that is all men - are subject to damnation, to death. Christ is the counterpart of Adam. Of Him St. Paul says: “Through the righteousness of one man it has come to the righteousness of life for all men.” “Through the obedience of the one man the many are set forth as righteous.” The future katastathe'sontai is the so-called logical future and announces that in the same manner - as certainly as the first thing is the case, that the many through the deed of one man (Adam) have been set forth as sinners - it is equally certain that the other thing takes place, that through the deed of the one (Christ) the many are set forth as righteous. And the latter, just as the former, belongs to the past. The apostle is explaining what in the case of the one, in the act of the one, has happened to the many. Thus Christ, the one, has fulfilled all righteousness, has rendered obedience. His entire life, suffering, and death was the fulfillment of righteousness (dikaiooma), was a great act of obedience. And precisely through this act the many, those who through Adam’s sin had become condemned sinners, have all been presented as righteous before God. The righteousness, the obedience of the one has been accounted to the many, to all people. All men are now accounted before God as righteous, obedient. They all have a share in justification. And this righteousness is, indeed, “the righteousness of life,” through which eternal life is accounted to them instead of death. The Scripture text before us is a clear passage, as clear as sunlight. Paul testifies clearly and plainly here that all men who were condemned through Adam’s sin have been justified through Christ and that precisely because Christ fulfilled all righteousness and rendered obedience all men are actually
justified, not only potentially. It is a wretched gloss when the more recent interpreters comment that the many, “all men,” are only believers, because St. Paul otherwise ascribes justification to believers only. But this idea goes counter to the Scripture in both text and context.

Other statements of Scripture are in harmony with the passage just interpreted. Through the obedience of Christ which he demonstrated even in death reconciliation, the reconciliation of the world, has been effected. The reconciliation is general. Christ is the reconciliation for the sin of the entire world (1 John 2:2). But now St. Paul the Apostle uses the concepts “reconciliation” and “justification” interchangeably. He writes in Romans 5:8-9: “But God commendeth his love toward us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.” This sentence Paul explains through the parallel sentence verse 10: “For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.” Upon the certain fact of the past, the death of Christ, the apostle here founds the certainty of future bliss, the final salvation from wrath. The benefit which we have from the death of Christ he expresses both as being “reconciled through the death” of God’s Son and as being “justified through His blood.” Reconciliation and justification here mean one and the same thing to Paul. Thus, if the entire world of sinners has been reconciled to God through Christ’s death and blood, then we may also say that the sinful world has been justified through Christ’s death and blood. Justification is nothing other than the forgiveness of sins. In 2 Corinthians 5:19 St. Paul testifies, “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself,” and explains the statement further through the addition, “Not imputing their sins unto them.” When God through Christ, Christ’s death, reconciled the world to Himself, He forgave the sins of the world, of all who belong to the world. Thus, it is true of all men that their sins are not imputed to them. All sins were actually forgiven to the world, the whole world, when Christ died for sinners. It is a wretched gloss of the interpreters, when they transform the forgiveness of sins, then transcribed, into the potential of a later forgiveness of sins.

Neither does Paul in Romans 5 leave unexplained how that which he teaches concerning general justification harmonizes with what he says elsewhere—for example, in the Epistle to the Romans from chapter 1, verse 16, on—concerning justification by faith. It is precisely in this way that faith retains its special concept and character, according to which all work and merit of man himself is excluded. Romans 5:17 says: “For if by one
man's offense death reigned by one; much more they which receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ." Through the obedience of one all men are justified, have received the justification unto life. But it is not said that now all, although they all are justified, will actually inherit, enjoy, reign in eternal life. Only those who accept, receive (lambanontes) the fullness of grace, the gift of righteousness, will reign in eternal life through the one, Jesus Christ. This accepting, this receiving, of which the apostle has spoken before ("By whom we have now received the atonement", verse 11) is nothing other than faith. Faith receives, accepts. Faith appears throughout as a means, only a means, by which we accept and make our own everything that belongs to justification—the fullness of grace, the obedience of Christ, and the justification itself. Faith does not come under consideration from any angle as a work of man, by which something is brought into existence that was not there before. It is not our faith and accepting which determines the judgment of God, which turns the judgment unto damnation into the opposite, which first creates the relation, in which God now stands through Christ to sinners. No, it is God's abundant grace alone and the obedience of Christ, of this one man, which directs and moves God to declare us free of sin and damnation—indeed, has long ago directed God to justify sinners and the entire sinful world. This judgment of God has been established long ago. This new relation of God to sinners has been brought about through the obedience of Christ. God's grace, Christ's obedience, the gift of righteousness is ready and prepared before our faith and acceptance and is offered and presented for acceptance, as St. Paul teaches, in the Word, in the Gospel, to all men who perceive the Gospel. And through faith, when we believe the Gospel, we now appropriate the reconciliation, the justification, the righteousness, which have been promised to all sinners, for our person. Through our faith, then, we for our person step within this justifying judgment of God which God has already declared over all sinners in general, into this new relation of grace founded through Christ, and are thus accounted righteous before God and can declare with joy: Now we have become righteous through faith. Thus through faith the general justification becomes a special justification. We draw and guide the justifying judgment of God directly upon our head, upon our person. Those who do not believe reject Christ and the Gospel, though they also have been justified through Christ's obedience.

They place themselves outside of that relation of God to sinners which has been established and has validity only in Christ and which is declared to sinful men only in the Gospel. He who believes does not first make reality of something that
God had only made possible, but recognizes and confirms what, on the side of God, was long truth and reality. He who does not believe renders impotent and invalid what was already reality. In a picture to which St. Paul once directed we can see the matter more vividly. In Christ salutary grace, God's friendship and love for all men, has appeared. Since then the brilliant sun shines over the entire sinful world. This light has dispelled all darkness. God has forgotten the former sins. To be sure, the eyes of all men are not yet opened. Before the Gospel comes, in which the sun of righteousness shines, man is blind and dark. But when he recognizes Christ and the Gospel, when he comes to faith, then he sees the sun standing in the heavens and becomes enlightened and joyful in its light. Through his seeing and recognition he does not create the sunlight but receives and accepts the light and its beneficial warmth into himself. He now lives and walks in the light.

Of course, this picture is only a weak comparison. With our small reason we cannot bring light and clarity into everything. Man, wherever he is born, finds himself in the guilt and condemnation of Adam. Nevertheless, in Christ the righteousness of life has already come for all men. Through the obedience of the one man we are already justified and in grace. And yet we rejoice when we are converted and come to faith: Once I was not in grace, but now I am in grace. This matter we cannot solve according to reason. We refrain therefore from systematizing justification. What Scripture says concerning justification, that we accept, that we hold fast and allow not one word of it to be apocopated or distorted. And we know that all, also what is said concerning general justification, was written for our comfort and serves our salvation. And when the last encounter comes, in that critical moment, when the soul hovers between death and life, between heaven and hell, when we feel the complete wretchedness of lost, condemned mankind, then we take refuge in this universal grace, then we take comfort in the justification of all men, of all sinners, and draw the conclusion that what was done for all men, must certainly be valid also for us and is intended for me personally. Thus we still our heart before God.

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